

**THE STORIES THAT LEADERS TELL DURING ORGANISTIONAL CHANGE:
THE SEARCH FOR MEANING DURING LARGE-SCALE TRANSFORMATION**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Dieter Veldsman, declare that this dissertation, titled

“The stories that leaders tell during organisational change: The search for meaning during large-scale transformations”

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

(MR D Veldsman)

DATE

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SUMMARY

By Dieter Veldsman

Supervisor: Dr M.S. May

Change has become the norm as knowledge economy organisations aim to build agile people, process, and technology practises to ensure future sustainability. Leaders have been criticised due to the inability to manage sustainable and meaningful change that will navigate the future success of the organisation. The research will explore leaders' stories during an organisational change journey in order to determine the story type and subsequent meaning associated with leadership stories during organisational transformation. The research utilised a qualitative narrative inquiry research design to explore multiple leadership stories. Thematic network analysis was used to explore the themes identified within the leaders' stories and to identify the themes of meaning evident beneath the surface. The research findings contribute to the field of Organisational Psychology by providing leaders with a framework for navigating sustainable change journeys, and explore current leadership practices that contribute to the high rate of current organisational change failures.

Key Words: change, leadership storytelling, future, meaning, narrative, vision, transformation

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

The four horsemen of the apocalypse have attacked the organisation of the 21st century in the form of globalisation, growth in the information technology sector, the intensity of competition, and the pressure for innovation (Guttmann, 2009). Change has become the norm as organisations are required to enable their people, process, and technology to become fit for the future (Champy, 2009). However, organisations are failing to build sustainable change capability, with an estimated 90% of change initiatives not yielding a viable return on investment in the long term (Hiatt, 2007).

This chapter discusses the background and motivation of the study that informed the context of the research and the design in light of the research problem statement and aims. The chapter will focus on the relevant literature trends applicable to the research study and provide the layout and context for the remaining chapters.

1.1. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

The King 3 report (2009), published in 2009, emphasised the principles of leadership, sustainability, and corporate citizenship as crucial factors on the agenda for South African organisations. The knowledge economy has placed pressure on organisations to contribute towards the community that it serves in terms of social responsibility and corporate citizenship, whilst remaining sustainable and financially viable in an ever-turbulent market (Britton, 2010). Michell-Weaver and Manning (1990) state that the economic prosperity and future growth of the developing world is largely dependent on a public and private sector partnership that will enable a sustainable future for the community which it serves. In developing countries, such as South Africa with an estimated 4.1 million unemployed resources (Statistics SA, 2008), the inability to equip organisations to survive in the knowledge economy has resulted in a disengaged and demoralised work force that is not able to drive the agenda of sustainability and corporate citizenship that King 3 demands (Williams, Crafford & Fourie, 2003). Due to their inability to change and remain competitive in

the knowledge economy, organisations are running the risk of becoming redundant and irrelevant, resulting in a negative impact on the community that it serves (Boubtane, Coulibaly & Rault, 2011).

The world has become a global village of opportunity that challenges organisations to relook “who we are,” “what we do,” and “what we as an organisation stand for” if the organisation is to survive (Kotter, 1995; Passmore, 1994). Change is inevitable, and this begs the question why leaders are not creating sustainable change practices that will enable their organisations to remain viable in an ever-turbulent market and grow into a corporate citizen that contributes to the community which it serves (Mitchell, 2011).

Based upon the requirement for change within the traditional organisation, the researcher will explore his own experience in an organisation that has embarked on a transformational change initiative in an attempt to gain insight into the stories that facilitate organisational change and subsequently build an organisation that is relevant, sustainable, and able to contribute to the community which it serves.

1.1.1. The researcher as follower of leadership stories

At the time of this study, the researcher found himself a follower of leadership stories within a global organisation that was undergoing a transformational change journey – a journey that would change the processes, systems, and people practices that have been embedded as part of the organisational culture over the past 150 years since the organisation opened its doors. The researcher was tasked with the responsibility of collecting the leaders’ stories across the impacted areas of the organisation and to facilitate the process of crafting a believable story of the future of the organisation – a story that would facilitate the change process for the organisational members as they embark on a transformational journey. From a personal perspective, the stories brought meaning to the researcher’s own story, providing perspective on the experiences of the researcher's own life story which unfolded during the project, and crafting a co-created organisational story that would inspire the change that would enable the organisation to build a sustainable future that would benefit both their own

people and the community which the organisation serves. Through the process of co-creation with the storytellers in the study, the impact of followers not believing in the leaders' story also became evident: a demoralised and disengaged work force that will result in the failure of the change process and, ultimately, the sustainability of the organisation in the future.

From the researcher's own experience, it became evident that leaders are struggling to create sustainable change within organisations. Often, the motivation for the organisation changing as well as the implications for the leaders from a personal perspective are unclear and, as such, the leaders struggle to convey a shared story that will enable and create the momentum that the organisation requires to navigate change journeys. Given the context of the research, the researcher had the opportunity to spend time with the leaders and co-create another level of abstraction in terms of their own stories – trying to explore if they find meaning within the stories that they tell from a personal perspective in times of change.

1.2. LEADERS AND ORGANISATIONAL STORYTELLING DURING CHANGE JOURNEYS WITHIN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The background and motivation applicable to this study was also discussed in light of the following model, which dictates the tone and areas of discussion relevant to the research constructs of leaders, change, and stories in the modern knowledge economy:

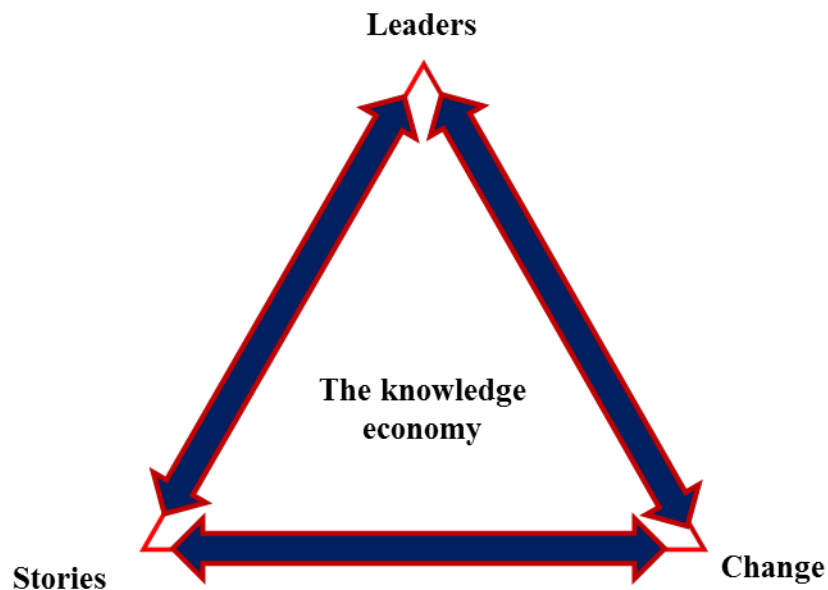


Figure 1.1: The research constructs (adapted from Denning, 2011; Kotter, 1995; Hiatt, 2007)

1.2.1. The knowledge economy

“The top ten in demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004. We are currently preparing students for jobs that don’t exist, using technologies that haven’t been invented yet to solve problems that we are not aware of.”

(Anonymous, 2009)

The knowledge economy is here (Britton, 2010). Global competition, vast amounts of uncertainty, technological changes, and organisations that strive for more efficient operating models at half the cost are considered the norm in the 21st century (Greenhaus, Callahan & Godshalk, 1999). Organisations are striving for flexibility in their business practices, innovative approaches that will effectively optimise the people, process, and technology performance of the organisation and allow the organisation to capitalise on the new sphere of opportunity that the boundaryless world provides (Bell & Barkhuizen, 2011; Gartner, 2010). Traditionally, organisations were seen as systems of information, and success was defined as the ability to do business more efficiently than the competition, utilising less effort and time (Nonaka,

1991). Guttman (2009) states that organisations have been attacked by the four horsemen of the apocalypse during the last decade, i.e. globalisation, growth in the information technology sector, the intensity of competition, and the pressure for innovation, which have yielded traditional organisations slow and unresponsive to the modern environment. The 21st century has brought numerous opportunities for organisations – if the organisation is willing, flexible, and innovative enough to navigate the trends that inform the knowledge economy. Ulrich and Smallwood (2009) state that certain trends will influence business practices of knowledge economy organisations, and that organisational success will be based upon the organisations' ability to adapt and remain sustainable amidst the environment of constant change. An overview of the trends follows below, and will be discussed in Chapter Two of the study (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009).

- Trend 1: The environmental complexity of organisations demands a pro-active and responsive organisational design that is adaptable and flexible to market requirements.
- Trend 2: Organisations are becoming rich in terms of people diversity, structure, activities, process, and culture, and no single leader will be able to understand the organisation in its entirety.
- Trend 3: There is no reality that leaders can build on – organisations are constructing reality on a continuous basis.
- Trend 4: The people of the organisation are tasked with building the new organisation in terms of its history, its identity, and according to their own agenda – which is open to be shaped by the organisation.
- Trend 5: People affect, influence, and react to one another in terms of the width and breadth of the relationships that exist within the organisation.

The four horsemen and the trends identified above demand that organisations respond by changing traditional business models that have become redundant and inefficient in the modern world of work (Nonaka, 1991). Knowledge has become the currency of the organisational landscape, where the organisation with the most knowledge inadvertently has a better chance of economic prosperity (OECD, 1996). The knowledge economy demands that organisations re-evaluate and, if required,

rethink the required capabilities that will take them into the future (Arthur & DeFillipi, 1994; Veldsman, 2011). This implies a shift in how organisations think about the organisational identity and relook "who we are," "what we do" and "what we want to achieve," shifting traditional thinking pertaining to organisational practices, as indicated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Shift in thinking regarding organisational practices (Arthur & DeFillipi, 1994; Veldsman, 2011):

Traditional organisational thinking	The emerging organisation of the future
Objectives, plans, and standards	Mission, vision, and philosophy
Local and physical	Global and virtual
Jobs, functions, and individuals	Roles, work domains, and teams
Procedures	Culture
Top-down decisions and relationships	Multi-directional relationships and decisions
Activities	Outcomes
Products	Markets/customers

Change is imminent if organisations are to build sustainable practices (Champy, 2009), but the question remains as to who will guide organisation into the future (Guttmann, 2009). Change adoption, especially at the individual level, is dependent on the internalisation of the change through the leaders of the organisation: leaders that walk the talk and create a psychologically safe atmosphere for their people during times of change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Bass and Avolio (1994) state that organisational change can only be accomplished through the persuasive power of the leaders that drive the process, accept responsibility for the change, and make the change meaningful for employees across the organisation. However, what does change leadership entail within the knowledge economy and are leaders ready to

accept the challenge of building the internal change capabilities that change-capable firms require?

1.2.2. The role of leaders as drivers of organisational change

The role that leaders need to play during change efforts has been recognised by numerous researchers (Appelbaum & Wohl, 2000; Potter, 2001; Chapman, 2002; Graetz, 2000). In order to understand the concept of leadership within the knowledge economy the following areas will be discussed:

- An overview of the leadership construct;
- Leaders as change facilitators within the knowledge economy; and
- Leaders as storytellers in the knowledge economy.

1.2.2.1. An overview of the leadership construct

Parsell and Bligh (2000) refer to leadership as the power and authority to make change occur, and Nahavandi (2009) refers to leadership as the ability to influence individuals and groups, elicit goal-orientated behaviour, and relate the visions and strategies of the organisation in an understandable manner. Kerfoot (1999) agrees and states that the science of leading change effectively defines and characterises the leadership construct. Nahavandi (2009) states that leadership can be categorised into three distinct eras over the past century: the trait era (1800s - 1940s), which perceived leaders to be born as opposed to moulded and created through experience; the behaviouristic era (Mid 1940s - 1970s), which focused on the behaviours that define a leader; and the contingency era (1960s to the present), which states that the effectiveness, behaviour, and style of the leader will depend on what the situation demands.

The 1980s saw a fundamental shift in leadership focus to incorporating aspects of change, followership, and inclusivity, and established leaders becoming the

custodians of organisational change (Smit & Carstens, 2003). In the knowledge economy and the turbulent environment that is evident in the new world of work, the essence of leadership lies in change, i.e. leaders' ability to create sustainable change and bring followers along the change journey (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Change competence, or the ability to create sustainable change, has become a vital capability that leaders need to possess (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), yet it seems that change efforts leave employees uninspired, demoralised, and disengaged. Traditional top-down leadership approaches have become redundant in the knowledge economy that demands leaders to be involved with their followers and practise a relationship-based leadership style focused on facilitating the change process from within the organisation (Griffin & Stacey, 2005).

1.2.2.2. Leaders as change facilitators in the knowledge economy

Leaders need to adopt collaborative models that facilitate change as opposed to the traditional leadership perspective that enforced change from the top of the organisational structure (Mor-Barak, 2007; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010). This implies a different approach from the leader, where change is no longer driven from the top and the leader becomes an active role player within the organisation, facilitating the change and direction that will take the organisation into the future. Leaders adopting the role of change facilitator need to align with change approaches that include the whole system in the change direction of the organisation if they are to drive sustainable and meaningful change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Leaders' success should be measured in terms of building the capacity of followership, as leaders are only leaders because others allow them to play the leadership role (Higgs, 2003). Cockerel (2009) states that organisational leaders should adapt the motto that it is "all about the people." "The organisation" becomes "our organisation," "organisational success" becomes "our success," and "the customers" become "our customers." Leaders, if they are to be successful at facilitating change from within, need to adopt an approach of collaborative, inclusive practices that will create movement and ownership within organisations that consist

of a multi-generational, multi-cultural, and multi-talented workforce (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006).

In order to facilitate sustainable change, leaders will have to make employees become part of the organisational future by crafting a story that is easy to understand and meaningful, and which enables followers to believe in the ethos of what the organisation stands for (Nahavandi, 1997). Canabou and Overholdt (2001) go even further than this by stating that it is the sole responsibility of the leader in the new world of work to articulate a story that followers are inspired to follow, that commits followers to the organisational objectives, and provides them with the opportunity to become part of the organisational identity. The role of change leader demands that leaders aim to bring meaning to their people during the change process (Katzenbach & Khan, 2009), which implies that leaders will have to meet different expectations from their followers during the change journey (Schein, 2004). The expectations and the subsequent change leader responsibility are discussed below:

Table 1.2: Leaders' responsibilities during change journeys (Schein, 2004)

Expectations from follower:	Change Leader responsibility:
The leader as visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders need to articulate and communicate the future that they want to see for followers. ▪ Considering the path and what actions are required is essential.
The leader as role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Followers will look to the leader to see what behaviour will be expected and even rewarded in the future.
The leader as reinforcer of the change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It needs to be clear what the leaders are rewarding and what behaviours are crucial to organisational success in the new world.

Leaders in the knowledge economy have turned to the use of stories to facilitate the change process, and they are using these stories to fulfil the responsibilities of visionary, role model, and reinforcer (Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven & Kroupa, 2006; Driscoll & McKee, 2006; Mconkie & Boss, 1994). Stories and their ability to include the whole organisation as part of the change process have always been evident within organisations, and leaders have relied upon stories to relay complex

messages in a way that is easy to understand and interpret across the boundaries of language, race, age, or cultural context (Hopen, 2006; Sametz & Maydoney, 2003). In the knowledge economy, leaders' stories have become even more relevant with employees being overwhelmed by information and seeking to understand and become part of the organisational future.

1.2.2.3. Leaders as storytellers in the knowledge economy

Organisations are complex systems that bring together employees from different generations, backgrounds, races, languages, and levels of literacy (Marais, 2001). This is particularly true in the South African context where 11 official languages, diverse cultures, and a political history of apartheid challenge leaders in the 21st century to align the work forces and create meaning for employees in their working environment (Marais, 2001). Inevitably, every organisation is telling a story and is constantly going through the process of creating stories, tailoring existing stories, and writing the history of the organisation. Constructivism places stories in everything and everywhere (Marcel, 2001), thus implying that stories are hidden in every text, performance appraisal, and interaction that takes place across the organisation on a daily basis.

Organisational storytelling can be described as the process of:

- constructing a narrative identity of the organisation, the people, and the culture (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001);
- orally communicating beliefs, personal histories, and life ideas (Groce, 2004); and
- relating information pertaining to an act, an occurrence, or a course of events (Corey, 2003).

Habermas and Bluck (2000) further state that stories can be classified according to patterns of events that occur within the organisation and aims to provide an understanding of themes related to the subjective metaphor, moral, and truth as well as the consequence and effect of the present that will create the future. Storytelling

allows individuals to share their opinions and shape their ideas, and encourages commitment to organisational goals through a collaborative story involving each individual in the organisation and shifting the language narrative that will facilitate the journey (Prusak, 2001). Leaders have used stories to articulate a new future to followers, which has resulted in the following business benefits:

- improved productivity and bottom line of the organisation (Gill, 2009);
- the creation of a knowledge-based organisational culture (McClellan, 2006);
- articulation of change visions that inspire employees to collaborate and build the organisation of the future (Denning, 2006);
- retention of the talent of the organisation (Gill, 2009);
- improved sales volumes, financial relations, cost to revenue ratios, and customer satisfaction (Christie, 2004); and
- enhanced organisational communication and an enablement model based on storytelling principles and mechanisms (Post, 2002).

Stories are mechanisms for understanding and drawing meaning from experience. They are created, transformed, tested, sustained, fashioned, and they shape the organisation (Gabriel, 2000). Marra and Holmes (2005) state that stories become part of the organisational repertoire and even become the official organisational truth. Boje (1991) views stories in organisations as the institutional memory system. Stories tie organisations together, as single strands of a narrative may span across characters and ranks to tie everyone into the essence of the larger community (Gabriel, 2000).

Organisational stories and their role in making sense of organisations have been emphasised by a number of researchers (Boje, 2008; Fleming, 2001; Kaye, 1996). Leaders have used stories to achieve the following outcomes during times of change, as stories tie into the DNA that defines and characterises the identity of the organisation (Bate, 2004):

- A personal awareness and understanding for the individual within the larger change journey;

- A community narrative to which everyone in the organisation can relate;
- A counter-narrative that speaks of a better future; and
- The translation of commitments into joint action, moving forward together, and keeping the change momentum going.

Christensen and Overdorf (2000) state that leaders in the new world will move from a systems- to a story perspective, which will allow them to move their employees along the change curve as the organisation transforms in the future. Stories define the past, the present, and the future according to the web of symbols, routines, paradigms, structures, and controls that characterise the organisation (Johnson & Scholes, 2002). Organisational identity is embedded in the conversations that employees have with each other on a daily basis and, therefore, the change process can only be facilitated if the leaders change the organisational conversations (Seel, 2000). Leaders are the conduits of organisational identity and, as such, the responsibility to facilitate the organisational change has become the responsibility of all knowledge economy leaders (Schein, 2004).

In summary, the constructs of change, leaders, and storytelling are intertwined in the complex environment of the knowledge economy. The concept of storytelling as a vehicle for creating sustainable change has to become the responsibility of the leader if organisations are to create sustainable movement that will ensure long-term success. In a recent study conducted by Kavanagh (2006) with 400 respondents over three years, a lack of change leadership competence accounted for an alarming 16.7% change adoption rate, with only 5.2% of employees feeling that their leaders managed the change process adequately. Taking these statistics into account, it is cause for concern that leaders are failing to create sustainable change journeys – which are crucial for the success of the organisation into the future (Kotter, 2008). The question remains as to why leaders are not able to create sustainable change. If, as discussed above, leaders are the conduits of organisational identity and stories, what stories do they tell during the process to create sustainable change within the organisation?

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Organisations are looking to their leaders to guide the people, process and technology pillars of the organisation in order for the organisation to become fit for the future. Change competence has become crucial to leaders success in the knowledge economy as the focus of leadership practice has shifted from a transactional to a transformational perspective. However, leaders are failing to make change meaningful and understandable to the organisation, and the question remains whether leaders themselves find meaning in the change that they facilitate (Pagan, 2008).

As indicated within the literature it seems as if only 10% of change initiatives in organisations achieve acceptable success criteria and return on investment (Hiatt, 2007), implicitly stating that critical resources are wasted by organisations in attempting to improve their people, process and technology. In an era where organisations state that people are their biggest assets, surely the question begs to be asked why leaders are not creating meaning and purpose for the people within their organisations, leaving them disengaged, unmotivated and uninspired during times of change (Mitchell, 2011). As discussed in the background and motivation to the study, Michell-Weaver and Manning (1990) state that it is the responsibility of the organisation to contribute to the sustainability and development of the community that it serves. Organisations that fail impact not only the work force but the subsequent environment which it sustains and as such the responsibility of the leader is to facilitate successful change within the organisation to ensure the sustainability and viability of the organisation in the future. This implies that stories could be used by leaders to facilitate a sustainable change process for the organisation that would potentially benefit both the community and the followers within the organisation.

The external environment which will inform the stories that leaders tell within the organisation will be explored in order to understand the knowledge economy, as well as the broader community and environment that the organisation serves. Due to the holistic nature of stories, the environment and its influence on the stories that leaders tell will be explored to understand what types of stories leaders tell based upon the

situational factors that influence the outcomes of the stories. The Lewinian Change Model (1951) will be used as the theoretical change model within which stories will be understood, acknowledging the past of the organisation, the current state or actual change that the stories are trying to enable and the future of the organisation as an action outcome based upon the leaders' stories. This rationale is explained in figure 1.2 below as referenced by Weiss (2001):

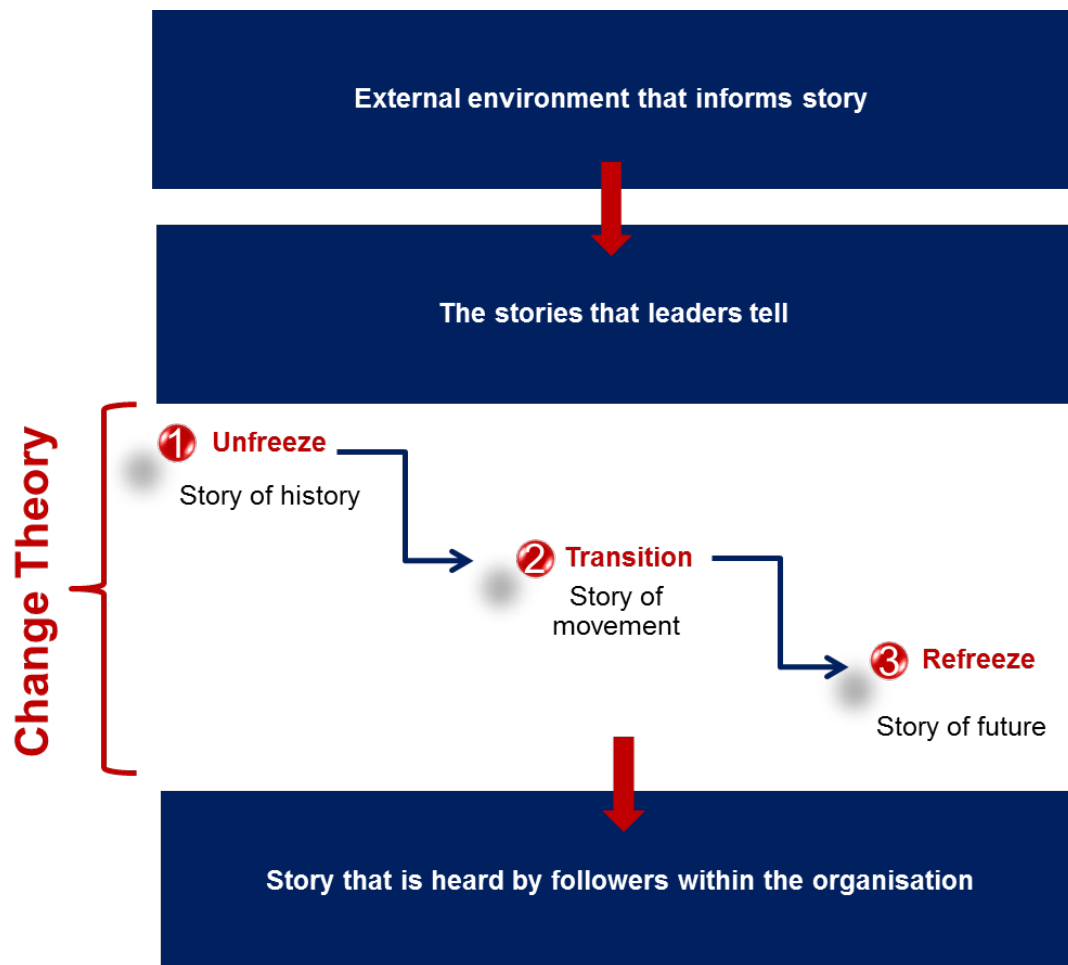


Figure 1.2: The Organisational Story Landscape (adapted from Lewin, 1951)

From a problem statement perspective figure 1.2 implies the following:

- **External environment:** Organisations are failing to create sustainable business practises that will enable the value of leading with integrity and becoming a corporate citizen with reference to the King 3 (2009) report. In order to

understand the stories that leaders tell the context of the knowledge economy needs to be studied accordingly.

- Leadership stories: Do leaders tell stories within the organisation and do they find personal meaning within the stories that they tell.
- Change Model: Framework for studying stories which is informed by the change that the organisation wants to accomplish by acknowledging the past and present organisation
- Story that is heard by the followers of the organisation: What types of stories are told by the leaders to enable the change that will build a sustainable and socially responsible organisation into the future.

The story landscape will be explored with reference to the framework provided by the Lewinian change model (Lewin, 1951; Weiss, 2001), as discussed in Chapter Two, in an attempt to determine what the stories are that leaders tell during organisational change and if the leaders' themselves find meaning in the stories that they tell. The study will explore the stories that leaders tell within the context of the illustration provided in Figure 1.2 in order to answer the following research question:

- What are the stories that leaders tell during organisational change and do they find personal meaning within the stories that they tell?

1.4. AIMS OF THE STUDY

Research aims to answer a number of questions during the research process, which based upon the background, motivation, and curiosity of the researcher can be described as follows:

- The **general aim** of the study is to explore the stories that leaders tell during a large-scale organisational change project, and to explore if leaders themselves find meaning in the stories that they tell.
- The **specific aim** of the **literature** was to explore the existence of storytelling in organisations and how stories are used by leaders during organisational change. The literature review concludes with an overview of organisational trends that will

inform the organisational models going forward, and the relevance of leadership stories in navigating the organisation into the future.

- The **specific aim** of the **empirical** study is to explore the stories that are told by leaders and whether they find meaning within the stories that they tell during a large-scale organisational change project.

1.5. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Paradigms allow the researcher to understand the world in terms of a basic framework through which to interpret and observe understanding (Babbie, 2004). A paradigm, particularly in the research context, asks three fundamental questions of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mouton & Marais, 1996):

- **Ontological:** What are the assumptions made of reality and existence within the chosen paradigm?
- **Epistemological:** Banathy (1996) states that epistemology refers to the question of “How do we know what we know?” and, in this paradigm, the assumptions regarding “truth” and “knowledge.”
- **Methodological:** What are the methods used to draw assumptions, based upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the paradigm?

For the purpose of this research study, the constructivist paradigm was deemed to be the most appropriate to studying the questions posed by the researcher. Constructivism focuses on real people with their own intricate understandings of the world (Van der Pijl, 1996), and contributes to science through the incorporation of concepts such as culture, norms, and how the use of language frames the context of action (Marcel, 2001). Action can only become meaningful once interpreted within the framework of other events that also contain meaning (Marcel, 2001). Constructivism acknowledges that the world exists through the creation of multiple realities of interaction, but argues that these rules and principles are known and should be congruent with the existence of a subjective rationality (Van der Pijl, 1996). In constructivism the goal is to clarify, not challenge, the view that the

participant holds of reality (Talitwala, 2005), which, in the context of this study, supports the notion that the stories of participants are to be understood rather than challenged regarding their factual value. Constructivism allows the co-creation of reality between the participant and researcher, which enables the co-construction of a story based upon the reality created by the participant and the researcher (Charmaz, 2000). The constructivist approach to research thus seeks to understand as opposed to explain phenomena, and it acknowledges the fact that values, although interrelated, may not always be harmonious (Marcel, 2001).

The constructivist approach was deemed to be appropriate for the current study due to the following decisions taken by the researcher, as supported by Charmaz (2000):

- The researcher and the participants needed to be submerged in the social world and context that the world provides;
- The world is inter-subjective and open to interpretation of the situation, the context, and the view of truth held by both the participants and the researcher; and
- The decision to use interpretive methods to gain a reconstructed understanding of the view of the world held by the participants.

The ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of the constructivist approach will be discussed in Chapter Three with reference to the concept of co-creation during the research process as a foundation for the constructivist paradigm.

1.6. RESEARCH DESIGN

The following section discusses the design of the research in relation to the chosen research approach, strategy, and method.

1.6.1. Research approach

The research will address the research questions and aims through a qualitative research approach. As the aim of the research is to gain a deeper understanding of the stories that leaders tell during organisational change, a qualitative research approach was chosen for the following reasons (Mouton & Marias, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1994):

- The ability of qualitative research to explore and discover the subtleties of meaning;
- The ability of qualitative research to be cognisant of the holistic environment from which the participants are telling their story; and
- The ability of qualitative research to acknowledge the role and influence of the researcher on the participants.

1.6.2. Research strategy

The research will utilise a narrative inquiry research strategy within the context of the qualitative research approach. Bleakley, Carson, and Bassett (2007) define narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research that incorporates a story as the product or the raw data of the research. Narrative inquiry can be defined as the sense-making of human experience through a story (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) further define narrative inquiry as an approach that allows the researcher to understand the experiences of participants within the context of time, place, and milieu.

1.6.3. Research method

The following section will discuss the research method as it pertains to the research setting, the establishment of the role of the researcher within the study, and how data will be collected, recorded, analysed, and reported.

1.6.3.1. Research setting

The research will be conducted within a global organisation within the financial services industry. Project Alpha, the focus point of this study, represents a transformational journey within the organisation that is aimed to change the organisation through the adoption of new people, processes, and technological practices. The project will focus on shifting an operational paradigm that has been embedded in the operating model within which the organisation has existed for the past 150 years, and aims to change the culture of the organisation to that of being focused on a client-centric mode of operations. The research will focus on one critical point in time during the project life cycle, exploring the stories that the leaders tell during the transformational journey to enable the imminent culture change that is required to facilitate the sustainability of the organisation into the future.

1.6.3.2. Entrée and researcher roles

The researcher is currently part of the project team and will fulfil two roles in the context of the research:

- The first role is that of change analyst and collector of leaders' stories within the project team. The researcher has obtained the permission of the senior leadership structure to gather and explore the stories that are told during the project.

- The second role of researcher will be to explore the stories gathered from the leadership team within the project, and gain a deeper understanding of these stories.

1.6.3.3. Sampling

Purposive sampling will be the method used to choose a certain group within the larger population according to their possession of key information that only they can contribute to the study (Maxwell, 1997). Within the identified group, convenience sampling will be used to select the leaders according to their availability and willingness to partake in the study (Teddlie & Yu, 1997). The research will start with a sample of n=6 leaders that provides an equal representation of the different work streams. The sample size was determined by the point at which saturation is achieved (Marshall, 1996), i.e. the point where further discussions will not lead to any new, meaningful data.

1.6.3.4. Data collection methods

The data collection process can be described as follows (Britten, Campbell & Pope, 2002):

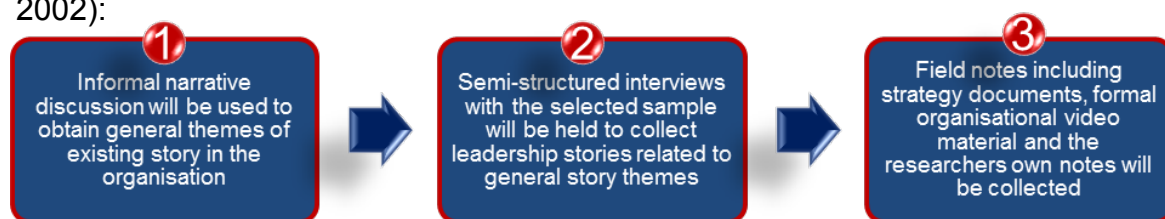


Figure 1.3: The data collection methods and process (Britten, Campbell & Pope, 2002)

Informal narrative discussion will be used to collect data in order to identify general themes or stories that currently exist within the broader project team. From the informal narrative discussions, general themes will be derived, which will form the foundation of the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews. Data will be

collected via these semi-structured interviews with the chosen leadership sample. The narrative inquiry approach will be the method employed to allow participants to tell their stories to the researcher. The narrative approach, as used by Riley and Hawe (2009) in their study of the experiences of community development officers, will allow the researcher to explore and collect the stories told by the leaders. Additional field texts, such as project documentation, will be studied in an attempt to understand the context of the lived experiences, and will add to the richness and quality of the field texts.

1.6.3.5. Recording of data

Data will be recorded as follows, as recommended by Talitwala (2005):

- Phase 1: Narrative discussions with project team members will be recorded via field notes captured during and after the discussions.
- Phase 2: Data obtained in the semi-structured interviews will be recorded electronically and transcribed.
- Phase 3: Additional field notes will be collected throughout the research process, and will be documented with reference to time, place, and milieu.

Once the data have been collected, the data analysis phase of the research will commence.

1.6.3.6. Data analysis

Data will be analysed by exploring the categorical themes emerging from the stories told by participants during the semi-structured interviews. Thematic network analysis, which is the analysis of story-like verbal material by deriving themes and categories, will be used to explore the stories obtained from the narrative discussions with the leaders (Jay & Smith, 1996). Thematic network analysis was

chosen due to the ability to view stories holistically whilst delving into further themes of abstraction within the constructed narrative. This allows for the identification of story types and subsequent themes of meaning to be explored within the data. Data analysis will occur according to the following process, and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three:

- Step 1: Coding the material
- Step 2: Identifying the themes
- Step 3: Constructing the thematic network
- Step 4: Describing and exploring the network
- Step 5: Summarising
- Step 6: Interpreting patterns

(Hayes, 2000; Mohan & Uys, 2006)

The interpretation of patterns and themes within the data will be discussed hereunder with reference to the chosen data analysis technique of thematic network analysis.

1.6.3.7. Data Interpretation

Data will be interpreted according to the thematic network analysis, which is the process of identifying recurring themes in the data being studied and arranging themes according to global, organising and basic themes (Talitwala, 2005). Themes can take the form of recurring statements, concepts, and assumptions (Hayes, 2000). Thematic network analysis aims to facilitate deeper levels of understanding of themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic network analysis identifies lower-order premises evident in the text (basic themes), categorises the themes to obtain more abstract principles (organising themes), and captures the themes in light of the wholeness of the text (global theme) (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This technique allows the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the studied story, based upon the identified global, organising and basic themes derived from the study. The data will further be interpreted in light of the relevant literature in order to gain a deeper understanding of the explored stories.

Throughout the research study, a number of strategies will be employed to ensure the quality of the data. These are discussed below.

1.6.3.8. Rigour and quality of the research project

In the context of this research, the narrative inquiry will be conducted according to a qualitative research approach, which implies the following criteria in terms of reliability and validity (Webster & Mertova, 2007):

- **Validity:** Strength of the data analysis, trustworthiness of the data, and the ease of access to the data; and
- **Reliability:** Dependability of the data, i.e. whether the data convey a believable story of the leaders' experience.

The concepts of reliability and validity will be addressed as they pertain to narrative inquiry and within the following contexts, as proposed by Golafshani (2003):

- **Trustworthiness:** Did the study investigate the problem statement and can the findings be accepted by others in the scientific community?
- **Rigour:** Did the research follow the stipulated design within the identified paradigm of psychology?
- **Quality:** Did the study relate the experiences of the participants in an accurate and believable way?

The research will be conducted with the utmost regard for ethical considerations to ensure the confidentiality and safety of the research participants as well as adherence to the requirements and expectations of the scientific community with regards to quality research.

1.6.3.9. Ethical considerations with regard to the research

The researcher, both in his role as researcher and as project team member, will adhere to the following ethical considerations (Mouton & Marais, 1996; Webster and Mertova, 2007):

- Ethical clearance from the academic institution

Ethical clearance will be obtained from the academic institution to conduct the research study, and the findings will be reported in a Master's dissertation.

- Buy-in and organisational consent

Permission will be obtained from the organisation to conduct the research and publish the findings.

- Informed consent

All participants in the study will give informed consent to take part in the study and will have the option to withdraw from the study or delete any comment that has been made throughout the course of the narrative discussion.

- Confidentiality and anonymity

The confidentiality of participants will be assured at all times during the research and reporting process. Participants' answers will be kept anonymous and, throughout the reporting process, the confidentiality of the participants will not be compromised in any way. All data will be stored in a secure location with limited access in order to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants.

1.6.3.10. Reporting

Reporting will focus on discussing the themes obtained from the explored stories and will focus on providing an integrated view of the literature pertaining to the study, as well as the practical implications of the findings of the chosen research study.

Reporting will be conducted through a third person account of the co-constructed stories (Coulter, 2009; Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999), with direct quotations used to substantiate findings and correlate themes across different leaders' stories. The researcher acknowledges the fact that the third person account is not omniscient in this context, but will be used to provide context for the reader and enable readers to draw their own conclusions based upon the told stories as described by Coulter (2009).

1.7. FINDINGS

The findings of the research will be reported in the form of a scientific article that will discuss the themes derived from the qualitative narrative research study, informed by the constructivist research paradigm. The article will aim to answer the research questions and add value to this organisation and the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology within the areas of leadership, organisational storytelling, and organisational change.

1.8. DISCUSSION

The findings will be discussed in the form of a research article (Chapter 4) according to the chosen research paradigm, as postulated by Guba and Lincoln (1994), the knowledge economy (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009), organisational leadership (McDermott, 2010), and change theory as defined by Lewin (1951).

1.9. CONCLUSIONS

The study will draw conclusions from the literature review and findings of the explored stories within the framework of the story landscape and aim to explore the

stories that leaders tell during large-scale organisational change. Furthermore, the study will explore whether leaders themselves find meaning in the stories that they tell during the change process, and discuss the implications of the findings for the knowledge economy organisation of the future.

1.10. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to the field of Industrial Organisational Psychology in terms of change, leadership and storytelling within the context of the knowledge economy. The study contributes to the fields of practice by providing leaders with a framework for creating and managing meaningful and sustainable organisational change.

1.11. LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to exploring the stories that leaders tell during organisational change through the lens of the constructivist approach. There is thus an opportunity for further exploration through a different paradigm of inquiry. Due to the nature of the study, a longitudinal component was not possible; yet the researcher believes that this could have added considerable value to the research study by incorporating the sustainability of leadership stories after organisational change interventions. From a sampling perspective, the chosen critical event for the study did not allow for the inclusion of a black African leader within the chosen sample, which could possibly have provided an additional cultural perspective to the stories that have already been collected.

1.12. RECOMMENDATIONS

The opportunity exists to research the story landscape from a follower perspective by focusing on how leaders' stories are interpreted through the paradigm of a follower during organisational change.

A further recommendation will be to include more biographical information during the sampling process to determine the influence that ethnic culture, experience, and age have on the type of stories that the different leaders tell. As this was not the focus of the study, the biographical information that was gathered was used to ensure the relevance of the sample to the population being studied as opposed to being used as input of cultural influences in the type of stories that are told by leaders. From an Industrial Psychology perspective, the possibility exists to use the study as a starting point to research the competencies required by leaders that enable the telling of effective organisational stories during change projects.

From an organisational perspective the research provides a number of recommendations for leaders within the knowledge economy that will enable the management of successful change journeys into the future.

1.13. CHAPTER LAYOUT

- Chapter One: Scientific orientation of the research

This chapter provided the background and motivation for the study, clarifies the aims of the research, and summarises the research approach, design, and strategy.

- Chapter Two: Literature review

Chapter Three will present an overview of the existing literature pertaining to the constructs of the knowledge economy, organisational change, leadership, and storytelling as used by leaders during the organisational change process.

- Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will provide an overview of the research design in light of the chosen research paradigms, approach, strategy, and method.

- Chapter Four: The research article

Chapter Four will discuss the conclusions drawn from the research, provide insight into the limitations of the study, and make recommendations for future research in the form of a research article.

- Chapter Five: Contributions, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations of the study

Chapter Five will discuss the research study with reference to the contribution of the study to both the literature and practice, the conclusions that can be derived from both the literature and the research findings, and discuss the limitations of the research. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research within the context of this particular research study.

1.14. SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the background that informed the research study and positioned the research strategy and approach that will be followed as the researcher explores the leadership stories in an attempt to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the applicable literature to be discussed in Chapter Two, and the research methodology that is to be discussed in Chapter Three. The scientific article that will outline and discuss the findings of the research study is mentioned in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five concludes the study in terms of the contributions, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations of the study to the scientific community.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The story landscape discussed in Chapter 1 informed the literature review in terms of the constructs that provided the theoretical framework for this chapter. The relationship between narrative inquiry and literature will be approached as a dualistic partnership of co-construction, with the literature informing the studied narrative and the narrative being informed by the existing literature, and both contributing to the manuscript, as discussed by Marshall and Rossman (1999).

The literature pertaining to the current study will be discussed in light of the model provided in Figure 2.1, which dictates the tone and areas of discussion relevant to the research constructs of change, leaders, and organisational stories within the context of the modern knowledge economy.

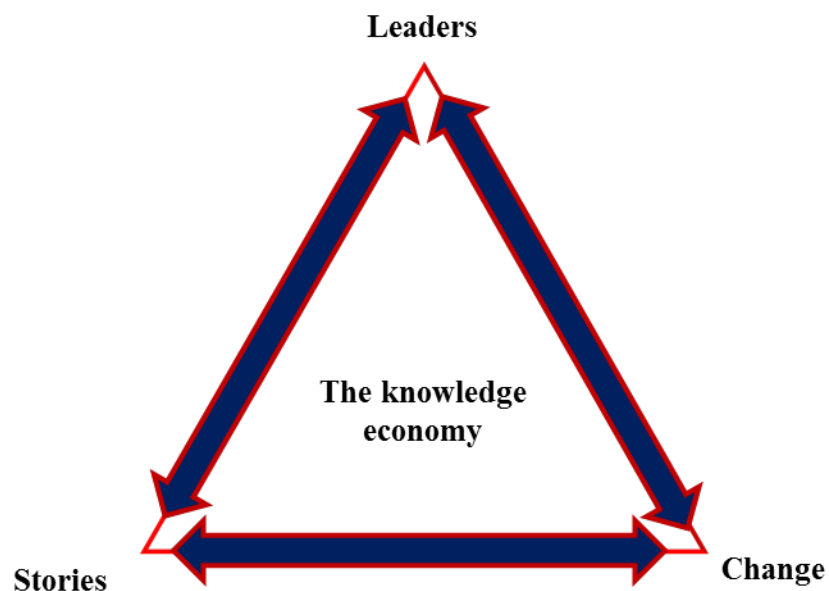


Figure 2.1: The literature model (adapted from Britton, 2010; Gabriel, 2000; Hiatt, 2007; Nahavandhi, 2009)

2.1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The knowledge economy is here (Britton, 2010). The world has become a global village of opportunity that challenges organisations to relook their vision, strategies, and performance in an attempt to foster sustainable business practices amidst the

complexities of an ever-changing environment (Kotter, 1995; Passmore, 1994). Agility, flexibility, and speed-to-market demands have forced organisations to relook the business practices that have been critical to the organisation's historical successes, in an attempt to evaluate their effectiveness and relevance in the modern world of work (Appelbaum, St-Pierre & Glavas, 1998; Gartner, 2010; Hiatt, 2007). The Newtonian definition of organisations as machines and systems that come together to solve problems about a predictable universe has been favoured by scholars to describe the evolution of organisations since the industrial revolution (Wheatley, 2006). Ulrich and Smallwood (2009) describe traditional organisations in terms of the roles (people), rules, and routines (processes) that govern and control organisational practices. However, the structured and rule-based hierarchical models described by Ulrich and Smallwood (2009) have become less effective as organisations adopt new approaches to remain competitive and grow their business (Champy, 2009). New role players, such as the BRIC economy (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) have brought a different type of challenge to the organisation, which is no longer just competing against competitors in the same industry, but rather in a global village that is innovative, faster, and more efficient than ever before (Champy, 2009; Greenhaus, Callahan & Godshalk, 1999). Guttman (2009) states that organisations have been attacked by the four horsemen of the apocalypse during the last decade: globalisation, growth in the information technology sector, the intensity of competition, and the pressure for innovation. These four horsemen demand that organisations respond by changing from traditional business models in order to becoming agile and responsive to the knowledge economy.

The knowledge economy, defined by the OECD (1996) as the systematic production, distribution, and creation of knowledge within society, has challenged organisations to integrate the people, processes, and technological capabilities in order to enable growth and prosperity in the future. Charlton and Andras (2004) state that traditional organisational levers such as structure and strategy have, at best, yielded short-term benefits, and that the knowledge economy demands faster go-to-market processes, fluid organisational designs, and responsive people practices if organisations are to weather the coming storm of change (Gartner, 2010). Based upon the trends identified by Ulrich and Smallwood (2009), organisations need to consider the implications of knowledge economy for current business practices and the impact

that this will have on the sustainability of the organisation (Britton, 2010, Katzenbach & Khan, 2009; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009). These trends are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Trends that will inform organisational design and delivery in the knowledge economy (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009)

Trend	Impact on the organisation
A pro-active and responsive organisational design that is adaptable and flexible to market requirements and environmental complexity.	Organisations need to build internal change competence that will empower and enable continuous change.
Organisations are becoming rich in terms of people diversity, structure, activities, processes, and culture and, ultimately, no single leader will be able to understand the organisation in its entirety.	Organisations will have to become holistic entities with all levels contributing towards the future direction of the organisation. Culture, rather than process, will drive performance.
Organisations are constructing reality on a continuous basis, as there is no reality that leaders can build on.	Reality will be constantly adjusted and leveraged based upon organisational identity – "who we are" will become more important than "what we do."
The people of the organisation are tasked to build the new organisation in terms of its history and organisational identity.	In order to facilitate the future of the organisation, the past needs to be taken into account. A future that aligns with the identity of the organisation has to be crafted.
People affect and influence one another and react to one another according to the existing relationships within the organisation.	Leadership and management will become relationship-based, and inclusive business practices will become the norm.

In essence, the complexity of the knowledge economy demands a paradigm shift with regard to the traditional practises that have informed the organisation of the past (Arthur & DeFillipi, 1994; Veldsman, 2011). Flatter organisational structures, lean management, and collaborative organisational decision-making have become the norm rather than the exception (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Traditional organisational practices accentuated objectives, plans and standards, focusing on procedures that inform the top-down relationships that exist within the organisation and, ultimately, the products and services that the organisation delivers (Veldsman, 2011).

In contrast to the traditional view, organisations in the knowledge economy have to focus on vision, mission, mantra, and philosophy, with a more established and diversified workforce that informs the multi-directional relationships that define the culture and offering that the organisation brings to the global market place (Veldsman, 2011). The paradigm shift requires organisations to re-evaluate "who we are" (identity and philosophy), "what we do" (operating model and processes), and "what we want to achieve" (strategic intent) within the complexity of a changing environment that demands more from organisational practices.

In summary, organisational models that have governed the success of the traditional hierarchy and role-based organisation, as described by Wheatley (2006), have become outdated, and the criteria for organisational success have changed dramatically. Organisations need to change, as the new world demands organisations that are agile, fit for purpose, and change competent – if the organisation is to survive in the future (Champy, 2009).

2.2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Balogun (2001) states that all organisations are undergoing change, with the emphasis on the repositioning of the organisation in light of new competitive conditions and trends relevant to the knowledge economy. Change is a process (Devine & Hirsch, 1998; Duck, 2001; Hiatt, 2007; Pritchett, Robinson & Clarkson, 1997), a conscious shift from one point to another through the adoption and acceptance of a number of phases over time (Mink, 1998). Organisational change

can be categorised as being either planned or emergent, which provide organisations with different theoretical frameworks and approaches to manage the change process (Smit & Carstens, 2003). Planned-change approaches are based upon the notion that change is a planned event that is driven from the top of the organisation (Nahavandi, 2009). In contrast, emergent-change theory states that change is facilitated constantly within the organisation, and all employees at all levels of the organisation are involved in crafting the future of the organisation (Rhydderch, Elwyn, Marshall & Grol, 2004). Planned- and emergent-change theory are based upon different underlying assumptions that influence the fundamental theoretical considerations of change theories, as described in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2: Underlying assumptions informing change theories (adapted from Smit & Carstens, 2003):

	Planned Change Theory	Emergent Change Theory
Assumptions underlying the theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As a starting point, the organisation is stable. ▪ Organisational change is a planned and structured event that is initiated by the organisation. ▪ The organisation needs to be destabilised before change can be initiated. ▪ Once changed, the organisation needs to be re-stabilised, and the new way of working becomes the norm and the status quo of the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employees understand the "how" and the "why" of the change and are involved in the strategies associated with the change in the future. ▪ Maddock (2002) states that the "people at the top" are not the only individuals who have the ambition to create a better organisation. ▪ An inside-out change approach uses employees as agents of change within the system.
Theories relevant	▪ Unfreeze, Change,	▪ Continuous improvement

to assumptions	<p>Refreeze Models (Lewin, 1951)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change Cycle Model (Heifetz, 1993) ▪ Culturally Sensitive Restructuring Model (Bate, Khan & Pye, 2000) ▪ Three-stage transition (St-Amour, 2001) ▪ Three-step Change Model (Qubein, 2001) 	<p>(Savolainen, 1999)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) ▪ Targeted culture modelling process (Shields, 1999) ▪ Business and computing support co-evolution (Bustard & He, 1998) ▪ Learning-based change (Sugarman, 2001) ▪ Consolidated change approach (Jay & Smith, 1996) ▪ Systems theory, complexity theory, social world theory, and organisational development (Rhydderch, Elwyn, Marshall and Grol, 2004)
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The knowledge economy describes organisations as hyper-turbulent environments (McCann & Selsky, 1984; Selsky, Goes & Ouz, 2007) and high-velocity structures of dynamic complexity (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This implies that the pace and, more importantly, the complexity of change is ever-increasing (Canton, 2006). As such, organisational change initiatives need to move away from the notion of planning change to an approach that facilitates change from within the system (Seel, 2000). Organisations need to build internal change capabilities that will facilitate change on a continuous basis as opposed to a stop-start process that, at best, yields a minimal return on investment for the organisation in the long term. Porras and Robertson (1992) state that 70% of organisational change efforts fail due to a lack of change capabilities inherent in the DNA of the organisation.

King and Wright (2007) state that three key components need to be visible in organisations to enable internal change capability and build sustainable change practices into the future:

- **Component 1:** The establishment of an enterprise-wide change network

This entails building the ability to sustain change that will gain momentum across the enterprise and enabling business units to partake in changing the business activities with the right skills and tools to manage change projects.

- **Component 2:** A change management training curriculum for all employees

This requires equipping all employees with the tools and techniques to manage the change process.

- **Component 3:** Coaching and consulting support in the management of change.

This entails providing support to the change leaders in the organisational ranks.

These components imply that the organisation as a system needs to be worked with from within by the agent and leader of change, as opposed to traditional approaches that place the change agent outside of the system – regarded as a top-down change approach, which has failed to drive sustainable change in organisations in the past (Seel, 2000).

Becoming change competent requires organisations to move away from the traditional paradigms that informed stop-start change approaches, and start referring to a change-capable business practice, as proposed by Lawler & Worley (2009) and illustrated in Table 2.3 below:

Table 2.3: Traditional organisational practices that need to be revisited to enable change capability (Lawler & Worley, 2009)

Traditional practice:	Change-capable practice:
1. Strategy:	1. Strategising:
Environmental scans and industry structure was stable and evaluated on an	Possible future scenarios are continuously analysed to ensure

annual basis.	immediate response to environmental needs.
Seeking one sustainable competitive advantage; a “keep on doing what we are good at” mindset.	A series of competitive advantages that require living much closer to the moment and any small window of opportunity that presents itself.
Culture is a constraint to change, as culture implies the way things are done, the activities engaged in, and how the organisation goes about doing business.	Identity is an enabler of change. Organisations know who they are and what they stand for, regardless of what they are currently focusing on.
2. Competence	3. Creating and adding value
Organisations ask questions regarding what they do well and how they make money.	Organisations ask what they need to learn to be able to be successful tomorrow and how to go about developing that capability for the future, today.
4. Design	4. Designing
Structures are hierarchical and job descriptions indicate what employees need to do on a daily basis.	Structures are adaptable and ask employees to identify what needs to be done.
Information silos and top-down ownership.	Information transparency and dual ownership.
Top-down authority and decision-making.	Improvisation, innovation, and initiative.
Leaders are heroes.	Leadership is a team sport.
Rewards jobs and seniority.	Rewards skill and performance.

In essence, change-capable organisations display the following characteristics that will govern the relevant knowledge economy thinking regarding business models and approaches to the future (Thompson, 2008):

- The active management of change as a pro-active capability that will influence and be influenced by the environment across all levels of the organisation;
- Investing in building organisational social capability, regardless of rank or title;
- Acknowledging the best and worst of the change history of the organisation;
- Celebrating the strengths of the organisation across the hierarchy; and
- Accepting conflict as a part of creating change, and focusing on the management of energy as opposed to managing conflict.

The question remains as to who will guide the organisation to become change fit and capable in the future (Guttmann, 2009). Change adoption, especially at the individual level, is dependent on the internalisation of the change through the leaders of the organisation: leaders that walk the talk and create a psychologically safe atmosphere for their people during times of change (Herscovitach & Meyer, 2002). Bass and Avolio (1994) state that organisational change can only be accomplished through the persuasive power of the leaders that drive the process, accept responsibility for the change, and make the change meaningful for the employees across the organisation. However, what does change leadership entail within the knowledge economy and are leaders ready to accept the challenge of building the internal change capabilities that change-capable firms require?

2.3. THE ROLE OF LEADERS AS DRIVERS OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The role that leaders need to play during change efforts has been recognised by numerous researchers (Appelbaum & Wohl, 2000; Potter, 2001; Chapman, 2002; Graetz, 2000). Kouzes and Posner (2009) state that leaders are the custodians of the future, and that they are tasked with the solemn duty to leave the organisation in

a better position than that in which they found it. The following section will focus on leaders within the context of the knowledge economy, and will discuss the following:

- The leadership construct;
- Leaders as change facilitators within the knowledge economy; and
- Leaders as storytellers in the knowledge economy

2.3.1. An overview of the leadership construct

Parsell and Bligh (2000) state that leadership has the power and authority to mobilise change, and Nahavandi (2009) describes leadership as the ability to influence individuals and groups, elicit goal-orientated behaviour, and relate the visions and strategies of the organisation in an understandable manner. Nahavandi (2009) states that leadership can be categorised into three distinct eras over the past century: the trait era (1800s – 1940s) that perceived leaders to be born as opposed to moulded and created through experience; the behaviouristic era (Mid 1940s - 1970s), which focused on the behaviours that define a leader; and the contingency era (1960s to present), which states that the effectiveness, behaviour, and style of the leader will depend on what the situation demands of the leader.

Congruent with the leadership eras defined above, leadership styles and specific focus areas have furthermore been categorised by numerous researchers in the literature (McDermott, 2010), as summarised in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Leadership models and definitions (adapted from McDermott, 2010):

Leadership model	Theorist	Focus of the leader
Servant leadership	(Greenleaf, 1977)	Leaders serve others through the primary motivation of helping others.
Transformational Leadership Model	(Burns, 1978)	Leaders collaborate through team involvement to motivate and

		achieve higher-order goals.
The Eight-stage Process of Change Leadership Model	(Kotter, 1995)	Leader creates a burning platform that inspires change within the organisation.
Leadership-Commitment Model	(Kouzes & Posner, 1987)	A five-step model where the leader focuses on engagement, vision, and enablement.
Principle-centred leadership model	(Covey, 1992)	Leaders focus on trust, empowerment, and alignment.
Leader-Follower Relationship Model	(Rost, 1993)	Leaders focus on creating and sustaining relationships with followers.
The Relational Leadership Model	(Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 1998)	Leaders facilitate and create a trusting relationship between leader and followers.
Situational Leadership Model	(Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2007)	Adapting of leadership style in relation to follower maturity and what is required within the environment.

As indicated by Table 2.4 and the identified eras of leadership, the 1980s saw a fundamental shift in leadership focus: incorporating aspects of change, followership, and inclusivity, which established leaders as the custodians of organisational change (Smit & Carstens, 2003). Constructs such as authenticity, ethical leadership, community leadership, nomological networking, and positive organisational scholarship are being discussed at the leadership table, and the concept of change leadership is gaining popularity in the literature (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009). In the knowledge economy, the essence of leadership lies in change, i.e. leaders' ability to create sustainable change that will transform the people, processes, and

technology of the organisation to become fit for the future (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Change competence, or the ability to create sustainable change, has become a vital capability that leaders need to possess in knowledge economy organisations (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), yet it seems that change efforts leave employees uninspired, demoralised, and disengaged (Mitchell, 2011). Albertyn (2001) states that the traditional structures and authoritative management styles have reduced the work-force to disengaged, disempowered members without any initiative, and that change leaders are required to inspire, to provide hope to their followers, and to articulate a change vision of the organisation in which followers can believe.

The 21st century has placed a new challenge on leaders' doorstep: a move from previous autocratic models of control to a contemporary model that focuses on teamwork and engagement (Dannhauser, 2007). Armenakis and Bedelan (1999) state that traditional change research has focused on a macro systems approach that ignored or made little reference to the individual in the change process. The leaders of the future, however, will no longer stand outside of the system, but will become a key component of the system, be involved with their followers, and practise a relationship-based leadership style focused on facilitating the change process within the system (Griffin & Stacey, 2005). This perspective of leadership indicates that organisations have to adopt collaborative models that facilitate change, as opposed to enforcing it from the top of the organisational structure (Mor-Barak, 2005; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010). Creating a psychologically safe environment for employees during the change process will become the leaders' responsibility (Herscovitach & Meyer, 2002). This demands a different approach from the leader: no longer standing outside of the system driving the change process, but becoming an active role player within the system, facilitating the change and direction that will take the organisation into the future.

2.3.2. Leaders as change facilitators within the knowledge economy

Leaders adopting the role of change facilitator need to align with emergent change approaches that include the whole system within the change direction of the organisation. Leaders' success should be measured in terms of building the capacity of followership, as leaders are only leaders because others allow them to play the leadership role (Higgs, 2003). Cockerel (2009) states that organisational leaders should adapt the motto that it is "all about the people" and that "the organisation" becomes "our organisation," "organisational success" becomes "our success," and "the customers" becomes "our customers." Leaders, if they are to be successful at facilitating change from within the system, need to adopt collaborative, inclusive approaches if they are to effectively lead the new workforce, which consists of multi-generational, multi-cultural, and multi-talented individuals (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006).

Historically, leaders have been unable to facilitate meaningful and sustainable change for the following reasons (Beer, 1999):

- The crafting of unclear strategies and conflicting priorities, resulting in employees not buying into the change or understanding the need for change;
- Ineffective leadership teams who misdirect the change according to their own personal agendas;
- Laissez-faire leadership styles that wait for change to happen as opposed to proactively making the change happen;
- Poor co-ordination and teamwork across the key interfaces deflating the change energy of the organisation;
- Poor vertical communication from the leader that leaves employees uninspired, demotivated, and resistant to the idea of change; and
- Inadequate leadership skills throughout the organisation that leave employees uncertain and unable to deal with the additional pressure of change.

In order to facilitate and manage sustainable change, the leader will be required to play different roles and meet different expectations during the course of the change journey, facilitating the change process for the organisation through the following responsibilities (Katzenbach & Khan, 2009), stated in table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Leaders responsibilities during change journeys (Schein, 2004)

Expectations from follower:	Change leader responsibility:
The leader as visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders need to articulate and communicate the future that they want to see for followers. ▪ Considering the path and what actions are required is essential.
The leader as role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Followers will look to the leader to see what behaviour is expected and even rewarded in the future.
The leader as reinforcer of the change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly communicating what the leaders are rewarding and what behaviours are crucial to organisational success in the new world.

However, if leaders are to create sustainable change, the ethos and philosophy of the organisation needs to be taken into account, as the leader cannot change the organisation without considering the inherent DNA of the organisation. Leaders in their role as visionary, role model and change reinforcer need to guide the organisation through the stories that they articulate as part of the change process. Stories are embedded in the structures, engagements, and conversations that define the organisational identity (Boje, 1991) and, as such, if leaders are to create sustainable change they will need to become storytellers within the knowledge economy (Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven & Kroupa, 2006; Driscoll & McKee, 2006; Mconkie & Boss, 1994).

2.3.3. Leaders as storytellers in the knowledge economy

Gabriel (2007) states that leaders such as CEO's, poets, novelists, and kings have used stories throughout history to unite, inspire, and entertain tribes and organisations. Stories have the power to unite and call ordinary citizens to action (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006), and great leaders such as Lincoln and Reagan used stories to share a message that united and inspired a nation to share in the American dream (Harbin & Humphrey, 2010). Stories provide a sense of continuity and community – a feeling that the journey is achievable and that a narrative identity exists between members of the organisation (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Powerful stories convey meaning (Gabriel, 2000), and it is through this mechanism that leaders influence their followers (Marra & Holmes, 2005). Leaders utilise stories to achieve a number of outcomes to enable commitment and engagement during change journeys (Bate, 2004; Flock, 2006):

- Personal awareness and understanding for the individual within the larger change journey;
- A community narrative where everyone in the organisation belongs;
- A counter-narrative that speaks of a better future;
- Commitments are translated into joint action and forward movement and, more importantly, keep the change momentum going;
- Leaders are able to position the case for change in a way that answers the question of why the organisation needs to change;
- Leaders are able to share the idea of where the organisation is headed and what this future will look like; and
- Leaders are able to provide a platform that dictates the goals and required steps to mobilise the change.

Stories have been identified as one of the most valuable tools in the leadership toolbox (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Thomas, 2002), and the past five years have seen a renewed interest in leadership narrative within organisations during organisational

change (Girard & Lambert, 2007). Flock (2006) states that organisations have failed at change because leaders have not been able to communicate the change in a way that makes it personal and meaningful to employees, due to a one-way, top-down communication approach that rarely inspires or creates movement within organisational employees.

Congruent with knowledge economy leadership approaches, Reading (2003) offers an alternative definition of communication as the artefacts that are created through human behaviour, which result in the attachment of meaning by all parties involved in the process. Both sending and receiving parties are equally important, as messages are interpreted, not according to the words, but according to the signs, symbols, and signals that both parties convey when delivering the message. Stories have become relevant in modern organisations that strive for two-way communication practices that foster collaboration and meaningful contributions from across the organisational hierarchy, allowing leaders to co-facilitate and craft the story of the organisational future (Denning, 2000).

Storytelling allows for the co-creation of organisational futures by allowing leaders to become change facilitators working from within the system and co-creating the story of the future by including the members of the organisation in the change process. Leaders' storytelling has become relevant in knowledge economy organisations as sustainable change is dependent on leaders mobilising change at an ethical and philosophical level within organisations – telling a story that is aligned to the organisational identity if the change is to bring a long-term return on investment.

As such, the concepts of leaders and storytelling are becoming intertwined within the knowledge economy, and demand a closer inspection of the nature of stories and their place within knowledge economy organisations.

2.4. ORGANISATIONAL STORIES

Gabriel (2000) defines stories as events that, over time, become charged with significance as they are retold and remembered by individuals. Peirano-Vejo and

Stablein (2009) state that organisations can be defined in terms of the oral and written stories that build, reinforce, and break down organisations. Organisational stories and their role in making sense of organisations have been emphasised by a number of researchers (Boje, 1991; Fleming, 2001; Kaye, 1996). In the knowledge economy, leaders as drivers of organisational change are turning to stories to enable sustainable change that is meaningful and inspiring to their followers, and to facilitate the change process in the new knowledge economy (Vaughn, 2009).

The following section will discuss organisational stories according to the following sub-sections:

- An introduction to storytelling;
- Stories in the postmodern world; and
- Stories in organisations.

2.4.1. An introduction to storytelling

We seldom think about it, but we spend our lives immersed in narratives. Every day we swim in a sea of stories and tales that we hear, read, listen to, or see – from our earliest days to our deaths. Our deaths are also recorded in narratives – for that’s what obituaries are (Berger, 1997, p1).

Stories in modern society are taken for granted. Narratives are all around us and in us, and human beings are entangled in the narratives that they tell, hear, and retell in order to make sense of who and what they are. To be human is to understand the world in the context of the stories and the meanings we ascribe to what happens to us on a daily basis (Thrift & Armudson, 2007). Narratives are central to being human, and being human is central to becoming story. Though many arguments exist regarding the similarities and differences between the concepts of narrative and story (Weick, 2007; Boje, 1991; Gabriel, 2000), for the purpose of this research, narrative and story will be used interchangeably, as used by Boje and Gomez (2008). Ricouer (1984) and Taylor (1989) regard stories as an inescapable part of human life. Webster and Mertova (2007) define stories as the substance or fabric of

history and human culture. In his book *Words*, Satre (1964) states that people spend their lives dwelling on their own stories, making sense of the stories of others, and looking at the world through the lenses that are shaped by their own life stories. Novak (1975) differentiates human beings from animals through humans' ability to tell stories. These stories acknowledge the past, inform the present, and shape the future. Stories are mechanisms used to understand and draw meaning from experience. Creating, transforming, testing, sustaining, and fashioning these stories shapes our existence (Gabriel, 2000). Stories are more significant than just the entertainment value that they offer; stories also bring the following to those fortunate enough to hear them and who are willing to engage with these stories:

- Stories stimulate the imagination and offer reassurance (Bettelheim, 1976);
- Stories provide moral education by teaching the listener life lessons through the actions of the characters (MacIntyre, 1981); and
- Stories justify and explain the world in a way that allows the listener a glimpse of the storyteller's world (Levi-Strauss, 1978).

Stories are told at the discretion of the storyteller, and poetic activity – the right of the storyteller to alter the story to achieve maximum effect – was acknowledged by philosophers such as Aristotle (Gabriel, 2000). Besides the poetic license of the storyteller, the listeners themselves have the potential to become storytellers and disseminate the stories in ways that create and relate the meaning that they associate with the story (Gabriel, 2000). Stories acknowledge the fact that experience is growth and that understanding is constantly being developed and redeveloped. In essence, stories are retold in order for the storyteller to make sense of his/her experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Stories are constantly restructured as human beings experience the world around them, interact with their community, and grow their experiences of life (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Historically, storytelling was seen as an art that was practised by the “ordinary” members of society, and the Grimm Brothers’ publication of collected tales signalled a significant milestone in story history, as the publication set the tone for stories to become part of human experience across the social classes (Gabriel, 2000). Postmodernism sees stories, not as vehicles of fact, but as symptoms of human

experience that is polysemic in nature (Gabriel, 2000). Thus, the same story can have different meanings to a single individual (Christie, 2004). However, when thinking about stories, the imagination immediately shifts to a time when tribal elders conveyed key teachings to future generations through stories. The question is whether there is still a place for stories in the knowledge economy or whether storytelling is only applicable to ancient folklorists.

2.4.2. Stories in the postmodern world

Postmodernism sees stories everywhere and in everything (Gabriel, 2000). This means that stories are hidden in every text, document, conversation, report, performance appraisal, theory, and even in silence, as the absence of a story is a story in itself (Gabriel, 2000). In today's knowledge economy, people are overwhelmed with information, and the importance of stories has increased significantly as communities are built around the stories that they tell. These stories connect us, they make our daily lives meaningful, and they make the characters come alive (Boje & Dennehy, 1993).

Within the postmodern context, stories and experience are inseparable (Gabriel, 2000). Boje (1991) goes as far as to say that stories have become the preferred currency of engagement and human relationships. Watson (1994) states that stories provide the language of the world with which we engage, the influence that we interpret and, ultimately, that upon which we act. Postmodernism has allowed storytelling to break free from the limits of being merely an activity associated with entertainment and communication to an activity that organisations need to take seriously, as stories are becoming the currency of the postmodern world (Gabriel, 2000). Stories have become part of the organisational repertoire and the official organisational truth that informs and drives the culture of the organisation through the conversations, symbols, and rituals that stories describe and inspire (Marra & Holmes, 2005). In the postmodern world, organisations need to take their stories seriously, as they will influence and drive organisational culture as employees co-create the organisational story of the future.

2.4.3. Stories in organisations

Organisational stories occur in dialogue, thus they exist in fragments across the organisation, with various different versions of the stories being told (Boje, 1991). Stories within organisations can occur according to different patterns, i.e. organising the same story into different patterns of meaning according to the required context. Habermas and Bluck (2000) state that these story patterns can occur in different contexts, discussed in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6: Coherent patterns of story classification (Habermas & Bluck, 2000)

Context of story	Description
Temporal coherence	Grouping events into a pattern of occurrence according to when the events took place in the organisation.
Cultural concept of biography	Patterns organised according to the beliefs of the organisation in terms of transition stages.
Thematic coherence	Aims to provide an understanding of a life lived in the organisation – patterns of themes related to the subjective metaphor, moral, and truth.
Causal coherence	Patterns created in terms of decisions taken in the past, and the consequence or effect on the present to create the future.
Connecting the life story and organisational vision	Meaning created by the life story of the leader being connected to that of the organisation.

The importance of stories lies in the necessity of the collaborative effort to create shared meanings and give life to the knowledge of the organisation (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Stories become embedded in the culture and sub-cultures of the organisation, and will focus on the organisation's triumphs and tribulations (Gabriel, 2000). Stephens (2009) states that powerful organisational stories have the following qualities in common:

- The stories are told about real people. They describe their specific actions and they are connected to the philosophy of the organisation;
- Stories are common knowledge. Everyone knows the stories; they make it their own and they are able to retell them to others;
- Stories are taken seriously and firmly believed by certain groups in the organisation; and
- The social contract is contained in the stories that the organisation tells – how things are done or not done in the organisation.

Gellis (2002) is of the opinion that stories will only be effective within the organisation if the stories align with and create the mission, vision, values, and the culture of the organisation. Leaders often call upon stories in an attempt to influence the audience, add breath to messages of the organisation, and provide context so that the leader can experience the organisation from within and connect the organisation to the story of its future (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). Denning (2006) practically demonstrated the benefits of telling organisational stories that align to the identity of the organisation in the following example of a story that he related to his followers during his time at the World Bank:

In June of last year, a health worker in a tiny town in Zambia went to the Web site of the Center for Disease control and got the answer to a question about the treatment for malaria. Remember that this was in Zambia, one of the poorest countries in the world, and it was in a tiny place six hundred kilometres from the capital city. But the most striking thing about this picture, at least for us is that the World Bank isn't in it. Despite our know-how on all kinds of poverty related issues, the knowledge isn't available to the millions of

people who could use it. Imagine if it were. Think what an organisation we would become (Denning, 2006, p 4).

Through Denning's example, employees had the opportunity to imagine the future, shape the part that they wish to play in crafting the future, and collaborate with regards to how they were going to get there and what that will mean for the identity of the organisation. In a recent study conducted by Vaughn (2009), the following statements were agreed upon by the participants of the study as being true of organisational stories:

- The use of stories and metaphors in leadership helps to expand the understanding of organisational goals;
- Stories help organisations to understand action;
- Leaders who use story are better understood by followers;
- Stories provides a common language for an organisation; and
- Both success and failure stories can have a positive impact on employee motivation.

Using stories provides the leaders with the significant opportunity to change the attitudes of the workforce and gain their commitment to the organisational vision and values (Brown et al., 2008). Stories, especially those related to experience, contain the following four key elements that make them real and meaningful to the members of the organisation (Christie, 2009, Denning, 2011):

- Ideas – real-life examples of value added to their customers' lives;
- Values – shaping the values that support the ideas of the business;
- Edge – indicating how tough decisions were made; and
- Energy – stirring action and motivating people to move.

Corporate stories are cognitive repositories of mapped ideas and stored information (Wilkins, 1978). Boje (1991) views stories in organisations as the institutional memory system, recreating the past based upon the present. Stories are multi-authored and are continuously unfolding as they relate to other organisational

members (Gabriel, 2000). Vaughn (2009) states that the organisational memory system is shaped by organisational experiences that are recounted socially through all levels of the organisation, which will serve as a guiding force for decisions, actions, and individual assumptions going forward.

In summary, stories define and are part of the organisational identity, and if leaders are to inspire sustainable change within knowledge economy organisations, the stories will have to be changed with leaders co-facilitating the organisational story from within the organisational system.

2.5. THE INTEGRATION OF LEADERS, STORIES, AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The knowledge economy has brought different challenges to the organisation with agility, speed-to-market, and flexibility becoming the norm as opposed to the exception. Change has become a necessity, with organisations striving to build internal change capability if they are to remain sustainable in the future. The knowledge economy demands a different type of leader – one that focuses on an inclusive and collaborative leadership style that enables a system-wide approach to facilitate organisational change from within the organisation as opposed to traditional top-down approaches that, at best, have brought about minimal return on investment. Leaders are turning to stories to not only position and guide organisational change journeys, but to facilitate the change in a manner that makes it meaningful and believable to the organisation.

Storytelling has become a critical skill for leaders, and it has earned a rightful position within the organisation as stories are continuously told, retold, and crafted according to the past, the present, and the future of the organisation. Figure 2.2 (below) summarises the trends identified through the literature review and indicates that leaders, stories, and organisational change are intertwined within the knowledge economy and need to be seen as complementary constructs that can facilitate the future of the organisation from within the system.

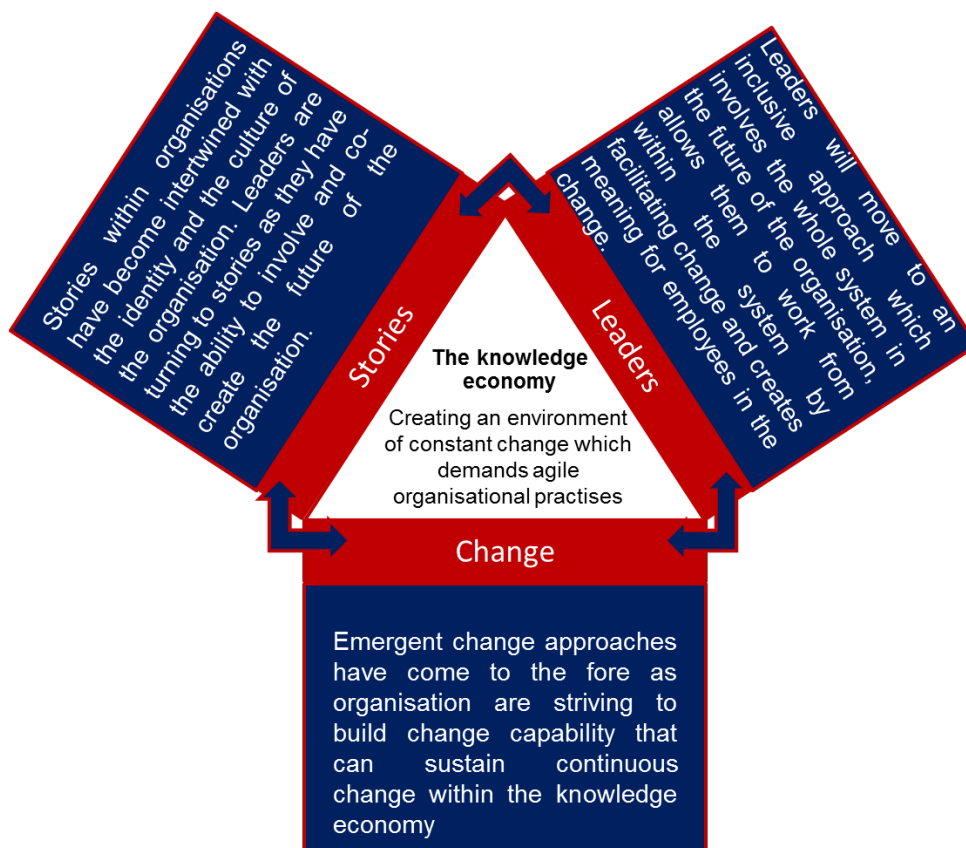


Figure 2.2: The integration of leaders, stories, and organisational change within the context of the knowledge economy

2.5. SUMMARY

In summary, Chapter Two explored the relationship between the constructs of change, leaders, and organisational storytelling set against the background of the knowledge economy organisation.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology that was used to explore the leadership stories applicable to this study and inform the findings, limitations, recommendations, contributions, and conclusions which will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quality and trustworthiness of scientific research can be evaluated based on the research design and the transparency of the decisions made by the researcher throughout the research process (Koch, 1994). Koch (1996) states that decisions in research, in order to be deemed valid and reliable, should always be made against the chosen theoretical methodological framework. Research methodologies and frameworks all hold certain views, paradigms, and perceptions of truth and reality, and the research needs to be congruent with the chosen paradigm and research methodology (Whitehead, 2002). In this chapter, the research paradigm, scientific criteria, and requirements that informed the design and method of the research study are discussed with reference to the framework presented in Figure 3.1.

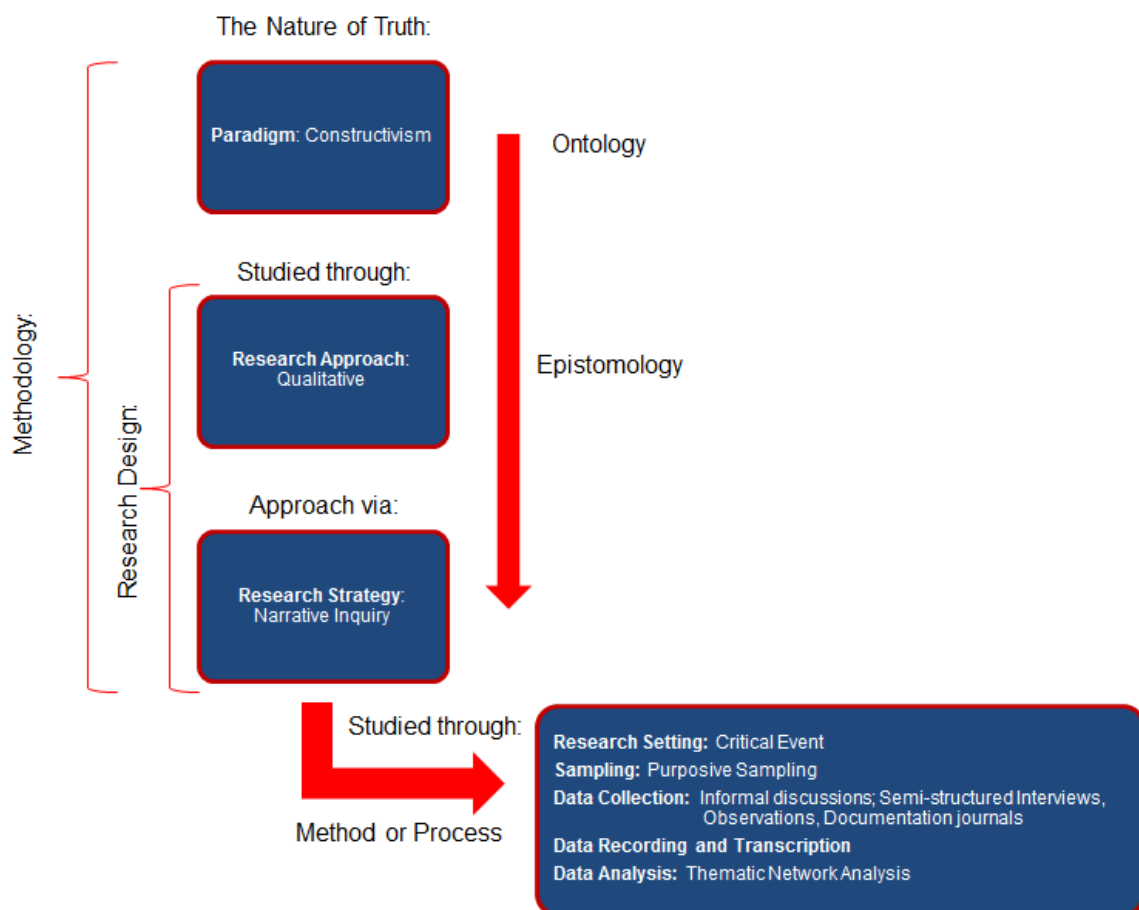


Figure 3.1: Chapter three outline

3.1. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The complexity of the environment affords researchers the opportunity to view the world through numerous sets of basic beliefs and assumptions, which provide a framework against which observations are interpreted and understood (Babbie, 2004). Scientific research consists of factual claims, knowledge statements, and moral judgements that all contribute to a perceived reality of the world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2007). Guba and Lincoln (1994) view research paradigms as a set of basic beliefs regarding the assumptions that are held about the world and how the world is viewed by the holder of these beliefs, the place that the individual holds in the world, and the existence and the nature of relationships that the individual has within the world. The choice of paradigm need to be addressed by the researcher in light of the following questions posed within the paradigm (Babbie, 2004; Koch, 1996; Mouton & Marais, 1996):

- Ontological assumptions: What is the nature of reality?
- Epistemological assumptions: What is the relationship between the individual and the nature of knowing?
- Methodological assumptions: What are the means and methods that the inquirer can use to find out what he/she believes?

The constructivist paradigm of inquiry was deemed appropriate as the paradigm informing the research methodology of the current study. The constructivist paradigm and the way in which the paradigm informed and influenced the research design and method are discussed hereunder.

3.1.1. The Constructivist Paradigm

The constructivist paradigm seeks to clarify, not challenge, the view that the participant holds of reality (Talitwala, 2005), which, in the context of this study, supports the notion that the stories of participants are to be understood as opposed

to being challenged regarding their factual value. The constructivist approach to research thus seeks to understand, as opposed to explain, phenomena, and acknowledges the fact that values, although interrelated, may not always be harmonious (Marcel, 2001). Language as the foundation through which we share socially constructed meanings is key in painting our pictures of reality (Talitwala, 2005), and meaning is continuously constructed through our interaction with others and our experiences. Within the context of the chosen research, the following considerations needed to be taken into account regarding ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gabriel, 2000; Terreblanche & Durrheim, 2007):

- The concept of truth had to be defined according to the interpreted reality of the storyteller;
- Stories as the research vehicle of this study are subjective and, as such, the chosen paradigm had to allow the researcher to accept the worldview of the storyteller;
- The researcher needed to be able to co-create and acknowledge his role in the creation of knowledge through the dialogue with the participants; and
- The researcher required the opportunity to reconstruct previously held constructs in accordance with the stories that were captured.

Mahoney and Granvold (2005) state that constructivism can be found across a number of diverse disciplines such as philosophy (Lao Tzu, 2009; Kant, 1959) and psychology (Adler, 1959; Bandura, 1977; Frankl, 1963), as the essence of constructivism lies in human experience. Constructivism contributes to science through the incorporation of concepts such as culture, norms, and how the use of language frames the context of action (Marcel, 2001). The constructivist world exists through the creation of multiple realities of interaction, but argues that these rules and principles are known and should be congruent with the existence of a subjective rationality (Van der Pijl, 1996). Constructivism rests upon the assumptions that people construct reality through their interactions within a social context, and that realities only exist in the conversations between knower and known, the relationships that exist, and the interdependence, reciprocity, and mutuality that materialise from

these relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Talitwala, 2005). Constructivism holds that life is constructed through symbolism (Gabriel, 2000), and that we seek to understand these symbols through our interactions with one another. Mahoney and Granvold (2005) define the essence of constructivism according to the following five themes:

Table 3.1: Five themes related to the essence of constructivism (Mahoney & Granvold, 2005)

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
Active Agency	Order	Self	Social-symbolic relatedness	Lifespan Development
Based upon the notion that human beings are active participants in their own existence.	Human beings create patterns of understanding to make sense of a complex world.	Individuals makes sense of the world by first making sense of themselves.	Human beings are born in relationship and make sense from relationship which indicates that meaning is experienced through our interactions with other human beings.	Constructivism is characterised by life-long learning and the spirals and patterns that develop during the course of experiencing life.

Understanding and interpretation within the constructivist paradigm of inquiry attribute the development of knowledge to a social phenomenon that evolves through communication and interaction between people (Talitwala, 2005). Knowledge, the complex construction of different realities, has to be tailored to fit the perceived view of truth (Fourie, 1994). Within the context of this research, the construction of knowledge and research criteria was approached according to the framework proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), which is summarised below.

Table 3.2: Constructivist implications for academic research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

Construct	Constructivist perspective:	Applicable to this research:
Inquiry aim	To understand and co-construct the story of the participant.	To explore the stories told by the leader participants in the study.
Nature of knowledge	Knowledge is based on the individual reconstructions thereof and the constant formation of new reconstructions of reality through	Stories are valued for their richness in information as opposed to their factual data.

	the acknowledgement of different perspectives of knowledge.	
Voice	Participant as facilitator of a multi-voice construction of reality.	Allowing the voices of both the leaders and the researcher to be heard.
Accommodation	Constructivism believes that reality is constructed according to the views of the participants.	The stories told by the participants are seen as truth.

Constructivist inquiry aims to clarify the process of understanding, i.e. how people interpret and come to conclusions and, as such, is concerned with history ("Why do people think this way?"), the present ("How do these thoughts influence the current situation?"), and the future ("How will what we know now influence the future?") (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Reality is constructed through stories, language, actions, rituals, and how individuals find meaning through their engagement with each other within the context of their own belief systems (Talitwala, 2005). Charmaz (2000) states that constructivism requires the participant and the researcher to seek meaning from each other through their interaction, which has the following implications:

- The researcher and the participant need to be submerged in the social world and the context that the world provides;
- The world is inter-subjective and open to interpretation of a situation, context, and the view of truth held by both the participant and the researcher;
- Interpretive methods have to be used to gain a reconstructed understanding of the view of the world held by the participant; and
- Ethical boundaries and mutual respect are of critical importance.

The concept of meaning within the constructivist approach is often associated with language, and stories constitute a mechanism through which individuals understand and order their experiences of the world (Mahoney & Granvold, 2005). The constructivist paradigm invariably leads to the notion of meaning, as well as the contrast that exists between perceived truth and the concept of meaning.

3.1.2. The concept of meaning within the constructivist paradigm

Constructivism seeks to unmask the symbols hidden within language, as meaning can be related via a single word or a complex story (Gabriel, 2000). The value of stories, as argued by Reason and Hawkins (1988), does not lie in the truth of the facts, but rather in the meaning that the facts entail. Knowledge in this context is value-laden, based upon the multiple interpretations of its perceivers, and grounded in the social reality of everyday life – the realm in which stories reside (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). The distinction needs to be made between fact as information and fact as meaning, as adopted by postmodern research approaches to storytelling (Gabriel, 2000). In an attempt to understand the underlying symbolism and meaning hidden within language, Idhe (1971) states that human beings are language – we use language to gain a self-understanding of who we are, and that language consists of words. Humans use words to express their opinions and confirm identity.

Constructivist inquiry asks not whether the story is true, but shifts the focus to the meaning that is created through the story. The word *logos*, (Greek for “knowledge”) (Frankl, 1946), brings the study of stories within the constructivist approach to the understanding, attribution, and search for meaning that human beings relate through stories. Language as a vehicle for meaning-making (Polkinghorne, 1988) in the scientific study of story places meaning as the central component of existence (Shaw, 2004). Gerkin (1986) describes language as central to existence, and human experience as the narrative structure within which we relate our experiences. Life stories, the narrative structure of our existence, focus on the human being in the never-ending quest for meaning, the value of life, and significance (Ganzevoort, 1993). Shaw (2004) states that human beings’ ability to translate experience into narrative is the method through which meaning is attributed to our daily lives. Who we are often only becomes understood and meaningful through stories (McKenzie, 2011). Stephens (2009) even goes as far as to state that stories shape society and give meaning to our existence, and that meaning can be found in every moment of our lives. Frankl (1963) states that the concept of meaning in life will differ from person to person and, as such, human beings are each living their own story while struggling to find the meaning and significance encapsulated within their existence.

Ganzevoort (1993) sees storytelling as an important part of life, as being human implies that we delve into stories to create sense and meaning in our existence.

The social scientist views research as the process that is followed to understand human experience, and a qualitative research approach was used to explore the complexities that are hidden beneath the surface of the stories that are told by the participants in the research study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

3.2. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

During the research process, the question of research design pertains to the applicable research method and strategy utilised to answer the research questions. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach informed a narrative inquiry research strategy in order to achieve the research aims. The research approach and strategy will be discussed hereunder.

3.2.1. Research approach

“Somehow we have lost the human and passionate element of the research. Becoming immersed in a study requires passion: passion for people, passion for communication, and passion for understanding people. This is the contribution of qualitative research” (Janesick, 1994; p. 217)

Qualitative research is conducted to understand the meanings that inform activity and allow the researcher to understand and document participants' voices through the research (Talitwala, 2005). The qualitative research approach, as well as the decisions that informed the use of a qualitative research approach, will be discussed in light of the nature and context of qualitative research as informed by the constructivist research paradigm.

3.2.1.1. The nature and context of qualitative research

Qualitative research is an acknowledged field of inquiry that is used across various disciplines and contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative research is the search for knowledge, as the everyday meaning of knowledge is not coherent, consistent, or in an understandable format (Talitwala, 2005). Qualitative research uses a variety of methods and is, in essence, interpretive and naturalistic in its approach to the subject matter (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that qualitative research has the following key characteristics:

- The natural setting is a source of data and the researcher is a key instrument. Qualitative research understands context and assigns significance through observation of the subject in its natural habitat.
- Qualitative research allows for the collection of descriptive data in picture or word format, as opposed to numbers.
- Understanding how things happen and how they translate back to everyday life through the application of qualitative research processes is important in the context of the research study.
- Finding out how people make sense of their lives is crucial to the qualitative researcher.

The strength of qualitative research lies in the ability and opportunity that it provides to study the unfolding of dynamic processes, the adapting to circumstances, and the responses to change during the course of the study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The advantage that qualitative research holds for the researcher is the opportunity to understand why similar events are, at times, interpreted differently by participants in the study (Sofaer, 1999). Qualitative research, informed by constructivism, aims to answer three interconnected questions during the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005):

- How the personal biography of the researcher within the context of constructivism influenced the decisions that the researcher took during the research process

- Within the constructivism context, the research environment gives meaning to a set of ideas and frameworks (theory, ontology), which allows certain questions to be asked (epistemology), such as: What are the thinking patterns associated with this view of the world?
- That is then examined in specific ways congruent with the constructivist paradigm through the application of applicable theory (methodology): How do we study and interpret the identified view of the world?

During the qualitative research process, the importance of the epistemology, methodology, and the influence and role of the self in the research cannot be ignored (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The interaction between tacit theory, the personal understanding of the researcher, and the formal theories (the existing literature) plays an integral part in explaining phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative research affords the researcher the opportunity to explore the language, meanings, and values that exist in how people view and experience organisations (Silvermann, 2009). The current qualitative research study attempted to capture the relative truth as opposed to the absolute truth of stories, as described by Sofaer (1999), and bore the following in mind:

- Viewing stories as vehicles of meaning that provide context is critical to understanding stories;
- The meaning and purpose that resides within the stories are deemed key to understanding the stories that leaders tell during organisational change;
- As per the constructive paradigm, the individual perspective has to be studied and viewed as relative truth; and
- Co-creation within the context of constructivism is crucial, as the researcher interacts with the participant and becomes part of the story.

Qualitative research occurs within different realms of inquiry and settings, and is dependent on an appropriate setting in order to discover answers to the research question. In the current study, a narrative inquiry research strategy was utilised within the qualitative research approach in order to explore the research questions relevant to the study.

3.2.2 Research Strategy

Narrative inquiry originated within an educational research framework, but has since expanded to other sciences such as psychology (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry as a research term was first used by the Canadian researchers Connelly and Clandinin in the early 1990s to describe their approach to educational research through a collection of teachers' personal stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to explore the meaning that people give to their work experiences (Thrift & Armudson, 2007). Critical to this process is the definition of the self and the positioning of the self within the narrative. Narratives focus on the definition of the self in the context of the self being dialogical, relational, interdependent, self-interpreting, and agentic against the background of the pre-suppositions and context that history and issues of significance impose (Thrift & Armudson, 2007). Narrative inquiry aims to understand a holistic interpretation of the truth, as opposed to other research methods that focus on understanding components or fragments of experience (Boje, 2001).

Narrative inquiry is messy, changes over time, and the researcher is obliged to take note of the growth that he/she experiences in order to form an accurate interpretation of the story that the participant is living (Hanrahan & Cooper, 1995). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) agree with this argument by stating that narrative inquiry provides the participant the opportunity of a meaningful retelling of life experiences that is both personal and social. Narrative inquiry as a research method has attracted interest as researchers began to realise that narratives provide an opportunity to explore human activity in light of the sensitivities related to experiences, which some traditional approaches do not allow (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Within the social sciences, narratives do not speak of their own accord, but gain meaning through the analysis of the researcher (Riesman, 2005). As such, narratives need to be analysed and understood to be made meaningful.

Ospina, Doge, and Foldy (2005) further distinguish between three objectives and perspectives to viewing narratives from the lens of the researcher, as described in table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Objectives of and perspective to narrative inquiry (Ospina, Doge & Foldy, 2005)

	Narrative perspective:		
Objective:	Language	Knowledge	Metaphor
Research assumption	A narrative is a medium of expression	A narrative is a way of knowing	A narrative is a structuring of meaning
Experience of people and the world	People use stories to create meaning and experience the world	People think and know through stories	People know or enter existing stories
Purpose of the inquiry	To understand the view of the person as they experience the world	To bring tacit knowledge to the surface	To unveil shared meaning

The current study, similarly to the study conducted by Ospina, Doge, and Foldy (2005), utilised all three perspectives in order to provide an integrated narrative inquiry, which increased the rigor and abstraction of the study. In the current study, a narrative was viewed as the following:

- A narrative as a language: the meaning of the stories captured from the leaders' stories of how they experienced the project;
- A narrative as knowledge: the knowledge that existed in the project and in the "world" in which the research was conducted;
- A narrative as a metaphor: the shared meaning of not only terminology but expressions, and the shared meaning that was conveyed by the project team through the stories that they told.

Stephens (2009) states that narrative inquiry starts at a particular point in the study and works its way through to reconstructing and providing an understanding of critical events. As such, the question of method needs to be considered in terms of

the research process aligned to the research approach and subsequent research strategy.

3.4. RESEARCH METHOD

The following section discusses the research method with reference to the research setting, sampling, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, rigour and quality, and the ethical considerations applicable to the study.

3.4.1. The Research Setting

Critical events are highlights of a narrative inquiry, and they allow the researcher to focus the study around one context or one event in time that the participants experienced (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A critical event in the context of the current study was the setting, time, and shared experiences of the participants regarding a specific topic of interest. Woods (1993) describes a critical event as a mix of the right ingredients at the right, specified time within the right context. Narrative inquiry strives to provide a holistic approach to understanding multiple experiences and has been the downfall of many research initiatives within the story domain due to the breadth of the data as opposed to the depth that a focused narrative can provide. Multiple stories are studied, and the researcher never gets to the underlying and deeper meaning of the stories, as there is too much data to be interpreted. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that the researcher as story collector needs to identify descriptive details that he/she has heard as pillars of story collection. A critical event approach to narrative inquiry allows the researcher to focus the research around one topic of interest: critical events that have a noteworthy impact on the storyteller and a significant influence on their lived experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Fay (2000) supports the notion that critical events are change experiences for participants, as their worldviews are constantly adjusted to incorporate new information and experiences.

Measer (1985) postulates that critical events can be understood according to three defined phases:

- Phase one: Extrinsic events that are shaped and understood against the background of historical and political events and facts, for example, the financial recession that had an impact on the research setting in 2011.
- Phase two: Intrinsic events, which are natural experiences that are encountered by the employee when entering the context of the chosen story, e.g., working with the project team applicable to the research setting.
- Phase three: Critical events that have happened in the personal lives of the storytellers and influence the manner in which the story is experienced and told. This can be illustrated by the following statement by one of the participants: “To tell you about this time of the project, you need to understand what I was going through in my personal life. They had broken into our house and held myself and my husband hostage...”

Critical events within the context of this study were studied according to the guidelines proposed by Webster and Mertova (2007).

Table 3.4: Critical event criteria relevant to the research study (Webster & Mertova, 2007)

Theoretical criteria	Applicable to the research study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events exist in a certain context e.g., time, structure, or place 	<p>A single critical event was selected, which took place at a certain point in time and provided an event that was experienced by a select group of leaders.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events impact the people involved 	<p>Purposive sampling techniques were used to ensure that the sample was representative of the impacted population.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events have life-changing 	<p>The story findings as explored in Chapter Four describe the impact of the case</p>

consequences	study on the individuals involved.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events reveal patterns 	Thematic network analysis was used to identify and explore patterns applicable to the research.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events can only be identified and understood in hindsight 	The research took place at a certain point in time, which allowed for the story to be lived for a period of time before becoming the focus of the research study.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical events are personal and have meaning for the individual 	The stories were explored in light of the personal experiences and meaning that they provided for the leaders

Project Alpha, the focus of this study, is part of a transformational journey that will change the organisational delivery and design model through the implementation of a new core banking platform system that will impact the people, processes, and technology across the enterprise. The journey was segmented into seven different implementations, divided according to different product offerings and business units. The current organisational operating model, which is focused on product- and offering-based delivery, will shift to a client-centric mode of operations, which entails a cultural paradigm shift in terms of how the organisation interacts and services customers. As a result of this changing paradigm, the organisation initiated an enterprise-wide project aimed at implementing the technological system and business processes that will support the new customer-centric operating model.

Due to resource scarcity and the magnitude of the resource requirements, Project Alpha partnered with an international consulting organisation to ensure the successful delivery of all seven implementations. The leadership team is representative of both organisations and all layers of the leadership structure. Increased project pressure, additional scope considerations, and demanding timelines resulted in an increase in the project team size to 468 members in a period

of 4 months, which resulted in the adoption of a complex delivery and governance model, which provided the critical event that is the focus point of the study.

The researcher's access and entry to the setting of the chosen critical event is discussed hereunder.

3.4.2. Entrée and researcher role

The researcher was a part of the story in the following capacity:

- As a member of the People Management team on *Project Alpha* tasked with the responsibility of managing the change effort for the organisation; and
- The researcher was the collector of leaders' stories within the project. The researcher in his role as story collector initiated this research effort in an attempt to understand the stories that leaders told on the project, and interpret their meaning in the organisational context.

Within the constructivist paradigm, the process of co-creation allows the researcher to co-create the stories of the participants, yet poses the risk of the views of the researcher being imposed on the storyteller during the story-collecting process. Reflection and gaining meaningful understanding of the researcher's own story was a powerful process that the researcher had to go through in an attempt to make sure that he remained true to his research role as collector of stories and did not lead the participants to tell his own perceived account of the truth. The researcher's own story was captured and analysed before the research project was initiated by an outside facilitator. This was done in an attempt to provide objectivity in terms of capturing the leaders' stories as opposed to imposing the researcher's own bias as part of the data. Constructivism allows for the co-creation of stories, and the researcher co-created the leaders' stories through his own knowledge of the research setting, the current organisation, and the dialogue between the leaders and the researcher.

3.4.3. Sampling

Numerous approaches to sampling exist (Teddlie & Fu, 2007), but for the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to use a purposive sampling technique that allowed the selection of certain individuals for a specific purpose (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), i.e. individuals who had a story to tell within the context of the chosen critical event. For the purpose of this study, the researcher considered the following criteria:

- Participants had to have adequate exposure and experience in the environment to be able to tell a comprehensive story;
- Participants had to be representative of all the different areas/business units of the project environment, i.e. IT, business, and consulting houses; and
- The participant had to be of a hierarchical level within the project structure in order to have access to the strategic stories.

Further to the purposive sampling technique, the researcher used convenience sampling methods to select participants who had the time and were accessible and willing to partake. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) state that the use of knowledgeable informants in the interview process is a valid and effective way of ensuring the collection of unbiased data. As qualitative research is not concerned with the generalisability of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007), the sample size in the current study was constantly evaluated for saturation, which is the point where further samples do not add any additional meaningful data to a study.

As part of the research setting, the researcher worked with the participants in a professional capacity, which had the following advantages and disadvantages related to the study (adapted from Cotner, 2000; Shenton, 2004):

- Advantages of being familiar with participants and the environment:

The researcher was familiar with the language and terminology used within the environment by the participants and understood the meaning behind the metaphors, abbreviations, and “project speak.” The researcher had easy access to the environment, which made the process of co-creation to be more natural and free of

time constraints, as opposed to being forced into a specific time frame or engagement. Due to the researcher’s familiarity with the setting and the participants, a relationship of trust and security already existed, which enabled the process of building rapport and co-creating the stories much easier.

- Disadvantages of being familiar with participants and the environment:

Research bias regarding the stories told by participants occurs when participants tell the researcher the story that they believe he/she wants to hear. The researcher was part of the study and, as such, not objective regarding the story told by the participant. The researcher therefore had to be even cognisant of his own projections on the participant and the environment. Even though constructivism allows for the co-creation of content, the researcher in the current study focused on listening to the leaders’ stories rather than imposing his own story onto the leader during the research process. Organisational politics could potentially have impacted the research setting due to the familiarity of both the leaders and the researcher with the political drivers behind the told stories.

The final sample consisted of six leaders who represented the organisation at different levels and were representative of the project – involving both the organisation and the consulting houses that participated in the change journey. The sample of six leaders who formed part of the research study is described in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: The research sample

	Representing area:	Level:	Representative of:	Gender	Home Language
Leader 1	People	Middle management	Consulting firm	Female	Afrikaans
Leader 2	Project Delivery	Senior management	Consulting firm	Female	English
Leader 3	Technology	Senior management	Permanent employee	Male	Afrikaans
Leader 4	Project	Senior management	Permanent employee	Female	English

Leader 5	Process	Middle management	Permanent employee	Male	Afrikaans
Leader 6	Technology	Middle management	Permanent employee	Male	English

3.4.4. Data Collection

Narratives exist in a sequence of consequences, and the researcher selects events and connects the meaning of the events for an identified audience (Riessman, 2005). Meaning is created in so far as participants create stories in relation to life (Frank, 2002). In an attempt to explore the meaning of the leaders within the case study, the following data collection methods, presented in Table 3.6, were utilised.

Table 3.6: Data collection methods utilised in the research

Tool utilised	Reason for research decision
Informal narrative discussions	The researcher used informal narrative discussions with selected project members to obtain raw data, which provided input into the narrative pillars of the stories that were studied and which formed the basis of the interview guide utilised in the semi-structured interviews.
Interviews	The researcher used semi-structured interviews to elicit stories from participants, and these shared the same time, place, and context applicable to the research question.
Observations	The researcher formed part of the research setting for a period of 17 months.
Documentation and journals	Formal project documentation, as well as a personalised journal from one of the leaders, was used as input into the stories.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define a semi-structured interview as a conversation with a pre-defined purpose that occurs between two or more people. The duration of the semi-structured interview is determined by the research question, as semi-structured interviews can range from short conversations with limited questions to an in-depth investigation that spans over numerous interviews held at different points in time (Talitwala, 2005). Semi-structured interviews are considered an effective means of gathering data that is rich in description and quality, and the researcher has the opportunity to explore the gathered data in a meaningful way (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Questioning in the context of narrative inquiry refers to the enablement of a process of reflection and recall for participants and, as such, can be used in conjunction with other techniques, such as observation, to gather information regarding the subjects' experiences in their natural environment (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews have been criticised for allowing the researcher to be biased towards the data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) and the following steps were therefore taken to minimise both the effect of the researcher in the current study on the participants and to ensure that the stories were captured accurately and reflected an accurate interpretation of the participant's story:

- The semi-structured interviews were conducted with predefined questions;
- The questions were formulated using 25 informal semi-structured interviews by the researcher to define and develop the interview guide. The general themes obtained from these semi-structured interviews were used as story pillars in the interview schedule;
- Interview questions were validated with different members at different levels of the project team before the semi-structured interviews commenced;
- An observer was used in a number of the semi-structured interviews, with the consent of the interviewee, in an attempt to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation;
- Following the interviews, the interview data was validated with different members of the team to ensure the credibility and believability of the stories; and

- The researcher also told his own story via a formal, semi-structured interview before the research process commenced, to ensure that he did not retell his own story via the interview process with the participants. The researcher's own story was captured and analysed in an attempt to reduce bias and improve the credibility of the research.

3.4.5. Recording of data

The data were captured, recorded, transcribed, and the field texts analysed after each discussion. Data were recorded as follow, as recommended by Talitwala (2005):

- Phase 1: Informal narrative discussions with project team members were recorded via field notes captured during and after the discussions. The field notes were compiled in an information matrix using Microsoft Excel according to identified themes and pillars.
- Phase 2: Data obtained in the semi-structured interviews were recorded via video tape, with the participants' permission, and transcribed after each session.
- Phase 3: Additional field notes was collected, which included video tape footage, project documentation, and informal field notes that the researcher collected during his period on the project.

3.4.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Different models of data analysis exist within narrative inquiry (Riesmann, 2005). For the purpose of the current research, thematic network analysis was chosen as the data analysis model for the following reasons:

- The researcher was interested in seeking categories of meaning across the stories that the leaders tell, and in understanding and interpreting the themes that

emerged from the text. Thematic network analysis provides structure to the data analysis, which allows all data to be given equal weight and studied accordingly (Talitwala, 2005).

- Thematic network analysis allows for the identification of recurring pockets of meaning. The researcher constructs new understanding through the engagement with the text, and thematic network analysis allows the researcher to examine all the data before coming to any conclusions (Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, 2000).
- Thematic network analysis allowed the researcher to identify story types based upon the underlying categorical themes that informed the global theme and to ascribe meaning to the underlying content hidden beneath the surface of the studied stories (Talitwala, 2005).

From a practical perspective, the researcher used a coding framework that informed the structure of the thematic network analysis, as used by Hayes (2000) and Mohan and Uys (2006). Material was coded by identifying repetitions and phrases that represented the topics and patterns (Talitwala, 2005). Data were coded in three phases (Neumann, 2000):

- Open coding: This is the process of bringing themes from inside the data to the surface, which is the first step in trying to understand and condense the data into categories. The researcher studied the informal interviews and identified terms and phrases that were used often by the participants.
- Axial coding: The focus shifts to the coded themes and new ideas emerge in this phase of coding, which are noted by the researcher. Some key themes are studied in more depth, while others are dropped. In the current study, the researcher categorised themes and added themes obtained from the supporting documentation and journals studied;
- Selective coding: Themes are reorganised and select cases are used to illustrate comparisons and contrasts between themes. Major themes are built and studied in depth. Themes were arranged according to the thematic data analysis framework as discussed below and refined according to the patterns identified

during the coding process: arranging themes in a global theme with a sub-network of organising themes and basic themes.

Thematic network analysis is the process of identifying recurring themes in the data being studied (Talitwala, 2005). Themes can take the form of recurring statements, attributes, and assumptions (Hayes, 2000). Thematic network analysis aims to facilitate deeper levels of understanding of themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic network analysis identifies lower-order premises evident in the text (basic themes), categorises the themes to obtain more abstract principles (organising themes), and captures the themes in light of the wholeness of the text (global theme) (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic network analysis is often depicted in a web-like diagram in order to view the research from a holistic perspective, as depicted by Figure 3.2.

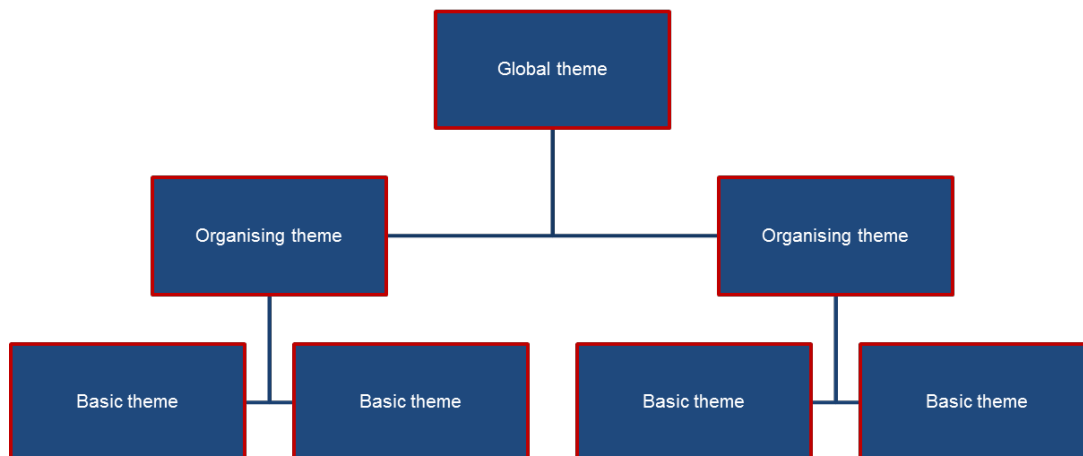


Figure 3.2: The thematic network analysis framework (Attride-Stirling, 2001)

Thematic network analysis allows the researcher to identify the underlying narrative between different themes that constitute the global theme and, within the story context, provides the researcher the opportunity to look at the story holistically within the context of time, event, and setting. Thematic network analysis aims to promote structure in the search for meaning and significance in the text (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Thematic network analysis allowed the researcher in the current study to gain perspective in terms of the various stories told by the leaders through the identification of narratives across the framework in a method that allows one story (global theme) to be studied in detail (organising theme), using data and ideas obtained from the data (basic theme).

Throughout the research project, the rigour and quality of the project was considered as a crucial element to providing a believable and true account of the leaders'

stories. The scientific rigour and ethical principles within the context of the research project will be discussed in the proceeding section of the manuscript.

3.4.7. Rigour and quality of the research project

The challenge that social scientists face is the fact that they can only question stories within their own social context of understanding (Frank, 2002). Using narrative inquiry has extensive ethical implications, as the researcher becomes part of the participants' search for meaning in moving towards the moral higher ground that stories seek to explore (Frank, 2002). In narrative inquiry, the researcher is concerned with three considerations pertaining to the rigour of the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which will influence the credibility and believability of the research:

- Theoretical consideration: The narrative inquirer needs to evaluate how human experience will be studied and what view of the experience will be narrated.
- Practical, field text-orientated considerations: The researcher is in a continuous process of negotiation as field texts are converted into research texts.
- Interpretive analytical considerations: The researcher has to determine what meanings can be derived from the research texts and what multiple meanings can be implied.

In the context of this research, a qualitative approach utilising a narrative inquiry research strategy was used, which implied the following criteria in terms of reliability and validity (Webster & Mertova, 2007):

- Validity: Strength of the data analysis, trustworthiness of the data, and the ease of access to the data; and
- Reliability: Dependability of the data, i.e. whether the data convey a believable story of the leaders' experience.

Narrative inquiry does not aim to tell the story of one collected truth but rather focuses on multiple truths, multiple versions of the truth, and different interpretations

of what truth is. Within narrative inquiry, validity refers to the extent of certainty that the methods and approaches to research provide (Amsterdam & Bruner, 2000; Huberman, 1995; Geelan, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005; Riesmann, 1993). The onus is on the researcher to conduct the study in a way that allows for the collection, recording, and accessibility of data in such a way that it can be understood, used, analysed, and audited by the reader and members of the scientific community (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Polkinghorne (2005) states that narrative inquiry cannot state truth, as truth is relative to the story of the participant and cannot be viewed as the extent to which a narrative relates to factual reality.

Narrative does not provide one truth, but rather pinpoints the view of one individual of his/her subjective experience and perception of the truth. Within the context of the current study, the reliability and validity of the study were ensured as follows, as recommended by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Polkinghorne (1988) and Webster and Mertova (2007):

- The believability of the participant's story was validated with other participants who were familiar with the environment, with the research subject's consent;
- An external observer was used, with the participants' consent, to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the captured stories;
- Throughout the research, the researcher used an interview guide to support consistency of the interviews as well as the verification of experiences with the participants in an attempt to accurately retell their stories;
- Participants were allowed to remove any piece of story evidence that they deemed to be inappropriate in the context of the story;
- Responses were explored through the interaction between research and the storyteller in an attempt to attain deeper levels of abstraction and understand the holistic context of the narrative;
- All decisions taken by the researcher in terms of the research study were documented and described in the manuscript to ensure the transferability of the study in the future; and

- The researcher in his role as researcher had the opportunity to be part of the project and thus had continuous access to the participants and the opportunity to validate the stories that participants told over time.

The quality and rigour of the study were taken into consideration with regard to the following ethical implications that were considered by the researcher during the course of the research study.

3.4.8. Ethical considerations with regard to the research

Due to the nature of storytelling and the context of the current study, the researcher had to adhere to ethical considerations pertaining to the methods and processes for conducting scientifically reliable and valid research. Ethics, derived from the Greek term for character, asks various questions of the researcher regarding the moral character of the study (Patton, 2002) and provides a moral framework that influences and determines the tone of the study. As stories relate to human experience, the topic of negotiation and the existence of human relationships cannot be ignored (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Patton (2002) indicates that researchers need to answer the following ethical questions throughout the research process in light of the relationships that exist within the research:

- In what way will participating in the study psychologically and physically put the participant at risk?
- How can the researcher ensure and convey to the participant the confidentiality of the data obtained?
- Who will have access to the data?
- How will both the researcher and the participant be affected by the data?
- How hard will the researcher “push” to obtain data?

Ethical considerations cover a variety of aspects such as access, doing no harm, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, as proposed by Gravetter and Forzano (2006), and is discussed hereunder.

The researcher was granted ethical clearance by the participating academic institution to conduct the research study. The researcher was subsequently granted access to the organisation by the senior leadership within the project and by participating institution. Stories that went deep into the personal lives of the participants and fell outside the scope of the researcher's field of practice were referred to the clinical psychologist overseeing the study in a professional capacity. Participants were contacted and the aim of the study explained before any interviews were conducted. Participants were then asked to confirm electronically via e-mail that they were willing to participate in the study. Informed consent was also obtained from the project owner and the organisation. The interviews were conducted on a floor separate to where the project team sat in the building, and data were stored securely. Participants also had the opportunity to remove sensitive data at any point during the research study. The style of reporting regarding the stories that were obtained was anonymous and did not provide any information that could be used to identify research participants.

In essence, the ethical considerations in social science research demand that the researcher adopts a research strategy and design that do no harm, that do not force participation, and that treat participants in a morally and ethically correct way throughout the research process – from analysis through to interpretation and, ultimately, in reporting the findings of the research study.

3.5. SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the fundamental questions that are asked of any researcher before conducting a research project with reference to research methodology, research paradigm, strategy, approach, and method. The research was conducted

from a constructivist paradigm of truth, using a qualitative research approach and a narrative inquiry research strategy. The research method identified a critical event as the chosen research setting, identified the participants through purposive and convenience sampling, and collected the data via informal narrative discussions, semi-structured interviews, observations, and field texts. Collected data was analysed according to a thematic network analysis, and themes were coded, derived, and studied within the identified framework of global, organising, and basic themes. The chapter concluded with an overview of the strategies utilised by the researcher to ensure the quality of the data with reference to the reliability and validity of the study and the ethical considerations taken into account to ensure safe and morally acceptable conduct towards the research participants.

Chapter Four discusses the research findings within the context of the relevant literature discussed in Chapter Two and the research methodology described in Chapter Three. The study will conclude with Chapter , which will provide further insight in terms of the conclusions, recommendations, limitations, and contribution of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STORIES THAT LEADERS TELL DURING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: THE SEARCH FOR MEANING DURING LARGE-SCALE TRANSFORMATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Orientation: 90% of organisational change efforts result in failure, with lack of change leadership and leaders' inability to create sustainable change cited as the most common reason for change projects not yielding a viable return on investment.

Research purpose: The purpose of this research was to explore leaders' stories during a large-scale organisational change project and determine the type of stories leaders tell during the change process, as well as whether leaders find personal meaning in their own change stories.

Motivation for the study: Change has become the norm in the knowledge economy as organisations aim to manage the organisational pillars of people, processes, and technology to build a flexible and agile business. Leaders as the drivers of the change process have been

criticised for a lack of change competence and an inability to manage sustainable change for their employees, resulting in a high degree of failure during organisational change efforts, which impact the organisation and the community from a monetary, people, and sustainability perspective.

Research design, approach, and method: The research utilised a qualitative research design, using narrative inquiry to explore multiple leadership stories collected during an organisational change journey. Thematic network analysis was used to explore the categorical themes of significance (the "Why?" of the change), simplicity (the end-state of the change), opportunity (the people within the change), and the future (the change vision), as obtained from the leaders' stories.

Main findings: The study identified and categorised different story types that leaders tell during the change process, which are aimed at making change meaningful to followers. The study also found that leaders themselves find personal meaning in the stories that they tell due to the nature and significance that they bring to the leaders' own life story.

Practical implications: The study provides a framework for leaders in the knowledge economy that can be applied to enable large-scale organisational change through the practical application of the identified categories of stories at different points during the change process.

Contribution/Value-add: The study adds value to the fields of leadership, organisational change and storytelling, and provides an integrated perspective and framework for leaders to manage sustainable change within the knowledge economy.

Key Words: knowledge economy, sustainability, storytelling, meaning, constructivist

INTRODUCTION

Organisations are failing the leaders of the 21st century (Hiatt, 2007). Operating models are not producing business value, hierarchical structures are not conducive to productivity, inflexible strategies that are too rigid in today's ever-changing environment, and a workforce that is drowning in a sea of change has become the norm (Appelbaum, St-Pierre & Glavas, 1998; Hiatt, 2007). Guttman (2009) states that organisations have been attacked by the four horsemen of the apocalypse during the last decade: globalisation, growth in the information technology sector, the intensity of competition, and the pressure for innovation. Organisations are experiencing an identity crisis in the knowledge economy. "Who are we?", "What is our identity?", "What is our core business?", and "What are we aiming to achieve?" are all questions that organisations need to answer if they aspire to navigate the hyper-turbulent environment and remain sustainable into the future (Hesselbein & Goldsmith, 2009). Change has become an essential capability that organisations need to manage if they are to enable the pillars of people, processes, and technology to become fit for the future. Leaders as the drivers of the change process have been criticised for a lack of change competence and an inability to create meaningful change for their employees during change journeys (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Denning, 2006). Hiatt (2007) is of the opinion that 90% of change initiatives do not yield a viable return on investment, and criticises leaders as a contributing factor due to their lack of change leadership and capability. The current study explored multiple leaders' stories during large-scale change in order to gain a deeper understanding of the types of stories leaders tell and the meaning that they attach to the storytelling process during organisational change.

Background to the study

Michell-Weaver and Manning (1990) state that the economic prosperity and future growth of the developing world is largely dependent on the private sector enabling a sustainable future for the community that it serves. The King 3 report (SAICA, 2009), published in 2009, emphasises the principles of leading with integrity, sustainability, and corporate citizenship as crucial factors on the agenda for South African organisations. The knowledge economy has placed pressure on organisations to contribute towards the community it serves in terms of social responsibility and corporate citizenship, whilst remaining sustainable and financially viable in an ever-turbulent market (Britton, 2010). The knowledge economy is demanding more from organisations than ever before, forcing organisations to adapt traditional business practices that are no longer relevant in the changing environment (Champy, 2009).

It seems as if organisational leaders are failing to create sustainable change practices that will enable the organisation to build a sustainable organisation that is able to contribute towards the community that it serves (Williams, Crafford & Fourie, 2003). This begs the question why leaders are not creating sustainable change practices that will grow the organisation and serve the relevant community into the future (Mitchell, 2011).

Key focus of the study

The study explored leaders' stories during a large-scale organisational change project through a qualitative narrative inquiry. The study explored the stories that leaders tell within the context discussed provided above in order to gain a deeper understanding of the content of the stories, the environment that informs the stories, and to determine if leaders themselves find meaning through the stories that they tell during organisational change. The story landscape will be explored with reference to the framework illustrated in Figure 1, which is based upon the Lewinian change model (Lewin, 1951; Weiss, 2001) that describes change according to the following three phases:

- Unfreeze: Preparing the organisation for change
- Changing the organisation: The transition process
- Refreeze the organisation: Embedding the change within the organisation

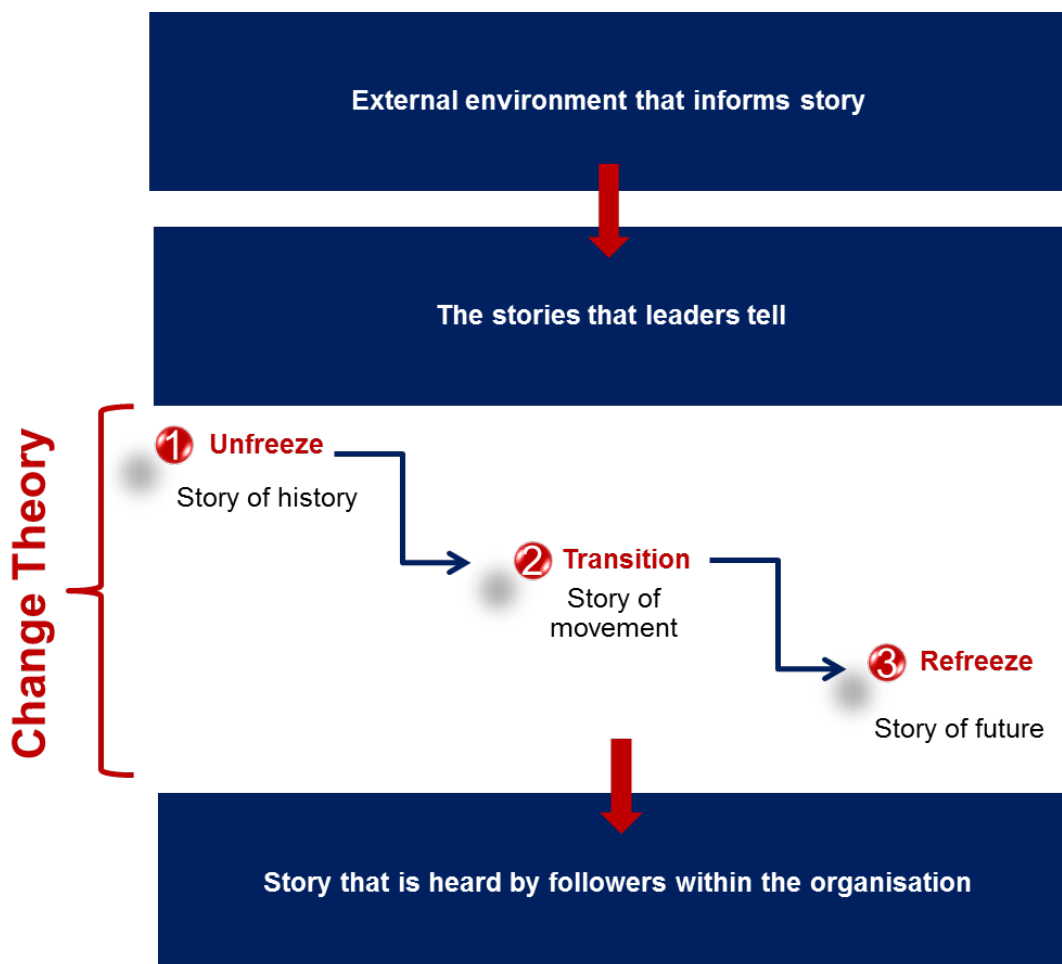


Figure 1: The story landscape of organisational change (based on Lewin, 1951)

Stories will be explored within the context of the model and acknowledge the story of history (unfreeze), transition (the change), and future (refreeze) that will provide the landscape for the exploration of the collected leaders' stories.

Trends from the research literature

The study discussed the relevant literature in light of the following model, which dictates the tone and areas of discussion relevant to the constructs of change, leaders, and stories within the context of the knowledge economy, as illustrated by figure 2 below:

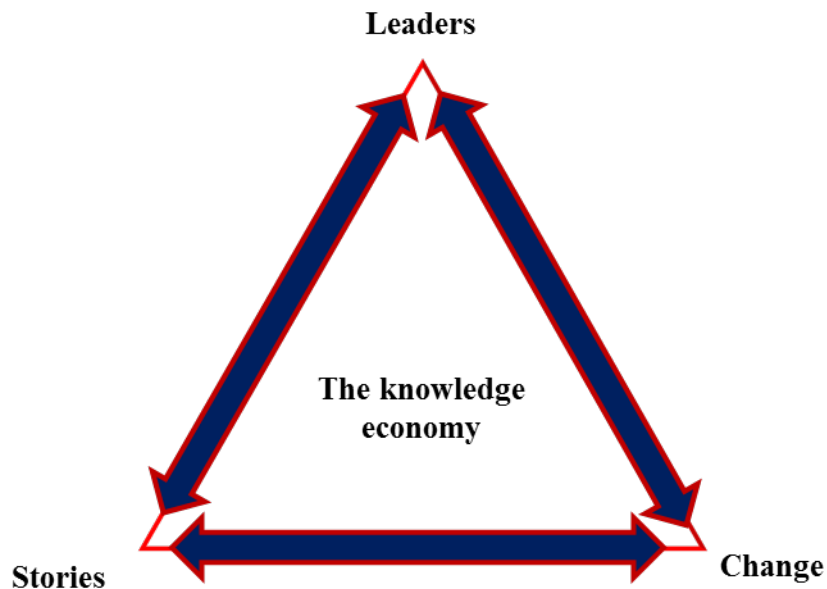


Figure 2: The literature focus of the study (adapted from Denning, 2011; Kotter, 1995; Gabriel, 2000; Hiatt, 2007)

▪ The Knowledge Economy

The knowledge economy, defined by the OECD (1996) as the systematic production, distribution, and creation of knowledge within society, has challenged the organisation in terms of integrating the organisational people, processes, and technological capabilities to enable growth and prosperity in the future. Traditionally, organisations were defined according to the Newtonian definition, which holds that organisations are machines and systems that come together to solve problems in a predictable universe (Wheatley, 2006). This implies that organisational success is judged according to the criteria of stability and predictability (Lawler & Worley, 2009). Ulrich and Smallwood (2009) describe traditional organisations in terms of the roles (people), rules, and routines (processes) that govern and control organisational practices. Organisational practices accentuate objectives, plans, and standards, focusing on procedures that inform the top-down relationships that exist within the organisation and, ultimately, the products/services that the organisation delivers (Veldsman, 2011).

Champy (2009) is of the opinion that the traditional delivery models of the organisation have become outdated in the knowledge economy. In order to survive, organisations will have to rethink the traditional strategies that were successful in the past. New role players, such as the BRIC economy (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) have brought a different type of

challenge to the organisation, which is no longer just competing against competitors in the same industry, but rather in a global village that is innovative, faster, and more efficient than ever before (Champy, 2009; Greenhaus, Callahan & Godshalk, 1999). In contrast to the traditional view, knowledge economy organisations focus on vision, mission, mantra, and philosophy, with a more established and diversified workforce that informs the multi-directional relationships that define the culture and offering that the organisation brings to the global marketplace (Veldsman, 2011).

Different trends will inform the knowledge economy organisation and will demand a responsive organisational model that is equipped to navigate the organisation across the waters of change ((Britton, 2010, Gartner, 2010). These trends and their impact on organisations are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Trends that impact knowledge economy organisations (Veldsman, 2011; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009)

Trend	Impact on the organisation
Environmental complexity demands a proactive and responsive organisational design that is flexible and adaptable to market requirements.	Organisations need to build internal change capability that will empower and enable continuous change.
Organisations will become rich in terms of people diversity, structure, activities, processes, and culture, and no single leader will be able to understand the organisation in its entirety.	Organisations will become holistic entities, with all levels contributing towards the future direction of the organisation. Culture, rather than processes, will drive performance.
There is no reality that leaders can build on – organisations are constructing reality on a continuous basis.	Reality will be constantly adjusted and leveraged, based on organisational identity – " <i>who we are</i> " will become more important than " <i>what we do.</i> "
The people of the organisation are tasked with building the new organisation in terms of its history and organisational identity.	In order to facilitate the future of the organisation, the past needs to be taken into account by crafting a future that aligns with the identity of the organisation.
People affect, influence, and react to one another in terms of the width and breadth of their relationships.	Leadership and management will become relationship-based, and inclusive business practices will become the norm.

In summary, organisational models that have governed the success of the traditional hierarchy and role-based organisation, as described by Wheatley (2006), have become

outdated, and the criteria for organisational success have changed dramatically. Organisations need to change, as the new world demands organisations that are agile, fit for purpose, and change competent if they are to survive in the future (Champy, 2009).

- **Organisational change**

Due to the size, complexity, and the speed of change, organisations can no longer rely on pockets of excellence that will bring about minimal change (Canton, 2006). With organisations being described as hyper-turbulent (McCann & Selsky, 1984; Selsky, Goes & Ouz, 2007) and high-velocity structures of dynamic complexity (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), organisational change initiatives need to move away from the notion of planning change to an approach that facilitates change from within the system (Seel, 2000). Large-scale people involvement is gaining momentum in organisational change literature as the speed and complexity of change demand an inclusive approach to facilitating sustainable organisational change (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Karp, 2004). Organisations will need to shift their change approaches to building internal change capability that will facilitate change on a continuous basis within the organisation as opposed to a stop-start process that, at best, yields minimal return on investment (Canton, 2006; Porras & Robertson, 1992). King and Wright (2007) state that three key components need to be visible in organisations to enable internal change capability and build sustainable change practices into the future:

- **Component 1:** The establishment of an enterprise-wide change network

This entails building the ability to sustain change that will gain momentum across the enterprise and enabling business units to partake in changing the business activities, together with the right skills and tools to manage change projects.

- **Component 2:** A change management training curriculum for all employees

All employees need to be equipped with the tools and techniques to manage the change process.

- **Component 3:** Coaching and consulting support in the management of change.

Change capability has become a competitive advantage, ensuring that all employees within the organisation are equipped and tasked with becoming agents of change (Seel, 2000).

Becoming change competent requires organisations to move away from the traditional paradigms that informed stop-start change approaches, and start referring to a change-capable business practice, as proposed by Lawler & Worley (2009) and illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Traditional organisational practices that need to be revisited to enable change capability

Traditional practice:	Change-capable practice:
1. Strategy:	1. Strategising:

Environment and industry structures were stable and evaluated on an annual basis.	Possible future scenarios are continuously analysed to ensure immediate response to environmental needs.
Seeking one sustainable competitive advantage; a “keep on doing what we are good at” mindset.	A series of competitive advantages that require living much closer to the moment and any small window of opportunity that presents itself.
Culture is a constraint to change as culture implies the way things are done, the activities engaged in, and how the organisation goes about doing business.	Identity is an enabler of change. Organisational actions are congruent with the identity of the organisation, regardless of what they are currently focusing on.
2. Competence	3. Creating and adding value
Organisations ask questions regarding what they do well and how they make money.	Organisations ask what they need to learn to be able to be successful tomorrow and how to go about developing that capability for the future, today.
4. Design	4. Designing
Structures are hierarchical and job descriptions indicate what employees need to do on a daily basis.	Structures are adaptable and ask employees to see what needs to be done.
Information silos and top-down ownership.	Information transparency and dual ownership.
Top-down authority and decision-making.	Improvisation, innovation, and initiative.
Leaders are heroes.	Leadership is a team sport.
Rewards jobs and seniority.	Rewards skill and performance.

In essence, change-capable organisations display the following characteristics that will govern the thinking in the knowledge economy thinking regarding business models and approaches to the future (Thompson, 2008):

- The active management of change as a pro-active capability will influence and be influenced by the environment across all levels of the organisation;
- Investing in building organisational social capability, without regards for rank or title;
- Acknowledging the best and worst of the change history of the organisation;

- Celebrating the strengths of the organisation across the hierarchy; and
- Accepting conflict as a part of creating change, and focusing on the management of energy as opposed to managing conflict.

Building change capability, at both an individual and organisational level, is dependent on the internalisation of the change through the leaders of the organisation: leaders that walk the talk and create a psychologically safe atmosphere for their people during times of change (Herscovitach & Meyer, 2002). Bass and Avolio (1994) state that organisational change can only be accomplished through the persuasive power of the leaders that drive the process, accept responsibility for the change, and drive the change agenda across the organisation.

- **The role of leaders as drivers of organisational change**

The role that leaders needs to play during change efforts has been recognised by numerous researchers (Appelbaum & Wohl, 2000; Potter, 2001; Chapman, 2002; Graetz, 2000). Kouzes and Pousner (2009) state that leaders are the custodians of the future, and that they are tasked with the solemn duty to leave the organisation in a better position than that in which it found them. The following section will focus on leaders within the context of the knowledge economy, and will discuss leaders as the foundation for enabling successful organisational change.

- **An overview of the leadership construct**

Nahavandi (2009) states that leadership can be categorised into three distinct eras over the past century: the trait era (1800s – 1940s) that perceived leaders to be born as opposed to moulded and created through experience, the behaviouristic era (Mid 1940s-1970s) which focused on the behaviours which define a leader, and the contingency era (1960s to present) which focuses more on a situational leadership style that measures the effectiveness of leaders within the context of the situational demands. Leadership has been defined by numerous researchers across the literature, and various leadership frameworks exist, as summarised in Table 3 (Kerfoot, 1999; McDermott, 2010; Nahavandhi, 2009; Parsell & Bligh, 2000).

Table 3: Leadership models and definitions (adapted from McDermott, 2010):

Leadership model	Theorist	Focus
Servant leadership	(Greenleaf, 1977)	Leadership serves others through a primary motivation that is focused on helping others.
Transformational Leadership Model	(Burns, 1978)	Collaborative leadership approach of mutual motivation to achieving higher order goals.
The Eight-stage Process of	(Kotter, 2008)	An eight-step process for leading

Change Leadership Model		change in organisations.
Leadership-commitment Model	(Kouzes & Pousner, 1987)	A five-step leader model focusing on engagement, vision, and enablement.
Principle-centred Leadership Model	(Covey, 2004)	Leadership is focused on trust, empowerment, and alignment.
Leader-Follower Relationship Model	(Rost, 1991)	Shifting the leadership paradigm to one that is relationship-based.
The Relational Leadership Model	(Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 1998)	Leadership based on a trusting relationship between leader and followers.
Situational Leadership Model	(Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2007)	Adapting of leadership style according to follower maturity.

As described in Table 3 above, the 1980s saw a fundamental shift in leadership focus: incorporating aspects of change, followership and inclusivity, which established leaders as the custodians of organisational change (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Smit & Carstens, 2003). In the knowledge economy, the essence of leadership lies in change, i.e. leaders' ability to create sustainable change practices within the organisation (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Change competence, or the ability to create sustainable change, has become a vital capability that leaders need to possess in order to ensure the longevity of the organisation in the knowledge economy (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

The 21st century has placed a new challenge on leadership's doorstep: a move from previous autocratic models of control to a contemporary model that focuses on teamwork and engagement (Dannhauser, 2007). Knowledge economy leaders need to become a key component of the system, be involved with their followers, and practise a relationship-based leadership style that facilitates the change process from within the organisational system (Griffin & Stacey, 2005). This perspective challenges organisational leaders to adopt a collaborative leadership style that facilitates change as opposed to top-down change enforcement approaches that tend to leave employees uninspired, disengaged, and demotivated (Mor-Barak, 2005; Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010).

○ **Leaders as change facilitators within the knowledge economy**

Historically, leaders have been to blame for the inability to facilitate sustainable organisational change for the following reasons (Beer, 1999):

- Leaders crafted unclear strategies and conflicting priorities, resulting in employees not buying into the change or understanding the need for change;

- Ineffective leadership teams directed the change according to their own personal agendas;
- Laissez-faire leadership styles waited for change to happen as opposed to pro-actively making the change happen in the organisation;
- Poor co-ordination and teamwork across the key interfaces deflated the change energy of the organisation;
- Poor vertical communication from the leader left employees uninspired, demotivated, and resistant to the idea of change; and
- Inadequate leadership skills throughout the organisation left employees uncertain and unable to deal with the additional pressure of change.

Key to past failures is the notion of the leader standing outside of the system and aiming to create change as opposed to mobilising the existing energy within the organisation. Leaders, if they are to be successful at facilitating change from within the system, need to adopt an approach that is collaborative and inclusive and which builds, supports, and rewards the establishment of internal change capability (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). Cockerel (2009) states that leaders should change their language so that “the organisation” becomes “our organisation,” “organisational success” becomes “our success,” and “the customers” becomes “our customers.” Building change capability implies that leaders fulfil different roles at different levels, which implies the fulfilling of different responsibilities during the change process (Katzenbach & Khan, 2009), as described in Table 4.

Table 4: Leaders' responsibilities during change journeys (Katzenbach & Khan, 2009, Schein, 2004)

Leaders' role:	Change leaders' responsibility:
Strategically: The leader as visionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders need to articulate and communicate the future that they want to see for followers. ▪ Considering the path and what actions are required is essential.
Behaviourally: The leader as role model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Followers will look to the leader to see what behaviour is expected and even rewarded in the future.
Operationally: The leader as reinforcer of the change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It needs to be clear what the leaders are rewarding and what behaviours are crucial to organisational success in the new world.

In summary, leaders need to adopt new approaches to facilitate the enablement of change competence within the organisation. This implies a collaborative approach to organisational change; an inclusive leadership style, and the leader being a facilitator of the change from

within the system. Stories have been identified as one of the most valuable tools in the leader's toolbox (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Thomas, 2002), and the past five years have seen a renewed interest in leadership narrative within organisations (Girard & Lambert, 2007). The stories used by leaders during the change process enable followers to believe in the transformation that the organisation is trying to accomplish and allow them to become part of the change process (Simmons, 2006). Stories relay vision, relate behavioural values, and communicates with employees in a way that makes them part of the process – all qualities that define change leaders in knowledge economy organisations (Adamson, Pine, Van Steenhoven & Kroupa, 2006; Driscoll & McKee, 2006; Mconkie & Boss, 1994).

○ **Leaders as storytellers in the knowledge economy**

Gabriel (2000) states that leaders such as CEOs, poets, novelists, and kings have used stories throughout history to unite, inspire, and entertain tribes and organisations. Stories have the power to unite and call ordinary citizens to action (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). Leaders such as Lincoln and Reagan used stories to share a message that united and inspired a nation to share the American dream (Harbin and Humphrey, 2010). Stories provide individuals with a sense of continuity, a feeling that the journey is achievable, and includes them in the story-crafting process (Boal & Schultz, 2007). Stories have become relevant in knowledge economy organisations that strive for two-way communication that fosters collaboration and meaningful contributions from across the organisational hierarchy (Denning, 2006). Change leaders are able to use stories to foster sustainable change competence that changes the organisational philosophy due to the co-creational nature of stories that enable the following during the change process (Bate, 2004; Flock, 2006, Vaughn, 2009):

- Personal awareness and understanding for the individual within the larger change journey;
- A community narrative where everyone in the organisation belongs;
- A counter-narrative that speaks of a better future;
- Commitments that are translated into joint action and forward movement and, more importantly, keep the change momentum going;

Historically, leaders have relied upon the use of stories to create an organisational community across the boundaries of language, race, age, or cultural context (Hopen, 2006; Sanetz & Maydoney, 2003). Leaders have used stories to achieve a number of business outcomes, such as improved productivity (Gill, 2009), creating a knowledge-based culture (McClellan, 2006), crafting believable stories of the future (Denning, 2011), and retaining talent within the organisation (Gill, 2009). Stories have become part of the change leader's repertoire and the official organisational truth that informs and drives the culture of the organisation through the conversations, symbols, and rituals that stories describe (Marra & Holmes, 2005). In the postmodern world, organisations need to take their stories seriously, as they will influence and drive organisational culture as employees co-create the organisational story and philosophy of the future.

▪ **An introduction to storytelling**

Gabriel (1991) defines stories as events that, over time, become charged with significance as they are retold and remembered by individuals. Boje (1991) views stories as the institutional memory system that ties together single strands of narrative spanning across characters and ranks (Gabriel, 2000). These stories connect us, they make our daily lives meaningful, and they make the characters come alive (Boje & Dennehy, 1993). Stories are created, transformed, tested, and sustained, and they shape the existence of the organisation (Gabriel, 2000). . Peirano-Vejo and Stablein (2009) state that organisations can be defined in terms of the oral and written stories that build, reinforce, and break down the organisations that we live in. Storytelling can be described as the process of:

- constructing a narrative identity of the people and the culture within a community (Ball-Rokeach, Kim & Matei, 2001);
- orally communicating beliefs, personal histories, and life ideas (Groce, 2004); and
- relating information pertaining to occurrences or a course of events (Corey, 2005).

Postmodernism sees stories everywhere and in everything (Gabriel, 2000). This means that stories are hidden in every text, document, conversation, report, performance appraisal, theory, and even in silence, as the absence of a story is a story in itself (Gabriel, 2000). Stories are told within the context of the storyteller and, as such, can be classified into different patterns of stories, such as events, beliefs, thematic patterns of morality, truth, and metaphor, and patterns of consequences describing decisions and their subsequent impact (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). The relevance of stories within the organisational context and their role in making sense of organisations have been emphasised by a number of researchers (Boje, 1991; Dennehy, 1999; Kaye, 1996). Within knowledge economy organisations, stories are embedded in the culture and the DNA of organisational identity and, as such, need to be consciously created and tailored by leaders if they are to create sustainable change practices (Gabriel, 2000).

○ **Stories in organisations**

Inevitably, every organisation is telling a story and is constantly going through the process of creating stories, tailoring existing stories, and writing the history and future of the organisation. Storytelling allows individuals to share their opinions and shape their own ideas, and encourages commitment to organisational goals through a collaborative story, involving each individual in the organisation and shifting the language narrative that will facilitate the journey (Prusak, 2001). Stories occur in the conversations that employees have with each other on a daily basis and, in essence, the change process can only be facilitated if the conversations are changed (Johnson & Scholes, 2002; Seel, 2000). Corporate stories are cognitive repositories of mapped ideas and stored information (Wilkins, 1978). Boje (1991) views stories in organisations as the institutional memory system, recreating the past based upon the present. Stories are multi-authored and are continuously unfolding as they relate to other organisational members (Gabriel, 2000). Vaughn (2009) states that the organisational

memory system is shaped by organisational experiences that are recounted socially through all levels of the organisation, which will serve as a guiding force for decisions, actions, and individual assumptions going forward. Stories contain the elements of energy and experience that stir action and motivate people to change (Christie, 2009, Denning, 2011, Vaughn, 2009). The importance of stories lies in the necessity of the collaborative effort to create shared meanings and give life to the knowledge of the organisation (Boal & Schultz, 2007). As such, stories become embedded in the culture and sub-cultures of the organisation and will focus on the organisation's triumphs and tribulations, ultimately becoming the philosophy of who the organisation is and what it stands for (Gabriel, 2000). Stephens (2009) states that organisational stories are told about real people and describe the philosophy of the organisation through artefacts that are common knowledge. These stories are taken seriously by the members of the organisation and ultimately inform the psychological contract that binds employees to the organisational philosophy. Stories are part of the DNA of the organisation, which implies that if the organisation is to be changed by the change leader from within the system, the stories that the knowledge economy organisation tells need to be changed, co-created, and retold if organisations are to weather the coming storm of change.

THE INTEGRATION OF LEADERS, STORIES, AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

In summary, the knowledge economy demands that organisational practices become agile, responsive, and flexible if the organisation is to become sustainable and change-capable. The building of internal change capability and enabling the organisation to deal with the complexity and speed of the knowledge economy change has brought a new challenge to the change leader. Inclusive and collaborative leadership styles that enable a system-wide approach to facilitating organisational change from within the organisation have become a necessity in the knowledge economy. Stories are embedded in the culture of the organisation, thereby implying that the leaders will have to change the stories if they are to successfully change the organisation to become fit for the future.

As such, the study aimed to explore the leaders' stories as part of a change process and answer the following research questions:

1. What are the stories that leaders tell during organisational change?
2. Do leaders find personal meaning in the stories that they tell?

The following section will discuss the research design and the findings obtained from the qualitative narrative inquiry as the researcher aimed to understand the stories that leaders tell during a large-scale organisational change project.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach

The research was approached within the constructivist paradigm through a qualitative research approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the stories leaders tell during organisational change and the personal meaning they derive from the change stories. The study focused on a defined critical event, one research setting within a time, place, and milieu, as described by Webster and Mertova (2007), in order to gain a deeper understanding of multiple leaders' stories.

The research strategy

The researcher adopted a narrative inquiry strategy to explore the research questions, as narrative inquiry allows for the sense-making of experience within a set time, place, and milieu, which, according to Connely and Clandinin (2006), is essential in a study of stories. The narrative inquiry research strategy was conducted within the constructivist paradigm, which allowed the researcher to explore the experiences of the study participants, not for their factual value, but with a focus on the meaning that is conveyed and co-created through the story experience (Talitwala, 2005).

The research method

The following section will discuss the research in light of the research setting, the role of the researcher, and the approach to collecting and analysing quality data.

Research setting

The study was conducted within a global organisation in the financial sector that had initiated a transformational project with the mandate to build the organisation of the future from a people, processes, and technology perspective. The project had been divided into seven phases, to be implemented over an estimated seven-year period. The research focused on the second phase of the project, which was to lay the foundational technological building blocks for the seven-year journey. The project team consisted of 480 individuals representing multiple nationalities and organisations that had been contracted to deliver the project.

Entrée and research roles

The researcher performed a dual role related to the research environment – as part of the project team in the role of a change management practitioner, and also as researcher and collector of leaders' stories. The research was conducted with the support of the senior project management structure, and was utilised as part of a storytelling initiative that was conducted in an attempt to make the change meaningful to the organisation by telling the story of the future and making the people believe in the vision of the project.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method, as described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), was utilised to select participants based upon the following criteria:

- Representation from all the different organisations that the project team was comprised of;
- Participants had to be senior enough to influence strategy within the organisation; and
- Participants had to be responsible to tell the story to their respective teams.

Furthermore, convenience sampling methods as used by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) were applied in an attempt to choose participants who were both willing and available to partake in the research. The six leaders that formed part of the research study are described in Table 5.

Table 5: The research sample

	Representing area:	Level:	Representative of:	Gender	Home Language
Leader 1	People	Middle management	Consulting firm	Female	Afrikaans
Leader 2	Project delivery	Senior management	Consulting firm	Female	English
Leader 3	Technology	Senior management	Permanent employee	Male	Afrikaans
Leader 4	Project	Senior management	Permanent employee	Female	English
Leader 5	Process	Middle management	Permanent employee	Male	Afrikaans
Leader 6	Technology	Middle management	Permanent employee	Male	English

Data collection methods

A combination of the following data collection methods was used to collect the leaders' stories:

- Informal conversations with the project team were used to identify narrative pillars as input into the interview guide (Riesmann, 2005);
- The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with sample participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992);

- The researcher explored formal project documentation such as scope, business case, and requirements definitions, feedback reports, formal communication media, and strategy documents (Gravetter & Forzano, 2006); and
- Field notes were kept, which recorded informal conversations held with project team members and observations by the researcher during the research (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Recording of data

Informal conversations were captured according to a matrix that listed information according to the identified narrative pillars and transcribed accordingly. With the permission of the participants, the stories were captured and recorded via electronic recording mechanisms to allow the researcher to revisit the data. Data were transcribed and analysed within the context of collected field notes and observations made during the interview process.

Data analysis

Within narrative inquiry, the researcher used thematic network analysis to analyse and derive meaningful themes from the data. Thematic network analysis is the process of identifying recurring themes in the data (Talitwala, 2005) through the identification of lower-order premises evident in the research, obtaining abstract principles, and capturing themes related to the whole of the text (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This implies that the researcher identifies a global theme that is informed by recurring categories within the data, and subsequently explores each category in relation to the sub-themes related to that category. Thematic network analysis allowed the researcher to explore the relationships between the categorical themes and the sub-themes that occurred in the narrative data, and provided the opportunity to view the data set from a holistic perspective, which is crucial in the storytelling context.

Furthermore, the researcher used a coding framework that informed the structure of the thematic network analysis, as used by Hayes (2000) and Mohan and Uys (2006). Material was coded by identifying repetitions and phrases that represented the topics and patterns (Talitwala, 2005). Data were coded in three phases (Neumann, 2000):

- Open coding: This is the process of bringing themes from inside the data to the surface, which is the first step in trying to understand and condense the data into categories. The researcher studied the informal interviews and identified terms and phrases that were used often by the participants.
- Axial coding: The focus shifts to the coded themes and new ideas emerge in this phase of coding, which are noted by the researcher. Some key themes are studied in more depth, while others are dropped. In the current study, the researcher categorised themes and added themes obtained from the supporting documentation and journals studied;
- Selective coding: Themes are reorganised and select cases are used to illustrate comparisons and contrasts between themes. Major themes are built and studied in depth. Themes were arranged according to the thematic data analysis framework as discussed below and refined according to the patterns identified during the coding process:

arranging themes in a global theme with a sub-network of organising themes and basic themes.

The rigour and quality of the research project

Narrative inquiry does not aim to tell the story of one collected truth, but rather focuses on multiple truths, multiple versions of the truth, and different interpretations of what truth is. Within narrative research, validity refers to the extent of certainty that the methods and approaches to research provide (Amsterdam & Bruner, 2000; Geelan, 2003; Huberman, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1988; Riesmann, 1993). The onus is on the researcher to conduct the study in a way that allows for collection, recording, and accessing of data in such a way that it can be understood, used, analysed, and audited by the reader and members of the scientific community (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Polkinghorne (1988) states that narrative research cannot state truth, as truth is relative to the story of the participant and cannot be viewed as the extent to which a narrative relates to factual reality. Thus, narrative research should adhere to the criteria of believability: whether the research depicts a believable account of the truth as told by the individual (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

From a reliability perspective, narrative refers to the dependability of the data and the process (Polkinghorne, 1988). A narrative does not provide one truth, but rather pinpoints the view of one individual of his/her subjective experience and perception of the truth. Within the context of the current study, the reliability and validity of the study were ensured as follows with reference to the works of Webster and Mertova (2007); Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Polkinghorne (1988):

- The believability of the participant's story was validated with other participants who were familiar with the environment, with the research subject's consent;
- An external observer was used, with the participants' consent, to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the captured stories;
- Throughout the research, the researcher used an interview guide to support consistency of the interviews as well as the verification of experiences with the participants in an attempt to accurately retell their stories;
- Participants were allowed to remove any piece of story evidence that they deemed to be inappropriate in the context of the story;
- Responses were explored through the interaction between the researcher and the storyteller in an attempt to attain deeper levels of abstraction and understand the holistic context of the narrative;
- All decisions taken by the researcher in terms of the research study were documented and described in the manuscript to ensure the transferability of the study in the future; and

- The researcher in his role as researcher had the opportunity to be part of the project and thus had continuous access to the participants and the opportunity to validate the stories that participants told over time.

The quality and rigour of the study was taken into consideration with regard to the following ethical implications that were considered by the researcher during the course of the research study:

Ethical considerations

The researcher was granted ethical clearance by the participating academic institution to conduct the research study. The organisation provided the researcher with permission and allowed the spend time with the leaders to obtain their stories. Ethical considerations, as described by Gravetter and Forzano (2006), were:

- Informed consent

Participants were contacted, and the aim of the study was explained before any interviews were conducted. Participants were then asked to provide written consent to participate in the study. Informed consent was also obtained from the project owner and the organisation.

- No harm

Stories that went deep into the personal lives of the participants and fell outside of the scope of practice of the researcher were referred to a clinical psychologist who was overseeing the study in a professional capacity.

- Confidentiality

The interviews were conducted on a floor separate to where the project team sat in the building, and data were stored securely.

- Anonymity

The anonymity of participants was respected at all times during the research and reporting process, and all feedback was reported using pseudonyms.

Reporting

In the next section, reporting of the research findings will be discussed in light of the chosen research paradigm, design, and literature. All identifying references to the project and participants have been removed and the alias *Project Alpha* will be used to refer to the research setting. Participants were allocated pseudonyms and will be referred to as Leader 1, 2, etc. in order to ensure anonymity in the reporting.

FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to explore the stories that leaders tell during a large-scale organisational change effort through a qualitative narrative inquiry. The findings will be presented as follows:

1. What are the stories that leaders tell during organisational change?
2. Do leaders find meaning in their stories?
3. What themes of meaning exist within the leaders' stories?

1. What are the stories that leaders tell during organisational change?

The study explored the different stories told by leaders during the change process, and concluded that leaders tell different types of stories during different phases of the organisational change process to achieve different outcomes (Gabriel, 2000). As suggested by Denning (2011), the story type was influenced by the following factors:

- Target audience: To whom was the leader speaking?
- Desired outcome: What did the leader aim to achieve with the story?
- Timing: When was the story told?

Due to the interconnected nature of stories, story types are often combined and retold with the emphasis on different elements of the same story at different stages of the change process (Bluck & Habermas, 2000). The story types identified during the research study are congruent with those referred to in the literature (Boje, 2001; Christie, 2009; Denning, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007) and are detailed below in Table 6, together with the outcomes that the story types were aiming to achieve:

Table 6: The stories that leaders tell during organisational change

Leadership story	Aim of the story	Action outcome of the story
Vision story	Aims to explain the future direction of the organisation.	Organisational commitment and employee buy-in into the future of the organisation.
Identity story	To illustrate the past, present, and future of the organisation.	Creates a sense of belonging in the identity of the organisation and creates a community within the organisational culture.
Significance story	To explain the significance of change and agility in the competitive market – how the organisation will enable growth and competitive	A sense of purpose within the organisation, enabling employees to move along the change curve in accordance with the change strategy.

	advantage through change into the future.	Employees feel that they are contributing to a greater outcome.
Collaboration story	To communicate how the organisation can only grow and change by everyone working together and facing the challenges as a unit.	A sense of belonging and a cultural shift. Employees feel that “we are all in this together” and that this can only be done by standing together.
Picture metaphor story	To illustrate how the change fits into the bigger picture of the organisation and the future that the organisation is aiming to achieve. This is usually done using a metaphor that is relevant and familiar to the members of an organisation.	Employees understanding the project and the holistic picture of the organisation of the future.

Effective stories need to adhere to the criteria of believability and authenticity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and, therefore the second research question aimed to explore whether leaders themselves find meaning within the different stories that they tell during the change process.

2. Do leaders find meaning in their stories?

The credibility of leaders’ stories is dependent on the sense of authenticity and resonance that stories create with those fortunate enough to hear the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 2005). Stories, especially during the change process, are personal, as the nature of the move along the change curve is painful and intimate (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As such, the study concluded that, in order to create movement within organisations, leaders need to tell a believable story that inspires meaning within their own personal change journey before being able to navigate a sustainable and believable change journey for the organisation. This implies that leaders need to find meaning within their own stories of change before being able to tell the stories that will change the organisation.

This finding is based upon the following themes, presented in Table 7, which became evident in the stories that the leaders told, and provided a personal insight into the stories during the storytelling process:

Table 7: Findings based upon the categories of meaning identified in the story themes

Story Theme	Categories of meaning identified from the story themes
Significance and impact (Boje, 1991)	Stories promote the belonging and contribution to a higher cause, which implicates how the individual can find meaning in being part of a bigger outcome. Leaders spoke about what it meant for them personally to be part of something bigger, to be part of creating a new future, and to be responsible for driving this initiative.
Personal impact and challenge (Denning, 2011; Gabriel, 2000)	Stories are personal for the leaders with reference to how the stories influenced who they were, either in their professional capacity or with regard to the sacrifices they had to make in their personal lives to be part of the story. Leaders spoke about not seeing their family, and shared some of the project artefacts with their families so that they could understand what kept them away from home.
Achievement and identity (Gabriel, 2000)	Stories create personal meaning. Leaders told stories of how they have grown during the change process and how being part of the journey was personal – defining who they were by being part of the story and achieving success. Leaders all mentioned personal growth during the stories, not just professionally, but learning about who they were as leaders, how to interact with diversity, and become more robust human beings.

During the course of the study, it became evident that leaders themselves at times did not realise the impact that the stories have on their lives (Boje, 1991) and that only through telling the story they became aware of what the story meant to them on a personal level. It also became clear that leaders did not realise the impact that their stories had on followers. This became evident during one of the informal discussions when a participant commented: “I am tired of the corridor terrorists who do not take responsibility for the impact that their words will have on junior staff.”

In summary, leaders tell stories of vision, identity, significance, and collaboration, and they use picture metaphors during the change process to achieve different action outcomes at different points in time (Boje, 2001; Christie, 2009; Denning, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). On a personal level, the stories also create different abstractions of meaning for the leaders that become evident through the storytelling process. However, the lack of leaders’ awareness of the impact and power that their stories have on the environment with reference to junior staff also became clear during the course of the study.

3. The themes of meaning that exist within the leaders' stories

The collected story types and the meaning derived from the story themes as discussed above and listed in Tables 6 and 7 were further studied through thematic network analysis, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to attain a deeper level of abstraction and explore the underlying themes of stories. The purpose of this analysis was to gain a deeper understanding of the leaders' stories by delving into the global theme, categorical themes, and sub-themes that informed the types and personal meaning that leaders found within the stories. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to view the data as one coherent story (global theme) comprised of categorical themes and sub-themes that gave meaning and context to the global story. The framework is illustrated in Figure 3 below:



Figure 3: Stories obtained from the data thematic network analysis

The stories are discussed in light of the global theme, categorical theme, and sub-theme per category.

Global Story: Changing the “heart” of the organisation

Participants in the study all spoke about Project Alpha with the same passion, pride, and fondness, which signified their personal attachment to the project. Leaders all spoke about the impact that the project will have on people’s lives, impacting a staff compliment of 17 000 nationally and a client base of millions of South Africans. Technologically, the project

was replacing the core operating model of the organisation, “taking out the heart of the organisation and replacing it mid-flight” (Leader 4). The project was the trigger event for an initiative that the organisation did not anticipate: a complete change in the culture of the organisation, including customer service and, ultimately, the overall strategy of the organisation to become a leader amongst emerging markets.

Within the context of changing the heart of the organisation, certain categorical themes emerged from the data. These will be discussed in relation to the relevant sub-themes that informed and provided meaning to the stories derived from the research.

The significance of the project for the organisation

The project impacted 17 000 staff members nationally within a branch network of more than 100 branches and 17 business units across two internal divisions, which included IT and Business (derived from field notes). Despite the obvious impact of the project on the organisation – cost, staff to be trained, project size, and business units – the real impact was one that was not immediately visible to the members of the organisation: a cultural shift in the way the organisation thought about service and work and, ultimately, the organisational identity. This very traditional, hierarchical organisation was challenged in a number of areas that were identified through the leaders’ stories:

- Leadership: Are the traditional leadership styles and models in the hierarchical organisation going to be able to deliver the project and bring the people along the change curve?
- The challenge of aligning different leadership teams at different levels across the organisation;
- The challenge of making difficult decisions and the impact of these decisions from a cost and people perspective;
- The tools and methodologies that the organisation had traditionally used to deliver projects were no longer applicable and able to deliver the significant project scope; and
- The traditional hierarchical structure of the organisation prohibited the fast decision-making and adaptability that the project demanded.

The following section will discuss the significance of the project with regards to the identified sub-themes.

▪ ***Organisational impact***

Participants in this study all spoke about Project Alpha, not as merely a project that will implement a change within the organisation, but as a “transformational initiative that will influence the way that the organisation thinks and the way we do our business” (Leader 3). The impact of the project was organisation-wide, with participants deriving significance and meaning from the way they were changing the organisation. This was evidenced by statements such as: “I really think that we are making an impression on the organisation

today" (Leader 2) and "You don't realise the impact until after you have implemented" (Leader 1). The essence of the project was captured by participants stating: "We are not just adding a system or a product, we are basically ripping out the engine of this organisation and replacing it with something new while we are still in flight" (Leader 3) and "We are unpacking the heart of the organisation by changing the way that we do business" (Leader 1). Leader 6 commented that they were delivering "a world class solution that has never been done before."

- ***Breaking down business silos and fostering relationships across divisions***

The project team was compiled from both the IT and the operational business environments (derived from field notes). The organisation in question had always run the two business units as separate entities, one with the purpose of running the business and the other playing the role of business enabler through the provision of systems and technology. Participants commented: "There was no sharing of information" (Leader 3) and "Look at the organisation and how it stands at the moment, it is very siloed" (Leader 6), referring to the interaction between the two divisions being limited to the operational dimension as opposed to strategic conversations.

Project Alpha demanded something completely different from what the organisation was used to: integrated teams that represented both areas of the organisation with completely different skill sets, project methodologies, and implementation histories that were being tasked with building a solution that was brand new and had never been attempted on this scale before (derived from field notes). Participants were of the opinion that "everybody needs to believe in it to make it happen" (Leader 2) and acknowledged that "We cannot do it by ourselves." "The technology team needs the functional team who, in turn, needs the business team" (Leader 1). The stories all spoke about the significance of the leadership sponsoring and supporting the project. Across the organisation, leaders joined forces to not only support, but also to drive co-operation between the different business units in the organisation. All the storytellers told a story of how different areas needed to start working together and forget about the disagreements that used to exist between different departments and the unnecessary competition that had raged for years (derived from field notes). "We actually had to change our mindsets in terms of how we develop solutions for the organisation, as we were so focused on silos in the past" (Leader, 3).

- ***Moving into uncharted waters – Challenges, and becoming the vehicle for change***

The storytellers stated that, "At the start of the project the organisation could not have foreseen the complexity and the size of the monster" (Leader 1) that they tried to tame. "It's a solution that will become less about technology; it will become less about a system but it will be about how people changed the way in which we operate" (Leader 2). As the project progressed, the leaders' stories turned to stories of frustration and disbelief as the organisation tried to use the project as a vehicle for a number of organisational initiatives: a new way of working for staff, business units that needed to collaborate and start working across divisional borders, leaders from different areas giving up control and power, and a restructure that was

initiated in an attempt to accommodate the project delivery. The project was in the limelight with every decision scrutinised by all stakeholders, every action questioned by IT, and a project team that was struggling to come to grips with the task they had to deliver. Team members felt the strain and said that “it was difficult to maintain motivation over such a long period of time” (Leader 1), the “immense complexity of this project makes it extremely difficult to get things right first time around” (Leader 1), and even that “if you can handle the challenges you face on this project, you can handle almost anything” (Leader 2). The team was inexperienced, not able to deal with the increasing complexity and, at times, not even equipped to deal with each other. “You've got different cultures, different international flavours, and different companies which all have their own little cultures” (Leader 6). Culture, team dynamics, and “running a medium-sized organisation” (Leader 1) within a global organisation was posing a different type of challenge to the organisation, requiring a different management style, “new tools and techniques” (Leader 5) that were adopted by an “inexperienced team with limited knowledge of the history of the organisation” (Leader 5), and trying to incorporate a vision that, at times, sounded like a wish list that was compiled by the business.

Laying the foundation for simplicity

The project aimed to make the lives of the end users simpler by providing an intuitive system that would allow them to work from one platform in the future, to have a single view of the customer across business units and, ultimately, become a customer-centred organisation that focuses on building relationships with their customers (derived from field notes). The significance of this statement can only be understood in relation to the following sub-themes of the stories that were told by the project leaders:

- ***The history of the organisation***

The organisation has a rich history that spans over 150 years and employs over 55 000 employees (derived from field notes). The workforce ranges from young graduate employees to employees who have been with the organisation for more than 50 years. The organisation has achieved a lot of success and has grown into a global role player in the financial industry, focusing on emerging markets such as Africa, Asia, and South America (derived from field notes).

From a leadership perspective, the organisation is very hierarchical, with the structure and reporting lines playing a key role in getting the job done. This has caused the organisation to develop and grow in silos, with different business units operating as their own businesses and, at times, losing touch with the overall strategy of the organisation and how the organisation delivers to its customers. A practical example of this is the story told of the experience of one of the project members: “Customer queries could not be resolved through one point of contact because the systems did not allow for a single view of the customer. This meant that customers had separate profiles within the same organisation, and no one business unit could provide an end-to-end view of who their customers were. This caused a lot of duplication, not only from a role and function perspective, but also with regards to what

was expected from our customers – submitting the same documents over and over for each new interaction with us" (Leader 5).

▪ ***Moving from a product- to a people-centred organisation***

The storytellers spoke about the enablement of a single view of the customer across the enterprise. Relationships and “know your customer” (Leader 4) processes had never been more important. One of the participants in the study commented: “Why, if I have already submitted all my documentation to open an account, do I need to resubmit my identification document when opening a new account? If the organisation can’t even keep my identity document secure, why should I trust it with my money?” (Leader, 3). The reality is that the complexity of the internal environment did not allow the sharing of information across the enterprise, as products and divisions operated within their own governance structures.

The mindset shift required was one of holistic thinking with regards to the “way in which we deliver and conduct our business” (Leader 5). The whole concept of customer experience came to the fore, and the storytellers all told of the system that would enable the “customer consultant to build a meaningful relationship” (Leader 3) with the customer through the information provided in the system. From a systems point of view, this demands flexibility and a system that provides “real-time and flexible information” (Leader 6). Participants spoke of a customer experience where you know your customers the moment they walk into your branch and you are able to sell them a better offering because you understand their holistic financial needs and have the opportunity to interact with them on a personal basis.

This approach would also impose a new way in which product packages would be put together for customers. Products needed to be combined into one “offering which could be customised to the client need” (Leader 5) and a background system able to support the customised offering bought by the customers. The offering approach meant that the one system had to support all products and be flexible enough to customise a unique financial solution for every customer. The customer consultants would have to be able to sell and make real-time decisions with a customer sitting in front of them and have the knowledge and expertise to do so. Moving the organisation to a people-centred way of thinking required a mindset shift with regard to “taking away some of the control from the areas” (Leader 1); “it’s a transformation of how we do things” (Leader 2), and “now you are forced to think of the organisation as a whole because the solution is consistent across the bank as opposed to just one specific area” (Leader 3).

Personal and Professional Growth Opportunity

The leader storytellers spoke about the project the way an artist speaks about his/her life’s work. Within the organisation, the project was seen as the one to be working on if you wished to grow your career, utilise new opportunities, and learn from an international project team consisting of experts in their respective fields.

- ***Career Opportunities***

Due to its unique nature, scope, and the prolific project profile, the project was perceived by many as the “project to be chosen for” (Leader 1) to fast-track and grow a career. The project leaders described the project as a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” (Leader 2) to gain skills and knowledge which, especially in the IT context, would enable team members to “open the doors internationally” (Leader 6).

Internally, the opportunities were also vast, with employees being promoted for good work and recognised and rewarded for their commitment to the project via internal reward programmes that were created specifically for this project. As the total project implementation would span numerous years, the question of succession planning and knowledge management came to the fore, with the continuity of the project being questioned.

The stories inevitably turned to the experience that project team members encountered on the project, the huge amount of new technologies and methodologies that the teams were exposed to, and the fact that “this is probably as big as anyone of us is ever going to see” (Leader 2). The team members felt that the project was “the opportunity to springboard with the organisation into the future” (Leader 5), as the skills and knowledge gained on this implementation were “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” (Leader 2) as organisations don’t “overhaul their inner workings every day” (Leader 1).

The storytellers spoke about the fact that delivering this project successfully had become a personal challenge: something more than just a project, but an opportunity to prove their skills and abilities to themselves and to the organisation. The project impacted each of the project members personally, taking time away from family and friends due to long hours spent at the office. The stories turned to sacrifice, with storytellers stating that “it took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to actually achieve this” (Leader 1). Some stated that “delivering this has become a personal challenge” (Leader 5), while others stated that, at times the only reason “I come to work is for my team” (Leader 5).

- ***Working with people from multiple cultures and nationalities***

All the storytellers spoke about the unique challenge and opportunity to work with people from other nationalities and cultures that the project provided. This sometimes posed unique challenges to the project team with regard to language, work ethics, and culture. Statements included: “The biggest learning on this project was with regards to teaming with the different people” (Leader 6) and “I have learnt a lot about the people that I have worked with and how to interact with people” (Leader 1). Some participants commented on the difficulties associated with “managing the expectations and perceptions of such a big team” (Leader 2). Besides the challenge of the project team not knowing one another, members came from different organisations and countries such as India, Germany, South Africa, and Russia.

The stories took a turn when relating how the team starting pulling together, “setting up some great relationships” (Leader 5). Participants spoke of the “energy that comes from everybody pulling together” (Leader 2) and “they all take what they do with personal pride” (Leader 6).

The leadership team employed a number of initiatives to enable the team to work together, such as “getting us all to sit together and get to know one another” (Leader 2) and setting up six-weekly sessions that incorporated the whole team in a face-to-face communication session. From a leadership and organisational perspective, this was significant, as the hierarchical structures at times did not foster the opportunity for bottom-up inclusion. From a broader perspective, the team even turned their attention to the rest of the organisation to provide input into what they were aiming to deliver. A change network with representatives across the enterprise was created to “get input from the end users – the people that will actually be using the system, to ensure that we provide them with something that they would want to use” (Leader 4).

The project took the first steps to a new way of delivering projects: multi-national teams that draw on global expertise while listening to the end users with regards to providing a solution that will make “a difference to ordinary South Africans, both customers and our staff” (Leader 6).

The Future

The final theme focused on the future of the organisation and the paradigm shift that was required to break down the silos in order to enable a holistic perspective of the organisation.

- ***Enabling a solution as opposed to delivering a project***

The stories inevitably returned to the organisation of the future and what this vision could entail. Sub-themes such as designing solutions that are “reusable and standardised” (Leader 5) continuously emerged, as the team had set out to design a system that is so intuitive and logical for the end user that they would not “even need training to be able to work” (Leader 3) effectively on the system. The leaders spoke about a vision of making things simpler for the organisation, making things easier for the staff, and improving the experience that the customer has when dealing with the organisation. The team dreamt about one platform – one front-end system that is integrated with all the other systems in the organisation. This implied that one staff consultant would only need to work off one user interface with a single view of the customer, and be able to comprehensively service the client through the use of one system. The team dreamt about being able to scale the solution to other parts of the organisation, being able to capture different areas of the market, and utilising new opportunities that the growing world of work provided.

A recurring story theme was the concept of developing an organisational solution as opposed to delivering a project. While this distinction may sound insignificant, the magnitude of the impact of this paradigm shift on the organisation cannot be underestimated. Decisions that were made during the course of the project had to be made with a journey in mind that would last for numerous years, often to the detriment of project timelines. “So it is almost going to become less about when the actual go-live is and more about the types of capabilities that will be delivered to the organisation over time” (Leader 2). Decisions were made with regards to “how we deliver such a significant scope” (Leader 1) and, at times, decisions were made that

would negatively influence the deadlines of the particular project phase in order to enable a successful solution down the line.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the stories that leaders tell during organisational change in an attempt to understand the following related to the leaders' stories:

- Do stories exist within knowledge economy organisations?
- Do leaders utilise stories during the change process?
- What types of stories do leaders tell during organisational change?
- Do they find personal meaning within the stories that they tell?

The study aimed to answer the questions stipulated above through a qualitative narrative inquiry that integrated the literature pertaining to the constructs of change, leaders, organisational storytelling, and knowledge economy organisations with the practical application of the research findings. In summary, the research found the following themes related to the data and relevant literature:

- Stories exist within the philosophy and culture of the organisation and have become more relevant in the knowledge economy where information overload has left employees feeling disengaged and demotivated (Boje, 1991; Denning, 2011; Gabriel, 2000);
- Leaders utilise stories during the change process. Whether they are consciously or unconsciously aware of the stories that they tell, stories are utilised to achieve movement within the organisation or at times drive the personal agenda of the leader (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Gabriel, 2000).
- Leaders tell different types of stories based upon the timing, audience, and desired outcome of the story. These stories include, but are not limited to, stories of vision, identity, significance, collaboration, and picture metaphors (Denning, 2011);
- Leaders need to go through the change process from a personal perspective if they are to tell stories that adhere to the criteria of believability and authenticity that will enable sustainable change practices (Hiatt, 2007). The study found that leaders themselves find meaning within their own stories through the themes of significance and impact, personal impact and challenge, achievement, and identity, which were evident in the collected stories.

The study thus agrees with the existing literature regarding the existence of stories within organisations (Boje, 1991; Denning, 2011; Gabriel, 2000), yet indicates that the fragments of narrative run far deeper than initially anticipated. The literature indicates that stories are part of organisational culture (Johnson & Scholes, 1998), but the current study shows that stories are core to the identity of the organisation. Stories enable change, as the nature of stories within constructivism implies movement and co-creation (Talitwala, 2005), but the current study confirms the notion that leaders often lack the self-awareness to realise the impact that their stories have on their followers. This implies that if the constructs of stories and leadership are to be studied, the question of leaders' maturity needs to be answered in order to determine whether leaders apply stories intentionally or unintentionally within the

organisation. The fact that leaders do utilise stories to achieve action outcomes, and tailor their stories to suit audience and environment cannot be disputed (Boje, 1991; Denning, 2011). The personal meaning that leaders ascribe to their stories became evident during the research process and, as such, the study agrees with Hiatt (2007) who states that leaders also need to go through the change themselves before being able to lead others along the change journey.

Based upon these findings, the following conclusions and recommendations for practice can be made:

Conclusions

Organisations are changing their business models to achieve competitive advantage through optimising the equation of people, processes, and technology within the knowledge economy. The role of the leader has changed, and the stories that leaders tell need to reflect the vision of the new organisation and provide the opportunity for their employees to make the change real and make the journey personal. Leaders need to change the stories of the organisation if they are to create sustainable change within the organisation whilst telling stories that speak to the philosophy of the organisation's identity: creating change that is congruent with who the organisation is and wants to become in the future.

Based upon the literature and the findings of the current research study, the following conclusions, as discussed in Table 8, can be derived:

Table 8: Conclusions from the literature and the data

Conclusions drawn from the literature	Conclusions drawn from the data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations are having to adapt to an ever-changing world (Champy, 2009; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009) • Leaders are responsible for leading effective and sustainable change within organisations (Hiatt, 2007) • If leaders themselves do not find personal meaning within the change, they cannot create authentic, sustainable change for their followers (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) • Leadership has shifted to inclusive practices that enable a flatter structure that “gets the whole system into the room” (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Nahavandhi, 2009; Smit & Carstens, 2003; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). • Stories exist within the organisational philosophy (Johnson & Scholes, 1998) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge economy demands the breaking down of business silos if the organisation is going to be competitive in the future • The knowledge economy demands a simplistic view of the future – making sense of the complexity of the environment through organisational identity • Leaders tell different types of stories at different points in time to facilitate change (vision, identity, significance, collaboration, picture) • Leaders themselves find meaning in the stories that they tell (significance and impact, personal impact and challenge, achievement and identity) • Leaders, at times, lack self-awareness and insight into the impact and power of their

Contribution of the study

The study aimed to contribute to the organisation, leaders, the field of Industrial Psychology, employees, and the researcher in the following manner:

- **Organisation:** The study contributes to the organisation through the discussion of trends that will inform knowledge economy organisations and promote the establishment of a sustainable and competitive organisational delivery model.
- **Leaders:** The study benefits leaders by providing insight and guidelines to creating meaningful change within the knowledge economy. The study highlights crucial competencies and skills that leaders need to acquire to enable change journeys within the organisation. This implies a different leadership style that focuses on inclusion, collaboration, and involvement of the whole system. The study further aims to create awareness of the impact that leaders' stories can have on the organisation and followers.
- **Industrial Psychology:** The study contributes to the field of Industrial Psychology through the proposed perspective of leadership in the future, the relevance of organisational philosophy during change journeys, and the impact that the knowledge economy will have on the organisation.
- **Employees:** The study contributes to employees within organisations by advising that leaders utilise a new leadership style that includes the individual voices of all employees, regardless of rank and title, during organisational change.
- **Researcher:** Delving into stories as part of the research project made the researcher gain deeper insight into his own change journey.

Recommendations for future research

Based upon the research findings discussed above, the following recommendations can be made that will enable knowledge economy organisations to become sustainable into the future and adhere to criteria of corporate citizenship, social responsibility, sustainability, and leading with integrity, as stipulated by the King 3 report:

- Organisations will have to develop internal change competence as part of their organisational philosophy to remain sustainable and competitive in the knowledge economy;
- Organisational stories will build the culture of the organisation based upon the past, the present, and the future, and leaders will need to tell stories that are congruent with the organisational identity if they are to facilitate change;
- Leaders should build a culture based upon the stories that they tell during the change process and employ inclusive leadership styles that foster organisational identity;
- Leaders will have to create purpose and significance for their employees in the organisational philosophy;

- Leaders will have to change the stories inherent to the DNA of the organisation in order to enable long-term organisational change whilst remaining true to the identity and philosophy of the organisation; and
- Leaders will have to change the organisation from within the system as opposed to a bottom-down change approach that produces minimalistic pockets of change excellence.

From a conceptual perspective, the opportunity exists to test and validate the hypotheses derived from the study. Furthermore, the opportunity exists to explore the stories from a follower perspective and determine whether the stories are understood and congruent with the intent of the leader telling the story. With reference to sampling, the researcher would recommend a detailed biographical element to the study that includes a biographical profile of the leader participants, which will provide the opportunity to explore whether cultural backgrounds influence the type of stories told and meaning that is derived from the leaders' stories.

Limitations

The study only focused on a single point in time and did not include a longitudinal component, which could have added value to the level of abstraction and depth of the data. The researcher was also limited to exploring the stories through the lenses of his own personal life story, and acknowledges the fact that the stories obtained from the data could have been vastly different if interpreted through the lens of another researcher.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, CONTRIBUTION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the conclusions, limitations, contributions, and recommendations applicable to the research. The conclusions drawn from the study will be integrated with the studied literature and discussed in light of the research findings. The study limitations will be discussed from both a literature and an empirical perspective. The contribution of the study will be discussed with reference to the field of Industrial Psychology, the organisation as focus point of the study, employees, knowledge economy leaders, and the researcher's own life story. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research as well as a perspective pertaining to the practical application of the research findings within knowledge economy organisations.

Research in the narrative tradition provides the researcher with the opportunity to co-create the stories that are studied within the applicable research environment. The leaders' stories, as discussed in Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four of the study were discussed from a third-person perspective in an attempt to ensure the integrity of the research study and provide an overview of the leaders' stories from their perspective whilst minimising the impact of the researcher on the co-creation of the narrative. However, in Chapter Five, in order to report on the conclusions obtained from the research, the researcher acknowledges his own influences within the research narrative and, as such, Chapter Five has a first-person perspective – allowing for the conclusions, limitations, recommendations and contributions of the study to be co-created both the researcher and the leaders who contributed to the research data.

Throughout the research process, I was challenged to explore my own story as part of the research, answering the question regarding to the meaning and motivation underlying my own story as well as the projections that my own lenses of the world, congruent with the constructivistic principles, provided. I had to acknowledge my own story, accept the lenses through which I see the world and, at times, realise the limitations in the way I see and interprets the world. Throughout the research, I had to find and acknowledge my own voice as part of the research process and realise

that I also had a story to tell, explore, and understand as a leader within a knowledge economy organisation.

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions will be discussed by referring to the literature and the empirical study, and will conclude with an integration of the literature with the empirical research in order to obtain a deeper level of understanding of the research study.

I entered the research environment playing a dualistic role: that of a researcher interested in answering the applicable research questions and also as a member of the team responsible for facilitating the leaders' stories that would enable the organisation to change into a knowledge economy organisation. From a literature perspective, this demanded an in-depth study of the following constructs in order to gain a deeper understanding of the literature pertaining to the existence of storytelling within organisations and whether leaders' utilise storytelling as a mechanism to enable sustainable, large-scale organisational change. The constructs applicable to the literature review are illustrated in Figure 5.1.

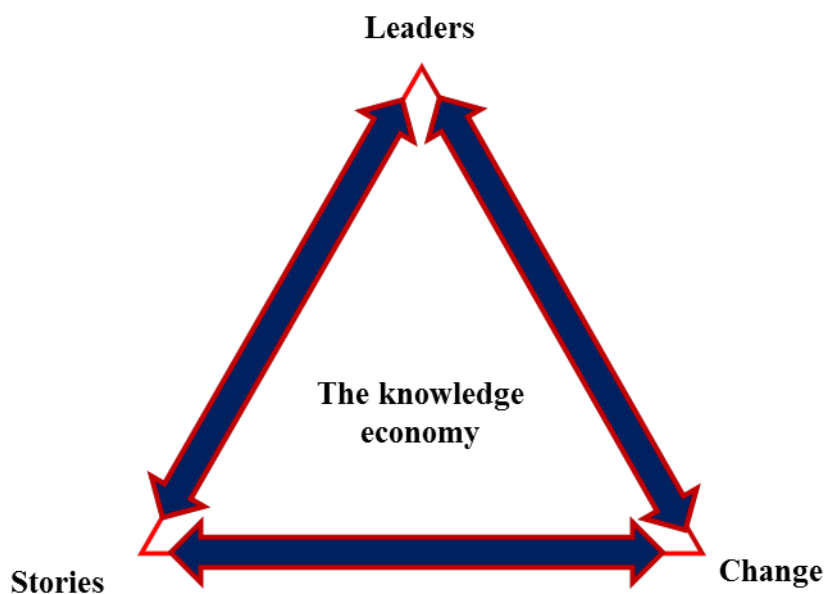


Figure 5.1: The literature constructs applicable to the research study (adapted from Britton, 2010; Gabriel, 2000; Hiatt, 2007; Nahavandhi, 2009)

- **Literature aim 1:** Discuss the existence of stories within knowledge economy organisations
- **Literature aim 2:** Discuss storytelling as used by leaders during organisational change

I will discuss the literature aims applicable to the research findings in the proceeding section, whilst incorporating the constructs of leadership, change and stories against the background of knowledge economy organisations.

5.1.1. The existence of storytelling within knowledge economy organisations

The relevance of stories within the organisational context and their role in making sense of organisations have been emphasised by a number of researchers (Boje, 1991; Dennehy, 1999; Kaye, 1996). Postmodernism has allowed storytelling to break free from the chains of being merely an activity associated with entertainment and communication to an activity that organisations need to take seriously, as stories are becoming the currency of the postmodern world (Marcel, 2001). Traditionally, stories were associated with fairy tales, and in the African context, stories have been acknowledged as giving life to tribes across the ages (Gabriel, 2000). Constructivism places stories at the core of our existence, stating that stories are the manner in which we co-create and understand our existence (Gabriel, 2000). In the organisational context, this implies that stories should be hidden in the strategy, culture, and philosophy that characterise knowledge economy organisations (Johnson & Scholes, 1998).

I was interested in exploring stories within organisations to determine whether stories are hidden in the structures, buildings, history, and language of the organisation, and whether stories have the ability to give life to the organisational philosophy (Gabriel, 2000). Organisational stories occur in dialogue, thus they exist in fragments across the organisation, with various different versions of the stories being told within the organisational ranks (Boje, 1991). The importance of dialogue lies in the necessity for collaborative effort to create shared meanings and give life to the knowledge of the organisation that is created by its members (Boal & Schultz, 2007). During the

course of the study, I was inspired, demotivated, engaged, appalled, and changed by the stories that I collected. Through the process of co-creation, I was changed by the leaders' stories, and realised that not only do stories exist within the organisation, they play a vital part in the decisions and direction in which leaders drive the organisation (Appelbaum & Wohl, 2000; Chapman, 2002; Graetz, 2000; Potter, 2001). I was also astonished to see how stories progressed, and were tailored and adapted to be utilised effectively by leaders within the environment – even, at times, used to pursue the leaders' own agendas. During the research study, I realised that my own story also influenced the behaviour of my fellow team members and impacted the climate and culture through the conversations that we shared, whether this took place in a formal setting or informally between meetings. Culture occurs in the conversations that employees have with each other on a daily basis, and I realised that change can only be facilitated if we change the organisational conversations (Seel, 2000).

I acknowledge the projection of my own story by stating that I want to be part of an organisation that has a defined philosophy to make a difference as opposed to driving financial and operational goals. However, due to the nature of narrative and the view of truth that it provides within the context of constructivism (Gergen & Gergen, 2004), I should have the opportunity to co-create a story that I can believe in; a story that inspires me to contribute, and a culture that makes me feel alive (Boje, 1991). The King 3 report demands that organisations become corporate citizens within the communities that they serve (SAICA, 2009), and surely this implies that the organisational story should incorporate the concept of community and citizenship as part of the organisational ethos or philosophy.

Within knowledge economy organisations, the literature themes of sustainability and agility continuously came to the fore. Organisations need to become flexible in terms of the strategic and operational direction to which they subscribe (Gartner, 2010). This implies that members of the organisation will have to be engaged at a philosophical level as opposed to the strategic and operational level, which, in the past, has proved to be sufficient to build sustainable and retainable talent practices. I do not state that operational and strategic goals are redundant or less important, but the deeper organisational philosophy needs to become evident in an

environment that is rich in diversity, opportunity, and competition if organisations are to keep their talent and build sustainability, as alluded to by Boje (1991), Gabriel (2000), and Webster and Mertova (2007). Practically, this means that organisations need to start telling the stories that relate their philosophy in a manner that is easy to understand, to buy into, and that guide the organisation according to these principles. Decisions need to be made based upon the organisational philosophy, always acknowledging who we are and what we stand for within the context of the behavioural framework that defines the organisation. This implies that leaders become the role models of the organisational DNA and are kept accountable at both a value and behavioural level for the actions that they take, as mentioned by Katzenbach and Khan (2009) and Schein (2004) when they describe the role and responsibility of the leader in knowledge economy organisations.

Boje (1991) views stories in organisations as the institutional memory system, which implies that stories are multi-authored and are continuously unfolding as they are related to other organisational members (Gabriel, 2000). Vaughn (2009) states that the organisational memory system is shaped by organisational experiences that are recounted socially through all levels of the organisation, which will serve as a guiding force for decisions, actions, and individual assumptions going forward. Stephens (2009) states that organisational stories are told about real people and describe the philosophy of the organisation through artefacts that are common knowledge, taken seriously by the members of the organisation, and ultimately inform the psychological contract that binds employees to the organisation.

In summary, the literature review confirmed the existence of stories within the organisation (Christie, 2004; Denning, 2011; Gill, 2009; McClellan, 2006; Post, 2002). Stories are embedded in the DNA of the organisation and speak to the philosophy and core of the organisational identity, both factors which have become competitive differentiators between knowledge economy organisations. Stories influence, build, and acknowledge the philosophy and identity of the organisation, which needs to be driven by the leaders if they are to create a sustainable organisation that is able to adapt and become resilient within the knowledge economy.

5.1.2. Storytelling as used by leaders in the context of organisational change

I stated in the first chapter that organisations are failing leaders due to inflexible practices that are difficult to change and slow to respond to the turbulent knowledge economy environment. Through the course of this study, I came to realise that perhaps we have gone full circle with this argument: confirming that the statement is true, but also acknowledging that the power to change the Newtonian organisation as described by Wheatley (2006) lies with the leaders themselves. Through the course of this study, I witnessed leaders that truly believe in the philosophy of the organisation, as well as leaders who utilise stories that do not bring sustainable change, but rather a quick solution that benefits the leader in a personal capacity rather than building a sustainable organisation.

Stories do have the power to inspire and create movement, but should be used responsibly by organisational leaders, as stories have the power to unite and call ordinary citizens to action (Hatch et. al, 2005). The literature confirms the notion that leaders use stories to change the organisation (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010, Mor-Barak, 2007), but I am of the opinion that leaders do not always have the self-awareness or maturity to realise the impact of the stories that they tell. During the course of the study, I became aware of the fact that I need to be cognisant of my own story and the manner in which my story shapes the stories of others. Stories have always been part of the change leader's repertoire (Bass, 1990, Bennis & Thomas, 2002), but I am of the opinion that conscious storytelling needs to become the mantra which guides knowledge economy leaders. Leaders not realising the impact of the stories that they tell was confirmed by one of the participants who stated: "I am tired of these corridor terrorists. They are senior leaders and should know better than to scream and shout in front of junior staff who lose motivation and belief in what we are trying to do." Even though this was not the focus of the study, it became evident that the dark side of stories should also be noted and investigated in order to really understand the stories that the leaders tell during organisational change. I believe that all leaders in organisations are telling and using stories, whether they are consciously or unconsciously aware of the stories that they tell.

Stories within organisations do exist and they will never cease to evolve, change, and be retold by the members of the organisation.

The empirical conclusions based upon the research study will be discussed in order to confirm and challenge the literature findings applicable to the study.

5.1.3. Conclusions drawn from the empirical study

From an empirical perspective, the study focused on confirming and challenging the following notions, as informed by the literature:

- If leaders do tell stories, as confirmed by the literature, what are the stories that they tell; and
- Do the leaders find personal meaning within the stories that they tell?

The sample of leaders shared their stories with me based upon the interview guide which I compiled using themes from 25 informal conversations that I had had with a sample of the project. I realised that stories are rarely told in isolation, and that understanding the context and environment that inform the stories are essential. Using a thematic analysis approach, as discussed in Chapter Three, I concluded that leaders tell a number of different stories at different times during the course of the project to achieve different objectives. Due to the nature of storytelling, I realise that my own projections and life story will influence the stories which I co-created with the leaders. As such, a different researcher within the same environment would possibly deduce different themes from the raw data and find a different version of truth which, according to the attributes of the constructivist paradigm, allows stories to change, grow, be co-created and retold over time. Through the lens of my own life story I concluded that leaders tell stories to achieve specified outcomes ("What do I want to achieve with this story?") and results ("What action do I want as a result of the story?").

Based upon these conclusions, I identified the following types of leaders' stories during the course of the study, as was stipulated as one of the research aims:

- Vision story: The leader tells a story of the future direction of the organisation and aims to obtain employee commitment and buy-in
- Identity story: The leader tells a story of the past, present, and future of the organisation that fosters a sense of belonging and creates a narrative community
- Significance story: The leader tells a story of the significance of change and agility in the competitive market – how the organisation will enable growth and competitive advantage through change into the future.
- Collaboration story: The leader tells the story of how the organisation can only grow and change by everyone working together and facing the challenges as a unit.
- Picture/Metaphor story: The leader tells the story of how the change fits into the bigger picture of the organisation and the future that the organisation aims to achieve.

Reflecting upon the story themes identified, it is interesting to note that, due to the background and context of the research study with reference to the time, place, and milieu, the story themes correlated to a large extent with the challenges that were faced within the environment at the time. This implies, congruent with the literature (Stephens, 2009) and the story landscape, that stories are told about real people in real environments, and in order to tell a meaningful story, the leader needs to be part of the system that facilitates the change. Stories are thus also informed and shaped by the external environment that impacts the organisation, which implies that organisational stories will also be shaped by parties and occurrences outside of the system. To illustrate this point, consider the following challenges that the organisation was facing at the time of the study and the type of story that was told in order to address these challenges:

- Challenge 1: Align and motivating the organisation to start a movement towards the changed future (Vision story);
- Challenge 2: The imminent change was at a philosophical level that dictated the past of the organisation (Identity story);
- Challenge 3: Positioning a business case for change that will enable the sustainable future of the organisation (Significance story);
- Challenge 4: Bringing together a global team that needed to work across the boundaries of race, language, and culture (Collaboration story); and

- Challenge 5: Making sense of the complexity of the change demanded a leader that tells a story in a simple and believable manner (Picture/Metaphor story)

By studying the underlying content embedded within the leaders' stories, I conclude that environmental challenge influences the story type, and that both the story type and the environmental challenge will inform the personal meaning that the leader ascribes to the relevant story. Reflecting upon the story landscape as positioned at the outset of the research study, it seems as if the story landscape (Figure 5.2) provides a relevant framework for studying stories told by leaders within knowledge economy organisations.

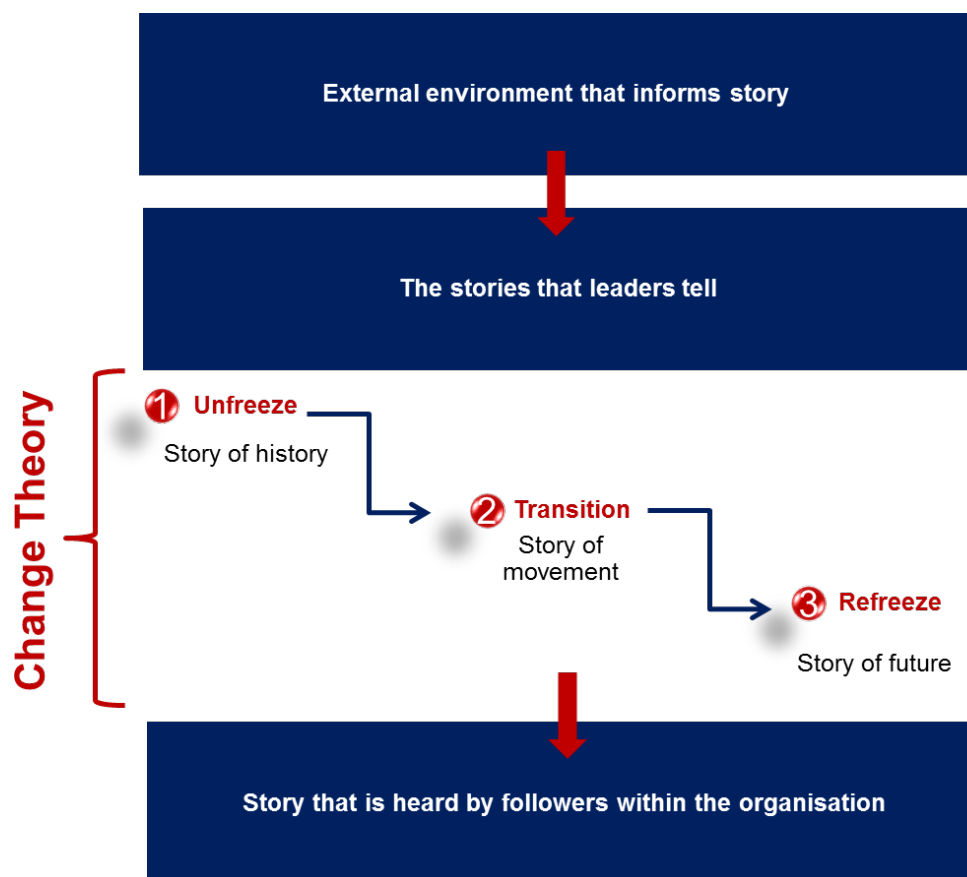


Figure 5.2: The story landscape (adapted from Lewin, 1951)

Earlier in the chapter I stated that the findings of the study lead me to believe that leaders, at times, lack the self-insight and awareness to understand the impact of the stories that they tell during the change process. The points noted above challenge leaders to determine whether the stories that they tell are reactive or pro-active

during times of change, i.e. are leaders telling pro-active stories to create change or are they telling reactive stories to manage change, which brings the argument back to the notion of a planned change approach (reactive) versus the emergent change approach (pro-active), as discussed in Chapter Two (Heifetz, 1993; Lewin, 1951; Qubein, 2001; Rhydderch, Elwyn, Marshall & Groll, 2004; Savolainen, 1999, Sugarman, 2001).

Having concluded from both the literature and the findings of the study that stories exist and that leaders tell different types of stories, the second question posed by the research aimed to explore whether leaders find personal meaning in the stories that they tell. According to the literature, the personal nature of stories means that they are inherent to the philosophy of the organisation and form the basis of organisational identity. Therefore, the second research aim was to determine whether the stories also carry personal meaning for the leaders during their own change journey.

The credibility of leadership stories is dependent on the authenticity and resonance that stories create with those fortunate enough to hear the story (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988). Stories, especially during the change process, are personal, as the nature of the move along the change curve is painful and intimate (Hiatt, 2007). As such, I concluded that, in order to create movement within organisations, leaders need to tell a believable story that is based upon their own personal change journey before being able to navigate sustainable change journeys for their employees. Change leaders also need to go through the change process and find personal meaning in the journey that they are trying to enable. Due to the personal nature of stories, leaders cannot tell a believable and authentic story if they have not found meaning in the story themselves. This statement is based upon the notion that the leaders in the sample stated that they found significance and personal impact in the stories that they told, as they were able to belong and contribute to a bigger outcome. They derived meaning from being able to steer the organisational ship into the future. Leaders experienced personal impact and make sacrifices in their personal lives to be able to be part of this change journey. As one of the leaders commented: "I took the project story video home to show my wife as she needed to understand why I was working late every night and how big this thing was that we were trying to accomplish." The

leaders further stated that a part of their identity, both professionally and personally, was informed and shaped by the stories as the stories influenced who they were, how they grew in their leadership, and how they discovered more about themselves.

Exploring the leadership stories from a thematic network analysis perspective, I tried to gain a deeper level of understanding of the underlying themes that informed the findings of the study whilst keeping the global theme (the shared overall story) as a guiding principle throughout the study. Figure 5.3 summarises the underlying themes that informed the findings of the study.



Figure 5.3: Understanding the stories at a deeper level of abstraction

The underlying themes stipulated in Figure 5.3 support the identified story types and relevant themes of personal meaning for the leader as described in the research findings and the conclusions as follow:

- **Changing the heart of the organisation:**
 - Story Type: Vision/Picture
 - Meaning of story for leader: Significance/Personal impact and challenge

- **Significance of the project for the organisation:**
 - Story Type: Vision
 - Meaning of story for leader: Achievement and identity
- **Laying the foundation for simplicity:**
 - Story Type: Identity
 - Meaning of story for leader: Achievement and identity
- **Personal and professional growth and opportunity:**
 - Story Type: Significance/Collaboration
 - Meaning of story for leader: Personal impact and challenge
- **The future:**
 - Story Type: Vision/Significance
 - Meaning of story for leader: Significance and impact

5.1.4. Conclusions based upon the integration of literature and the empirical study

Based upon the literature findings pertaining the constructs of change, organisational storytelling, leaders, and the knowledge economy as well as the findings stipulated above, the following can be concluded based upon both the literature and research data:

Table 5.1: Integrated literature and data findings

Conclusions drawn from the literature	Conclusions drawn from the data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations are having to adapt to an ever-changing world (Champy, 2009; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2009) • Leaders are responsible for leading effective and sustainable change within organisations (Hiatt, 2007) • If leaders themselves do not find personal meaning within the change, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The knowledge economy demands the breaking down of business silos if the organisation is going to be competitive in the future • The knowledge economy demands a simplistic view of the future – making sense of the complexity of the environment through organisational

<p>they cannot create authentic, sustainable change for their followers (Habermas & Bluck, 2000)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership has shifted to inclusive practices with flatter structures that “gets the whole system into the room” (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Nahavandhi, 2009; Smit & Carstens, 2003; Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). • Stories exist within the organisational philosophy (Johnson & Scholes, 1998) 	<p>identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders tell different types of stories at different points in time to facilitate change (vision, identity, significance, collaboration, picture) • Leaders themselves find meaning in the stories that they tell (significance and impact, personal impact, and challenge, achievement and identity) • Leaders, at times, lack self-awareness and insight into the impact and power of their personal stories
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The following research hypotheses were generated based upon both the literature and empirical findings relevant to the research.

5.1.4.1. Generated research hypotheses

- Research Hypothesis 1:

Organisations will have to build internal change competence as part of their organisational strategy to remain sustainable and competitive.

- Research Hypothesis 2:

Organisations may be defined by shared vision, values, and identity, which could dictate the change that the organisation would be able to accomplish.

- Research Hypothesis 3:

Organisational stories can build the culture of the organisation based upon the past, the present, and the future.

- Research Hypothesis 4:

Leaders can build a culture based upon the stories that they tell during the change process as well as the inclusive leadership styles that they display to foster organisational identity.

- Research Hypothesis 5:

Leaders can create purpose and significance for their employees within the organisational identity.

- Research Hypothesis 6:

Leaders need to consciously become aware of the stories that they tell as well as the impact that the stories have on the followers within the organisation.

- Research Hypotheses 7:

Leaders might not be conscious of the dark side of stories.

Based upon the research findings discussed above, the following conclusions can be derived from the study:

- Organisations, in order to remain sustainable and competitive in the new knowledge economy, will probably have to build internal change competence as part of their organisational philosophy.
- Organisational stories will build the culture of the organisation based upon the past, the present, and the future, and leaders will need to tell stories that are congruent with the organisational identity if they are to facilitate change.
- Leaders can build a culture based upon the stories that they tell during the change process as well as the inclusive leadership styles that they display to foster organisational identity.

- Leaders will have to change the stories inherent to the DNA of the organisation in order to enable long-term organisational change whilst remaining true to the identity and philosophy of the organisation.
- Leaders will have to change the organisation from within the system as opposed to a bottom-down change approach that produces minimalistic pockets of change excellence.
- Leaders need to find personal meaning in change before aiming to create movement within the organisation, by answering the question of personal significance in the change journey, i.e. what does the change mean for you, personally, as the leader?
- Stories need to be authentic and real to the organisational members and, as such, leaders need to become part of the story as opposed to standing outside of the organisational system. This implies an involved leadership style where the leader "gets his/her hands dirty."

I hope that the above conclusions will add value to organisational practices and contribute to various domains of application.

5.2. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The potential contribution of the study spans across various domains, contributing at an organisational level, to leaders in knowledge economy organisations, to Industrial Psychology, and to my own life story, as described below:

- Contribution to the organisation

The study contributes to the organisation through the discussion of trends that will inform the organisation of the future and promote the establishment of a sustainable and competitive organisational delivery model. The research explored why change journeys fail, and highlighted elements within the traditional organisation that could hinder change. If organisations become aware of their philosophy, which is encapsulated within the organisational stories, I hope that sustainable change will be

possible as organisations strive to remain afloat in an ever-changing world of uncertainty.

- Contribution to leaders in the knowledge economy

The study benefits leaders by providing insight and guidelines to creating sustainable change within the knowledge economy. The study implies a different leadership style that focuses on inclusion, collaboration, and involvement of the whole system in order to build sustainability into the future. Leaders can further benefit from the study by becoming aware of what it entails to drive change journeys and asking themselves what this change means to them on a personal level. I hope that the study will also create awareness in leaders in terms of the stories that they tell and the power and impact that their stories have on other members within the organisation.

- Contribution to the field of Industrial Organisational Psychology

The study contributes to the field of Industrial Psychology through the proposed perspective of leadership in the future, the type and relevance of organisational culture during change journeys, and the impact that the knowledge economy will have on the organisation. The study contributes to the existing literature within the Industrial Psychology field pertaining to leadership, organisational storytelling, and change, and recommends a number of research avenues for future research that could add value to the field of Industrial Psychology.

- Contribution to my own life story

The study contributed to my own understanding of how stories transformed my own change journey during the research process. Through the co-creation of the participants' stories I gained insight into my own story and the stories that I still need to write in the future. I became aware of a number of my own perceptions and projections, which became evident once I investigated and started to tell my own story.

Limitations pertaining to the research study were identified and are discussed hereunder.

5.3. LIMITATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE STUDY

This section explores the limitations of the study from both a literature as well as an empirical study perspective. The literature relevant to this study posed the following challenges in terms of limitations:

- The concept of leadership has been well researched, yet significant differences exist in the definition of leadership, especially with regard to the role that leaders need to play in the new knowledge economy;
- Change literature and theory relevant to the concept of change leadership were at times found to be lacking in the existing literature, with change only recently being seen as a core leadership competency as opposed to a leadership characteristic;
- The story literature has been well researched within the realm of therapy and education, yet storytelling case studies within an organisational context were limited;
- Defining the story construct was challenging due to numerous perspectives of different researchers in terms of narratives and stories and the difference between the two concepts; and
- Operational definitions of what organisational culture entails were vast and varied in the literature.

From an empirical perspective, the study was limited to exploring the stories that leaders tell during organisational change through the lens of the constructivist approach. I also acknowledge the fact that my own life story influenced my perspective and could possibly have been a limitation to themes that have been left unexplored within the data and possibly could have been significant for another researcher in a similar environment. Therefore the opportunity exists to further explore the stories from a different set of lenses, either utilising another paradigm of inquiry or perhaps studying the stories from another researcher's perspective.

Due to the nature of the study, a longitudinal component was not possible, yet I believe that studying the movement and evolution of stories over time could potentially have added another level of abstraction to the study. Even though the

sample was representative of the population of the study, it would have been interesting to include more biographical information with regard to the research participants' own cultural backgrounds to determine the influence that culture has on the type of stories that the different leaders tell. As this was not the focus of the study, the biographical evidence that was gathered was used to inform and ensure the relevance of the sample to the population being studied, as opposed to being used as input into cultural influences on the types of stories that are told by leaders.

Before the study commenced, certain risks and dangers were identified as part of the study limitations. As stated by Clandin and Connelly (2000), the risk of abusing the narrative needs to be thought of before the narrative commences. I identified the risks of inter-subjectivity, smoothing, and external constraints described by Boje (2001) as relevant to the current study and put the following mitigating actions in place:

- Inter-subjectivity: I asked an objective outsider to interview me before the research commenced in an attempt to capture and become aware of my own story. Collected stories were also validated to ensure their accuracy and truthfulness with other participants familiar with the environment, whilst guarding the confidentiality of the participants.
- Smoothing: I validated the story to ensure the truthfulness of the “ending” and, as the story was centred around one critical event, no ending to the story was captured – a mere snapshot in time was explored and reported.
- External constraints: Interviews were conducted at a time and place suitable to participants. I also interviewed participants over a period of time within the defined critical event to ensure a snapshot of the complete story experience, as opposed to capturing one day in the life of the participant.

Due to the nature of stories, as well as my own lenses of interpretation, recommendations for future research and practical application will be discussed based upon the research conclusions and limitations identified within the study.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

I would like to recommend the following possible research questions (presented in table below), which, based upon the data and findings of the research study, provide future research opportunities that could enable knowledge economy organisations to become sustainable into the future and adhere to criteria of corporate citizenship, social responsibility, sustainability, and leading with integrity, as stipulated by the King 3 report:

Table 5.2: Recommendations for future research

Generated hypotheses	Possible Research questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organisations will have to build internal change competence as part of their organisational strategy to remain sustainable and competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How do organisations build sustainable change practices? ▪ How do organisations plan for change within their organisational strategy?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organisations will be defined by shared vision, values, and identity, which will dictate the change that the organisation is able to accomplish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does the establishment of a shared organisational identity entail?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organisational stories build the culture of the organisation based upon the past, the present, and the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the past, present, and possible future of the organisation influence the type of stories that build the organisational culture?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders can build a culture based upon the stories that they tell during the change process as well as the inclusive leadership styles that they display to foster organisational identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the impact of leadership style on organisational culture?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders will have to create purpose and significance for their employees through the organisational identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the relationship between shared purpose and significance in defining organisational identity?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders need to consciously become aware of the stories that they tell as well as the impact that the stories have on the followers within the organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the impact of the stories that leaders tell during organisational change?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders are not conscious of the dark side of stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the dark/negative consequences of storytelling?

I hope that these recommendations will not only stimulate ideas for future research within the story domain, but that they will also facilitate further research on the construct of leadership and how leaders can use stories to create sustainable change that will impact the community and the organisation in a positive manner.

5.5. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I summarised the findings of the research study in the context of the literature and data that were collected during the research process. I also discussed the limitations pertaining to the study and made recommendations that will provide avenues for future research within the field of Industrial Psychology. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the contribution that the study has made, not only to those involved in the research process, but also in the way the stories changed my own life story and will influence the road ahead.

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APPENDIX A: THE STORY INTERVIEW GUIDE

I used six pillars to base my questions on, which I derived from having informal conversations with 25 project members as well as reading through the project documentation. In general, the interviewees focused on the following six general pillars, which I verified with the project managers and some of the more influential people in the project:

1. History of why the project was born.
2. The challenges that were experienced.
3. The future of the organisation and the role that the project will play.
4. The successes/milestones that have been achieved and the experiences associated with the success.
5. The strategic connection between the project and the bigger organisation.
6. The identity of the project: this speaks in a large extent to the significant impact that the project will have on the organisation.

I used these pillars to draw up the questions. The questions and my reasoning behind each question are provided below.

Drafted Interview question:	Reason for choosing the question:
Why is the overall journey significant for the bank?	This was the first step that the organisation took in terms of trying to create a new strategy. Some of the leaders were part of the thinking behind why this whole project was initiated, and this is where the story lies. The story lies with the thinking process, the environment at that time, and how four people sitting around a table inspired a project that has cost more than R1 billion over four years.
What did we learn from the first implementation?	I want to use this question to reflect. From the field notes I have gathered, I see a lot of stories hidden in the lessons that people have learnt. In one of the conversations that I had, one respondent stated that we learnt that we can't change a bank overnight, we all need to work together, and a lot of people needed to come to the table to make this happen. The story here lies how two siloed internal departments (Business and IT) had to put aside 150 years of differences to work together.

What did the project mean to IT and to business?	Once again, this question was aimed at getting to the heart of how the two siloed departments pulled together. While this may sound insignificant, the history associated with the organisation makes this important.
Tell me about the first implementation and why it was significant.	This was a major milestone that the team achieved and a lot of the people dynamics were rooted to this project with a cliché of some of the team still holding on to the success that this first implementation achieved.
How did we do things on a project that was so complex, so new, and so revolutionary?	From a global perspective, this was the very first implementation of its technological type and complexity. The story here lies with the significance of the project and the meaning that the team members derived from the success and their role.
Tell me about the vibe on the floor before the first go-live and what were you experiencing at that point in time.	Once again, the story here lies in the experience of the team.
What were some of your key learning points in phase 2, which was never completed and stopped before implementation?	The story lies in what the people learned from this phase of the project. Upon investigation and before the interview guide was compiled, in the informal conversations a number of the team members referred to how much they had learnt and related stories of how they grew and developed, not only technically, but from a personal perspective.
Tell me about the things that you are proud of on the project.	This question was aimed at tapping into the positive experiences of the team members and getting a general impression of what they felt about the project.
What does Project Alpha mean to you?	The story here lies with the fact that employees saw this as more than a project. During the first sessions with them everyone talked about the project as being more than a project, and the meaning and impact it has had on them as people.
Tell me about what motivates you on Project Alpha.	This question needs to tap into the story that is associated with how the team has kept on going through difficult times. In my previous conversations with the project team members they all spoke about what kept them going through the difficult times and the stories that they told each other to

	get going.
What do you think about the way we do things on the project?	This is a very open question that I would like to use for the team members to tell the story of difficulties and some of the hardships that they have experienced. In previous discussions and field notes it became clear that there was some internal turmoil within the management team, and this question is aimed at starting to tap into that story.
What are some of the key milestones that we have achieved?	A lot has been achieved that has held personal significance for the team members and created meaning for them. This story is one of personal success and meaning for the individuals.
What will success look like?	The story here lies in the vision and personal meaning that the project members have for the project and what they want to achieve.
Tell me about the future of the next phases. What will it look like?	The story here lies in the vision and personal meaning that the project has for the team members and what they want to achieve.
What do we need to get to the future?	The story here lies in the vision and personal meaning that the project has for the project members and what they want to achieve.