LISTENING TO THE REACTIONS OF PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

By

JILL FRIESTAD-TATE *   CRAIG MCCOY **

*-** Professor, Kaplan University.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to listen to reactions of key stakeholders experiencing profound organizational change. A case study was used to gather data from participants' interview responses. Data analysis identified research-supported reactions; in addition, two unique themes were identified: constructive critique and ill-effects of good intentions. Listening to, understanding, and appreciating reactions and emotions during change provide valuable insights that help build organizational community and enhance the success of a change initiative.

Keywords: Change Recipients, Change Research, Emotions, Organizational Change, Reactions to Change.

INTRODUCTION

The United States educational system, throughout history, has been slow to change. Contemporary educational systems in the United States face profound changes as they address increased pressure from growth or decline of student populations, limited budgets, federal mandates, and the immediacy of preparing today's youth for the careers of tomorrow. Organizational structure greatly influences how to approach the forces of change within the educational system as structure can be a barrier to change and/or resist it. The call to improve education requires educational leaders to transform schools into learning organizations that produce high-level results for all children. In doing this, schools are faced with creating second-order, or transformational, changes. Second-order change deviates completely from what an organization is currently doing, evolves throughout the process, requires a new level of learning for organizational members, and is irreversible (Bateson, 1979; Bergquist, 1993; National Academy for Academic Leadership, 2007; Wheatley, 1997). The complexity of transformational change revolves around the fact that there are no easy solutions to the problems that exist, which is coupled with a major shift in philosophy.

Profound forces of change exist in every school district in the country. By choice or necessity, many school systems are taking on the challenge of redrawing the social and educational architecture of how children can best be educated in a demanding world. As school districts work to create transformational change, they must decide between the freedom of implementation found in grass roots efforts where little support from outside agencies is provided or obtaining funding from outside sources where limitations exist and specified outcomes must be met. Many have been working on changes to current practices for several years; one of those schools is the focus of this case study.

In August 2009, a small, rural school district in the Midwest hired a secondary (7-12) principal who created a "culture of change" by demonstrating the importance of creating a world-class education for students (J. Carver, personal communication, November 15, 2010). His belief is that educators are at a printing press moment in relation to technology and a global economy, referring to that time in history when the invention of the printing press produced profound change by making written materials available to the masses. Using this historical analogy the principal convinced the staff of the value to "build the capacity to change" (J. Carver, personal communication, November 15, 2010). With the support of the school board and using Deming's 14-points as a guide, the principal worked to enact change within the small district. To further support the idea of change, the principal required the staff to read specific books and journal articles related to global

education and skills required to compete in the 21st century workforce. According to the secondary principal, a "significant emotional experience" needed to take place for staff members to accept the changes (J. Carver, personal communication, November 15, 2010). He believed that if individuals were simply asked, or forced to change, the changes would not be as successful as they could be if individuals were emotionally invested in the change and its positive outcomes.

As time progressed, changes were implemented in the school, including a technology initiative, the One-to-One program, where each student in grades 7-12 received a MacBook computer (Towne, 2011). In fact, the school district was so committed to the change that when the state government reduced school budgets by 10%, the school board voted unanimously to increase the One-to-One program to include grades 6-12 (J. Carver, personal communication, January 10, 2011). Introducing new technology meant additional staff training, support, and resources for the secondary school, but the increased level of engagement by students and staff encouraged the district to continue in its endeavor.

In August 2010, further changes were implemented district-wide, with focus given to the implementation of Dufour's Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The focus of PLCs is three-fold: ensuring that students are not only taught but also learn, promoting a collaborative culture for teachers, and basing effectiveness on results (DuFour, 2004). In the future, the district hopes to expand changes including implementing a new calendar year, using competency-based grading, adding online learning opportunities, and making all students marketable upon graduation, in order to transform the educational system from grades PreK-12. The rationale for studying the emotions involved in a change initiative, and in this case several change initiatives, is to gain insights into individual emotions related to the change process in order to help leaders more effectively implement change in organizations. Research related to organizations implementing change is common, but it is important to also understand how individuals involved with the change react (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenkis, 2011).

Many changes have occurred and continue to occur for the small rural school district in this case study research. While there is a tendency to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of such moves, that is not the focus of this study. The purpose of this study is to listen to the reactions of key organizational stakeholders in the midst of profound change to understand the range of emotions present when undertaking such initiatives. Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, and DePalma (2006) found that individuals' reactions to change initiatives play a pivotal role in its potential success. The research method involved gathering data from participants' interview responses to understand their reactions to change. Analysis of the data identified patterns and themes based on their reactions. Further analysis of the coded patterns offered greater understanding of the human experience during transformative organizational change. In order to listen to and categorize the reactions, qualitative research was utilized to gain information beyond numbers and statistics. This study contributes to the body of research related to how individuals react to organizational change and provides insights for leaders into how they can more successfully implement change in any organization.

Review of Literature

The literature often discusses how individuals dealt with change after the change has been completed. The intent of this study was to listen to stakeholder members in the midst of experiencing change in a public school setting using a qualitative approach. George and Jones (2001) reported that little attention has been given to how change recipients understand change and even less attention paid to how they feel about it. In much of the research, individual experiences are often cited as resistance to change as recipients are not questioned further about organizational change (Kuhn & Corman, 2003; Oreg, 2003). However, Dent and Powley (2002) found that positive reactions to change outnumbered the negative reactions. Kanter, Stein, and Jick (1993) also noted differences in focus and orientation to change based on an individual's position within the organization, either as change agent, implementer, or recipient, as experiences are different for each role in the change process. Top level management

may hold different views from lower level employees about how organizational goals should be in a given change (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl, 1996).

According to the Leadership-and-Motivation Training (n.d.) web site, individuals can have several reactions to change including: shock, resistance, hostility, sadness, confusion, denial, anxiety, fear, and/or stress. Leaders can attempt to ease these emotions by listening, understanding employee emotions, and offering resources and support when possible. The process of change is difficult, but providing the proper time and support to work through the emotions involved is vital to its success (Austin, 2009).

In discussing why change efforts are so difficult to implement, Austin (2009) stated that "the disconnect between theory and practice is due to stakeholders' complex, seemingly irrational and often political reactions to new initiatives" (p. 5). The "seemingly irrational" reactions are actually quite normal and should be included as part of the change process. Ruth Gehmlin, as cited by Bell (2006), discussed four ways people deal with change: thriving on it, not being bothered by it, being cautious about it, and resisting it. Austin (2009) suggested five steps to effective change management, including identifying stakeholders and allowing them the time necessary to process their reactions. Time to deal with the change and process through reactions should be built into the change process, but it is often omitted or overlooked by change agents. The reactions and interactions of stakeholders are also key elements in understanding any change process (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999). Seeking a deeper understanding of change recipients' reactions supports the rationale for examining key stakeholders' reactions as they experience change. All of these areas are included in the research conducted by Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, and DePalma (2006) related to how individuals make sense, sensemaking, of change in organizations.

Kiefer (2002) suggests that "viewing emotions…(is) an essential part of the working experience" and supports the examination of emotions and how they impact organizational change (p. 39). Ashkanasy, Zerbe, and Hartel (2002) state that "emotions are an inherent part of the workplace" (p. 3) and note that there has been a rise in

the research related to emotions in the workplace in recent years. Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) reviewed sixty years of quantitative research related to change recipients' reactions to organizational change and created a model that classified explicit reactions to change, prechange antecedents, change antecedents, and change consequences to help guide researchers in understanding and classifying individual reactions to change. For the purposes of this study, the researchers focused on individuals' explicit reactions to change.

Research Methodology

The nature of this study was to listen to the reactions of organizational members as they were in the midst of transformational change. The method used for this research study was qualitative in nature. It was based on a single case study of a school district that is currently experiencing transformational change.

The school district restructured the way students in the district learn through increased technological interaction, which had a profound impact on the students, teachers, administrators, and community. The primary researchers in this study had little insight as to what to expect along the change journey, so questions beginning with how and why were relevant to this study. An interview guide was used to ask participants significant and thoughtful questions related to specific changes in the district during the past, present, and future. Following this guide, the researchers probed the participants to respond in an honest manner that elicited deeper understanding of how transformational change affects people in the midst of the change. Specific examples and questions relating to past, present, and future changes were included within the interview guide to elicit responses about each time frame.

This study was an in-depth analysis of the unique phenomenon of how organizational members—school board members, students, teachers, administrators, and parents—react in the midst of change. The methodology of this study draws from Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) who build on Hegel's and Husserl's foundation in transcendental phenomenology. Listening to the reactions of organizational members in the midst of transformational change allowed the researchers to analyze this

phenomenon based on the truthful and credible insights from participants.

Synchronizing with the Change Process Timeline

The change process in the case study has a long duration, which began in August 2009. Distinguishable and relevant time benchmarks which unfolded as significant segments of the change process were, or in some cases will be, announced to organizational members. Thus, it was necessary to include several benchmarks during the interview sessions related to the change experience for participants. Interview questions were framed specifically to past, present, and future change events. This was important in order to capture how participants' reactions to change may have developed as the process evolved and also framed the data analysis and coding of responses.

Target Population and Sampling Procedure

Organizational members and other stakeholders in the case study school district likely have differing perspectives of the transformational change due to their job position, their role in decision-making during the change process, and relationships within the organizational structure. Due to the differing perspectives that likely exist, several targeted population groups were included in this study.

The target population groups included: school board members; high school-level administrators; teachers who were employed prior to August 2009 when the changes began; high school seniors who were enrolled prior to August 2009 and who at the time of interviewing were at least 18 years of age; and the parents of the high school students who were enrolled prior to August 2009. Using a variety of stakeholders, who all had knowledge of and were affected by the changes, provided a more comprehensive look at the emotions of all affected by the changes in the district. A purposive, stratified random sampling procedure was utilized to select two participants from each stratum. Due to the small size of the district as well as each targeted group, two was a sufficient number to interview and gather data from in this qualitative study. In gathering data for qualitative research, it was crucial that the population be purposively selected in order to assure access and gain confidence prior to conducting human research. It was also important to seek populations where a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest were present and where data quality could be reasonably assured. However, once populations were purposively selected, participants were randomly selected from all potential participants in order to reduce bias by the researchers or individuals related to the change process.

In order to minimize the risk of deductive disclosure of participants' identities, selected participants were not disclosed to the district and responses to the interview questions were generalized instead of listed by separate categories. This allowed for depth and discovery in the coding and theme development of the data analysis within the research study. The participants were contacted by email with an attached Memo to Potential Participants describing the study and the Consent for Participation form for participants to review. Once participants agreed to take part in the study, the date, time, and location of the interview were provided. The participants signed the Consent for Participation form in the presence of one or both of the researchers on the day of the interview.

Investigator Bias

Two researchers conducted the interviews with participants and worked to reduce bias by creating a structured questionnaire. This helped improve the inter-rater reliability as a script was used in addition so participants were introduced identically to the interview topic and questions. Limited personal bias was accomplished by utilizing an interview guide, containing a set of scripted questions related to participants' reactions during various change initiatives in the district. Participants were assigned a numerical identification so that when the interview transcriptions were analyzed, no connection to a particular person's responses could be made. There were only two times in the research process that the participants' identities (names, addresses, and email only) were known to the researchers. This occurred when they signed the consent form and when the interview transcription was mailed to the participants for their review. Once the transcripts were reviewed for accuracy, the participants were referred to numerically in transcripts, coded information, data analysis, and recommendations.

Data Collection Management and Analysis

Qualitative Research Measures

The process for judging the quality of research and to affirm the scientific basis of the study is most often based on generalizability, validity, and reliability (Trochim, 2001). However, Trochim argued that qualitative researchers often reject the traditional philosophical perspectives of reliability and validity that are so fundamental to quantitative research. Instead, qualitative research is conducted with different standards of judging the quality of research. These alternative qualitative standards, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

In this study, criteria of credibility involved establishing believability in the data presented through the transcribed responses by each participant. The researchers in this study are confident the data and the analysis of the data are credible. Credibility was maintained by eliminating, to the greatest extent possible, the effects of researcher bias in the interview process. The researchers did not react verbally or non-verbally to the responses that would create a sense of affirmation or rejection of what the participants were saying. Great care was given to create a safe and professional interview environment which permitted open and truthful responses to every interview question.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of one study can be transferred to another contextual setting of time and place. Even though the responsibility for carrying out transferability lies in the hands of other researchers, the researchers of this study purposefully constructed a logical framework of research design and methodology so that other similar studies could be conducted.

Dependability

Observing social interaction is best measured by the criteria of dependability. Dependability was demonstrated by selecting interview participants randomly but from a known range of organizational target populations. Also evident throughout the interview process was a strong

sense that the participants' responses to interview questions were based on full knowledge of past, present, and future change initiatives. Each participant's responses were spoken in a manner that demonstrated trust and accuracy in what they had to say.

Confirmability

Two assessments of confirmability occurred in this study. The first assessment of confirmability was conducted with follow-up correspondence to all of the interview participants asking each participant to read and verify the authenticity of their transcribed interview responses. All participants cooperated in this endeavor.

The second assessment was to check and recheck the data throughout the data analysis process. The researchers conferred with each other and assessed the accuracy of each step of the coding process. As similar patterns emerged, data checking proved to be insightful to confirm the emergence of codes and themes.

Coding Through NVivo

The first step in analyzing the data was a reconstruction of the interview data into a format that allowed the researchers to analyze and code the data and look for patterns and themes within each section of the interview guide (past, present, and future). For this study, computer software called NVivo ©, developed by QSR International, was used in data analysis. Managing qualitative data generated from the reactions of people in the midst of transformational change was unstructured and not easily reduced to quantifiable numbers. Analysis of this type of data required sensitivity to detail and context. Above all, it required a meticulous and rigorous process to explore and discover significant themes and patterns. This process elucidated a deeper understanding of the type and range of human reactions and emotions that people experienced in the midst of transformational change. Those themes and patterns forged the core of understanding discussed in the study's Conclusion and Recommendations for further Research.

A challenge for all qualitative researchers is sifting through the vast amount of evidentiary matter that is generated from the interview responses. Utilizing the NVivo program aided in the process of data management and greatly

enhanced data analysis. The researchers were able to thoughtfully code participants' reactions to past, present, and future change initiatives as were shared during the interview process. Ultimately, the identity of themes emerged through the data interpretation process and the main areas of past, present, and future time frames were used as coding nodes.

Coding in this study was an iterative process. Proficiency in coding is central to conducting qualitative analysis. The researchers are confident that the analysis of data demonstrated in this study adhered to proper open coding procedure as set forth by Singleton and Straits (1999), Strauss (1987), and Creswell (1998). Initial open coding permitted an unrestricted coding approach as the data sources from the interview transcriptions were read and reread. Codes were modified as interview transcripts were analyzed and additional refinements were made and applied to previous coding iterations. Provisional labeling of the transcripts identified the following general categories based on the structure of the interview questions seeking input on past, present, and future change initiatives

- Group Reaction

- Individual Reaction

- Implementation Process

- Notification Process

- Post-Change Observations

Further modification during the coding process verified the true nature of emerging qualities. A second pass through each participant's responses to the interview questions found more specific reactions while in the midst of past, present, and future change. This refined node category was identified as: Reaction to Change.

The node Reaction to Change for each of the time frames (past, present, and future) became an axis upon which other more meaningful themes were coded and identified. The following analysis identifies and describes the themes discovered from participants' interview responses within each area of past, present, and future change.

Reaction to Change (Past)

Participants' reactions to change in the past exposed the following themes, which are supported with representative examples of participants' responses that confirm and verify each coded theme

- Positive Emotion: Supportive; excited; nice; engaged; we thought it was a great initiative; positive; pleased; looking forward to a change; good things that are coming from this; enjoyed it; cool; have helped aid us; involved.

- Negative Emotion: Overwhelming; concerned; hemming and hawing; trying to catch up; difficulty with change; do not embrace; a lot of pressure to comply; they dove in head first; (information) would have been great; a ton of stuff just thrown at everybody at one time; weren't sure; don't particularly get too into it; not very excited; little skeptical; not involved.

- Questioning: Didn't talk vision; questions; assumptions about knowledge; we need some help; there was not enough (information); people that wondered what it is supposed to be, look like; I don't think the staff was ever really aware of what it would look like when we got there; no one knew; give a direction or talk more about a direction; they weren't as knowledgeable; What is the value in this?; so many questions, not clearly answered; handled much differently and clarified beforehand; a lot of things that were missing; if there was preparation that would have showed what the end goal was; we had all these questions; didn't understand; why is this happening?

- Resignation: This happens about every 5 to 7 years; everybody is going to get worked up about it. In about 5 years it is going to go away; I have to make it look like I'm doing this but not really, this is just the next thing; we have done things similar to this and it's been called something else; the old way is the best way, I think this is pretty cool but I don't have the skill set to do it; anything is better than what we got; oh great, here's another technology that my kid is going to get interested in and not pay attention to school

- Vague: Wow this is really going to change things; this was something new.

- Other: Time to get used to The emerging coded themes around the axis of reaction to past change are represented visually in the following graph. The frequency of each theme is indicated in the number of occurrences and percentage. It is worth noting that within Reaction to

Change (Past), as shown in Figure 1, the frequency of positive emotion, negative emotion, and questioning are all in the 30 percent range.

Reaction to Change (Present)

Examination of participants' reactions to present change supports many of the same themes that were exposed previously in reactions to past change, including positive emotion, negative emotion, questioning, resignation, vague, and other. However, a new theme was exposed and identified as constructive feedback, which is listed below with representative participants' responses:

• Constructive Feedback: personalize it; need different levels of support; I would like to have more input as to what that is

The emerging themes around the axis of Reaction to Change (Present) are represented visually in Figure 2. The frequency of positive emotions as a reaction to present change was significantly greater at 45%. Negative emotion decreased slightly to 25%. Questioning decreased from 29 percent to 15 percent. However, participants' reactions to present change were identified in a new theme labeled as constructive feedback. During the present change initiative process, there seemed to be greater interest in the change initiative and the desire for many stakeholders to offer critique in a positive manner.

Reaction to Change (Future)

Examination of participants' reactions to future change supports the same themes that were exposed previously in reactions to past and present change; however, another new theme emerged from the analysis of the participants'

responses. This coded theme is referred to as: ill-effects of good intentions. Examples from participants' responses of constructive feedback and the ill-effects of good intentions are included below:

• Constructive Feedback: As much detail as you can is great; don't do as good of a job as we could or want to in getting their opinions on change and what the future looks like; should have some buy-in to what the change is going to look like; need more training; talk about this year and then plan it for next year; need to work together a little bit more; have a better understanding of what was what and they got to ask questions so typically they felt really good; they would solicit input from us; more helpful and informative to have on a regular basis so we have an idea of what is going on

• Ill-Effects of Good Intentions: Comments from change agents: I don't expect you to embrace change, I expect you to create change. And I want change all the time. I don't care if you fail. That is ok. Failure happens all the time. Always change…Because only if we do that, will we be able to progress; Bribing them with pie and cake. Going to their group and taking a treat. That is what it is all about; We floated out ideas to the teachers; we let them know that it was something that was important; I even think that the folks that are so-so [unsure about the change] are really going to embrace it within a year or two.

• Reactions from Change Recipients: Overwhelmed, disengaged, I would like to have more input, need support, time to get used to, I have to make it look like I'm doing this but not really, this is just the next thing; we have done things
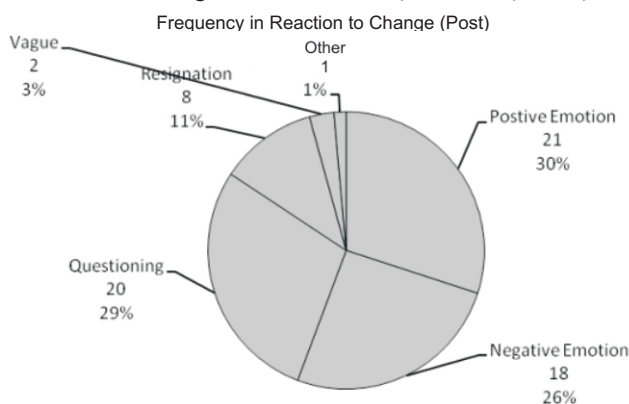
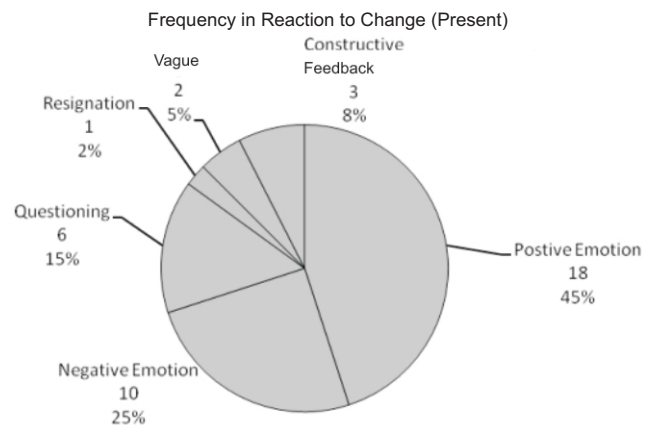Figure 1. Frequency of Coded Themes within Reactions to Change (Past)

Figure 2. Frequency of Coded Themes within Reactions to Change (Present)

similar to this and it's been called something else; the old way is the best way, I think this is pretty cool but I don't have the skill set to do it.

The emerging coded themes around the axis of reaction to future change are represented visually in Figure 3. Questioning decreased from 29 percent to 15 percent from past to present reactions to change, but when participants were asked to think about future change initiatives, the reaction of questioning increased to 28 percent. Constructive feedback also increased from 8 percent to 26 percent as participants thought about future change and how they could be an agent for positive change.

Listening to the participants' reactions revealed relevant themes about past, present, and future change unfolding in the school district. Collecting and analyzing data from transcribed interview responses required an iterative reading and coding process in order to identify specific reactions to the changes. The following section offers conclusions and recommendations for future research and to leaders as they implement organizational change initiatives.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

The Importance of Listening to People in the Midst of Change

One of the constants in organizational life is change. All contemporary organizations experience change at some level as it is necessary in order to remain viable in today's competitive global market. Leaders are constantly acting
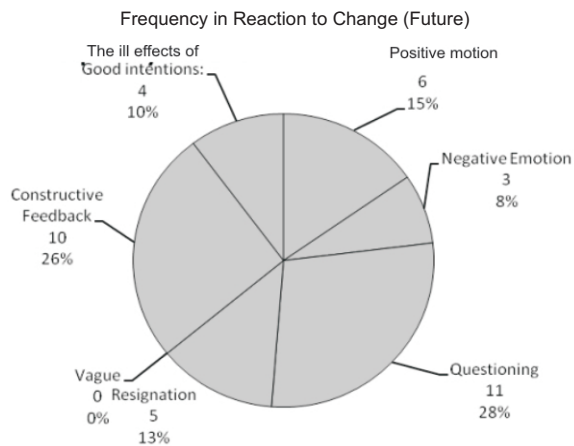

Figure 3. Frequency of coded themes within Reactions to Change (Future)

and reacting to the forces of change. People at all levels of an organization are faced with the day-to-day realities of how to build community in order to implement change and move the organization forward. The purpose of this study was to listen to the reactions of people in the midst of change. The intent of this study was not to assess the nature of the change or evaluate its success or failure, but rather, to randomly select stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, parents, and school board members), ask questions, and listen to their reactions to past, present, and future change initiatives.

Implications for Practice

Listening to people's reactions to change only once, either at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a change initiative, may be misleading, because a person's reaction to change may shift over time. It may be a common aspect of human nature to have a range of reactions as change unfolds over time. This became evident during the data analysis in this study. It is worthy to note the following discoveries and trends found in the investigation of change within this particular school district case study.

- Knowing that human reactions to change are a normal part of any change process should prompt leaders to be mindful to the value of listening more diligently to how organizational members and stakeholders are reacting at various time intervals.

- Reactions to change (past) indicated that positive feelings, negative feelings, and questioning were at approximately the same level of frequency at 30 percent. This may suggest that leaders should understand the level of emotion that takes place during change and provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and express concerns in order to have more positive reactions to the change. This result supports the research conducted by Dent and Powley (2002) where positive reactions outnumbered the negative by nearly two to one, which indicates individuals more often respond positively to change that is implemented properly and supported well.

- As the change process moved into the present, it was interesting to capture reactions which indicated that people wanted to constructively critique and offer ideas on how to facilitate change in a positive manner. This may be

a key point for organizational leaders to realize and leverage as buy-in becomes high and people are eager to contribute. This is an element of human energy that needs to be utilized at the proper time. These findings support Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, and DePalma's (2006) conclusion that "participation in the initiative increased the experience of gains" (p. 182) and that change recipients are not simply passive in the change process.

• Dealing with future aspects of change exposed a new coded theme identified as the ill-effects of good intentions. Even though the people who implement change see only good intentions for the school district, ill-effects often are the result. This new theme indicated possible escalation of troubled, frustrated, and worried stakeholders as change presses into the future. The situation may become more complicated and reactions more negative when leaders continually implement change in an organization without recognizing the growing ill-effects.

In this case study, there is little doubt that school district leaders are initiating change in order to achieve high levels of student performance and achievement. Their intent is true and passionate during past, present, and future changes processes. The type of transformational change that this case study school district is experiencing is tedious and challenging. It is also evident that some organizational stakeholders may experience forms of change fatigue. This was evident in this study through the theme of ill-effects of good intentions. Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) caution organizational leaders to be mindful and have a keen awareness of discriminatory detail in order to prepare for unexpected events and correct errors that could escalate into a crisis. This is a valuable insight that is confirmed by this study. The task of listening to the reactions of people in the midst of change is not simply useful for researchers wishing to understand emotions surrounding change, but it would be wise for all organizational leaders to adopt this form of organizational behavior whenever they begin a change initiative.

Limitations in Research Design

The researchers want to identify and discuss recommendations for further research in order to expand understanding of how people react to change. This is

challenging because this type of research attempts to capture human emotions during a time that can be both exciting and unsettling. A natural reaction to change may be that people are reluctant to share their true feelings. Perhaps the dynamic of the change process is at such a quick pace that people are not given an opportunity to have someone listen to their reactions. A qualitative approach to conducting this type of research in human behavior is likely the best way for other researchers to proceed. Whissell (2001) argues that words possess multiple meanings, which should be taken into consideration when analyzing change within an organization.

A key component of this research study was to capture human reactions to past change, present change, and future change within the same organizational context. This was accomplished by creating an interview instrument that required the participant to reflect back on a past change initiative, think about what was happening currently, and also project upon future change processes. Conducting the interviews in this manner had the benefit of conducting a single interview. However, conducting a longitudinal study over time and interviewing participants in real time may yield more accurate responses. This should be considered by other researchers as they listen to the reactions of people in the midst of change.

A potential limitation in any qualitative research study, in which data is gathered from participants' responses to interview questions, is a discrepancy in the truthfulness of the responses. This gap between what a person says and what they actually do was a potential limitation. Argyris (1982) cautions social researchers to know the difference between espoused theory and theory in use. To overcome this problem, the interview guides were carefully designed to counter responses of espoused theory through probing questions by asking the participants to elaborate on their responses using specific examples to illustrate lived experience.

Conclusion

The researchers of this study urge others to expand the conversation related to individual reactions to change initiatives. Doing so will broaden the knowledge and

research base of this important component in the literature related to organizational change. Listening to reactions of people in the midst of change and conducting relevant research will enhance the ability of leaders of change to be more aware of how others are reacting. Listening, understanding, and appreciating how others feel during the change process can provide leaders with valuable insight as they navigate the course of change and build an organizational community that strives for a sense of closeness in order to enhance implementation and success of a change initiative.

This type of knowledge can prove valuable in successfully implementing change in any organization. A leader may initiate change, but it is the responsibility of organizational stakeholders to implement change processes over time. It is essential for future research to focus on listening to how organizational members react to change before, during and after change occurs if long-term, systemic change is desired.

References

[1]. Argyris, C. (1982). *Reasoning, learning, and action: Individual and organizational.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[2]. Ashkanasy, N., Zerbe, W.J., & C. Härtel (2002). Managing emotions in the workplace. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, Inc.

[3]. Austin, J. (2009). Mapping out a game plan for CHANGE. *HRMagazine*, 54(4), 39-42. Retrieved from Business Source Complete database.

[4]. Bacharach, S., Bamberger, P., & Sonnenstuhl, W. (1996). The organizational transformation process: The micropolitics of dissonance reduction and the alignment of logics of action. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 41, 477-507.

[5]. Bartunek, J.M., Rousseau, D.M., Rudolph, J.W., & DePalma, J.A. (2006). On the receiving end: Sensemaking, emotion, and assessments of an organizational change initiated by others. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42, 182-206.

[6]. Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity*. New York: Dutton.

[7]. Bell, V. (2006). Coping with change in the workplace: Four ways that people deal with change, available at: http://www.thefabricator.com/article/shopmanagement/coping-with-change-in-the-workplace.

[8]. Bergquist, W. (1993). *The modern organization: Mastering the art of irreversible change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[9]. Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among 5 traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: *SAGE Publications*.

[10]. Dent, E.B., & Powley, E.H. (2002). "Employees actually embrace change: The chimera of resistance," *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), 56-73.

[11]. DuFour, R. (May 2004). What is a professional learning community? Educational Leadership, 61(8), 6-11, available at: http://pdonline.ascd.org/pd_online/secondary_reading/el200405_dufour.html.

[12]. George, J.M., & Jones, G.R. (2001). Towards a process model of individual change in organizations. *Human Relations*, 54, 419-444.

[13]. Judge, T.A., Thoresen, C.J., Pucik, V., & Welbourne, T.M. (1999). Managerial coping with organizational change: A dispositional perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 107-122.

[14]. Kanter, R.M., Stein, B.A., & Jick, T.D. (1993). *The challenge of organizational change*. New York: Free Press.

[15]. Kiefer, T. (2002). Understanding the emotional experience of organizational change: Evidence from a merger. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 4(1), 39-61.

[16]. Kuhn, T., & Corman, S.R. (2003). The emergence of homogeneity and heterogeneity in knowledge structures during a planned organizational change. *Communication Monographs,* 70, 198-229.

[17]. Leadership-and-Motivation Training (n.d.), available at: http://www.leadership-and-motivation-training.com/strategies-for-managing-change.html (accessed 7 March 2010).

[18]. Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

[19]. Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research

methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: *SAGE Publications*.

[20]. **National Academy for Academic Leadership (2007).** Leadership and institutional change, available at: http://www.thenationalacademy.org/ready/change.html. NVivo qualitative data analysis software. *QSR International Pty Ltd*. Version 9, 2010.

[21]. **Oreg, S. (2003).** Resistance to change: Developing an individual differences measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 88, 680-693.

[22]. **Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis, A. (2011).** Change recipients' reactions to organizational change: a 60-year review of quantitative studies. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 47: 461. DOI:10.1177/ 0021886310396550.*

[23]. **Singleton, R.A., & Straits, B. (1999).** *Approaches to social research.* New York: Oxford University Press.

[24]. **Strauss, A.L. (1987).** *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[25]. **Towne, J. (2011).** Next generation: Computers in the classroom can transform education, available at: http://www.whotv.com/news/who-story-next-generation-schools-052110,0,4464731.story.

[26]. **Trochim, W. (2001).** *The research methods knowledge base*. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog Publishing.

[27]. **Weick, K., & Sutcliffe, K. (2001).** Managing the unexpected-assuring high performance in an age of complexity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[28]. **Wheatley, M. (1997).** Goodbye, Command and Control. *Leader to Leader,* Summer, (5).

[29]. **Whissell, C. (2001).** The emotionality of William Blake's poems: A quantitative comparison of songs of innocence with songs of experience. *Perceptual & Motor Skills,* 92, 459-467.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Friestad-Tate is a faculty member for Kaplan University in the School of Business MBA program. At Kaplan she has served as a mentor and on multiple committees for the university. She is a member of the Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management (IBAM) and Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Her business and entrepreneurial experience include real estate, small business ownership, retail, and education all levels from K-12 through graduate education. Her expertise is in the study of leadership, technology skills of students, and organizational change utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Dr. McCoy is a full time faculty member for Kaplan University in the School of Business MBA and MSM programs. At Kaplan he serves as a mentor, course lead, and course developer. He is a member of the International Leadership Association (ILA) and Institute of Behavioral and Applied Management (IBAM). His business and entrepreneurial experience spans 23 years as president of McCoy & Associates, Inc. His expertise is in the study of leadership and organizational change utilizing a qualitative research methodology.