

**AN EXPLORATION OF EMPLOYEE READINESS FOR CHANGE AT WALTER
SISULU UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are faced with pressure to change to meet academic as well as socio-economic needs. These changes are often aimed at achieving financial viability, increased institutional efficiency, and solving problems of fragmentation in the university. Universities can change in their structure, operations, systems, or and in the use or adoption of technology. The effective implementation and management of these requisite changes is the key challenge to organisations facing change.

Walter Sisulu University, a comprehensive university in the Eastern Cape, has formulated a strategy to turn the university around. Included in the strategy is a project on the academic enterprise. The level of readiness for change is viewed to be a determining factor in making any change successful. Since readiness is not automatic, there is a need to prepare individuals to have a positive attitude towards the change and to embrace the proposed change initiative. This study is informed by the quest to know what will encourage and prepare employees for the implementation of the new Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) at the University. The study therefore sought as its main purpose to explore factors influencing individual readiness for change in the PQM at Walter Sisulu University.

A qualitative approach was adopted in the study. Models of change readiness were reviewed to identify themes that would be used to explore the levels of readiness amongst university academic employees who were to implement the new Programme and Qualification Mix. Documents were analysed to understand the change in PQM and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews held to solicit the views of academic employees regarding enablers or inhibitors of their readiness.

Results highlighted the poor preparation of academic employees at Walter Sisulu University to support and implement the change. Key concerns of employees included dissatisfaction with the inadequate and inappropriate communication strategies, uncertainty about the suitability of the changed PQM, doubt regarding leadership support for change, as well as the perceived risk of the change. However, the main enablers were the comprehension by WSU employees of the need for a new PQM to address the poor alignment with university vision and HEQSF requirements, an appreciation of the lack of social relevance of the programmes, and confidence that they have the requisite skills and qualifications. The perceived benefits for the institution provided the needed spur for embracing the new PQM.

DECLARATION

I, Bulelwa Ntombentle Mpepo, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, **AN EXPLORATION OF EMPLOYEE READINESS FOR CHANGE AT WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY** submitted for the degree Master of Business Administration at Rhodes University, is my own work. I also declare that this dissertation has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any other postgraduate qualification to this or any other tertiary institution. All sources used or referred to have been documented and acknowledged by means of complete references.



Bulelwa Ntombentle Mpepo

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADKAR	Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement.
BCC	Buffalo City Campus
B Tech	Bachelor of Technology
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CLTD	Centre for Learning and Teaching development
DHET	Department of Higher Education And Training
DIT	Durban Institute of Technology
FBS	Faculty of Business Sciences
FSET	Faculty of Science and Technology
FTE	Full time equivalent
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HOD	Head of Department
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification Sub Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QAD	Quality Assurance Department
RAS	Resource Allocation Strategy
TTM	The Transtheoretical Model
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The use of mergers in transforming higher education is not a uniquely South African phenomenon (Arnolds, Stofile & Lillah, 2013). Harman and Meek (2002, p.1) noted that, mergers have been used by national governments to initiate systemic restructuring of higher education in many countries such as Canada, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and Australia to name a few. According to Harman and Meek (2002, p.2) the dominant global trend has been to move from many and highly specialised institutions to fewer and more comprehensive institutions, and from single site and single campus to multi-site and multi-campus institutions.

The South African Higher Education system has similarly undergone significant transformation (Jansen, 2007). The National Plan for higher education (Ministry of Education, 2001) proposed the reduction of the number of public institutions in South Africa. This, according to Jansen (2007, p.294) set in motion a process for the restructuring of the higher education system in South Africa, which resulted in the reduction in public institutions of higher learning from 36 institutions to 21.

According to Wyngaard and Kapp (2004, cited in Arnolds, et al., 2013, p.2), the two most important reasons for these mergers were (1) the unification of the fragmented further and higher education system inherited from the previous dispensation, and (2) the eradication of inequalities and distortions of these education systems.

Arnolds, et al. (2013) noted that, the focus of change studies in the higher education sector in South Africa has been on the implications of mergers between strategic management, staff behaviour and attitude, with a bias towards the impact of change management. May and Mason (2007, pp.152-153) explored employees' opinions on goal clarity, trust in management and perceptions of organisational readiness for change in the context of the changes caused by the merger to form the Durban Institute of Technology (DIT), South Africa. They found that, extensive research had been done in the generic field of mergers focusing on higher education institutions (HEIs) globally and South Africa in particular. However, it appears as if there is a lack of research on the human aspects of mergers and specifically the perceptions of the readiness for change, goal clarity and trust in management.

In this study, the main focus is to understand employee attitude and response to change. It is noteworthy that a number of recent studies have been undertaken on readiness for change. For example, Mntungwa (2007) looked at readiness of employees for change in a regional electricity distributor at Ethekwini Electricity and Bedser (2012) examined readiness in Eskom. Van Heerden's (2011) study aimed at determining the level of readiness for the change amongst the employees of Nedlands local government in Australia. Kassiem (2014) investigated organisational change in an employee wellness company, specifically investigating its effect on job satisfaction and organisational climate. The focus of these studies was on the human factor, assessing both management and general staff readiness for change. This research builds on these studies and investigates employee readiness in the higher education sector.

This study uses Walter Sisulu University (WSU), a merged comprehensive institution as its case study. The proposed change was necessitated by the previous state of affairs at Walter Sisulu University. That is, following a collapse of systems, governance and financial crisis at WSU, the South African government through the Ministry of Higher Education and Training appointed an administrator to ultimately develop a turnaround strategy to improve the performance efficiency of the university (WSU, 2012). The university turnaround strategy comprised of eight projects, namely; institutional governance, academic enterprise, student governance, financial management, ICT infrastructure, human resources management, teaching and learning technology and physical infrastructure, in line with the assessor's recommendations, and was ready for implementation (WSU, 2013). Of these eight projects, the most critical is the academic enterprise as it forms the core of the institution (WSU, 2013). Part of this academic enterprise project is the programme qualification mix of WSU, which is the focus of this study.

An appropriate research method is needed to study employee readiness for change. With this in mind, a qualitative case study approach was used as it provides an excellent opportunity for the researcher to gain insight into a case, using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to learn directly from the employees what is important to them (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, case study research is a holistic inquiry that investigates an existing phenomenon in depth and within its real-life setting (Yin, 2009).

1.2 Research problem

Higher Education is valued by society for its contribution to economic and social development and to the strengthening of democracy and social justice (Badsha & Cloete, 2011). In the case of WSU, Songca, Eldik, van der Merwe & Morris (2014) has noted that the university has not had the desired impact on society through its academic programme offerings, research activities and community engagement programmes, as these have not been aligned to the needs of society. This study examines the changes being introduced to the current academic programme offerings and employees' response to this change.

When reviewing their academic programmes, Dougall and Rupprecht (2015) believe that it is critical for South African universities to respond appropriately to the Higher Education Qualification Sub Framework (HEQSF) through for example, rethinking and adjusting their programme qualification mixes (PQMs) so that they are aligned with the new HEQSF. They further point out the challenge associated with deciding which programmes or qualifications to offer and how to adjust these from time to time in order to stay relevant in a changing education environment. In addition, academic programmes and qualification are changed to be in agreement with the mission and goals of an institution as well as meet national / regional needs (Council for Higher Education (CHE), 2004).

WSU is faced with a PQM that is not aligned with HEQSF requirements, and not relevant to socio economic needs. The university is proposing the implementation of a new PQM to fit its vision and mission, to be financially viable and responsive to the region and country's socio-economic requirement (Songca, et al., 2014). The new PQM brings the opportunity to improve efficiency and as such produce well rounded, "marketable" graduates. The problem is that there seems to be a lack of awareness and poor preparation of the academic employees in term of their readiness to support and implement the proposed change in the WSU PQM. This makes it critical to determine and facilitate readiness of employees before change as employee readiness is critical to the effective implementation of any organisational change (Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993; Faghihi & Allameh, 2012; Zolno, 2009).

1.3 Research questions

This research seeks to answer the following research question: "What are the perceptions of Walter Sisulu academic employees regarding their readiness to effect

the proposed change in the PQM?”. This question can be answered by addressing the following sub-questions:

- How was the proposed change communicated to the academic employees?
- What is the impact of the change communication on academic employees?
- What interventions can be recommended to the institution?

1.4 Aims and objectives of study

The aim of the study is to explore and describe the perspectives of the WSU academic employees within two faculties at the Potsdam site of the Buffalo City campus regarding their readiness to implement the changes to the programme qualification mix. Three research objectives emerge from this, namely:

- To describe how the change was communicated to WSU academic employees;
- To analyse readiness of academic employees at WSU in comparison to the content of Walter Sisulu University change communication; and
- To make recommendations on how the institution can facilitate employee readiness to support the modified PQM.

1.5 Significance of the study

The improvement of employee readiness for change in institutions and more specifically institutions of higher learning has been, and continues to be a cause for concern. Therefore the study of employee readiness at WSU will help the institution improve the facilitation of employee readiness to support the implementation of the change initiative. Further, the study enhances a better understanding of employee readiness issues in institutions of higher learning in South Africa and focuses more specifically on WSU employees. It also presents an understanding of the terminology employed in the institutions of higher learning, ways employees conduct their day to day duties, the impact of organisational factors and how they limit themselves due to their different perspectives, backgrounds and contexts. In other words, the study offers an exploration of employee readiness for change focusing at WSU.

1.6 Envisaged structure of dissertation

The first chapter provided the introduction to the research, outlining the research questions and its aims and objectives. Chapter 2 discusses published works of

various scholars that focus on employee readiness for change. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology employed for the study. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research findings. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a presentation of main conclusions, recommendations, limitations of the study, and directions for additional research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Amos, Ristow, Ristow and Pearse (2008, p.3) noted that an organisation does not operate in a void but is part of a wider business environment, making it part of an open system. Hence, Lear's (2012, p.25) notion that an organisation is vulnerable to the ever accelerating rates of change in both the internal and external environment. Since the organisation is compelled to operate and compete successfully in this turbulent and volatile environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010) change becomes essential for the organisation to survive (Weber & Weber, 2011). Ochurub, Bussin and Goosen (2012, p.2) echo an assertion by Carnall (2007) that as organisations grow in productivity, activities and profitability, such growth requires changes in the way that the organisation operates. Cummings and Worley (2008) caution that in this ever changing era unwillingness by an organisation to change poses a threat to the organisation's success and its existence.

This chapter provides an overview of literature on organisational change, specifically readiness for change. The major focus is on how individual readiness has been defined and how models of readiness have been used to explore the factors impacting positively and/ or negatively on readiness for change. This is done by firstly, defining organisational change and readiness for change, followed by an overview of the models of planned process change within which readiness for change lies. It is from these models that factors impacting negatively or positively on readiness are drawn. Since there is possibility of resistance when it comes to change, this study will also discuss the concept of resistance to change.

2.2 Organisational change

In an attempt to explore the concept of readiness it is crucial to first understand organisational change. Organisational change is defined as the adoption of new behaviour by people in an organisation, where behaviour is defined as new learning in terms of knowledge, skills that are gained and are required to be applied differently so that the organisation is able to adjust to environmental influences or change (Cummings & Worley, 2014). Organisational change is a process by which organisations move from their current state to some desired future state to increase

their effectiveness (Smith, 2005, p.408; Jones, 2010, p.31 cited in Hughes, 2010, p.13). In order to improve its performance an organisation makes change to its structure, strategies, systems, processes methods, technologies or organisational culture (Creasey, 2009; Veremeenko, 2014). Creasey (2009, p.6) further states that these changes can be a reaction to specific challenges the organisation is facing and which could be internally or externally imposed. Rebeka and Indradevi (2015, p.73) describe change as a process through which an organisation plans to get stakeholders to accept change in their institution's environment. Thus, change involves establishing a new pattern of thinking and behaviour (Chen, Suen, Lin, & Shieh, n.d).

The definitions above portray change as a positive and smooth move wherein organisations move to a better state. However, views to the contrary exist. Kotter (2007) states "In reality, even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises". Change does not always yield intended results as captured by Beer and Nohria (2000) when they state that seventy percent of all change initiatives fail. This is confirmed by Elving (2005) when he states that more than half of change initiatives fail.

A further point noted is that organisational change has been defined in terms of content, context and process which inform the nature of change. It is vital that organisations understand the nature of change.

2.2.1 The Nature of Change

As pointed out in the previous section organisational change has been defined in terms of content, context and process. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) add another dimension concerning employee responses to organisational change. Literature demonstrates that content, context and process are the three critical dimensions that shape employee responses to change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Firstly, content change refers to 'what to change' and considers the order or level, the scale, timing, foci and degree of change (Hodges, 2014; Kezar, 2001). The content of change can be categorised into tangible and intangible factors (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Huy, 2001). Tangible factors include factors such as organisation structure, strategy, systems, work processes (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), whereas

intangible factors include changes in social relationships and systems of shared beliefs (Huy, 2001).

Secondly, the context of change focuses on why the change is needed. Contextual issues include both internal and/or external influences existing in the institution's environment, impacting on how the institution is operating and perhaps leading to the change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Thirdly, the process of change encompasses the way in which change happens (Kezar, 2001) as well as the implementation of change (Burke, 2008). Specifically, process considers the actions that are taken by the institution to plan and implement the change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Understanding organisational change as a process sets the stage for individual readiness as an important requirement for successful organisational change efforts (Wittenstein, 2008).

Responses to all three dimensions are important but this study emphasises process and content, as it focuses on the PQM and how it is communicated as well as how it impacts on the employees in the case studied.

Andersen (2008) points out that the manner in which an individual responds to change depends on the type of change confronted by the person. Hence there are differing reactions to change. Furthermore, acceptance of change is not reliant only on the type of change faced, but also by how that particular change will affect the individual (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Eby, et al., 2000).

Whereas organisations realise the importance of understanding the nature of change it is also crucial to understand the type of change, since this will assist the organisation in anticipating individual reaction, as well as choosing the most appropriate strategy or strategies to effect the change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

2.2.2 Types of Organisational Change

Cummings and Worley (2008) considered types of change from a variety of standpoints, such as, planned or unplanned change, transformational or incremental change and trans-organisational. Trans-organisational change covers interventions

such as mergers, acquisitions, alliances and integration processes. Furthermore, Burke (2008) identified other types of change such as evolutionary and revolutionary change. Planned change is associated with organisational modifications that are deliberately shaped by members of the organisation (Kezar, 2001, p.20) and as such a product of conscious reasoning and action (Hodges, 2014). Planned change is further differentiated in terms of the magnitude of organisational change and the degree to which the system is organised (Hughes, 2010).

Bedser (2012) highlights that even within a well-planned change process elements of unplanned change do appear and require careful management. Change therefore may sometimes unfold in an apparently spontaneous and unplanned way (Lewin, 1947). Unplanned change, also referred to as emergent change, occurs when the organisation has to respond to unanticipated external change in an adaptive and spontaneous way (Burke, 2008).

Furthermore, while change can be planned, outcomes at different stages of the intervention can be different to expectations (By, 2007). Emergent change is more prevalent in organisations than strategic planning implies (Hughes, 2010). Burnes (2001) depicts this type of change as incremental in nature, involving the introduction of continuous small to medium scale changes over time. Weick (2000, cited in Burnes, 2004, p.889) states that emergent change consists of ongoing accommodations, adaptations, and alterations that produce fundamental change without intending to do so. This suggests that change agents need to understand the sometimes unpredictable nature of change

Although change in the past has mainly been associated with incremental change, recently it is concerned with fundamental change involving among others organisational dimensions such as structure and culture (Cummings & Worley, 2008). Transformational change improves the organisation in a deeper, more fundamental way (Burke, 2008) and the key areas that represent an organisation's deep structure are culture, strategy, structure, power distribution and the control systems (Hodges, 2014). According to Kezar (2001, p.16), transformational change is a change associated with a crisis that triggers the change. However, Dicke (n.d.) advises that not all change is crisis driven but a chosen change can be proactive,

triggered by a progressive institution wanting to improve its effectiveness. Cumming and Worley (2008, p.506) bring in the people dimension when they state that organisation transformation implies radical changes in how members perceive, think, and behave at work and is concerned with fundamentally moving the dominant assumptions about how the organisation functions and relates to its environment.

Change is also described as evolutionary and revolutionary. Evolutionary change involves minor adjustments and improvements in one or a few dimensions of the organisation (Burke, 2008). It consists of improvements introduced in incremental steps (Burke, 2008, p.69) and fits into the programme's existing values and structure. On the other hand, revolutionary change is defined as sudden change that involves a change of the organisation's deep structure and can be planned (Burke, 2008). This change shows similar features to the transformational change discussed above.

The type of change can differ from one organisation to the other, and any change may involve several types of change (Arsaelsson & Theorsdottir, 2013). Research shows that at least 40% of organisational change involves more than one type of organisational change (Smith, 2002) as change categories sometimes overlap in one organisational change initiative (Arsaelsson & Theorsdottir, 2013).

The identified types of change will inform the appropriate model(s) to be used in effectively planning and implementing the envisaged change. Two of the generic models of planned change highlighted in the literature are outlined in Table 2.1.

2.2.3 Models of planned change

The turnaround strategy at WSU includes the changed PQM to be implemented organisation wide. The proposed change initiative is a planned process that will continue as PQMs have to be constantly reviewed to respond to socio economic needs and HEQSF requirements (Dougall & Rupprecht, 2015). Successful management of the changed PQM necessitates consideration of models of planned change that propose how management can guide their organisations through the process of change.

TABLE 2.1 : PLANNED ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE MODELS

MODEL	LEWIN (1947)	KOTTER (1995)
PHASES OF PLANNED CHANGE	Unfreezing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a sense of urgency 2. Form guiding coalition 3. Create vision 4. Communicate the vision
	Moving	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Empower others to act 6. Plan for short term wins 7. Improve on the changes
	Refreezing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Institutionalise change

In his ground-breaking seminal work on change and more specifically change readiness, Lewin (1947, cited in Armenakis, et al., 1993, p.681) conceptualised change as a three-phased planned process. Lewin regarded change as a modification of a set of forces keeping current behaviours stable (Cumming & Worley, 2008). The model recognised that at any point in time there are forces driving for change and those striving to maintain the current position (Kritsonis, 2005). Jones and George (2008) claim these forces arise from the way an organisation operates from its structure, culture and control systems while Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2009, p.489) describes these forces as people, habits, customs and attitudes that drive and restrain change. In the three-phased model Lewin provides a guide on how people can be influenced to change by shifting the balance of the forces in the direction of planned change (Kritsonis, 2005). The stages consist of unfreezing, moving and refreezing, where unfreezing involves assessing the current state and preparing the individual employees and the institution for change by showing dissatisfaction with the status quo (Gilley, Gilley & McMillan, 2009). Unfreezing is considered critical to overcoming the strains of employee resistance (Kritsonis, 2005). Lewin (1951 cited in Kritsonis, 2005) proposed that methods of unfreezing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, comprise increasing the forces that drive positive behaviour toward the change initiative, reducing the inhibiting forces opposing the shift from the status quo and engaging in activities that motivate employees, build trust and help employees recognise the need to change. During unfreezing the task of managers is to identify the reasons for change and provide information to show discrepancies between the

desirable future position and what is happening at present (Nieuwenhuizen & Rossouw, 2012). Furthermore, during unfreezing the content of the change message communications should also include reassurances regarding the change initiative (Klein, 1996).

Moving consist of changing behaviour and moving the organisation to a new equilibrium, while refreezing covers stabilising or embedding the new behaviour in the fabric of the organisation such that it does not go back to its old way of operating (Burke, 2008, p.104; Higgs Rowland, 2005, p.122; van Heerden, 2011, p.15). Lewin saw that planned change is primarily aimed at improving the operation and effectiveness of the human side of the organization through participative, group- and team-based programmes of change (Burnes, 2004; French & Bell, 1999 cited in Bedser, 2012). Below is an adaptation of Lewin’s three phase model.



FIGURE 2. 1 : ADAPTATION OF LEWIN’S THREE- STEP CHANGE MODEL
Source: Adapted from Robbins et al. (2009, p. 488).

Kotter (1995) developed eight stages that provide a breakdown of the process of change. The model builds on the Lewin’s model and shows the critical components or elements of the process. Kotter initially outlined errors that leaders need to correct when trying to initiate change (Lunenborg, 2010) and then defined eight stages to help correct these errors in the process of organisational transformation, namely; (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) creating a guiding coalition capable of driving change, (3) developing a vision and strategy, (4) communicating the change vision, (5) empowering and encouraging employees to try out new ideas and approaches, (6) generating short-term wins, (7) consolidate gains and produce more change and (8) institutionalising the new approaches in the culture of the organisation (Stralgas, 2010).

Lewin's unfreezing of an organisation is reflected in Kotter's creation of a sense of urgency, where employees are awakened to their state of complacency and convinced of the need to move from the current state. Lewin's model captures this preparation in only one step, namely unfreezing. However, in Kotter's model this preparation phase is extended over the first four steps and stresses the importance of employee acceptance of the change before its implementation (Amis & Aissaoui, 2013).

Much criticism is levelled at Lewin's unfreezing, as it is not explicit in terms of encouraging employees that the need for change is still valid, even when the change has been achieved. Kotter's model is explicitly encourages the organisation to improve on the changes as it gains short term wins (Smith, 2005).

Both Lewin's and Kotter's models describe activities to be carried out in order to initiate and achieve successful change. The significant commonalities in these models lie in the fact that both focus on strategies to mitigate resistance to change and both emphasise preparation as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of any change effort (Barber, 2010).

The value of Lewin's work is that forces supporting and opposing the change are exposed and their impact on the change effort (Kritsonis, 2005). Whereas Lewin's model provided recognition of the role of individual employees' beliefs and attitudes on change initiative, Kotter's model does not provide adequate insight on factors that impact on employee belief, and attitudes toward the change (Barber, 2010). Criticism of Lewin's work is directed at its limited relevance and failure to take into consideration organisational politics and conflict. Burnes (2004, p.978) points out that the model is only relevant to small scale changes in stable environments and encourages a top down approach to change management.

It is noteworthy that, both models are criticised for their failure to appreciate change as complex and for their 'simplistic' assumptions regarding success, taking for granted that if the rigid steps are followed the change will succeed (Gilley, et al., 2009). Furthermore, Kotter's model has some flaws emanating from its top down approach to change, its rigidity and irrelevance of some steps for some contexts.

Hence, Sidorko (2008 cited in Applebaum, Habashy, Malo & Shafiq, 2012, p.769), challenges the model for not acknowledging the need for building multiple guiding coalitions on multiple occasions to deal with different aspects of the change process.

In spite of the flaws highlighted in these models, Kezar (2001) accepts that the general models for planned change may be appropriate for HEIs, but laments the limited examination of change in universities as distinct entities leading to the general transference of change models from other disciplines to HEIs without considering the appropriateness thereof.

The models discussed highlight the importance of employee readiness as a requisite step towards successful change. The focus in the discussion of the models of planned change is on the phases where the individual employees are prepared, or made ready to embrace organisational change, since this study seeks to establish the readiness of employee for change. Having considered the change types and two of the popular models of planned change in general, the following section attempts to reflect on the nature of change in educational institutions, specifically those of higher learning.

2.3 Change in Higher educational institutions (HEIs)

According to Nature (2014, p.273) “Universities have always changed with times. Whatever a university looks like today, it seems certain that the universities of 2030 will look very different”. Educational institutions have to contend with demands for deep changes and innovations such as adoption of new learning approaches (Angehrn & Maxwell, 2008). Nair (2003 cited in Chandler 2013, p.243) identifies four key reasons for reform in higher education, namely technology driven growth, globalisation, competition between institutions and lastly pressure from the public for universities to be accountable to communities around them, thus enabling them to receive greater local support as they meet the needs of the society within which they operate. The trend for American universities has been to form partnerships with for-profit entities to avert economic constraints (Sandeem, n.d.). Broadly, the eroding of funding by state and or other funders, together with fierce competition between universities has forced American universities to change and operate as business entities.

Considering change in South African universities, Govender, Moodley and Parusamur (2005, p.78) noted that universities tend to change in structure, operations, systems or technology use or adoption, with the aim of improving their cost effectiveness. Harman and Meek (2002) expands on the reasons for change in universities by stating that some HEIs change to increase efficiency, to solving financial problems and resolve fragmentation challenges. Jansen (2007) noted that, higher education institutions in South Africa have been transformed through either small and gradual changes, initiated from within institutions or large-scale changes initiated externally through government and donor interventions.

Fumasoli and Stensaker (2013, p.479) in their examination of organisational studies in Norway higher education, lament that these studies have focused on externally driven change, specifically change in policy. In so doing less attention has been given to the internal stakeholders', specifically institutional managers' concerns on HEI practices. In South Africa the focus has been on the implications of mergers for strategic management (Arnolds, et al., 2013), staff behaviour and attitude in terms of its impact on change management (Govender, et al., 2005).

The literature reveals that in South Africa, since the advent of mergers in HEIs, the nature of change has mostly been externally imposed and involved a variety of change types, including transformational and incremental, small- and large-scale change. The eight-project turnaround strategy at WSU comprises major changes aimed at the restructuring of the university to "rebuild the university" (WSU, 2013) improve infrastructure, review the academic enterprise, IT infrastructure, financial sustainability, human resources and drive change management (WSU, 2013). The targeted project proposes the transformation of the academic enterprise that will among other things involve a change in the entire institution's PQM (WSU, 2011).

The change at WSU is multifaceted. The initial change at WSU was trans-organisational, since it is a result of three merging institutions of Higher learning. The current change initiative at WSU, the eight project turnaround strategy, is an overlap of a number of different types of change. Firstly, the change is externally imposed by DHET, secondly, it is planned as it is a conscious and deliberate action by the university to improve the institution's effectiveness, and thirdly it is transformational

because it involves organisation wide changes (Songca, et al., 2014). The new PQM specifically proposes an overhaul of all programme mixes in the entire institution supported by a major change in governance, architecture, policies and guidelines to effect the change. Finally, it requires continuity in that DHET requires continuous review of programmes and qualifications to meet HEQSF requirements (Dougall & Rupprecht, 2015) and to correspond to ever changing socio economic needs (Badsha & Cloete, 2011).

Knowing the nature of the change at WSU assists toward ascertaining how the change can be effected successfully. According to Armenakis, et al. (1993) change readiness implies a transformation of individual perceptions and increases the chances of successful change effort. Furthermore, Smith (2005) points out that an organisation can only achieve successful change when it is ready to change. Hence, Bedser (2012) argues the need to enhance change readiness. The next section expands on the importance of change readiness.

2.4 Importance of Readiness for Change

Literature advocates the essentiality of employee readiness for successful change implementation (Eby et al., 2000; Nordin, 2011; Smith, 2005). Luecke (2003, cited in By, 2007, p.4) states that it is vital for an organisation to be change ready before attempting to implement and manage any kind of change. By (2007) further points out that premature implementation of change may not give the result envisioned by the organisation as employees may not be psychologically and emotionally ready for the change effort.

A number of publications indicate that the major reasons for failure of change include, inadequate attention to personal concerns (Miller, 2012) and lack or poor preparation of employees for change (Berneth, 2004). Faghihi and Allameh (2012, p. 216) affirm this stating that when there is readiness to change in an organisation the change effort has a higher chance of success, and failure to assess change readiness may result in spending significant time and energy in the wrong direction. Against the backdrop of the picture portrayed by studies that 70% of change initiatives fail (By, 2007; Kotter, 2008), it becomes imperative for organisations to give serious attention to change readiness as failed change efforts come at a price

and if readiness is neglected the organisation may waste resources in dealing with resistance (Smith, 2005).

Although there is no guarantee that individual readiness will lead to successful implementation of change, a number of writers agree that individual readiness for change would augment organisational change. In their study, Cunningham, et al. (2002, p.389) found that readiness for organisational change scores did not reflect a general propensity for personal change. Zolno (2009, p.1) on the other hand states that the success of any major organisational change effort is dependent to a large extent on the "readiness" level of the employees. By's (2007, p.6) study of change readiness in the tourism sector in the United Kingdom supports the view that there is a positive correlation between the level of change readiness and the successful implementation of change. Pettigrew (1990 cited in Weeks, et al., 2004, p.8) considers the process of altering people's actions, reactions, and interactions to move the organisation's existing state to some future desired state as critical when discussing change. Hence, Holt and Vardaman (2013, p.9) proposes that one important factor influencing successful implementation of change is initial readiness.

The importance of readiness was emphasised by Piderit (2000) when she proposed the creation of readiness for change as the main cure for reducing resistance. Smith (2005), emphasized this by stating that the creation of a state of change readiness before the change, shields the organisation from having to cope with consequences of resistance in the future. Kwahk and Lee (2008) confirm the critical role played by readiness role in their claim that readiness for change serves to mitigate resistance and reduce the failure rate of change initiatives.

Individuals impacted by change experience and exhibit different responses to change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Yhu-Shy (n.d.) cautions that when the organisation introduces change it should recognise that some employees will welcome the change while others will resist it, resent it or will be neutral. Since literature advances readiness and resistance as two sides of the same coin, one can therefore not look at readiness without discussing resistance.

2.4.1 Resistance to change

Studies show that while change can be energising (Govender, et al., 2005) it can also be stressful and intimidating (Doyle, Logue & MacNamara, 2009, p.4; Lane, 2007, p.90) as it threatens a person's stability (Weeks, et. al., 2004). Miller (2012) advises that while change needs to be executed with minimum disruption employees may cause disruption by openly or covertly withdrawing their support for the change effort. This disruption is referred to as resistance and terms such as resistance to change or lack of readiness (Armenakis, et al., 1993) or un-readiness (Pardo-del-Val & Martínez-Fuentes, 2003) are used interchangeably.

Employee resistance can be considered in terms of both attitudinal and behavioural responses to change (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004; Vakola, 2004; Wittig, 2012). Resistance to change has been defined as “an adherence to any attitudes or behaviours that frustrate organisational change goals” (Shah, 2009, p.27). Attitudinal resistance to change on the one hand relates to any conduct by the employee reflecting psychological rejection of the change on the basis of feelings toward the change and evaluations of the worth or benefit of the change (Wittig, 2012). Behavioural resistance on the other hand, refers to individual behaviour that shows a lack of commitment to the change, where the employee displays an unwillingness either to support the change or to remain with the institution during the challenging period of change (Shah, 2009) or “any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo” (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977, cited in McKay, et al., 2013, p.30) or an intention to act against the change (Wittig, 2012).

Furthermore, literature provides a number of reasons or sources of resistance. People's reluctance to embrace change emanates from their suspicion or uncertainty about what is happening or what is going to happen, (Amos, et al., 2008, p.271), when they do not perceive it to yield positive outcomes (Govender, et al., 2005, p. 79), when they envisage potential failure in coping with the new situation (Vakola & Nikolau, 2005, p.161) and when they are asked prematurely to take action (Fixsen, Blasé, Horner, Sims and Sugai, 2013, p.1). Hence, resistance can be analysed from different perspectives. Burke (2008, p.115) analyses resistance from an individual, group and organisation perspective. He states that at individual level resistance has

to do with apathy, losing something of value to the person, while at group level it refers to changing allegiance or ownership and at organisational level it is associated with diversionary tactics such as sabotage, as change is viewed as a way of avoiding the real work of the organisation.

In the context of higher education Schoor (2003 cited in Chandler, 2013) advances the following reasons for individuals resisting change: self-interest; job security and social status; changes in work roles, responsibilities, tasks, new staff or management and power relationships.

Current literature challenges the validity of the concept of resistance and the negative light through which change is viewed. Hughes (2010, p.172) argues that individuals do not resist change as much as they resist the uncertainty that comes with change. Kirton (2003 cited in Hughes, 2010, p.172) points out that a crucial issue is that the resistance terminology puts the blame for rejection entirely on those to whom change is proposed. Kotter (1995 cited in Jansen, 2000, p.53) asserts that individual resistance is actually quite rare. He suggests that barriers to change more often rest in the organisation's structure and systems which are not yet aligned with the desired new behaviour. Hughes (2010, p.171) describes it as a rich and complex concept that calls for rethinking. Jansen (2000, p.54) encouraged the debate in resistance to change and take a different direction;

“Think beyond resistance. We must attend to the more specific reasons for resistance, such as loss of control or loss of self-efficacy, to diagnose problems more accurately and to overcome them more efficiently and effectively. We must also keep in mind the context of the change and focus on explanations other than individual resistance for why change may not be occurring. Finally, we must think beyond the wisdom that people resist change by challenging ourselves to consider the role we as change leaders may play in creating and propagating resistance”.

Looking at the earlier definition by Hayes (2014) of change as occurring when tension is experienced by members, when there is a discrepancy between their current reality and their desired future state, it can be argued that this tension is

necessary as it motivates the organisation to move to a desired state. This challenges change agents to consider the role of resistance in moving the organisation towards readiness to change and how resistance can be turned to readiness. Self (2007, p.3) argues that a number of change initiatives fail not because of resistance but because of “bad change” processes. One would then accept that resistance, in a sense, provides feedback enabling change agents to review and make improvements where possible on either content or process of change.

2.5 Readiness for Change

Readiness for change cannot be assumed. Employee readiness is considered an important and determining factor of successful change (Faghihi & Allameh, 2012; Holt & Vardaman, 2013). Armenakis, et al. (1993) noted that when present, readiness is perceived as a positive factor because it connotes an energetic stance toward change. Armenakis, et al. (1993, p.681) recognised readiness for change as a precursor to the behaviours of either resistance to, or support for a change effort. This is alluded to by Holt and Vardaman (2013, p.10) as they note that readiness equates to the preparation stage, whereby individuals have a positive attitude towards the change and indicate an inclination to take action in the immediate future.

According to Wittenstein (2008, p.9) readiness arises from a combination of personal and organisational characteristics. It includes individual factors that reflect the extent to which individuals hold key beliefs regarding change. In contrast, Weiner (2009) pointed out that organisational readiness refers to the organisational member’s change commitment and change efficacy to implement change.

It is noteworthy that, literature traces the origins of promoting readiness to Coch and French (1948); Lewin (1947); Jacoby (1957); Kotter, 1979); Armenakis, et al. (1993) and Prochaska (1994). Schein and Bennis (1965 cited in Walinga, 2008, p.4) claim that readiness is rooted in early research on organisational change. Self (2007, p.4) attributes the birth of readiness to Lewin’s concept of unfreezing or getting organisational members to let go, both physically and psychologically, of the existing ways of doing things within the organisation. Mello (2015, p.259) cautions of the

inherent risk and uncertainty in doing things differently hence the need to make employees ready.

In contrast to the definition of resistance, readiness is considered as a positive attitude toward the change with positive implications for the individual and organisation (By, 2007; Armenakis, et al., 1993). Literature demonstrates a general agreement on the recognition of readiness as an important factor in the achievement of successful organisational change (Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Smith, 2005) and offers a host of factors that can be used to define the concept of readiness.

2.5.1 Change readiness defined

Many definitions have been offered to explain the concept of readiness for change. Cunningham, et al. (2002) and Wittenstein (2008, p.9) both suggest that readiness arises from a combination of personal and organisational characteristics. Armenakis, et al. (1993) defined readiness as an organisational member's beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed, and the organisation's capacity to successfully make those changes. Bernerth (2004) expanded on this, arguing that readiness is more than just understanding and believing in the change but readiness is a collection of thoughts and intentions toward the specific change effort. Readiness is also considered to refer to change acceptance and openness to change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), the extent to which employees hold positive views about the need for organisational change, as well as the degree to which employees believe that such changes are likely to have positive implications for themselves and the wider organisation (Jones, et al., 2005, cited in By, 2007, p.4).

Lewin (1951 cited in Bedser, 2012) states that change readiness occurs when an individual is completely free of the past to embrace the future. In their review of the readiness literature Holt, et al. (2006, p.30) provided a broad definition inclusive of a number of the factors impacting on change readiness. Holt, et al. (2006) define readiness as " a comprehensive attitude that is influenced simultaneously by the content (i.e., what is being changed), the process (i.e., how the change is being implemented), the context (i.e., circumstances under which the change is occurring), and the individuals (i.e., characteristics of those being asked to change) involved and collectively reflects the extent to which an individual or a collection of individuals is

cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo". Holt, et al. (2006, p.52) sum up the definition by proposing that as a multidimensional and multilevel concept, readiness is comprised of psychological, structural or contextual dimensions which can be viewed from both individual and organisational perspectives.

It can be noted that the definitions of readiness are typically employee centred, since they consider change readiness as involving member behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, individual or collective motivation of members, and members' change commitment and efficacy (Armenakis, et al., 1993; Bernerth, 2004; By, 2007; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Furthermore these definitions portray readiness according to its impact or analysis at different levels, namely individual, group or organisational level (By, 2007; Wittenstein, 2008). The definition of Holt, et al. (2006) provides the cognitive, affective and psychological components of readiness, the factors influencing these components, the level of analysis, as well as the outcome of readiness, which is the alteration of the current state. However, even they focus more on individual and collective readiness with no explicit mention of the organisation's readiness in terms of its capacity to carry through the change.

These definitions reveal the view held by most writers that individual readiness has enjoyed more research than organisational readiness. Gartner (2013, p.54) claims that even where organisational research is undertaken it is often measured via individuals' perceptions. Gartner (2013, p.54) further points out that, literature distinguishes two parts, conceiving readiness at either an individual level or collective level. The individual level construct is defined in psychological terms such as perceptions, beliefs, attitudes or emotions while the collective is described in structural terms such as organisational culture, work policies and procedures (Gartner, 2013).

According to Wittenstein (2008, p.14), one line of research that has been very dominant in increasing an understanding of readiness as it relates to individual change began in the field of psychology, where individual behavioural change research focused on what makes an individual ready to either stop harmful behaviours or begin a beneficial change. At the psychological level the dimensions

are whether or not the individuals (1) feel the change is appropriate, (2) feel capable of making the change successful, and (3) believe the change is personally beneficial (Holt & Vardaman, 2013).

While literature points out that much research is done on individual readiness (Rafferty, Jimmieson & Armenakis, 2013) there was not much evidence to substantiate this in the South African Higher education arena. This provides an opportunity for this study to make a contribution to filling that gap. In this regard, this qualitative study will contribute to the understanding of readiness for change particularly in the context of higher education in South Africa. Nevertheless, Khator cited by Sandeen (n.d., p.10) pointed out that, “ ... you can never exactly predict your course even when you know your destination you just have to be ready to change.”.

Thus, for this study the readiness of employees at WSU is defined as the extent to which employees reflect a willingness to change based on the positive beliefs, attitudes and intentions they hold about the need for organisational change, the implications of the change for employees and the organisation as well as the employees' and the organisation's ability to effectively support and carry out the change effort.

There is concurrence in literature that readiness is important and can be created (Armenakis, et al., 1993; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; Piderit, 2000; Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) argues that if readiness for change is important, there is need to consider how best readiness can be achieved. Models of readiness provide insight on how best to assess, facilitate and achieve readiness. The next section will examine some of the popular change readiness models.

2.5.2 Change Readiness Models

The change management literature suggests a number of models for assessing individual readiness. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979 cited in Kotter, 2008, p.1) suggest that in order for organisations to change successfully, they need to choose appropriate change strategies. Van Heerden (2011) points out that the models are

useful in identifying and understanding perceptions and possible reactions to change. Table 2.2 below compares three approaches that assess employees' readiness to change. All three models stress that readiness is a prerequisite for any type of change to succeed.

TABLE 2. 2 : READINESS FOR CHANGE MODELS

	MODELS		
	Armenakis et al. (1999)	Prosci (2004)	Prochaska et al. (2005)
FOCUS	The communication message	Change outcomes	Individual decision making process
PHASES OF CHANGE MODELS			1. Pre- contemplation
	1. Readiness - Need for change - Appropriateness - Principal support - Efficacy - Valence	1. Awareness of 2. Desire	2. Contemplation 3. Preparation
	2. Adoption	3. Knowledge 4. Ability	4. Action
	3. Institutionalisation.	5. Reinforcement	5. Maintenance
		6. Termination	

Armenakis, et al. (1999) developed a model of readiness focusing on the change message that is meant to heighten the employee's level of commitment to change. They propose that change message should be communicated using communication approaches that include firstly, persuasive communication which refers to the speeches by change agents and articles in employee newsletters; secondly, active participation as a strategy that incorporates indirect learning, enactive mastery, and participative decision making; and finally, management of internal and external information that involves presenting the views of others (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

The model offers five critical beliefs of employees who are facing change. Armenakis, et al. (cited in Abdel- Ghany, 2014, p. 299) suggest that these beliefs can be used at any point of the change process and comprise (1) discrepancy, which means the employee must perceive that the change is needed; (2) appropriateness, meaning that employees need to believe that the chosen strategy is suitable to address the gap; (3) self- efficacy, which means the employee is self-assured that he/she is adequately empowered to successfully bring about the change; (4) principal support, which refers to the belief that managers and peers will support the change initiative, inspiring employees to be confident about the change; and lastly (5) valence, meaning employee certainty of the benefit accruing from the change for them and the institution.

Prosci (2004 cited in Kiani & Shah, 2014, p.78) developed the ADKAR model in 1998. The ADKAR model suggests the five elements that are building blocks necessary for individual change (Hiatt, 2006) and is an acronym for the five constructs underpinning the model, namely, awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. Hiatt (2006) emphasises that all who are or who will be affected by the change need to (1) be aware of the change, (2) desire to participate in and support the change, (3) know how the proposed change is going to impact them, (4) possess the ability to execute the change and (5) the degree to which the capability is strengthened. Figure 2.2 below provides an illustration of the ADKAR model. The Awareness and Desire phases are congruent with Armenikas' (1999) readiness stage.

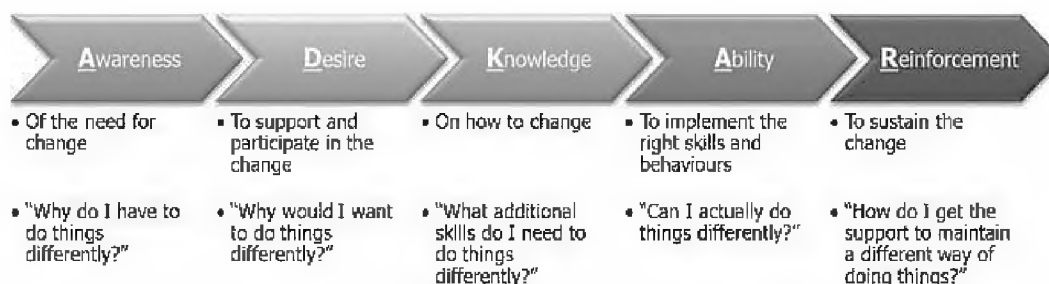


FIGURE 2.2: ADKAR MODEL

Source: Maerz (2013).

By (2007) criticises Armenakis' framework for being inadequate for considering non-verbal communication. He noted that the model is limited to three message-conveying strategies, namely, persuasive communication, active participation and managing internal and external information. Armenakis' model is not explicit on the need to use multiple channels to address the needs of different organisations or organisational structures, as suggested by French and Holden (2012) when they note that communication strategies should be tailored to address the uniqueness of different institutions. Clegg (2010) and Lawrence (2008 cited in Amis & Aissoui, 2013) both point out that Armenakis' readiness model focuses on the communication of an appropriate change message and neglects the issue of power dynamics involved in the change programmes. Who communicates the message then becomes important. Klein (1996) states that people expect to hear important, officially authorised information from their immediate supervisor or boss, who should be well informed to be able to convey the information accurately. Witherspoon and Wohlert (1996) are in agreement with this point when they assert that middle management is key to brokering and delivering information to employees at lower levels of the organisation structure.

Cunningham, et al. (2002) developed a measure of individual change readiness based on Prochaska and Diclemente's (1983) trans-theoretical model (TTM) that uses stages of change to bring together change practises and principles across major theories of intervention. Prochaska, Redding & Evers (2008) outline six stages in the process of change, with the first stage pre-contemplation, reflecting the stage where people have no intention to act. Prochaska, et al. (2008) noted that this could be caused by lack or limited information as to the consequences of their behaviour. According to Prochaska, et al. (2008, p.98–99), contemplation is when people intend to change behaviour in a short while but keep on postponing the action. Preparation is when people intend to take action soon and have already taken steps to do so. In the action stage there are detectable changes in individual behaviour. Maintenance sees people making specific observable changes in their lifestyles. They do not want set-backs and are confident the change can be sustained. Lastly, the termination stage occurs when people no longer experience temptation and have high self-efficacy (Prochaska, et al., 2008).

The models as shown in the table have different foci. Underlying the Armenakis, et al. (1999) readiness model is the change message, how it should be communicated and the components it should incorporate. The ADKAR (1998) focuses on describing requirement for achieving and sustaining change (Hiatt, 2006) while the TTM (1983) emphasises the individual decision making abilities. Holt, et al. (2013) identify preparation as synonymous with readiness since the individuals have positive attitudes toward the change and show an inclination to act in the near future. Cunningham, et al. (2002) categorised the core constructs of the TTM, into three categories, namely: (1) benefits, risks or demands that come with the organisational change, specifically externally imposed change, (2) individual contributors to readiness, such as efficacy, and (3) workplace contributors to readiness for organisational change, including jobs with high decision latitude. They suggest that individuals embrace the change and prepare to take action when the benefits of the change exceed the risks or demands that result from the change; when they perceive themselves to possess requisite ability to cope with the change, and lastly, when individuals are in active jobs with more control (Cunningham, et al., 2002).

Like Lewin (1947), Armenakis, et al. (1999) depicts the process of change as a three step model, comprising readiness, adoption and institutionalisation. The ADKAR model has five steps while TTM (1983) covers six steps. The models exhibit some points of similarity. Firstly, all these models focus on the individual invited to change, referred to as the change recipient in By (2007). The models consider the behaviour of the employee throughout the change process, and more specifically evaluating how the employee readies him/herself for change (Cunningham, et al., 2008). Secondly, all the models highlight the importance of employee readiness as a step preceding support for, and successful implementation of, the change. In the Armenakis, et al. (1999) model, readiness presents the first step. Prosci's (2004 cited in Kiani & Shah 2014, p.78) captures readiness in the first two stages of awareness creation and desire for change while the Prochaska, et al. (2005) TTM model incorporates readiness in the second and third phases of the model, namely, contemplation and preparation.

Thirdly, the Armenakis' model, ADKAR (Hiatt, 2006) and TTM (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) call for the analysis of the present and future state to assess the need and

appropriateness of the change effort. Finally, all three emphasise communication, throughout the process and Armenakis, (1999) goes further to propose what dimensions the change message should address. Bernerth (2004, p.41) asserts that communication of change is the main tool for creating readiness among employees in an institution. Armenakis, et al. (1999) propose five key elements that need to be communicated when conveying the change message. Hence, in the early stages the communication focuses on highlighting the inadequacies of the present state, convincing the change recipient that the proposed change is the most suitable solution to address the discrepancy causing the employee frustration or dissatisfaction and moving to show the benefits of the change initiative for both the individual and organisation. Armenakis, et al. (1993) reflect readiness in the first stage discrepancy and appropriateness factors, ADKAR captures this in the awareness, desire and knowledge phases, while TTM includes this in moving the employee from pre-contemplation to contemplation through to preparation.

The flaws of the ADKAR model are (1) it limits its focus to the early stages of change (Bedser, 2012) and (2) in its application it does not lend itself to reordering or skipping of the elements (Hiatt, 2006). Further, it is only suited to incremental change and ignores emotional dimension that need to be addressed by management.

The Armenakis, et al. (1999) model is appropriate for this study as it focuses on understanding employees' perceptions of the change effort. Furthermore, the Armenakis, et al. (1999) model is chosen for its comprehensiveness in terms of the elements required to prepare employees for change and greater relevance to the main study objective. While the Armenakis, et al. (1999) model comprises five readiness components, the valence component covers two dimensions, namely the benefits and risk that may result from the change. However, the risk element is not explicitly discussed in Armenikas, et al. (1999) but in the modified readiness measure (Cunningham, et al., 2002), risk is given more explicit attention. Therefore, an adapted model of readiness is used in this study, incorporating Armenakis, et al. (1999) readiness model and the additional construct of the risks of organisational change, from the modified readiness measure (Cunningham, et al., 2002). Valence will thus be explored in this study in terms of both benefit and risk levels thus making

six themes. While the different models of readiness may place similar constructs in different stages of the readiness process, they all highlight the importance of the six constructs that will be used in this study.

2.6 The change message dimensions

Based on the models of Armenakis, et al. (1999) and Cunningham, et al. (2002), the six components or themes for this study are discussed below in the context of communication of change.

2.6.1 Discrepancy

Discrepancy considers the perception of a need for the change initiative (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). Self (2007) notes that the need to change should be justified. Bernerth (2004, p.44) states that the employee has to be shown that (1) something is wrong with the current situation and (2) how the change effort will correct it. The dissatisfaction with the current state spurs the need for change, or is the incentive to make the individual consider the change positively. Armenakis, et al. (2007) state that 38% of studies reviewed agree on the importance of the perception of need for change. Kotter (2008 cited in Holt & Vardaman, 2013, p.13) also noted this importance and described it as tension for change. This parallels the stages of awareness and desire in the ADKAR (Hiatt, 2006) model and the contemplation and preparation phase in the TTM (Holt, 2009), where the individual appreciates that there is a change needed in the organisation and the individual intends to take action in the near future (Prochaska, et al., 1997).

Desire to change in the ADKAR (Hiatt, 2006) model goes beyond just helping the employee to 'perceive and accept the need for change (Smith, 2005) but emphasises the motivation of the employee to support the change. Cunningham, et al. (2002) advises that when change is imposed the risk is that employees may not see it as necessary for the improving the current position. This is alluded to by Bernerth (2004) when he states that members of an organisation cannot share in the vision for a better organisational life if they see nothing wrong with current operations.

2.6.2 Appropriateness

Appropriateness is key to readiness for change and Katsaros, Tsirikas and Bani (2014) stated that this involves the provision of information relating to why the proposed change is considered the appropriate one, or what the initiative is intended to improve. Katsaros, et al. (2014) further distinguished that, it is critical to explain to the employees why the intended change is the most suitable course of action for the recognised discrepancy. Having been made aware of the necessity of change, the question one has to consider is; is this initiative the most appropriate one to deal with the identified inconsistency between current and desired state? According to Katsaros, et al. (2014), a well proposed change should match the organisational vision and mission. In line with this Buller, Saxberg and Smith (1985 cited in Self, 2007) suggest that the proposed change should also consider organisational culture, structure and formal systems. However, Anderson (1999) contends that, it is not enough for employees to accept that there is a need for change but they need to approve the tool as accurate to address the challenge. Samara and Raven (2014) state that an appropriate change effort should be reinforced by a verification indicating why it is considered the most suitable one.

Nevertheless, if the proposed change is not viewed as appropriate by change recipients, they could resist it. Self (2007) advocates a need for management to encourage and make evident to employees that the change effort is the most suitable solution to address the inconsistency between the status quo and desired state.

2.6.3 Efficacy

Efficacy refers to the confidence in the ability of both the institution and employees to successfully execute the change initiative. Gist and Mitchell (1992) regard efficacy as a motivational construct that influences individual choices and performance. The change agents as well as change recipients believe that they have the necessary expertise to successfully drive the change. Holt, et al. (2009, p.51) consider efficacy to be related to the effort and perseverance employees are prepared to put toward achieving change goals, motivated by confidence in their capability to make change work. The question to ask in this stage is, does the organisation or the employee have the capacity to successfully implement the change? According to Mntungwa (2007, p.23), changes that take place within an organisation affect an individual's

efficacy. The confidence of employees in their own ability is known as change self-efficacy (Bernerth, 2004, p.42; Schyns, 2004 cited in Oneil, 2007, p.50). However, Bernerth (2004, p.41) noted that collective efficacy occurs when a group of employees are confident that they are adequately empowered to successfully bring about the change. Weiner (2009) offers three determinants of self-efficacy namely, task demands, availability of resources and situational factors. Van der Linde–De Klerk (2010, p.128) is of the view that, the knowledge and ability stages of the ADKAR address this confidence in the level of adeptness of the employee to manage the change. Supporting individual's perceived ability to perform, therefore, becomes crucial. Smith (2005) alludes to this by suggesting that change agents have a responsibility of building the change recipient's confidence and guiding them to understand their role in the proposed change. Individuals who perceive themselves to be incapable of handling the demands that come with the change have a tendency to focus on these inadequacies and neglect ways to push for successful change (Bernerth, 2004). According to Holt and Vardaman (2013) change agents should seek interventions to match employee knowledge, skill and abilities to revised job demands.

2.6.4 Principal support

Bernerth (2004, p.43) noted that principal support touches on a crucial change concept that employees are not alone but interact with others as they perform their work in the organisation. The employees need to believe that managers and peers will support the change initiative, inspiring employees to be confident about the change. Principal support refers to the employees' belief that formal and informal leaders support the change and are committed to its success (Holt, et al, 2009; Self, 2007). This dimension includes care for employees, management encouraging employees to contribute creative ideas, valuing employee input by considering it, giving feedback and implementing suitable suggestions for improvement (Bernerth, 2004, p.44). According to Katsaros, et al. (2014, p.38) perceived supervisory support may provide a foundation for open employee participation and involvement. This is alluded to by Miller (2012) when he states that individuals will “energetically support a change initiative when they observe leadership behaviour that is both credible and supportive”. Kotter (2007) asserts that empowering others to act includes creating a climate in which they believe that they are able to support and effect the change.

Kritsonis (2005, p.4) points out that it is at the preparation stage that the employees need support and help with problem solving.

2.6.5 Valence

According to Bernerth (2004), valence refers to the perception by employees that there is certainly benefit accruing from the change for the employee and personal valence is what guarantees employee buy in to the change effort. Prochaska (1994 cited in Cunningham, et al., 2002, p.378) suggests that readiness for change is stimulated when employees perceive the change to be of personal benefit. According to Armenakis, et al. (1993) the benefits of the change for both the individual and the organisation are largely captured in the valence dimension. Whereas Armenakis, et al. (1993) addresses the benefits of the change for the employee there seems to be a gap in the manner the model addresses the risks or threats that may be faced by the employee.

2.6.6 Risks of organisational change.

Cunningham, et al. (2002, p.378) outline types of change risks that include, (1) Job change or loss, (2) conflict between domestic and work responsibilities and (3) stress or anxiety that comes with change. Hiatt (2006) emphasises that all who are, or who will be affected by the change need to know how the proposed change is going to influence them. Both benefits and risks are stressed. When the risks are outweighed by the benefits, the employee's self - interest is said to increase. Perception of possible job change or loss would limit employee participation in change activities (Cunningham, et al., 2002). Armenakis and Bedeian (1999, p.307) allude to this when they point out that change can cause cynicism and stress which in turn may inhibit success. Organisations need to examine the extra workload which may be created as a result of organisational change. Increase in workload is not only easily attributable to the change but it also makes change unattractive and problematic leading to non-supportive attitudes. (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005, p.160). Cunningham, et al. (2002) contend that employees progress along the TTM stages through a process of weighing anticipated risks against potential benefits of change. This process is located in the preparation stage of the TTM.

2.7 Conclusion

All organisations face the challenge of change which requires effective management of that change initiative. WSU is proposing the implementation of a turnaround strategy that includes changes in its PQM. This impending change is planned, organisation wide, and externally imposed. The proposed PQM intends to improve all programme mixes in the entire institution to fit its vision and mission, to be financially viable and responsive to the region and country socio economic requirement (WSU, 2014, p.19) thus bringing the opportunity to produce well rounded, “marketable” graduates. The problem is that there seems to be a lack of awareness and poor preparation of the academic employees in terms of their readiness to support and implement the proposed change in the new WSU PQM. Lack of readiness for change frustrates attempts to accomplish successful organisational change (Walinga, 2008).

Employee readiness for change within organisations has been studied and analysed by several researchers, but the higher education sector has been under-researched. The literature on employee readiness has highlighted the importance of ensuring employees are ready for a change, prior to its implementation and has identified several contributing factors. Furthermore, communication has been identified as a key contributor to creating a state of readiness. The literature on the factors of readiness has been reviewed and six factors were identified as the basis for investigation for this study. The next chapter provides a discussion of the research design of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the methods that were selected and used to undertake this study. It begins by presenting the aim and objectives of the study and then discusses the appropriate methodology to realise the study objectives. Included is also an outline of the sampling technique, data collection tools and how data would be analysed. It is important to note that, this research offers WSU an opportunity to gain insight into the perceived impact of the proposed change effort on their employees. Hence, the methods used were selected with the objective of the study in mind, which was attempting to answer the research question posed in chapter 1. The chapter concludes with the discussion of the research limitations.

The research aimed to explore and describe the perspectives of the WSU academic employees within two faculties at the Potsdam site of the Buffalo City campus regarding their readiness to implement the changes to the programme qualification mix.

Three research objectives emerged from this, namely:

- To describe how the change was communicated to WSU academic employees;
- To analyse readiness of academic employees at WSU in comparison to the content of Walter Sisulu University change communication; and
- To make recommendations on how the institution can facilitate employee readiness to support the modified PQM.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Weaver and Olson (2006, p.460) state that paradigms are patterns of beliefs and practices that regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished. This study is a qualitative study that allows the researcher to get insight on complex situation by examining participants' experiences in detail about the phenomenon. This is in line with Leedy and Ormrod (2010) who further outlined four purposes that qualitative research studies serve, namely, (1) describe, (2) interpret, (3) verify and (4) evaluate. On the other hand, Guba and Lincoln (1994) consider qualitative research to be emergent in

nature, allowing new information to surface as the process unfolds. It is in the light of this that the interpretivist paradigm with the ontological view of internal realism will be used to explore the subjective experience of reality that each participant presents (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2005). The purpose of research in interpretivism is to understand the day to day events, experiences and social structures and the values people attach to these phenomena (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Burns and Burns (2008) state that in this paradigm reality is socially constructed with subjective evaluation and meaningfulness of experience emphasised for the individual.

3.3 Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative case study approach as it provided an excellent opportunity for the researcher to gain insight into a case using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.556). Qualitative research methods enable the researcher to learn directly from people what is important to them (Burns & Burns, 2008). Yin (2009, p.93) points out that case study research is a holistic inquiry that investigates an existing phenomenon in depth and within its real-life setting. It recognises the importance of the context, the necessity of understanding and gaining insight through engagement with people so as to understand the meaning that they attach to their activities in a particular setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Furthermore, Hyde (2000) states that qualitative research may follow inductive or deductive processes. Deductive processes start with an established theory and move to see if the theory applies to the given case. This study has used a deductive process of inquiry.

3.4 Data collection techniques

Two techniques were used to gather data, namely, interviews and documents. According to Babbie (2001) use of data from a variety of sources aids the researcher to check findings. Bowen (2009) alludes to this, noting that a qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple sources of evidence.

3.4.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted on a selection of documents relevant to the proposed change at WSU to explore the foundation for the change, its planning as

well as its proposed roll out process. Creswell (2009) notes that document analysis enables the researcher to obtain the language and words of participants while also being convenient in terms of accessibility. Furthermore, Bowen (2009) suggests a number of purposes that document analysis can serve which include providing data on the context within which research participants operate, providing additional research data, as well as providing a way to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other sources.

3.4.2 Interviews

Since a deductive approach was applied, semi structured interviews developed using existing theory were administered. Ten (10) semi structured personal interviews were planned but only six (6) of the recruited academic employees were interviewed. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) note that, the use of interviews can result in diverse information from the different participants, and may also result in making comparisons among interviewee input challenging, but its flexibility is likely to provide the researcher with more relevant information that the researcher had no intention to ask for.

The semi structured interview schedule (Appendix A) was arranged according six themes to prompt participant responses to address the research agenda. The researcher began each interview by clarifying the research purpose and the important role of the interview in fulfilling that purpose. Participants were assured of anonymity. Interviews were audio-recorded and notes were taken to capture the covert nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, nods, shaking of head, tone of voice and posture to name a few. Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, (2004, p.77) point out that “word alone” does not convey the full message. Informed consent was sought from participants prior to using the recording equipment. Member checking was done to provide a quality control process by which the researcher seeks to improve accuracy, credibility and validity of data during the research interview and this is congruent with the views of scholars like Barbour (2001) and Doyle (2007). The interviews were scheduled for one hour each in a private venue at the Potsdam site away from the participant’s office. There was some variation in time taken as the interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached.

3.5 Population and Sampling

According to Uma (2003), the population of a study refers to the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. It is the collective of all units that have a chance of being included in the sample to be studied. The population involved comprises fifty (50) academic employees, both male and female in two faculties (FBS and FSET) of WSU. This was done with one main selection criterion in mind, that is, all participants must be involved in teaching and learning.

3.5.1 Demographics of participants

The attributes of the six (6) participants scheduled for the interview process are presented in the table below:

TABLE 3. 1: SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC DETAIL OF PARTICIPANTS

	Male	Female	Total
	2	4	6
Current HOD		1	1
Past HOD	2	1	3
Lecturer		2	2

3.5.2 Sample and Sampling procedure

According to Flick (2008, p.27) consideration of the sampling techniques used in qualitative research offers a way of managing diversity, so that as far as possible, the empirical material captures variety in the phenomenon being study. Babbie (2002, p.178) noted that, purposive or judgemental sampling is appropriate in instances where the researcher wishes to study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified but the enumeration of all of them would be nearly impossible. Hence, the researcher used, purposive, convenience sampling to recruit six (6) participants from only two faculties FBS and

FSET at Potsdam. Potsdam is one of the six (6) sites of the Buffalo City Campus with approximately fifty (50) academic employees spread in five departments. The site and faculties were selected for practical convenience as it is where the researcher is based.

3.6 Data analysis

The data obtained from the audio recorded interviews was transcribed, analysed and coded. A coding system was used to group the findings into themes for analysis and interpretation, this is in line with Rubin and Babbie (2009, p.483). Henning's et al. (2004) transcription for conversation analysis and interpretation method was used. The results were written up by the researcher.

3.7 Ethical concerns

The researcher ensured that ethical considerations outlined by the higher degrees committee on research that deals with human beings were followed. Major ethical issues were considered to include insider research bias, permission to undertake research, anonymity of participants and confidentiality of their information. The potential for bias was appreciated and care was taken not to reveal the researcher's personal opinion and interpretations of the change for the period of the study. This was done bearing in mind the fact that the researcher is an employee of WSU although just an ordinary member of staff not holding a key role in the change initiative. With that in mind, written consent to undertake the study was sought from the Campus Rector and the Director of Research (Appendix B and C). The participants were invited in writing to volunteer to take part in the study. The letter of invitation (Appendix D) gave the purpose of the study, what participants are being asked to do exactly, risks and benefits, how the information will be used, how anonymity will be ensured, and so forth. They were made aware that they are free to pull out at any stage of the study. Once the invitation was accepted, participants were requested to sign an informed consent form (Appendix E) prior to the commencement of each interview. During the interview process no one was referred to by name only randomly selected numeric codes were used to address the participants the duration of the recorded interview sessions. The signed forms with names of participant were kept separate from other study material to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity was adhered to in the study.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The limitation of qualitative research generally is that the researcher can only transfer the findings of the study to similar context (Burns & Burns, 2008). The similar contexts may not be easily known to the original inquirer making transferability difficult (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The size and selection of the sample also pose generalisation limits. This research was only confined to one institution of higher learning and the practices of this institution may not apply to other institutions country wide.

3.9 Conclusion

A qualitative research design was used in this study by employing primarily face to face interviews. The study used qualitative content as a research technique for data analysis, WSU as its case study and all the data came from WSU employees who were directly involved with the area of study. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the study was to describe and explore employees' perspectives of the proposed change in the programme and qualification mix at WSU and their readiness to support the change, based on what and how this change was communicated to them. The chapter provides a presentation and discussion of the findings and gives attention to two objectives of the study namely;

- To describe how the change was communicated to WSU academic employees; and
- To analyse readiness of academic employees at WSU in comparison to the content of WSU change communication.

This section provides a brief overview of how WSU communicated with the staff and other key stakeholders in relation to this change and incorporates the university employees' experience of the communication. The description of the change readiness content is then organised according to the six themes used during the process of collecting data, namely: discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, valence and risk of organisational change. Each theme is presented as a distinct section, allowing for both the content in WSU documentation to be presented where applicable, and the perspective of employees.

4.2 Change Communication

The description of how the change was communicated and the employees' experience of the communication, is based on the communication principles and strategies used to provide information to employees about the change.

4.2.1 Document information on communication approaches used by WSU

Various WSU documentation presented strategies to be used to inform all stakeholders of the pending change. A number of such initiatives are noted: Firstly, a turnaround bulletin was introduced with the objective of updating the WSU community on the progress of the turnaround strategy the university was developing and implementing (WSU, 2012). The Bulletin was launched in November 2012 and is available in hard and soft copies. Secondly, a turnaround summit involving

stakeholders was held in October 2012 (WSU, 2012; Daily Dispatch, September 2012). Thirdly, an interim management committee (IMC) consisting of senior managers and the administrator's technical team was formed in 2012 to drive the draft turnaround framework. The IMC set out to form a Turnaround Consultative Forum to provide a platform for inputs from all stakeholders (WSU, 2012). Finally, the university intranet and emails served as the major platform for communication about the change.

4.2.2 Employee perspectives on communication

Participants cited persuasive communication through internal networks (intranet) emails and meetings as the major form of communication that was used in cascading information from change agents to employees. Of the total participants, only two interviewees cited formal documents on the proposed change. It is revealing that, although information about change was publicised in printed news media such as the Turnaround bulletin, Daily Dispatch and Government Gazettes none of the participants mentioned these as sources of change initiative information. Furthermore, current and past Heads of Department (HOD) were the only interviewees that made reference to regular feedback by top management. For example, Participant 2 noted:

- "...there were communications from the office of the Vice Chancellor Academic, through the Deans and HODs..."

while Participant 9 stated:

- "The change was communicated by various media at the university, particularly emails and the administrator had regular feedback to the community stakeholders at large..."

While emails were the predominant method of communicating the change to employees, participants were of the view that a variety of strategies should have been used to reach the different levels of staff. The participants showed a preference for the use of people known or believed to be 'the right people' to drive the change in the cascading of the information to staff down the line. As one participant noted:

- “... Let’s have people, let’s have workshops, let’s have people whom we know will be a driving force, let’s have workshops so that people can ask questions relating to this process” (Participant 2).

Participants were also of the view that not enough was done to communicate with lower levels. Some participants noted that change communication should have devolved to the academics at lower levels of the university organogram:

- “The change should have been communicated further down the line and we should have been made aware of the implications thereof ...” (Participant 9);
- “ ..., cascading the information from faculty to departments, to conscientise people about this whole process...” (Participant 2).

Two HODs concurred that they received direct communication and even got hard copies of the information, but were silent in terms how they conveyed the to their own subordinates. The failure of HODs who are middle managers in this context to play their role of disseminating information to lower levels seems to be a contributing factor in the breakdown in communication regarding the change, which concurs with the assertion by Witherspoon and Wohlert (1996) that middle management is key to brokering and delivering information to employees at lower levels of the organisation structure.

Review of data suggests that communication of change at WSU was in line with the persuasive communication strategy where communication includes holding meetings, giving speeches as well as using memos and newsletters. It seems that there was minimal use of an active participation strategy which would have allowed participation by those affected by change in planning and decision making for the change initiative more especially in the lower level. Hence, participants in the lower rungs indicated that their input was not sought and where it was solicited it was not taken seriously. This view contradicts the information on the existence of a Turnaround Consultative Forum created as a formal platform to receive inputs from both internal and external WSU stakeholders.

Furthermore, while all study participants agreed they knew about the change, not all of them really knew what it entailed and what its implications were for them. Even the Heads of Departments were not in agreement about the adequacy and regularity of information given to them.

It appears that WSU did communicate information about the change and that even the media has reported on the change initiative by the university. However there seems to be a gap, as employees do not seem to be aware of, and have not read important documents. The strategies, or vehicles used to carry the message did not match employee expectations and as such were inadequate to reach all people in the organisation. This finding is congruent with Kotter's (2007) concept of under communicating where he notes that in more successful transformation efforts, executives use all existing communication channels to broadcast the vision.

4.3 Analysis of change readiness themes

A consideration of the strategies used to communicate the change message has been given in the section above. The following section focuses on the change sentiments proposed by Armenakis, et al. (1993) to be critical in explaining reactions of change recipients to a proposed change namely: discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, valence and risk of organisational change. The valence dimension has been dealt with as two themes to explore both benefits and risks believed to result from the change effort.

4.3.1 Discrepancy

The discrepancy message element relates to the member's perception about the necessity or rationale for the change. Readiness for change can be generated when discrepancies between current and desired future states are deliberately revealed (Smith, 2005). Employees must realise that there is trouble with the current way of doing this in order to share the vision for a different and better organisational life and be motivated them to embrace the change (Bernerth, 2004, p.43). Lewin (1951) encouraged the creation of an "emotional stir up" and Kotter's (1995) advocated the creation of sense of urgency so that employees can be moved from complacency and be made to realise the need for change. Cunningham, et al. (2002) caution that

when change is imposed, there is a risk that employees may not perceive it as necessary for improvement of the current position.

4.3.1.1 WSU Documentation on Discrepancy

The documents reveal internal and external pressures that necessitated the change initiative. Firstly the PQM at WSU is not comprehensive, there is absence of academic articulation, and programmes are not relevant to socio economic challenges (Songca, et al., 2014). Globally, higher education is expected to focus on the employability of its graduates and to contribute, to national economic development (CHE, 2002). Also the non-harmonisation of programmes and duplication of modules is considered to result in high costs. The CHE (2002) requires individual institutions and providers of programmes to design their educational offerings such that their different visions, missions and plans are not just reflected but are realised. Further, the programmes and qualifications should meet the varying needs of the stakeholders, communities and regions that they serve (CHE, 2002).

4.3.1.2 Employee perspectives on Discrepancy

Participants gave reasons for the change matching internal and external requirements for the WSU PQM. They recognised that they needed to make changes to be aligned to the purpose of the institution and DHET requirements:

- “The reason for the proposed change in our PQM is to fit with the mission and vision of WSU, that of rural development and urban renewal. Also to be in line with DHET requirements and the needs of the province, also the country as a whole...” (Participant 9);
- “Transformation is the reason for change...” (Participant 6).

They simultaneously acknowledged the needs of external stakeholders such as (prospective) students and employers:

- “Certainly we need to have viable programmes that definitely will address the needs as well as the expectations of the new institution. As an institution focusing on economic development, so our programmes should be in line with community development at the same time be informed by both former

technikon and university programmes. How do we change our curriculum for it to be in line with the mission of the University? ...” (Participant 2).

- “We will have programmes that are in line with our vision and mission, responsive to needs of market ...” (Participant 5).
- “We change to meet the requirement in terms of HE quality assurance that in a three year cycle our programme has to be changed. Our programmes must be in line with market requirements to be able to secure jobs. If we overlook that we will contribute to a pool of students who have got a programme that will not secure them future employment. That means we are not making inroads in terms of changing the course of unemployment. We need to give our students programme/s that is/ are marketable. ... ” (Participant 10).
- “We do not want our programmes to fail. If we do not change the structure of our programmes to be in line with requirements it means we will not be accredited by both SAQA and Professional bodies for example PRISA” (Participant 8).

4.3.1.3 Discussion on Discrepancy

According to Bernerth (2004, p 43; and Smith, 2005, p.409) readiness for change is generated when leaders actively reveal gaps between current and desired future states. Spector (1990 cited in Self, 2007, p.5) points out that when information is shared with organisational members they are better positioned to realise that the organisation cannot continue in the present state.

All participants appreciated the need for change as the WSU documentation has adequately articulated the compelling reasons for change thus facilitating their realisation of the gap between the current PQM and the envisaged PQM. Internal and external pressures necessitating change are clearly outlined in the consultation paper on the academic enterprise (Songca, et al., 2014) and the independent assessor report (CHE, 2011, p.16).

Literature notes that for employees to embrace the proposed change they should believe that there is a justification for the change (Self, 2007). Members of an organisation cannot share in the vision for a better organisational life if they do not see troubles with the present method of operation (Bernerth 2004, p.44). The

documentation reflects the need for the change as critical for the effective functioning and survival of the institution.

The participants seem to believe that there is a pressing need for change and they expressed dissatisfaction with the current PQM believing it does not have viable programmes that are relevant to socio economic needs. This is consistent with the assertions made earlier by Self (2007) and Berneth (2004).

4.3.2 Appropriateness

Appropriateness is described as employee perception of the proposed change as the most appropriate course of action to address the identified discrepancy (Kavaliauskaite & Jucevicius, 2010). Andersen (2008, p.7); Armenakis and Harris (2002, p.170) and Self (2007, p.5) note that employees may feel that the change is needed but disagree with the specific change strategy to effect the correction on the discrepancy. Hence, according to Holt, et al. (2009, p.52); Samara and Raven (2014) and Self (2007, p.5); management should move beyond just demonstrating that there is a need for change, and must offer information convincing employees of the correctness of the strategy chosen to effectively correct or improve the current situation; and that is appropriate for the organisation's context. This dimension concentrates on the fit between the proposed change and the institution's vision and mission; culture, structure and formal systems of the organisation (Katsaros et al., 2014; Self, 2007, p.5). The questions being addressed are, do employees understand how the change supports the vision, mission, structure and formal systems of the institution? Do they think that there is an alternative way that would best address the weaknesses of the current PQM? Bernerth (2004, p.43) noted that the possibility of resisting the proposed change initiative is high if the change recipients do not view it as the correct tool to address the discrepancy.

4.3.2.1 WSU documentation on Appropriateness

WSU was mandated by the Department of Higher Education and Training to develop an eight project turnaround strategy to address the anomalies addressed in the independent assessor's report. One of the projects, the academic enterprise, is proposed as a suitable solution to address the vision of a comprehensive university

relevant and responsive to societal needs. Songca, et al, (2014, p.9) assert that a comprehensive university's crucial achievement is to produce truly comprehensive programmes articulating both the academic and technical nature of the institution. They further point out that the current PQM is not comprehensive, for it lacks academic articulation, relevance and responsiveness to societal needs. Hence, the design of a modified mix of academic programmes, research focus areas and community engagement programmes is required to enable the university to address societal and regional needs, as well as to comply with HEQF requirements (Songca, et al., 2014).

The documents do not give much information on how the new PQM is aligned to the strategic intent of the institution. However, the focus has been more on how the academic structure, academic architecture and policy framework support the academic enterprise. Songca et al. (2014, p.19) sketches how the PQM will change, the phases through which the proposed transformation of the academic structure will be rolled out and the benefits of consolidating and rationalising the PQM.

4.3.2.2 Employee perspectives on Appropriateness.

The responses of participants were diverse, with some not sure of the suitability of the modified PQM whilst others agreed that it matched WSU priorities. Those who could not commit to the appropriateness of the proposed change stated that they did not have details of the new PQM. For example Participant 9 stated:

- "I do not have the details or requirements of the new PQM".

while Participant 2 claimed;

- "Nothing much has been communicated, people were just speculating, coming up with different speculations...".

On the other hand, Participant 6, who was an HOD, perceived the proposed PQM to be a fitting solution for addressing the gap and motivated the perceived suitability of the strategy by stating:

- “PQM consolidation is the right tool...consolidating the PQM for the department is a good move. Instead of servicing the programmes in other departments, now the programmes have been moved to their “rightful departments”. More full time equivalent (FTEs) and qualified staff will be gained. Also this will contribute to building the capacity of the department...”.

However, even though convinced that the new PQM is an appropriate tool, the same participant expressed concern based on past experience with change and claimed that:

- “Programmes do appear on the PQM but are not yet offered. For example B Com. Economics, MBA, B Tech and OMTECH are in the PQM but not offered yet”.

These programmes the participant stated were in the old PQM but were never offered and are now once more included in the new mix.

When participants were asked about alternative tool(s)/ strategies that could have been used to address the gaps in the current PQM, no participant could give any ideas in response to the question.

4.3.2.3 Discussion on Appropriateness

Literature suggests that change recipients may resist the proposed change initiative if they do not view it as the correct tool to address the discrepancy (Bernerth, 2004). This is in line with what has been noted earlier in the discussion under the discrepancy theme, where the CHE (2002) lays down that educational offerings be designed to adequately match the different visions, missions and plans as well as meet the varying needs of the stakeholders, communities and regions that they serve. However it arouses one’s curiosity to note that while only two participants who were former HODs had knowledge of the document containing the revised PQM all expressed willingness to support the change initiative. Probably this is informed by their knowledge of the inadequacy of the current PQM as articulated in their responses.

It was informative that participants claimed not to have details of the new PQM although details of the academic structure, even at the programme level, is provided in the Consultation Paper, Version 2 (Songca, et al., 2014). Moreover, the entire WSU community had free access to the Consultation Paper. In addition, information on its availability was publicised and the invitation to consultative meetings was extended to all staff. However, the interpretation of the PQM was from a discipline specific perspective with some participants considering their departmental mixes and requisite changes in their mixes. Only the HODs had an institutional perspective of the PQM. Perhaps this is why there was a challenge especially with non-managerial academic staff with regards to understanding the suitability of the change in their context.

It seems the management was not aggressive enough in providing evidence of the appropriateness of the change effort. The manner in which WSU management communicated the necessity and suitability of the change is not congruent with literature. Self (2007) advocates a need for management to encourage and make evident to employees that the change effort is the most suitable solution to address the inconsistency between the status quo and desired state. Perhaps this could be linked to the ineffective strategies used to cascade the change information down to the appropriate levels, mentioned when discussing how communication of the change effort was effected.

It is noteworthy that all participants agreed they knew about the change but not all of them really knew what it entailed and what its implications for them were. Whilst there was some communication regarding the suitability of the changed effort to address the discrepancy it was minimal. Furthermore, the document communication tended to be skewed toward the need for the change, rather than addressing the appropriateness of the proposed change. Contrary to the advice provided in the literature, there was no information indicating why the change was considered the correct one.

4.3.3 Principal support

This dimension refers to the employees' belief that formal and informal leaders support the change and are committed to its success (Holt, et al., 2009; Samara &

Raven, 2014; Self, 2007). According to Katsaros, et al. (2014), perceptions of supervisory support refer to employees' perceptions of how management value them by showing appreciation for their input and implementing their suggestions. Furthermore, Kotter (2007) asserts that empowering others to act includes creating a climate in which people do not only believe in their own ability to effect the change but confidence that they have the support of others to make things happen. The creation of a climate conducive to perceptions of leadership support for the change according to Armenakis, et al. (1993) is reflected in the crafting of policies and practices that are supportive to the change. Armenakis, et al. (1993) further point out that employees will embrace the change if they are convinced that leadership has given its full backing of the change initiative.

4.3.3.1 WSU documentation on Principal support

The appointment of an independent assessor and subsequently an administrator who championed the development of the turnaround strategy was initiated by the WSU when they appealed to Minister of Higher Education and Training to appoint an independent assessor to conduct an investigation into the operations of the University (Higher Education Act 101, 2011). This indicates that management supported the change effort from its initiation. The documentation shows evidence of the leadership commitment to this change through the following initiatives to support the new academic enterprise: (1) management commitment to the provision of financial support (WSU, 2013); (2) a commitment by management to step up academic staff development by affording all academics the opportunity to acquire appropriate skills and qualifications, including the development of staff retention and scarce skills recognition plans, as well as empowerment strategies (Songca, et al., 2014); and (3) management commitment to provide support through the reformed governance of the academic activities. Generally management is committed to the provision of necessary resources, requisite skills (Songca, et al., 2014) as well as policies and guidelines demonstrating that they are fully behind the change effort (WSU, 2013).

4.3.3.2 Employee perspectives on Principal support

The responses from participants indicated that employees did not recognise the effort of the leadership to show commitment and support for the change. The

interviewees, specifically the academics in non-managerial positions claimed that their contribution was not sought in planning the change. Participant 10 remarked:

- "...ideally it would have been proper if they had come to us with the original document and given us an opportunity to rework it..."

Participant 8 concurred:

- "... it was introduced randomly, they did not introduce it professionally, they did not ask for our views..."

Participants were not convinced of the creation of a climate encouraging the change. They were not aware of the workload policy and were not convinced that management was committed to providing adequate financial support to successfully execute the change initiative. This was attested to by participants who said:

- "There is no workload policy, and we lack necessary resources..." (Participant 6);
- There are no policy changes to help us support change. Even the workload policy is not clear ..." (Participant 8).

According to the two participants the workload of HODs had increased as a result of the new structure meant to improve the management of functions.

Participant 8 noted:

- "...the current HOD is doing more than the previous as the work of the Director, HOD and PCO is put together and should be done by the HOD.

There was a view that to show its support for the change, management should do so by providing adequate personnel to carry the load that would come with the change. In anchoring this view Participant 8 pointed out that:

- "If management wanted to support staff they would at least replace those who resigned".

Participant claimed that there is inadequate leadership commitment pertaining to training or skills development. Participant 5 had this to say:

- “No training is given to prepare academics for the implementation of the change minimal support is via Quality Assurance Department and Centre for Learning and Teaching Development. These two departments provide support just for a short time...at meetings”.

Further concerns regarding support are associated with assistance to balance workloads, understaffing and poor follow up in terms of ensuring policy implementation.

- “For the peers to support each other they need to take over workloads from other colleagues to help them implement the change. Also there is need for external support for the change from prospective employers of our graduates, starting from when we craft the PQM (Participant 5).

Participant 8 asserted that,

- “Peers are eager to embrace change if the core problem of being understaffed is addressed. It is not going to affect them but now it comes with the disadvantages.”

Furthermore, participant 8 viewed the changes as just that in saying,

- “... there are changes on paper, but these changes are not easy...”.

4.3.3.3 Discussion on Principal Support

Armenakis, et al. (1993) point out that for employees to embrace the change, they need to be convinced that leadership has given its full backing to the change initiative. While documentation revealed commitment by management to provide support for the initiative through provision of necessary resources and policies, employees seemingly did not recognise the effort of the leadership to show commitment and support for the change. Employees were of the view that the commitment by leadership was just on paper with no follow through to implementation.

It appears that while the institution was in line with Armenakis, et al. (1993) in creating an environment perceived to be conducive for leadership support through crafting of policies and practices supportive to change, the dissemination of this information was not executed effectively. Hence, the employees were not convinced that the change received the support of leadership. Furthermore, management's neglect of sourcing employee input contradicts Katsaros, et al. (2014) who assert that management should value their employees in terms of appreciating their input and implementing their suggestions as a way of showing support.

4.3.4. Efficacy

This dimension refers to the employee's perception of personal or organisational competence to successfully carry out the proposed change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; p.178; Armenakis, et al., 2007, p.277). This construct is said to be motivational and influences individual choices, coping and performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). The questions addressed are; Do members have the requisite skills and qualifications to perform the tasks that come with the change? Can the institution successfully execute the change? According to Weiner (2009, p.4) in appraising their ability to cope with change employees consider among other things task demands and availability of resource. Employees who are confident in their ability to cope with the change show a higher level of readiness to support and contribute to the change initiative (Cunningham et al., 2002, p.388; Malone, 2001, p.27). In addition to that, Bernerth (2015, p.42) and Wanberg and Banas (2000, p.134) also note that individuals who judge themselves to be incapable of handling the demands of change tend to focus on these personal deficiencies and neglect ways to make the change succeed. Hence, Smith (2005) suggests that change agents have a responsibility of building the change recipient's confidence and guide them to understand their role in the proposed change. This, as noted by Self and Schraeder (2009, p.167) can be achieved when managers provide the necessary training and education for employees. The confidence of employees in their own ability is known as change self-efficacy (Bernerth, 2004, p.42; Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Thus, the efficacy element in the context of this study relates to the perceived confidence that both the organisation and its employees will successfully implement

the proposed change. This is approached by examining the documentation and participant's perspectives.

4.3.4.1 WSU documentation on Efficacy

The WSU documentation outlines the planned measures to build capacity of the employees and create an enabling environment in the university that will boost effective implementation of change. The said measures include the following:- developing staff skills and qualification thus strengthening the academic staff qualification mix; developing a WSU-branded education and training suitably accredited and tailored to prepare academics for positions of leadership; relationship building that aims at attitude and culture change such that the WSU communities are cemented to actively pursue a "WSU pride and unity" among stakeholders; and the formulation of a resource allocation strategy to improve the sharing of the universities' limited resources (Songca et al., 2014).

4.3.4.2 Employee perspectives on Efficacy

This dimension is approached by considering both self-efficacy and organisation efficacy.

4.3.4.2.1 Self- efficacy

Participants provided differing responses with regard to the ability of staff to handle the change. Some interviewees indicated that the staff is adequately qualified and experienced to carry out the change. Participant 9 stated:

- "Staff is well qualified in various finance disciplines...". and Participant 2 asserted;
- "The staff have necessary qualification and experience...and personally I have adequate qualifications and corporate experience...".

It was also pointed out by Participant 6 that staff were ready to implement the change.

- “We have staff with expertise in law, management and entrepreneurship. The department is ready to implement the new PQM...” .

Two participants expressed reservations regarding employee capabilities to deal with the proposed change. Participant 5 mentioned:

- “I have the necessary skills to handle the change, but not all people ...”.

while Participant 10 noted:

- “...staff qualifications might not be in line with what is needed in the new syllabi/ content...”.

Interestingly, it is only the current and past HODs who stated that their respective departments had the necessary expertise to implement the change while the non-managers were sceptical about their own and peer efficacy.

4.3.4.2.2 Efficacy of the institution

The efficacy of the institution refers to the university’s ability to successfully carry out the proposed change. Participants were asked to share their opinions regarding the university’s ability to implement the change initiative successfully. Two participants, one a ‘junior’ employee expressed inadequacy or lack of capacity by HODs, or irrelevant qualifications of HODs. Participant 10 stated:

- “...people driving the project now, even the HOD does not have the necessary qualification...” .

Participant 55 attested to this claiming:

- “Our new HODs have no experience, they are not pulling together with staff”.

It was interesting to note that all except one participant were confident that they possessed the necessary capabilities to implement the change and asserted that

while they were not happy with how the planning and development of the change initiative was handled they were ready to support it if certain measures were taken.

It was noted that while most participants believed in the competence of staff to effectively implement the change some participants expressed doubt about the institution's ability to successfully implement the change and support academics in implementing the change. Financial challenges and staff shortages were advanced as reasons for their concern. For example Participant 5 said:

- “Financial instability of the institution is a cause for concern”;
and Participant 6 claimed:
- “... out of 26 staff members only 12 are permanent. We depend on part-time and contract staff. Lack of resources is another factor that could hinder implementation...”.

Participant 9 added to this saying:

- “...financial support is imperative in the implementation of a new programme...”. Participant 6 on the other hand noted that;
- “...there is a need for an academic workload policy to be put in place to balance the key performance are as of a lecturer ...”.

Participant 5 noted;

- “... the load that the lecturer is carrying does not allow the lecturer to do all these four effectively this will help the university to implement the PQM changed successfully.

Participant 10 contributed stating:

- “... collaborative teaching could help in the identification of industry experts, and use of practitioners to bring their experiences to class...”. The same

participant went further to propose training programmes such as lecturer developmental programmes before change implementation; assigning of programme to relevant skills.

This view was supported by Participant 8:

- "... WSU can make it if we place the right people in term of qualification and experience, people who understand what is to be done ...".

4.3.4.3 Discussion on Efficacy

Literature reveals that change agents have a responsibility of building the change recipient's confidence, guiding them to understand their role in the proposed change (Smith, 2005) providing the necessary training and education for employees (Self & Schraeder, 2009). It is encouraging to observe that management identified with this theory. Remarkably, HODs seemed to hold a different position to the documentation, they were confident that their staff had the appropriate qualifications to implement the change. It is however, disconcerting that the HODs were silent about how they would empower and support their subordinates. The views of HODs were echoed by some of the participants who expressed confidence in their capabilities, in terms of qualifications and experience. They indicated no doubt that they have what it takes to carry the change through even with the few areas they claimed needed intervention. This result is supported by the assertion of Samara and Raven (2004) that individuals with a high levels of self-efficacy tend to change their behaviour than those with lower levels.

The ability of the institution to implement the change is supported through the availability of the funds to cover the necessary changes, the resource allocation plan, the turnaround action plan and capacity building organs like the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) and the Quality Assurance Department (QAD). Participants concur with this asserting that CTLD provides them with necessary training and equipment. Interestingly, while all these can be viewed as support mechanisms it is fitting to view them as capacity building mechanisms as well as tools for building employee and institution efficacy.

4.3.5 Valence

Valence describes benefits and or loss one may expect as a consequence of the proposed change (Samara & Raven, 2014). This section addresses the question of benefits accruing in a short or long term for employees and the institution, while risk will be dealt with separately in the next section. The assertion of Armenakis and Bedeian (1999, p.302) is that, personal valence addresses the belief held by employees that to change is in their best interest. Self and Schraeder (2009, p.174) further noted that employees still focus on personal valence, even if management has demonstrated the change will benefit the organisation and employees also recognise that. According to Bernerth (2004), personal valence is what guarantees employee buy-in to the change effort. Prochaska (1994 cited in Cunningham, et al. 2002, p.378) alludes to this stating that readiness for change is stimulated when employees perceive the change to be of personal benefit. The views above suggest that employee support is guaranteed when employees perceive that the proposed change will benefit them. Self (2007) points out that the employee not only considers the benefit flowing from the change but also reflects on how attractive the benefit is for the individual. Thus, should the benefit come with inconvenience for the employee or family, it will be viewed in a negative light.

4.3.5.1 WSU documentation on Valence

There were no direct benefits explicitly discussed in the documents consulted. In its discussion of how capacity would be built to enable effective implementation of the proposed change mention is made that staff skills and qualification will be developed and academics will be prepared for leadership positions (Songca, et al., 2014, p.16). This indicates significant investment on human capital which will in turn benefit staff via acquisition of appropriate skills and qualifications.

4.3.5.2 Employee perspectives on Valence

Some of the questions posed to the interviewees were: “In your view, how will you benefit from the proposed change?” and “What do you perceive as a benefit for the institution in implementing the changed PQM?”

It was interesting to note that in their responses, participants were prompt in pointing out benefits for the institution.

- “The change will improve the quality of our programmes, that will contribute towards improving throughput rate as a university. Offering programmes linked to industry is one of the key important points. Advice from external stakeholders would lead to responsive to industry and society needs...” (Participant 2);
- “WSU will be taken seriously by outside institutions. High chances of employability for our students is envisaged. We need to be equipped and be authorities of that particular knowledge, we need to be able to defend our discipline. Long term rewards of education we have a generation of talent to make difference for themselves...” (Participant 10).

Only Participant 6 perceived the training of staff members and the access of advice via advisory boards as empowerment for academic staff.

- “Involving advisory boards when doing re-curriculum and leading us to aligning our programmes with what is being offered by industry. University organs are more involved for example the intervention by the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD), with training staff members and provision of equipment. Quality assurance department (QAD) intervenes, ensuring that all programmes are quality assured...” (Participant 6).

Some participants acknowledged that the change initiative would compel the academics to move from their areas of comfort and create opportunities to give of themselves, adding to the knowledge resources of the university, and thereby leading to growth.

- “Knowledge of academics would be enhanced. As an academic you need not confine yourself to one specific area, that would open up opportunities for further research, provide new opportunities that might require new knowledge, enable one to give back to the students, assist the university in terms of developing the curriculum. Opportunity to plough back knowledge to the institution...” (Participant 2);

- “If staff see it as an opportunity for growth on a personal basis, the growth of the department, new opportunities, new areas of expertise, the change will be embraced as an opportunity as long as it’s not extra work, it’s within their work complement they will be happy to embrace the change” (Participant 9); “Adding an agricultural department- possibility that new department will have a finance component thus there will be a need for accounting lecturers- that is a positive impact” (Participant 9).

Participant 5 found it encouraging;

- “... to know that my sacrifices are taken seriously in the external world, employability of my student and their ability to employ themselves if they cannot get employment”.

4.3.5.3 Discussion on Valence

There seemed to reluctance with most participants to share their views with regards to “what is in it for me”. In addition to that, two former HODs laughed when asked to share what they would benefit personally from the change which could be interpreted as a sign of nervousness. Moreover, the accruing benefit for staff was not clearly articulated by both the institutional documents and the participants, except for the section proposing equipping staff with appropriate skills and qualifications which was stated in the WSU documentation. Hence, it was noted that most of what was shared as personal valence tended to be the same as institutional valence. This led to the assumption that the HODs’ understanding of the benefit of the change initiative emanates from the fact that they have looked at the change from both the institution’s and department’s point of view. Their keenness in participating in the change is consistent with literature suggesting when employees perceive the change to bring institutional and personal benefit they are more inclined to support the initiative.

4.3.6 Risks and Demands

In considering the dimension of valence the employee weighs both benefits and threats or demands that are brought about by the proposed change. Benefits have been dealt with in the paragraph above. This section explores employee perceptions

regarding demands or threats envisaged to ensue as a result of the imminent change. Kavaliauskaite and Jucevicius (2010, p.587) refer to this dimension as negative personal valence, threatening both job security and relationships between co-workers and with the organisation. When the risks are outweighed by the benefits, the employee's self-interest is said to increase. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999, p.307) point out that change can cause cynicism and stress which in turn may inhibit success. This view is supported by Kotter and Schlesinger (2008, p.132) when they assert that employee participation in change activities would be limited if the employees anticipate that the change brings with it loss of something of value such as job change.

4.3.6.1 WSU documentation on Risks and Demands

The documents consulted though not expressly indicating risks make provision for the development of policies and strategies to support the implementation of the new academic enterprise such as the workload policy which provides a justifiable approach to academic allocation and the resource allocation strategy to avert unfair allocation are examples as discussed in the dimension on principal support.

4.3.6.2 Employee perspectives on Risks and demands

When asked on demands anticipated as a result of the change the participants' responses mirrored a great deal of concern regarding the increased workloads that will follow the change. They also considered the negative effect the increased workloads will have on contact time with students and to their families. One departmental head pointed out that the department would have three programmes added to its mix. Participant 6 stated:

- "We used to have four programmes now there are seven. Workloads will be heavy as a result of staff shortages, lack of resources and lots of administration".

Participant 6's thoughts were that these factors are considered not only to lead to burdensome workloads but have a negative on contact time with students, time with family, time for staff development and also a negative impact on my private study and research time.

- “Position are not filled, those taking extra loads are not remunerated for that.

Participant 8 added:

“When positions were advertised a lot of work was expanded. The current HOD is doing more than the previous as the work of the Director, HOD and Programme coordinators in the old structure (PCO) is put together and is being done by the HOD...”.

Participant 9, a former HOD expressed anxiety at the fact that the change in their programme would lead to feelings of inadequacy or incapability by staff.

- “...if staff are not capable or they feel it is out of their areas of expertise...” .

Furthermore, the capping of student numbers for the next academic year was considered a threat to job security. Participant 9 indicated the possibility of staff cuts since the university intakes are capped.

- “University numbers are capped. The department will have to get students from existing programmes. The university was to give a percentage of our students to FSET, we at FBS would have to curtail our quota for the benefit of FSET. Thus the reduction in number of students will have negative impact on staff and this will impact on the allocation of time table which in turn will result in shortage of space for lectures, more workloads and ultimately allocation of resources will be a challenge. Participant 2 also acknowledged the challenge of resources shortage of citing the fact that staff that has resigned has not been replaced and that becomes burdensome for the remaining staff.
- “... members are working under stress to carry the extra workload. It’s an uphill in our department or else there will be a lot of resistance...” (Participant 2).

Participant 9 further noted:

- "...even if staff members are excited to start on something new there will be extra work..."

The uncertainty regarding the role the staff is expected to play was revealed as adding to staff anxiety.

- "...I do not know what is expected of me, I would make better contribution if my role was explained to me clearly. There is a lot of insecurities,...if this programme is no longer offered I will lose my job or if one contributes, this one will take my job..."(Participant 5).

While the HODs were not happy with how the change was approached they had confidence in the success of the change, hence Participant 9 said:

- "...if the core problems could be addressed the change would be a success. They expressed
- "excitement in starting new things..."

4.3.6.3 Discussion on Risks and Demands

Amos, et al. (2008) and Govender, et al. (2005) note that reluctance to embrace change emanates among other things from employee uncertainty about what is going to happen and when people do not perceive the change to yield positive outcomes. Vakola and Nikolaou (2005, p.160) further point out that an increase in workload is not only easily attributable to the change but it also makes change unattractive and problematic, leading to non-supportive attitudes.

It was remarkable to note that while the participants were apprehensive about some aspects of the proposed change they stated their eagerness to implement it. This is contrary to the notion that employees may resist change when they believe that the demands exceed their coping capabilities (Armenakis, et al., 1993). This is not consistent with literature that when employees identify risks or demands in the proposed change they tend to be reluctant to embrace it. Probably they do not

consider the number of challenges they have mentioned above such as: increased workload, impact on family life, the risk of incapacity and the possibility of staff cuts. These may outweigh the benefits to be derived for both the institution and individuals, as discussed under the valence dimension.

4.5 Conclusion

The presentation of findings included a brief explanation of how change was communicated to the WSU employees. It then focused on how these employees perceived the communication message regarding the revised PQM, in terms of the six themes, namely: discrepancy, appropriateness, self-efficacy, principal support, valence and risk.

The next chapter will deal with the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws the study to a close by examining whether the objectives of the study were met, drawing conclusions from the research and making recommendations on addressing the problems raised.

The study explored employee readiness at WSU by examining:

- How WSU communicated the proposed PQM change to its employees; and
- How this communication impacted on the institution's employees.

5.2 Main Findings

Change is constant. Regardless of the nature or type of change it presents both opportunities and challenges. Organisations therefore need to plan and prepare for any pending change to be able to execute it successfully. This study has highlighted the significance of preparing employees for a change before it is implemented.

In ensuring employee readiness for change, communication has been recognised as key.

5.2.1 How WSU has communicated the proposed change to its employees.

Both strategies for communicating the change and the message content incorporating the six themes were analysed. The study revealed that the institution has not used effective approaches in disseminating information about the change. The lack of sound knowledge about the content of the change at institutional and departmental level shows inadequate or miscommunication in the planning and the development of the change in the PQM.

Inadequate, inappropriate and ineffective communication strategies were used in communicating the change. In addition, middle management failed to effectively play their key role of disseminating information to lower ranks. Therefore, a serious omission in the change communication has been the limited inclusion of the ordinary academic staff in planning the change.

5.2.2 How PQM change communication impacted the WSU employees

Six dimensions of communicating change were used to present and analyse the results of the data collected from WSU documents and interviews. Highlights of this analysis were that:

- Participants were dissatisfied with communication strategies used to inform them of the pending change as they considered them inadequate, inappropriate and lacked critical content,
- While the participants understood the need for change, the benefit of the change and were confident of their ability to cope with the change, they were uncertain about the appropriateness of the change and concerned about the concomitant risk and demands.
- Participants also focused on the inappropriateness of the communication strategy, more than on the nature of the proposed PQM itself. Moreover, timing of the communication was considered late. This resulted in some of the participants expressing concern at the fact that they only received formal communication three years into the process of planning for the change.
- Employee input was not sought.
- There was a perceived lack of commitment from management to ensure that the change communication was effective.
- On the aspect of discrepancy, employees appeared to appreciate the need for change and cited the need for viable and socially relevant programmes to be effective as an institution. However, it was noted that their knowledge of the compelling reasons for change was not attributed to management communication.

The above study concludes that the organisational change was considered by employees to be a good initiative but a difficult process. It also highlighted the importance of facilitating readiness for change prior to change execution.

While HODs could attest to the correctness of the new PQM as an appropriate tool for successfully addressing the discrepancy, and the employees appeared to appreciate the need for change, these general employees either lacked the information necessary to make a knowledgeable decision as to the correctness of the tool or were not convinced of the suitability of the tool. Also some employees

noted the concern about the inclusion of programmes in the mix that do not get to be offered.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings above, several recommendations are made so as to assist WSU management to facilitate the change readiness of employees.

Firstly, with regard to communication of the change message, it is noted that employees need to buy in to the change, and this can only be achieved by successful and clear communication. Middle managers are found to play a critical role in disseminating information to the lower ranks. As a recommendation to address under communication and the poor dissemination of information by middle managers, WSU management should:

- Make use of varied communication strategies tailored to the uniqueness of the various university structures and stakeholders so as to appeal to the semi-independent nature of the structures and staff within the institution.
- Appreciate the role played by middle management and their buy in the change process.
- Empower middle managers to enable them to play their role of cascading accurate information to lower levels.
- Use direct communication strategies with other staff levels to close the gap that may arise when middle management do not give adequate information to lower ranking subordinates.
- Involve employees through active participation in change planning. Continue to seek out contributions from employees, thereby encouraging their participation.

On the aspect of discrepancy, it is recommended that management should:

- Share more information on the justification for the change to reassure employees of the desirability of the change.

It is also recommended that management give evidence and motivate the appropriateness of the revised PQM by making available more information, clearly articulated to:

- Convince or reassure employees of the fit between the new PQM that provides financial viability for the institution and the vision and mission of WSU
- Engage employees on how the PQM will improve the institution's and individuals' effectiveness in terms of meeting both internal and external stakeholder's requirements; highlighting the strength of the proposed PQM in terms of enabling the institution to produce sought after graduates.
- Involve employees in seeking to improve their programmes by soliciting and valuing their input.

Employees were not convinced that a supportive environment had been created, as they did not know of the policies that existed. Management did not show employees that their views were valued, as they did not solicit employees' viewpoints when developing the change plans. The following is recommended:

- Leadership should create an environment for free engagement with general staff so as to encourage information exchange.
- Encourage employees to actively offer input and in turn demonstrate appreciation of the ideas shared by employees on change matters.

Some reservations were expressed regarding employee competencies in dealing with proposed change. Confidence in their abilities and expertise tends to make individuals embrace change. It is recommended that the institution:

- Builds the capacity of HODs and general staff by providing not only subject specific training, but capacitate employees in programme review and change management.
- Reviews and implements proper placement by linking qualification, experience and skills with employee position and job requirements.

- Communicate clearly the benefits and risks accruing from the change initiative for both individual and institution.

5.4 Limitations and recommendations for further research

The study was narrowly delimited, based on only one of the eight projects constituting the turnaround strategy, and also focused on a few employees on only one site of a six-site campus. The use of only interviews and documents as data collection techniques was another limiting factor, and only a few academic employees were interviewed.

A similar study using mixed methods and a combination of tools e.g. interviews combined with questionnaires could yield more extensive results. It is also recommended that this research on employee readiness be extended to other categories of employees, including senior staff, support staff working in academic departments, and staff on other campus sites.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON CHANGE READINESS

Bulelwa Mpepo

88M0791

Title - An exploration of employee readiness for change at Walter Sisulu University

The following themes will be used to solicit views of the academic employees regarding their level of readiness for the change in the PQM and to understand the factors that will foster or hinder their preparedness to successfully implement the changed PQM in the new divisional model.

1. COMMUNICATION: INFORMATION PROVISION

- i. How did you know about the proposed change in the PQM?
- ii. What was communicated to you about the proposed change in the PQM?
- iii. What do you think should have been communicated about the proposed PQM?
- iv. Was your role in the planning and implementation of the PQM change clearly explained to you?

2. DISCREPANCY: THE NECESSITY OF THE CHANGE IN THE PROGRAMME QUALIFICATION MIX (PQM)

- i. What is your understanding of the proposed PQM?
- ii. How does the proposed PQM differ from the existing PQM?
- iii. What was given as the reason for the proposed change in the PQM?
- iv. What is your view regarding the management's reason for change PQM?

3. APPROPRIATENESS: THE SUITABILITY OF THE NEW PQM TO ADDRESS THE WEAKNESSES OF THE CURRENT PQM?

- i. What alternative tool(s)/ ways could have been used to address the gaps in the current PQM?
- ii. What advantage does the alternative tool carry for the students?
- iii. What advantage does the alternative tool carry for the staff?

4. PRINCIPAL SUPPORT: SUPPORT BY MANAGEMENT AND COLLEAGUES

Support by management.

- i. What actions have been taken by management that indicate their openness to your contribution about what and how to change the PQM?

- ii. What is your view regarding the actions taken by the management?
- iii. How were you assisted by management to understand what the intended PQM change involves?
- iv. How was your contribution in the planning and implementation of the proposed PQM received by management? Elaborate.

Support by peers.

- i. What is your opinion regarding how your colleagues view the change? If yes, cite actions they have taken to indicate support for the proposed change. If no, give actions indicating lack of support.
- ii. What role do you think your colleagues could play to encourage you to support the change effort?
- iii. What role do you think you could play to encourage your colleagues to support the change effort?

5. EFFICACY: ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT THE CHANGE

Self - efficacy

- i. Do you think your capabilities are adequate to enable you to successfully implement the proposed change in the PQM? If yes, indicate what qualification(s), experience and skills you have that will enable you to deal with the changed PQM.
- ii. What factors do you think will hinder your ability to support or implement the proposed change?
- iii. In your view what can your institution do to help you handle the proposed change?

Organisation Efficacy

- i. What is your opinion regarding the university's ability to successfully implement the change in the PQM? Give the factors that give you assurance or doubt about the university's ability to do so.

6. VALANCE: PERSONAL BENEFIT

- i. In your view, how will you benefit from the proposed change?
- ii. What do you perceive as a benefit for the institution in implementing the changed PQM?

7. RISK: ADDITIONAL DEMANDS

- i. What demands do you think could be added to your workload as a result of the proposed PQM change?
- ii. How will the additional demands, if any, impact on you personally?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

88M0791

Dear Participant

I am studying towards a Masters in Business Administration at the Rhodes Business School. This letter serves to invite you to participate in my research project on “ **An exploration of the employee readiness for change at Walter Sisulu University**”. You are requested to read this form before you decide to take part in the study. Please feel free to ask me for any additional information you may require that will help you in decision making.

The purpose the study is to understand from an employee’s perspective the factors that facilitate or hinder the readiness of WSU employees with regards to implementing change in the programme qualification mix.

Explanation of procedures: Participation in the study is voluntary and participants’ responses will be kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a numerical code and only that code will appear in the analysis. However, the gender (male or female) of the participant and the participant’s department will be identifiable. Participants’ names will not appear in any document reporting on the study. A participant may choose to withdraw from the study at any stage. This study will be conducted through use of semi structured interviews between the participant and the researcher. As the interviews will be audio recorded participants are humbly requested to allow the researcher to use the recording equipment. The purpose of recording these interviews is to allow the researcher to pay attention to the interview process than to writing during the interview process. While anonymity of the participants will be preserved the results of the study may be used in future for academic purposes.

Remuneration or compensation: Participants will not be remunerated for participating in the study as this is a voluntary exercise.

Venue: All interviews will be held at the Potsdam site and participant will be advised of the exact venue as soon as it is secured.

Duration: The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete.

Benefits: After the study is completed the researcher will make a copy of the study available to all WSU community and share the research findings with management. Thank you for your willingness to assist in this study.

Yours Sincerely

Bulelwa N Mpepo

.....

I hereby agree to participate in this research.

.....

Participant signature

.....

Date

Appendix C

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

88M0791

Dear Participant

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY on “An Exploration of employee readiness for change at Walter Sisulu University”.

This letter kindly informs you of the above-mentioned study and to invite you to communicate with the researcher if you would like to participate.

The purpose of the study is to understand from an employee's perspective the factors that facilitate or hinder the readiness of WSU employees with regards to implementing change in the programme qualification mix.

The study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews between the researcher and participant.

The interview will be audio recorded and this will allow the researcher to pay attention to the interview process than to writing during the interview process. The researcher humbly requests your consent for the use of recording equipment. The recording will not be made available to any other people other than the researcher and her supervisor.

The researcher wishes to place it on record that:

- Participation in the study is voluntary.
- Participants' responses will be kept confidential. The participant will be assigned a numerical code and only that code will appear in the analysis. However, the gender (male or female) of the participant and department will be identifiable.
- Participants' names will not appear in any document reporting on the study
- Participants may decline to respond to any of interview questions should they wish so.
- Copies of the transcript will be locked up in a safe storage and will be destroyed on completion of the study.

- In the final report of the study, some responses may be cited as quotes but those will remain anonymous.

Should you be interested to participate in this study kindly contact Ms. B N Mpepo at 071 684 8493 or bmpepo@gmail.com. Arrangements will be made to meet with you to give more details on the process and fully explain the informed consent form. The participant will be required to sign the aforementioned form.

Kindly note that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time (even after you have signed the consent form). The interviews will be conducted at the Potsdam site. The venue and date for the interview will then be communicated to the participant. All the information provided during the interviews will be treated confidentially and will be used for academic purposes only. After the study is completed the researcher will make a copy of the study available to all WSU management and academic community in order to share the research findings.

Your willingness to participate in the study is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

B. N. Mpepo

Appendix D

INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION

The Acting Rector
Walter Sisulu University
Buffalo City Campus
Potsdam

Dear Sir

Request for permission to conduct research at the Potsdam site of Walter Sisulu University Buffalo City Campus.

Pursuant to our previous verbal communication regarding the above matter I hereby formally request permission to conduct research for the purpose of completing a Masters in Administration degree at Rhodes University. The study has received Ethics approval.

The details of my research are as follows;

The research topic: **“An exploration of employee readiness for change at Walter Sisulu University.”**

The aim of the study is to explore the readiness of Walter Sisulu University academic employees within two faculties at the Potsdam site of the Buffalo City campus to implement changes in the programme qualification mix. The study will be conducted using one on one semi structured interviews.

I am now seeking your approval to invite and interview academic staff at the Potsdam site with the intention to identify and evaluate factors they perceive to facilitate or hinder their readiness to support and implement the proposed changes to the university’s programme and qualifications.

The participant participation is voluntary. All information supplied by the participants will be kept confidential. On completion of the study a summary of the research findings and recommendation will be made available to the University management and academic community.

As the institution is identifiable in the study, the researcher welcomes consideration of retaining the study results for a specified period that will allow the researcher to publish at a later stage.

I hope that the results of this study will benefit our institution, other education institutions as well as the broader research community.

Yours sincerely

B N Mpepo

Appendix E

INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION

The Research Directorate
Walter Sisulu University
Buffalo City Campus
Potsdam

Dear Dr Cishe

Request for permission to conduct research at the Potsdam site of Walter Sisulu University Buffalo City Campus.

Pursuant to our previous verbal communication regarding the above matter I hereby formally request permission to conduct research for the purpose of completing a Masters in Administration degree at Rhodes University. The study has received Ethics approval.

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B N Mpepo