

**THE MICROPOLITICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY
AT A UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL IMPLEMENTING ONLINE LEARNING**

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

by

Pierre Lainey

Date: February 2nd, 2020

ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of this study was to use action research to investigate ways to engage faculty members of a large, francophone Canadian (public) university business school in online learning implementation through action learning. It aimed: (1) to understand the underlying motives of faculty members' reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning; (2) to use action research to investigate the role that micropolitics might have played in this change, with the aim of addressing power issues more effectively; (3) through action learning to find ways to engage faculty members opposed to the change; and (4) to develop a framework that might help address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to help me, the change agent, move the change forward more effectively, thus generating actionable knowledge.

Applying Crozier and Friedberg's (1977) framework to study faculty members' micropolitical "strategic games" and conducting thematic analysis with data obtained in the learning sets, it appears that faculty members engaged in strategic games as a way to gain power and influence over the change process to benefit from the outcomes of the change. Adopters of online learning (those who anticipated more gains than losses if the change succeeded) and resisters (those who foresaw more losses than gains) seemed to have engaged in the same mode of political action to gain power and influence in an attempt to steer the change process to their advantage. The *consolidation mode* of political action consisted of building alliances with the aim of shifting to an *expansion mode*. Once in this mode, both adopters and resisters tried to maintain their political position by empowering their other, less powerful allies so that they would exert influence on the change process. Adopters used their influence to move the change forward; resisters exerted their influence to try to derail it. Unsuccessful attempts to gain power and influence meant that there were people preventing them from doing so (the "political opponents"). Adopters and resisters then shifted to a *protective mode* of political action in an attempt to try to convert their political opponents (those who were trying to make them less powerful) into allies. The political goal of both adopters and resisters was to shift out of protection to go back to consolidation. For those who were not successful in doing this, their other option was to consider a *confrontation mode* of political action in order to make their political opponents less powerful, to then try to convert them into allies. Finally, as the change agent, I helped adopters move into an *expansion mode* of political action by engaging them in forming a powerful coalition.

This research generated actionable knowledge that was useful to both adopters and myself in moving the change forward more effectively. We engaged in four modes of political action to gain power and influence over those who opposed the change. The adopters learned to use their power and influence more effectively, engaging resisters by transforming a top-down change into a bottom-up change to empower resisters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undertaking this DBA has been a truly life-changing experience for me and it would not have been possible to do without the support and guidance that I received from many people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my primary supervisor, Dr. Allan Macpherson, for the patient guidance and keen advice he has consistently and promptly provided throughout this journey. I am particularly grateful to him for putting me on the right track when I felt overwhelmed by the amount of data that I had accumulated and did not know where to start. I also want to extend my sincere gratitude to my second supervisor, Dr. Jane Klobas, whose invaluable advice was extremely helpful in writing this thesis. I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Ali Rostron and Dr. David Denyer, the examiners whose recommendations helped me improve the final thesis. Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my wife, Carolle, for her immense support, love, and patience. Thanks also go to my dear friend, Jean-René, whose many questions about my research forced me to provide clear answers to a complex subject that I'm still learning about. Merci!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 Background and Context of the Study	
1.2 Statement of the Problem	
1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study	
1.4 Research Methodology	
1.5 Definition of Key Terms	
1.6 Organization of this Thesis	
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	5
2.1 Micropolitics: A Definition	
2.2 Micropolitics Applied to Organizational Change	
2.3 Micropolitics Applied to Online Learning Implementation	
2.4 Relevance and Applicability of Micropolitics to Solving My Organizational Problem	
2.5 Theoretical Framework	
2.5.1 Key Concepts of the Theory: Definition and Evaluation	
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	23
3.1 Studying Micropolitical Behaviour: Ontological and Epistemological Considerations	
3.2 Action Research Design and Implementation	
3.3 Action Learning as a Mode of Action Research	
3.4 Setting and Set Participants	
3.5 Data Collection	
3.5.1 Forms of Data Collected	
3.5.1.1 Group 1	
3.5.1.2 Group 2	
3.5.1.3 Group 3	
3.5.1.4 Group 4	
3.6 Data Analysis	
3.7 Ethical Issues	
3.8 Limitations	
3.9 Conclusion	
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE.....	43
4.1 The First Action Research Phase: Constructing the Issues	
4.2 The Second Action Research Phase: Planning Action	
4.3 The Third Action Research Phase: Taking Action	
4.4 The Fourth Action Research Phase: Evaluating Action	
4.5 Analysis of the Data	
4.5.1 Analyzing the Data Using Crozier’s and Friedberg’s Framework	
4.5.1.1 Strategic Games	
4.5.1.2 Behavioural Patterns	
4.5.1.3 Resistance as Competitive Strategic Games	
4.5.1.4 Interactions among Organizational Actors	

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE SECOND ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE.....	71
5.1 The First Action Research Phase: (Re-)Constructing the Issues	
5.2 The Second Action Research Phase: Planning Action	
5.3 The Third Action Research Phase: Taking Action	
5.4 The Fourth Action research Phase: Evaluating Action	
5.5 Analysis of the Data	
5.5.1 Analyzing the Data Using Crozier’s and Friedberg’s Framework	
5.5.1.1 Strategic Games	
5.5.1.2 Behavioural Patterns	
5.5.1.3 Resistance as Competitive Strategic Games	
5.5.1.4 Interactions among Organizational Actors	
CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH.....	87
6.1 Faculty Members’ Motives for Opposing Online Learning	
6.2 Using Action Research to Investigate Micropolitics of Online Learning Implementation	
6.3 Engaging Faculty Members Opposed to the Change through Action Learning	
6.4 Actionable Knowledge: Four Modes of Political Action as “Strategic Games”	
6.4.1 Gaining Power through a Consolidation Mode of Political Action	
6.4.2 Protecting One’s Own Power through a Protection Mode of Political Action	
6.4.3 Reducing the Power of Opponents through a Confrontational Mode of Political Action	
6.4.4 Empowering Allies through an Expansion Mode of Political Action	
6.5 Initiating a Bottom-Up Change by Empowering Allies (Adopters) and Involving Opponents (Resistors)	
6.6 Concluding Reflections	
6.6.1 Contribution to Disciplinary Knowledge	
6.6.2 Contribution to Practice	
6.6.3 Limitations	
6.6.4 Self-Reflection	
REFERENCES.....	103
APPENDIX A.....	116
APPENDIX B.....	119

LIST OF TABLE AND FIGURES

Table 1: Group Composition

Figure 1: Crozier's and Friedberg's Framework

Figure 2: The Action Research Design (based on Coghlan and Brannick, 2010)

Figure 3: Embedded Action Learning within the Action Research Cycles

Figure 4: Guiding Questions Asked in the Meetings

Figure 5: Participant Selection Process and Meeting Schedules

Figure 6: Overlapping Phases of the Action Research Cycles for the Four Groups of Participants

Figure 7: Data Structure (based on Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012)

Figure 8: Summary of Data Collection and Analysis

Figure 9: Summary of the Questions Addressed in the Action Learning Process and the Action Research Cycles

Figure 10: Positive Framing of the Change Outcomes by Adopters

Figure 11: Negative Framing of the Change Content and the Change Process by Resistors

Figure 12: Micropolitical Strategies for Selling the Change

Figure 13: Micropolitical Strategies for Undermining the Change

Figure 14: Empowering Adopters (Allies) to Influence Resistors

Figure 15: Active Resistance

Figure 16: Competitive Political Strategy

Figure 17: Collaborative Political Strategy

Figure 18: Synthesis of the Data Obtained in the First Action Research Cycle

Figure 19: Reframing the Issues of both Adopters and Resistors

Figure 20: Involving Resistors: Positive and Negative Outcomes

Figure 21: Consolidating Power

Figure 22: Summary of the Findings in the Second Action Research Cycle

Figure 23: The Political Dynamics of Online Learning Implementation Derived from the Analysis of Data Obtained at Each Phase of the First Action Research Cycle

Figure 24: The Political Dynamics of Online Learning Implementation Derived from the Analysis of Data Obtained at Each Phase of the Second Action Research Cycle

Figure 25: Four Modes of Political Action in the Context of Organizational Change

Figure 26: Links between an Individual's Power and Organizational Change

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background and Context of the Study

For the last six years, I have been grappling with a complex problem in my organization, namely managing the change triggered by online learning implementation. My organization is a large, francophone Canadian (public) university business school with an enrolment of approximately 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students. A total of 342 faculty members (97 full professors, 88 associate professors, 44 assistant professors, 3 guest and visiting faculty, 61 full-time lecturers and 49 guest and visiting professors without a career perspective, researchers, and associate and affiliate professors) teach at the business school which was founded in 1907. Our mission is “to contribute to society’s prosperity by providing leadership in all its spheres of activity, i.e. teaching at all levels, research and serving the community.”

In 2012, management at the business school decided to gradually implement online learning. This decision was taken based on a survey conducted in 2009 to determine if our students would enrol in online courses. Over 88% of those surveyed said yes. Between 2010 and 2012, a pilot project to test the feasibility of such an endeavour was put in place. This pilot project consisted of developing and testing three online courses with three groups of students. I was involved in this project, and found that online courses answered the needs of both students and the school. More specifically, students were asking for the flexibility in delivery, pace and distribution that online learning offers, and the school was hoping to attract new students in order to generate a fresh source of revenue in response to declining public funding, and to explore how online learning might enhance both the content and delivery of courses that were offered in class. Finally, the school wanted to be part of an expanding trend as online learning was (and still is) growing in Canada. According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Centre (an American organization), between 2012 and 2013 the number of institutions launching e-learning platforms increased by 23%. A study conducted in 2016 by the Canadian government¹ concludes that Canada’s rate of expansion of online learning is approximately 8.75% annually. Online learning is becoming mainstream. To remain competitive, higher education institutions such as my school will have no choice but to offer online courses. The success of the pilot project prompted management in my organization to announce that it was going forward with the implementation of online learning on a broader scale. The development of online learning required close collaboration with many faculty members as their courses would eventually be offered both in class and online. At the time, management was hoping to substantially increase the number of online courses offered to students. The number of courses to be offered online by the fall of 2018 was set at 15. This number was never reached because of a lack of participation from faculty members in this endeavour, and that became even more serious in early 2013. This is when I was appointed by management to help implement online learning. As a former participant in the pilot project, it made sense that I was assigned this role as I understood some of the challenges of online learning implementation and I could provide some kind of guidance to faculty members who were to participate in the development and implementation of online learning. They actually did not have any choice but to participate in the project as management had determined which courses would be offered online based on student enrolment in those courses and on the student survey. I was hired at my school as a full-time lecturer in 2006. I mostly teach at the undergraduate level. I currently also teach online. Teaching online entails that I have to adapt course content so that it can be offered online, assist students online, deliver synchronous classes once a week, and grade papers and exams. This is what was expected from those who were to participate in the development of online learning. However, shortly after the decision to implement online learning was announced by management, many faculty members expressed their opposition to this project.

¹ A national survey of university online and distance learning in Canada, 2016.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Faculty members are obviously in the forefront of this project as they are expected by management to actively participate in the development and delivery of the courses offered online. Many of them voiced their opposition to this project from the beginning, in meetings and face-to-face when I met with them about their future involvement in the project. Some expressed their concerns about the need for such courses to be offered online (the change “content” – Self and Schraeder, 2009), and others about the process that was being put in place to implement online courses (the change “process”). Some had issues about both content and process.

The reasons underlying this decision were clear for most faculty members; however, management was not very clear about the implementation. They had made a top-down decision without first consulting faculty members and without providing any details about how implementation would unfold. They announced their decision by e-mail, informing faculty members that I was hired to help manage the change brought about by online learning implementation, and that management would coordinate the project in terms of resource allocation, deadlines, etc. It was left to me, based on my experience in the pilot project, to explain how it could be done. It appears that management had wrongly assumed that faculty members would actively participate in this endeavour with little hesitation. This was clearly not the case from the beginning as many faculty members expressed their opposition.

I made numerous attempts to identify and address their concerns through private and formal meetings, but with limited results: out of 272 faculty members (at the time the project was initiated), only a small number (13) had agreed to actively participate in the design and delivery of online courses at the starting point of the project. An additional 25 members were involved in the process, and appeared at the time to be the most reluctant to engage in online teaching. Involved in an adversarial dynamic from the onset of the project, management tried to compel some of them to participate in the project by imposing fixed goals and a strict timeline, which was not the most effective strategy, as they then resorted to specific acts to slow down the project. For example, they would withhold relevant information that would have helped me move the change forward. Some tried to get those around them involved in order to oppose the change, then resorted to particular acts to block the change, such as overtly opposing the goals they were assigned or delaying their involvement in the project for obscure motives. It appeared at the time that this active opposition to the change was symptomatic of underlying causes that had not yet been unearthed, despite my efforts to address those issues.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study

In informal meetings with a number of faculty members, I initially tried to uncover the reasons underlying their opposition to the project, but was unsuccessful in obtaining clear answers. Experience and the literature suggest that resistance to change is common in organizations (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; and Ford and Ford, 2010). Within the framework of Lewin’s field theory, resistance to change may be conceptualized as a force that impedes the change process. Burnes and Cooke (2013, p. 421) argue that field theory can help answer “key questions [...] about why so many change initiatives fail, why resistance to change arises and what the real barriers to behavioural change are.” However, in order to find out what triggers resistance behaviour, one obviously needs to engage with those who exhibit such behaviour. During the informal meetings I had with a number of faculty members, I tried to address some of the factors that might explain their resistance to the change brought about by online learning implementation. Drawing on existing literature, I addressed the effect of emotions and personality factors on online learning (Tanner, Noser, and Totaro, 2009), the role of low self-efficacy in adoption of online teaching (Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt, 2008), cognitive and personal dispositions towards online learning (Panda and Mishra, 2007), intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors (Maguire, 2005), and professional values and norms (Mitchell and Geva-May, 2009).

I also explored institutional issues, such as the degree of support offered to faculty members for online teaching (Bolliger and Wasilik, 2009), ways to enhance online interaction between teachers and students (Wilkes, Simon, and Brooks, 2006), and career-related matters (Shea, 2007), but to no avail: many faculty members were still opposing the project and the change it entailed, some trying to derail the change initiative for purposes that remained obscure. Therefore, it appeared that faculty members' active opposition to the change could not be explained by factors described in the literature on online learning implementation that I had read at the time.

One of the things the change literature reveals is that organizational change often implies a perceived or actual reallocation of power among organizational members (Markus, 1983). Consequently, faculty members might resist the loss of power that the project entails. According to Bigley and Roberts (2001, p. 1295), loss of power intensifies "political acts and power struggles," which may take the form of a great variety of resistance strategies (Gunn, 2001). Consequently, investigating the role that power might play in explaining faculty members' opposition to the change may be a research endeavour worth pursuing. Assessing and addressing faculty members' resistance behaviour using factors such as those found in the literature have failed. Investigating the role of power and how people use it (micropolitical behaviour) might shed some light on why they are resisting the change, and how I might address underlying political issues to help move the change forward. Also, micropolitics is an underdeveloped field of organizational research (McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart, 2012), and investigating micropolitics could help to uncover new phenomena that might overcome resistance to change. Thus, this research aimed to explore how top-down change affected power among faculty members, and to find ways to address those power issues in order to help me manage the change process more effectively. Specifically, the purpose of this study was: (1) to understand the underlying motives of faculty members' reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning; (2) to use action research to investigate the role that micropolitics might have played in this change, with the aim of addressing power issues more effectively; (3) to find ways to engage faculty members opposed to the change through action learning; and (4) to develop a framework that might help address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to help me, the change agent, move the change forward more effectively, thus generating actionable knowledge.

1.4 Research Methodology

In this study, I used action research to generate actionable knowledge, and action learning served as a mode of action research to understand micropolitical behaviour in the context of organizational change and to learn about the most effective ways to engage in micropolitical behaviour. Meetings with learning set participants helped to gather data about what participants had learned between meetings in their efforts to influence the change process. Data were gathered during two cycles of action research. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze data.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

- *Online courses*: Fully online, undergraduate courses in finance, management, organizational behaviour, human resource management, marketing and business strategy; students can take those courses either in class or online; most of those courses are compulsory, and are offered in the fall, winter and summer semesters. Each course is comprised of visual aids, exercises, case studies, audiovisual material, e-questionnaires, and self-help documentation. Faculty members deliver the courses online, synchronously, once a week for 12 weeks, in periods that last from 90 to 120 minutes each week. Faculty members are involved in online teaching, and students, in online learning, but I will use online learning and teaching interchangeably as they refer to two dimensions of the same process.

- *Online learning implementation:* Refers to the implementation of online courses, which is comprised of three steps: 1) selection of the courses to be offered online; this selection is made by management, based on the student survey, on whether the course is compulsory or not (if it is, then it is offered online), and on how many students traditionally enrol in the courses if they are optional; 2) course adaptation (existing course material is adapted so that it can be used online; visual aids are prepared, and audiovisual material is developed); and 3) course implementation, which consists of giving the courses online and assessing student responsiveness, which can lead to additional modifications to the courses.
- *Online learning adoption:* Faculty members are expected by management to become “adopters” (i.e., “[individuals who] put an innovation into use” – Rogers, 2003, p. 474) of online learning; they are expected to participate in online course development and delivery, or are already doing so, as opposed to “resistors” who blatantly refuse to get involved in online learning.
- *Organizational change:* The process that was established to promote the adoption of online learning internally, to enrol faculty members in the project, to help them deal with issues associated with a transformation in their teaching methodology, and to address problems relating to the acceptability and adoption of online learning implementation. I designed the change process as a series of regular meetings with faculty members in order to hear their concerns, to provide answers to their questions, to brainstorm solutions to problems relating to the project, to bring unresolved issues to management’s attention, and to ask management for needed resources. The change outcomes were to get faculty members to adopt online learning. This would involve teaching online synchronously once a week, providing support to students, facilitating online interactions among students, and grading papers and exams, to name some of the requirements. There is a need to distinguish between the change process (the way the change is done) and change outcomes (the consequences of the change for the people involved and for the school).
- *Change agent:* The person in charge of the change (myself), who is different from the project leader (management) who is in charge of online learning implementation (mostly the technical side of the project); the change agent is primarily concerned with the human aspects associated with the project. My goal is to enrol more faculty in online course development and delivery.
- *Change recipients:* Change recipients are end-users of the change (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999), namely faculty members targeted for online learning implementation.
- *Political behaviour and micropolitics:* Behaviour exhibited by faculty members in their attempts to exert influence over others. Although some commentators define micropolitics as necessarily covert (Crocker, 2019), I have chosen to address explicit political behaviour that can be discussed in the context of the learning sets. Discussing individual political behaviour might help to uncover relational micro-political complexities, which constitute micropolitics (Gibson and Groom, 2019).

1.6 Organization of this Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters: Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature pertaining to the politics of online learning implementation and organizational change. It explores power and micropolitics and describes the theoretical framework used for studying micropolitical behaviour in my school. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology used in this study. The following two chapters outline data obtained in two action research cycles and provide an analysis and a discussion of the results. The last chapter presents the findings, offers a conclusion to the study, and describes actionable knowledge that was derived from it, as well as my personal reflections on the project.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Conducting successful change appears to be quite a challenge as roughly 80% of change initiatives fail (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Dawson, 2019; Higgs and Rowland, 2000; Hirschhorn, 2002; Knodel, 2004; Kotter, 2008; Sirkin, Keenan, and Jackson, 2005; and Whelan-Berry and Sommerville, 2010). Change brought about by the implementation of online learning has yet to be investigated (Dermentzi and Papagiannidis, 2018; and Dumont and Raggo, 2018). Not only might a novel approach to understanding why organizational change fails be necessary, but we also might need to consider micropolitical behaviour as a potential positive force to move organizational change forward (McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart, 2012) and, more specifically, how micropolitical behaviour might help to implement online learning. This chapter is divided into three sections: the first section provides a definition of micropolitics, and the following sections describe how micropolitics can help to understand and conduct organizational change and online learning implementation.

2.1 Micropolitics: A Definition

Micropolitical behaviour (and micropolitics) refers to idiosyncratic attempts to exert influence (Buchanan and Badham, 2008; Prasad and Rubenstein, 1992; Valle and Perrewé, 2000; and Vigoda, 2003). These influence attempts are intentional and aim to induce others to act in a certain way (Allen et al., 1979; Dean and Sharfman, 1993; Farrell and Peterson, 1982; and O'Connor and Morrison, 2001). Consequently, micropolitical behaviour might be conceptualized as the combination of those daily influence “tactics” with which power is constructed and applied in order to extend the room for maneuver and to defy external control, especially in the context of top-down organizational change (Neuberger, 1995). Since influence attempts may either facilitate or impede change initiatives (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), power and politics become essential variables to introduce and manage organizational change, which evolves into a political process, with those involved functioning as “micropoliticians” or “influencers,” as Mintzberg (1983) labels them. Influence attempts are not necessarily associated with a particular formal role in the organization, such as a leadership role (Drory and Romm, 1988, and 1990; and Sussman et al., 2002), and are sometimes covert (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Consequently, such attempts might not be easily identifiable among organizational members. Nevertheless, I have chosen to investigate micropolitical behaviour as explicit efforts to influence others in the context of organizational change due to online learning implementation.

Burns (1961) was undoubtedly the first scholar to use the term “micropolitics” in referring to interactions among organizational actors working to create change. In studying institutional change, he developed a two by two matrix to account for the political behaviour of people in such contexts: organizational members might have similar beliefs about how the change should be conducted (the “rules of the game”) or not, and change might involve the mobilization of new resources (in the case of external change) or an altered balance of resources in the case of internal change. He also considered political behaviour to be the main driver for social change in organizations. He asserts that micropolitical behaviour refers to the behaviour that organizational actors engage in when mobilizing individual power resources to create and change formal structure. People cooperate and compete through political behaviour:

“[Burns] argued that the organizationally cohesive forces of cooperation and competitiveness are both the product of, and the incubator for, political behavior. Furthermore, he suggested that these political behaviors represented a mechanism for the survival of the individual and could be seen as legitimate to the degree that one’s interests are aligned with those of [others].”

(Ferris and Treadway, 2012, pp. 6-7)

Burns (1961) did not clarify what form organizational actors' behaviour takes when they cooperate or compete, nor who decides whether or not one's interests are aligned with those of others. The idea that cooperation and competition are the result of political behaviour assumes that, without power, an organizational actor can neither cooperate nor compete. To do so, one would need to acquire power, which forms the basis of political behaviour one needs to engage in to survive within the context of organizational change. This means that loss of power diminishes one's chances of "surviving" the change, which might explain why people are reluctant to lose power and see their "scope of action" diminished (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), as faculty members in my organization appear to have shown through their resistance strategies. Burns (1961) did not define what "surviving a change" means, nor how power can help one do that.

Since Burns (1961), it appears that no attempt was made to provide a clear definition of the concept of micropolitics. Nullmeier, Pritzlaff, and Wiesner (2003) contend that, today, there is no common understanding among researchers of the definition and nature of micropolitics and organizational politics. McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart (2012, p. 102) maintain that "in the review of the published organizational politics literature, little work was found that focused solely on clarifying the underlying conceptualization of organizational politics." There is, however, agreement about the scope of the concept: micropolitics refers to politics within the organization, among organizational actors, as opposed to macropolitics which is often associated with politics beyond the organization, such as coalitions and alliance building among firms (Mintzberg, 1999). One could argue that coalitions and alliances might become "tools" to gain power within the organization in an attempt to exert influence over others in order to move organizational change forward, or block it. Consequently, the study of micropolitics could also involve an analysis of the way organizational members use coalitions and build alliances in attempts to influence others in the change process.

Although micropolitics can be studied on an individual level, it can also be seen as a theoretical organizational concept which, as Küpper and Felsch (2000) (translated and cited in Willner, 2011) suggest, "analyzes actors' behaviour within an organizational context." (p. 149) Organizations are, thus, analyzed through the lens of scopes of action and power relations among organizational members, and how these relations act as "stabilizing regulatory mechanisms within organizational scopes of action" (Alt 2001, p. 294, cited in Willner, 2011). Consequently, micropolitics can serve as a framework not only to analyze faculty members' political behaviour within the context of the change taking place in my organization, but also to examine power relations that they have established with management.

I would further argue that micropolitics provides a framework for exploring how change disrupts power relations among organizational actors (change recipients), thus destabilizing their scopes of action. To prevent that, change recipients might engage in resistance strategies through coalition building, alliances and the use of power bases to exert influence over others in order to block change perceived as being incompatible with their interests. To counter these forces against change, the change agent would need to address the question of how power dynamics can be used to facilitate change with respect to the different interests of individuals and groups involved in the change process; in so doing, change agents might engage change recipients in pursuing a collaborative strategy to achieve common goals and help the change succeed.

If one accepts the idea that political behaviour is the process by which people mobilize power to exert influence, why do people become political? Mayes and Allen (1977) were among the first scholars to argue that political behaviour is an attempt to link a means ("what is done?") and an end ("for what purpose?"). Means and ends can be organizationally sanctioned (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001) or not. Functional (positive) political behaviour involves the use of means that are not necessarily sanctioned by the organization, to achieve ends that are organizationally sanctioned. Dysfunctional political behaviour, on the other hand, implies the use of means that are either sanctioned or not, but to

achieve ends that, in both cases, are not sanctioned by the organization. Furthermore, their approach removes from political analysis all activities and interests sanctioned by the organization. In essence, this model ignores formal organizational programs, policies, and goals and the formal processes used by organizational actors to achieve their goals (Blase, 1991). Despite these limitations, their definition suggests that political behaviour is based on power, which is exerted to influence others, and links influence attempts to a purpose, which may or may not serve the greater good. Political behaviour can thus be categorized as being “positive” (it serves the interests of organizational members) or “negative” (it only serves the personal interests of the individual who engages in such behaviour). It is unclear, however, who decides whose interests it serves.

Buchanan and Badham (2008) argue for establishing linkages between political behaviour and outcomes, and have used a constructivist approach to study this relationship. They developed the “actor-theory-in-use” model that links antecedents to political behaviour, to the actual behaviour, and to their consequences. Antecedents refer to individual and contextual factors that trigger political behaviour, which takes the form of influence strategies and tactics; when such political behaviour is at play, it may have positive or negative outcomes for individuals and for the organization as a whole. This view is convergent with that of Blase (1991, p. 1) who asserts that micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence others and to protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends.” In the context of conducting organizational change, this suggests that it might be worthwhile to investigate the triggers underlying change recipients’ political behaviour, especially when they oppose the change initiative by building coalitions and cooperating with those who share their concerns about the outcomes of the change related to the implementation of online learning.

Based on the above, it appears that power can be “managed” in the sense that people might want to increase their power in an attempt to exert influence over others. Buchanan and Badham (2008) argue that power can indeed be “managed” if it is understood using two, broad theoretical perspectives: the “episodic” perspective (Cobb, 1984) and the “pervasive” perspective. The episodic perspective views power as a way to shape the behaviour of others in particular contexts. Within this framework, the use of power is explicit, and power is exerted at a specific point in time. The other perspective refers to values, norms, routines, etc. embedded in organizational structures and processes, and which implicitly shape people’s behaviour.

Buchanan and Badham (2008) argue that the episodic and pervasive nature of power operate as two complementary forces that shape people’s behaviour in organizations. If one assumes that this is the case, then the implicit (pervasive) nature of power has to be made explicit for power to be fully understood. The episodic perspective on power started to gain momentum in the early 1980’s, with the theoretical advances of three analytical frameworks that have come to gradually dominate research on power. These are coalition analysis, resource analysis, and strategic analysis (Rouleau, 2007). These frameworks enhance our understanding of the nature of power, its origin, and how it is used in organizational settings.

The main purpose of coalition analysis is to examine power as a phenomenon by which organizational members try to influence decisions through coalitions (Rouleau, 2007). The ability to form coalitions is a source of power. Cyert and March (1963) were among the first scholars to posit that organizations are composed of a number of coalitions that pursue different objectives. March and Olsen (1976) have argued that ambiguous rules within an organization account for this plurality of views: not being constrained by precise and explicit rules, organizational members are free to pursue objectives that might differ from those of the organization. Those sharing the same objectives might get together and form coalitions to increase their chances of achieving their objectives. This opens the door to all kinds of influence strategies and “power struggles” among organizational members; a conflict of

perspectives is the “norm,” which makes organizations “anarchies” within which power is a central feature. According to Vigoda (2003), coalition analysis is a macropolitical approach to studying power. However, I disagree. Once again, I contend that coalitions can become micropolitical tools that change recipients use to oppose organizational change, as Pettigrew (1985a) has shown. He asserts that organizational change is shaped by power struggles among coalitions within and outside the organization. Those coalitions influence decisions and the change process itself through their control of scarce resources and the use of symbols to make demands on management, and to minimize the influence of other groups pursuing divergent objectives. Mintzberg (1983) studied power in and around organizations and stresses the role of internal and external coalitions. He comes to the conclusion that there are basically six configurations of power determined by the relationships among those coalitions: instrumental, closed system, autocratic, missionary, meritocratic, and political. He does not explain how organizational actors establish and maintain those coalitions. In conclusion, coalition analysis might shed some light on the micropolitics of change because coalitions are comprised of individuals who have decided to come together and exert influence to achieve a common goal. While some commentators consider a coalition to be a macropolitical concept (Vigoda, 2003), analysing how they are formed from a micropolitical perspective, i.e., through the interactions of individuals, particularly in the context of organizational change, might help to enhance my understanding of the political dynamics underlying the change in my organization.

Resource analysis contends that power is derived from a person’s degree of dependency on certain types of resources (Pfeffer, 1981): an individual who is sure to have access to the resources needed to function (low uncertainty) has more power than an individual who is not. Those who have and/or control access to scarce resources (those resources that other people or units need to function) that cannot be replaced by other types of resources, have power. Finally, those who have resources on which many people depend (centrality) have power. Pfeffer (1981) argues that identifying those resources is relevant because it is then possible to find out who is more powerful within the organizational setting, and how they use those resources to gain power and exert influence. Those resources can take many forms, such as information, money, expertise, access to powerful individuals, etc. (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986). I would argue that both the type of resource and its scarcity provide power: certain resources might be relevant in specific contexts, and if they are, then their relative scarcity provides power to those who control or have access to those resources on which others depend. In the context of change, I would contend that people might try to gain access to and control of tangible and intangible resources to influence the change process and/or the outcomes. Pfeffer (1981) maintains that people might use narratives and symbols to appear more powerful than they really are, and this is why it is important to distinguish between “real power” and “perceived power:” real power refers to the resources that one possesses and/or has access to, while “perceived power” is related to how others perceive the power that those resources yield. It is, thus, possible for someone to “manage” the perceptions of others. In conclusion, resource analysis helps to explain how power can be derived from structure and organizational processes. From a micropolitical perspective, incorporating this approach in examining the strategies that individuals use to access and control scarce resources on which others depend to exert power might provide insights into organizational members’ micropolitical strategies. I would assert that these resources take the form of “power bases,” such as those defined by French and Raven (1958), who have argued that power results from the use of five bases: reward power, coercive power, referent power, legitimate power, and expert power. These five power bases provide power to those who can mobilize them. Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth (1986), on the other hand, claim that there are eight power bases which could be used “strategically” by organizational members to either support or oppose the change initiative: reward, coercion, authority, referent, expert, information, affiliation, and group power. Whatever the actual number, I contend that these power bases are resources that can be utilized to exert influence over others.

In the 1970's, strategic analysis became a prominent approach to studying how power is acquired and used in organizations (Rouleau, 2007). Power is gained through the ability to control uncertainty, to make and implement rules, and to engage in strategic behaviour. Crozier and Friedberg (1977) are in the forefront of this theoretical programme. Crozier showed that, in large bureaucratic organizations, the capacity to control "zones of uncertainty" provides considerable power (Crozier, 1963). Crozier and Friedberg (1977) developed a set of concepts to analyse power relations between individuals to explain how and why they collaborate, or fail to do so. These power relations take the form of "strategic games" in which people engage to control uncertainty in such a way that they can achieve their goals, or prevent others from doing so, in order to gain an advantage, thus increasing their power to control the work assigned to them (to increase their "scope of action"). Crozier and Friedberg define the power of individual "A" over individual "B" as being dependent upon the capacity of A to predict how B will behave, and the uncertainty of B's behaviour with respect to the behaviour of A (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Consequently, strategic games aim at increasing one's own "scope of action" for gain maximization and loss minimization. In everyday organizational settings, people constantly negotiate their zones of uncertainty to acquire as much leeway as possible. Their games are bounded by their understanding of their particular contexts, but can always be explained by situational variables. In other words, bounded rationality imposes constraints on the strategic games in which people engage, but can be explained by an analysis of the particular situations. This perspective promotes the idea that the nature and scope of political behaviour influences social phenomena within a particular context, and that one's propensity to collaborate depends on gain maximization and loss minimization.

Strategic analysis provides an interesting framework for understanding organizational members' micropolitical strategies. The analysis of people's perceptions of organizational problems, their goals, their stakes (in terms of gains and losses), the resources that they use to achieve their goals, formal and informal rules, as well as people's identity in the workplace, might shed some light on the strategies that they adopt to increase their scope of action and, in so doing, gain power. Within this framework, power is eminently relational, as Pettigrew and McNulty (1995) have argued: power should be defined as a relational phenomenon, and is activated, gained and lost in the context of relationships with others. This view was initially proposed by Crozier (1973), for whom power is a relationship that develops and changes over time. It is a dynamic process which is specific and reciprocal. The concept of reciprocity, according to Crozier (1973), is central to strategic analysis: reciprocity forms the basis of collaboration and alliance-building among organizational members. Thus, the analysis of how faculty members in my organization form alliances, maintain reciprocity and collaborate might be important for this study.

The other perspective of power, its "pervasive" nature, emphasizes "hidden" dimensions of power (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). Power is viewed as inherent to organizational structure and processes. Frost and Egri (1991) refer to "deep structure," as opposed to the "surface structure" of organizational power, in describing those invisible dimensions of power, such as rules and procedures that are built into organizational structure and processes and that shape people's behaviour. Individuals might increase their level of power by gaining access to information, to decision making, or to those higher up in the hierarchy through organizational structure and processes. They might also exploit rules and procedures to their advantage (Reynaud, 1997). The strategic contingency theory of intra-organizational power (Hickson et al., 1971) is consistent with this approach to power, and advances the idea that certain dimensions of organizational power are more "visible" than others (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). For example, organizational culture, rituals, routines, and modes of behaviour are invisible as they are built into the organizational fabric and impact the way that power is distributed and used within the organization (Scott-Morgan, 1995). They represent invisible dimensions of power, but can be made explicit by those who want to manipulate them, or to enforce them in their efforts to gain power (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). Consequently, "hidden" dimensions of power might be used by organizational actors as micropolitical devices to gain power and extend their scopes of action.

Bachrach and Baratz (1962) have shown how organizational members engage in “backstage” (i.e., invisible) activities to construe rules and procedures that prevent others from expressing views which are deemed controversial. They developed the concept of “non-decision making” to describe those attempts made by key organizational members to manipulate rules and procedures to avoid conflict with those with opposing agendas. They also developed the concept of “mobilization of bias” to account for attempts that are made to use organizational rules and procedures to the benefit of some, and the detriment of others (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). This “strategy” might be used to render individuals and groups politically “passive.” Clegg (1989) describes the various forms that these strategies might take when powerful members try to silence the less powerful members of the organization, such as by ignoring their concerns and grievances, or sending them to committees that engage in inconclusive deliberations. Powerful members remain powerful, and may even gain more power by institutionalizing such procedures that become so embedded in organizational structures and procedures that organizational members take them for granted. Lukes (2006) refers to this phenomenon as the “third dimension” of power, which describes how organizational members have been socialized to not recognize certain problems: members are socialized into norms that close off debate, or cause actions to be perceived as routine or result in them being concealed. In conclusion, the embedded power relations within the organizational structure and procedures give rise to strategies that, at a micropolitical level, might account for how people gain power by manipulating the structural and procedural components of the organization. Consequently, uncovering hidden micropolitical strategies employed by faculty members who resist the change in my organization might prove difficult.

In conclusion, based on the above literature, organizational members’ micropolitical behaviour can be conceptualized as influence attempts to encourage others to cooperate when their interests are compatible with the change. Those whose interests are incompatible with the change might compete for more power to increase their influence in order to disrupt the change. Assembling a coalition of people with compatible interests, controlling the resources needed to move the change forward and building alliances with others are all ways to gain power and influence.

2.2 Micropolitics Applied to Organizational Change

Mangham (1979) was perhaps the first scholar to explicitly address the politics of organizational change. According to Blase (1991), Mangham has developed one of the most thorough analyses of the political perspective in the context of organizational change. Through symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), he offers a detailed discussion of some of the underlying causes of political behaviour in changing organizations, such as differing views about the goals of the change and the means to achieve them. To negotiate those differing perspectives, organizational members have no choice but to engage in political behaviour. These negotiation attempts might be conflictive or consensus-building: “Where there are rival positions and rival advocates, competition for support ensues and all the techniques of politics may be displayed—persuasion, compromise, bargaining, and destabilization of the other’s position” (p. 18). Joint action is characterized by both competition and collaboration of individuals and groups attempting to manage their own behaviour and the behaviour of others to achieve their self-interests. To Mangham, power is the common currency of all negotiation and the basis of all social and organizational behaviour.

Mangham’s approach provides insight into the politics of organizational change, but fails to acknowledge that context might play a role in the nature, frequency and intensity of organizational members’ political behaviour: for example, do people exhibit the same political behaviour towards the different types of organizational change? Do organizational rules and norms impact political behaviour? What about the change agent’s political behaviour? And how does one distinguish between political and non-political behaviour? Those questions are left unanswered.

What seems to be clear, though, is that change triggers and intensifies political behaviour among organizational members (Bacharach and Lawler, 1981; Buchanan and Badham, 2008; Frost and Egri, 1991; Markus, 1983; and Pettigrew, 1973). Markus (1983) makes a compelling argument that organizational change often implies a reallocation of power among organizational members, and that the loss of power generates resistance to the change. Bigley and Roberts (2001) concur and argue that the loss of power increases the occurrence of political acts against the change initiative and those who manage it. Gunn (2001) contends that resistance behaviour and strategies are basically political acts against the change. Frost and Egri (1991) argue that power struggles are initiated by those who hope to block the change process, and/or who want to offer an alternative mode of change which has a less detrimental effect on their interests: for these authors, power is “the potential capacity to get others to do things they might otherwise not want to do and/or to resist others’ efforts to get one to do what they want one to do” (p. 236). Following this definition, power can indeed be utilized to impede change efforts. This form of power (i.e., power used for this purpose) is considered as being used to oppose managerial authority, viewed as the legitimate form of power (Demers, 2007). Consequently, power and political behaviour through which organizational members express power might be used as a form of resistance to change (Hardy, 1995) that hinders organizational progress. However, the literature is not clear on the form that political acts to resist the change might take: How can one characterize those political acts? Are they mostly covert? Do people who engage in them do so for legitimate purposes? Those are questions left unanswered.

Political behaviour may be exhibited by those impacted by the change (the change recipients), as well as by those implementing the change (the change agents) (Buchanan and Badham, 1999). For example, change recipients might resist and oppose the change by engaging in political activity to undermine it, and change agents might need to become politically astute to move the change forward. Thus, political behaviour can be observed in both change agents and change recipients. Therefore, the question is: are there any discernible patterns in the way people behave politically in the face of change, from a change recipient’s and a change agent’s perspective? To answer this question, one needs to look into the type of change being introduced in the organization. As Demers (2007) maintains, organizational members’ political behaviour is shaped by the type of change occurring in the organization: top-down, radical change does not trigger the same political behaviour as bottom-up, incremental change. Heyden et al. (2017) make a clear distinction between “top-down change” and “bottom-up change” based on the roles played by managers across the hierarchy. Top-down change involves discontinuous change across a range of organizational features and parameters (McAdams, 2003) such as organizational structures, cultures and processes (Al-Mashari and Zairi, 1999), and is usually initiated and managed by top management or their representatives (Heyden et al., 2017).

Organizations that are most resistant to change are those with a structure that is highly differentiated vertically and horizontally (Pettigrew, 1973), with a culture that values conformity (Feldman, 1985) and control (Ban, 1995), and in which processes are diversified and complex (Quinn, 1978). This leads to higher authority appropriation by top management and to passiveness, and a lack of new ideas from employees (Claver et al., 1999). These features, all of which apply to my school, might explain why management decided to impose their decision to implement online learning on faculty members. However, management has obviously underestimated the degree of resistance exhibited by faculty members. As Bates and Sangrà (2011, p. 200) rightly note: “[people higher up in the hierarchy of higher learning institutions] have little power over their colleagues, who can usually resist suggested changes or activities with little fear of adverse consequences.”

One stream of research about the politics of top-down change is mainly embodied in the work of Quinn (1978) who, like Mintzberg (1985), sees organizations as political arenas in which the “power-behavioural” dimension accounts for the fact that organizations put forward change initiatives that usually evolve in a step-by-step, opportunistic and continuous fashion. Organizational members pursue multiple goals, and coalitions (such as sub-systems of the organization) are constructed to

negotiate the change. As such, Quinn (1978, 1980) echoes the views of Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) and Cyert and March (1963) about the political nature of organizations. Furthermore, in order to move the change forward, management needs to be aware of power issues within the organization, namely in terms of building a power base for certain actions that promote the change initiative, and in terms of preventing or defeating opposition to the change (Demers, 2007).

Quinn's (1980) logical incrementalism is a model of how to avoid (political) resistance to top-down change: if it cannot be avoided, it must then be managed through the use of several strategies to foster incremental change, which gradually evolves into more important change. There are no positive side effects to political activity, according to Quinn (1980). However, by focussing on management, Quinn (1980) ignores the political dynamics among lower-level employees, which might give rise to bottom-up, organizational change. Also, there is an underlying ideological element to this perspective, which assumes that management is always right, which might not be the case.

Even if the literature has focussed on the political activity of change recipients, and to a much lesser extent, on the political behaviour of change agents, many commentators agree that change recipients might engage in political activity to oppose top-down, radical change (Hardy, 1995; Markus, 1983; and Pfeffer, 1981). From a Lewinian perspective, political activity instigated by change recipients is considered to be a force against top-down, radical change. When change is emergent (bottom-up), then political activity among organizational members is considered a force for change and a source of organizational innovation (Kanter, 1983). This is the approach taken by Crozier and Friedberg (1977), Pettigrew (1985b), Giddens (1979), and Tsoukas and Chia (2002). According to these scholars, change is an emergent, context-specific process driven by organizational actors. Crozier and Friedberg (1977) adopt this view, and their concept of "games" and their underlying rules posit that organizations are continuously changing because those rules are constantly renegotiated among organizational actors ("players"). People engage in a negotiation process, hoping that they will maintain or improve their position within the organization, i.e., increase their "zone of uncertainty" (their freedom of action, or "scope of action") and the power that they wield or to which they have access.

A formal structure is established to maintain equilibrium among opposing strategies within the organization. Consequently, power games induce incremental organizational change: transformations in the nature of the power games and in the rules that regulate the system inevitably provoke change. For Crozier and Friedberg (1977, p. 30), change "can only be understood as a collective creation process through which members of a given collectivity learn together, that is, invent and crystallize new ways of playing the social game of cooperation and conflict." Pettigrew (1985b) also focuses on organizational actors and the system: actors embody action, and a system means that there is structure. Change is the study "of actors and systems in motion" (p. 287). Power is a central feature of the study of "the dynamics of changing." He asserts that the micropolitics stemming from competition among organizational members with different goals and rationalities is linked to the macropolitics that changes in the environment bring about. Micropolitical strategies serve to legitimize one's or a group's position: more specifically, micropolitical strategies enact a "process of symbol construction and value use designed both to create legitimacy for one's actions, ideas and demands, and to delegitimize the demands of one's opponents" (p. 44). Pettigrew (1985a, and 1985b) insists on the importance of deciphering front-stage and back-stage use of power to better unearth the micropolitics associated with organizational change. Burns (1961, p. 260) asserts that "it is backstage, so to speak, that the imputations of empire building, caucus log-rolling, squaring, and obstructionism occur." Contextualism, according to Pettigrew (1985a), is the process by which a researcher can methodically uncover legitimation and delegitimation processes that organizational change entails.

The literature on the politics of top-down and bottom-up change fails to take into account that change might also be a multilevel process that should be described both at a macro level (the organization—the structural level) and a micro level (the individual) (Demers, 2007). Furthermore, the political school

has generated much criticism from those who promote a radical view of power and change. Hardy and Clegg (1989), who are foremost proponents of this approach, assert that organizational rules “embody discretion and provide opportunities for resistance; and, so, their interpretation must be disciplined, if new powers are not to be produced and existing powers transformed” (p. 634). Consequently, the study of micropolitical strategies implies delving into strategies that management uses to dominate, and those that subordinates use to resist and liberate themselves from this domination.

To a certain extent, these two opposing perspectives on the political behaviour of change recipients (change recipients can be a force for change or an impediment to change) determine the way that change agents should address the change politically: in the context of top-down change, change agents should try to prevent change recipients from engaging in political activity because it is detrimental to the change itself, and they should foster constructive, political activity among change recipients in the context of bottom-up change. I would argue that patterns of political behaviour observed in change recipients are shaped not only by the type of change occurring in the organization, but also by the way that change agents address and deal with the political behaviour exhibited by change recipients. I would further posit that the change agent’s inability to effectively address and deal with the political behaviour of change recipients might encourage them to resist the change, which might be conducive to power struggles. The next section explores power, its management and its manifestations in the context of online learning implementation.

2.3 Micropolitics Applied to Online Learning Implementation

Micropolitics has mostly been studied in schools and similar settings (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; and West, 1999), but not in the context of online learning implementation. It appears that most of the current literature on the adoption of online learning is set within a traditional-rational approach to organization, and neglects the role that power might play in the adoption/rejection of the change brought about by the implementation of online learning. Scholars in the field of education have defined micropolitics as a set of practices ranging from conventional management practices to self-interested manipulation (Hoyle, 1999). Blase (1991, p. 11) defines micropolitics as “the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations ... both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics.” Lindle (1999) offers the following definition: micropolitics consists of “the networks of individuals and groups within and surrounding schools, who compete for scarce resources, even power. [It] encompasses the daily interactions, negotiations and bargains of any school” (p. 171). These definitions highlight the idea that micropolitical behaviour is distinct from everyday behaviour associated with a particular formal role, and that it encompasses collaborative and competitive strategies used for self-serving purposes and/or to achieve common goals.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, online learning is becoming mainstream. Therefore, the literature on online learning is expanding, and conditions underlying successful online learning implementation have been the focus of many studies. However, the literature on online learning adoption by faculty members in a university setting is sparse (Martins and Nunes, 2016; and Mitchell, Parlamis, and Claiborne, 2015). Many commentators have identified personal and organizational factors that have an impact on faculty members’ decision to teach online (King and Boyatt, 2015; Maguire, 2005; Mehta et al., 2019; and Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt, 2008). These factors become barriers to adoption when they lead to a decision to not teach online. First- and second-order barriers (Kearney et al., 2018) are found in the literature to help explain why faculty members are reluctant to engage in online learning. First-order barriers refer to organizational factors, such as the degree of support offered to faculty members to teach online, internal policies and career-related opportunities.

Second-order barriers are idiosyncratic and refer to beliefs, values, emotions, personality factors, self-efficacy, cognitive and personal dispositions, intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, and professional values and norms. Such categories are rather static; their authors fail to account for causal relationships among barriers of the same or a different category, and do not always consider that some barriers might overlap both categories. Nonetheless, identifying barriers to online learning adoption has long been the goal of many studies. For example, Maguire (2005) investigated both first- and second-order barriers and produced a literature review that shows that certain external conditions, specifically, incentives in the form of promotion and tenure, have to be met in order to engage faculty members in online learning. Faculty members who are promoted if they teach online may influence their peers to do the same. Other factors such as administrative and technological support, and adequate policies and procedures that meet the needs of faculty members, play a role in the adoption of online learning. Panda and Mishra (2007) showed that “lack of credit toward promotion,” “lack of technical support,” and “lack of institutional policy” were the most important barriers to online teaching. Nonetheless, these authors fail to provide any indication of the type of administrative and technological support or specific policies and procedures that might be conducive to online learning adoption.

Faculty members’ unease with online teaching was assessed by Wilkes, Simon and Brooks (2006). They demonstrated that faculty members are mostly concerned about the lack of opportunity to interact with students, the reduced quality of online courses, and time-related issues. Those results are similar to those of Shea (2007) who analyzed data from 386 faculty members teaching online in 36 colleges in a large state university system in the U.S. The author found that part-time faculty members are more motivated by the opportunity to teach online because this could promote job security. He also found that “traditional faculty members (assistant, associate and full professors) were more discouraged by the perception that online teaching was more time consuming than were faculty members who were part-time and non-traditional” (Shea, 2007, p. 80). Finally, he concludes that compensation issues and the administration’s failure to recognize that additional effort is required to teach online are the most important institutional inhibitors to online learning adoption.

Some more recent studies did confirm that time, concerns about course quality and copyright issues are institutional inhibitors to online learning adoption (Akbarilakeh, Razzaghi, and Moghaddam, 2019; and Ali, Uppal, and Gulliver, 2018). In 2012, Ithaka S+R, a non-profit American organization, conducted interviews with senior academic leaders at 25 institutes of higher learning to understand the barriers to online learning adoption in U.S. colleges and universities, and to identify strategies to overcome those barriers. They provide a list of eight obstacles that prevent the adoption of online learning in higher education, such as the fear that online teaching is used by universities to reduce faculty employment, the concern that developing online courses takes time, and the worry by faculty members that they might lose the intellectual property of the teaching material that they develop for online courses. The results of these studies are not specific about the criteria with which faculty members assess the quality of online courses, nor on how to address copyright issues. When the authors offer strategies to overcome barriers to online learning adoption, their suggestions are often too generic to be of any assistance. Nonetheless, researchers might one day come up with a list of definitive barriers that need to be addressed for online learning adoption.

Second-order barriers were the focus of a certain number of studies. Faculty members might be less inclined to adopt online learning when they entertain misconceptions about online education (Alhabeeb and Rowley, 2018; Allen, Seaman, Lederman, and Jaschik, 2012; and Lin, Singer, and Ha, 2010). Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt (2008) argue that personality factors, such as confidence regarding the use of online technology, can also explain faculty members’ adoption of online learning. Ideological factors, such as faculty members’ overall philosophy about online teaching (Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt, 2008) and the idea that online learning is of lesser quality than the learning that takes place in the classroom (Ithaka S+R, 2012) can also explain faculty members’ reluctance to teach online. Zhen,

Garthwait, and Pratt (2008) identified one set of factors that correlate with faculty members' decision on whether or not to teach online, namely self-efficacy. Other factors such as previous experience in online teaching, time-related issues, faculty peer-pressure, and class innovation had no significant effects on the decision-making process. These results suggest that faculty members who strongly believe in their own ability to complete tasks and reach goals related to online teaching are most likely to overcome other types of barriers. Consequently, the strategy which consists of giving time to faculty members by reducing their workload in order to engage them in online teaching may not be necessary. On the other hand, lack of time is one of the major concerns of faculty members who are reluctant to teach online courses (Zhen, Garthwait, and Pratt, 2008). Consequently, a major critique of these studies is that they do not provide any clear guidance about ways to reduce or eliminate the barriers that they identified. The only few to have done that are Tanner, Noser, and Totaro (2009). They studied business faculty members' and undergraduate students' perceptions of online learning and found that university administrators need to take into account faculty members' perceptions, concerns and anxieties to enhance the likelihood that online courses will be viewed as valuable.

It appears from the above discussion that many first- and second-order barriers have been identified to explain faculty members' unwillingness to adopt online learning. However, there are few suggestions about ways to reduce or eliminate them. When advice is offered, it is often too generic to be of any help. Many studies seem to assume that these barriers are static, and fail to acknowledge causal relationships among them and that some might change over time. Finally, I contend that some of those barriers might be used as political tools by those opposing online learning in an attempt to block the project. For example, someone could justify inaction by complaining that institutional procedures are not clear enough or that administrative support is insufficient, despite considerable effort by the institution to clarify procedures and offer assistance to those it hopes to enrol in online teaching. This might be the reason why, instead of focusing on the barriers to online learning, some authors have conceptualized online learning implementation as a process that faculty members go through in their efforts to learn and adopt the technology (Hsbollah and Idris, 2009). Online learning is essentially a technologically driven change. The rate at which an individual adopts a new technology can explain a person's willingness to use new technology at a particular point in time (Rogers, 2003).

The adoption rate of a new technology is based on the perception of potential adopters: what are the advantages of adopting this technology? To what degree is it compatible with existing values, past experiences and actual needs? How complex is this new technology? Is it possible to experiment with the new technology on a limited basis? To what degree are the results of adopting the technology visible? According to Surry (1997), these perceived five attributes (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability) determine the rate at which a new technology is adopted. There is a possibility, in the context of the research, that faculty members opposing online learning are just "slow" adopters, or they might be involved in micropolitics to slow down the adoption process with the undisclosed intention of derailing online learning implementation.

The numerous efforts by my school to reduce and eliminate first- and second-order barriers and to provide training and coaching to faculty members to assist them in adopting the technology have been unsuccessful and, thus, justify the need to investigate the political side of online learning implementation in order to shed some light on my problem.

Samarawickrema and Stacey (2007) are among the few commentators who have looked into the politics of online learning/teaching implementation, but only superficially, as it was not the focus of their study. They argue that efforts to better understand the factors enabling and impeding the adoption of new technology have to take into account the power and politics of the setting in which the adoption is taking place. They have found that "many teaching academics' adoption (of new technology) [...] are not just related to improving learning but are stimulated by the politics of the context such as top-down authority directives, funding grants, and faculty politics" (p. 332). To support

this, they conducted research to identify the factors (political and non-political) underlying the adoption or rejection of web-based teaching and learning. Using actor-network theory (Latour, 1992) to interpret their findings, they found that the influence of colleagues plays an important role in the adoption of the technology. They also concluded that when faculty members are forced to adopt web-based teaching mainly for institutional motives (such as to increase student enrolment or to follow a trend), faculty members might adopt the technology, albeit unwillingly: “These political aspects of the work setting, though negative, exerted a powerful influence that directed the routines of these teaching academics and forced their adoption of web-based learning” (p. 327). The authors failed to provide any clue about how colleagues exert their influence on others to get them to adopt new technology, nor on whether adoption of the technology is successful in the long term when faculty members are forced by management to do so. In the same study, Samarawickrema and Stacey (2007) also used Rogers’ (2003) theory of diffusion of innovations to analyse their results. They determined that decisions to adopt web-based teaching are mostly based on the relative advantages of using the technology, although they are unclear about what those advantages may be. They also found in their study that teachers adopted the technology in response to “top-down authority innovation directives:” if teachers are compelled to use the technology, then adoption is not voluntary but imposed, which, I would argue, might trigger covert political acts of rebellion.

Dermentzi and Papagiannidis (2018) have looked at peer influence and the role that social norms might play in adopting new teaching technology. They have found that social norms, in a higher education setting, are affected only by peer influence. They argue that if institutions want to take advantage of the benefits that new learning technology offers and decide to use a top-down approach to implementing the technology, first-order barriers, such as having adequate technology, providing support to faculty members and offering compensation, have to be addressed at the outset; then efforts to empower faculty members can be put in place in the form of providing adequate coaching and inviting them to attend action learning sessions. Other authors support such an approach: Aubusson et al. (2014), for example, make a case for taking into account faculty members’ preferences and pedagogical styles when engaging them in adopting a particular teaching technology. I would add that this can only be achieved if faculty members actively participate in the design of online learning activities so that they can indicate what their preferences are, an approach that was not taken in my school.

Kearney et al. (2018) also support a participative approach to foster the adoption of new teaching technology. They argue that action learning groups might support the adoption of new teaching technology more effectively, and they appear to be strong proponents of “bottom-up” professional learning opportunities such as “action learning group strategies [...] and individually negotiated, authentic immersion activities” (p. 492). They do not indicate under which conditions such action learning group strategies might work, nor how to engage faculty members in those strategies, as academics tend to work independently and often prioritize their own agendas (Aarrevaara et al., 2015).

Dumont and Raggio (2018) have looked into faculty resistance to the adoption of new teaching technology from an implicitly political perspective. They report a comment made by a research participant in their study about the perception of faculty members towards online teaching: “The staff hired to help faculty have never taught and have no idea what’s involved. They are just technicians and they have a lot of power over your course. There is not the same freedom that one has in the classroom” (p. 56). This might be indicative of a loss of power, which might trigger resistance towards the new technology. Lawrence and Tar (2018) also have investigated resistance towards the adoption of new technology, again with an implicit political lens when they report that some of their research participants felt they were losing power as the technology might replace them: “so instead of losing their jobs and old methodology of teaching, they refuse to use technology in their teaching” (p. 97).

The sparsity of the literature on online learning adoption by faculty members in a university setting makes it very difficult to draw any definite conclusion about the politics of online learning implementation. The few authors who have investigated the topic offer very little insight into the underlying politics of the phenomenon; for example, how do faculty members who are forced to use new online teaching technology use their influence to either oppose or support such an endeavour? Is there a political context more favourable to online teaching implementation? How do people influence existing social norms that might become barriers to online teaching? Is it desirable and possible to engage faculty members in the decision-making process about online teaching implementation? What might be the political consequences of doing that? All those questions are left unanswered by the current literature on online learning adoption.

Although many acknowledge that online learning adoption is a change in the way faculty members teach (Al-araibi et al. 2019; Salmon and Asgari, 2019; and Zheng, Gibson, and Gu, 2019), few have addressed the change that online learning entails (Shahbaz et al., 2019). The politics of organizational change might offer some clues as online learning implementation is in itself an organizational change that can alter the distribution of power in my school (Markus, 1983). This is the purpose of the next section.

2.4 Relevance and Applicability of Micropolitics to Solving My Organizational Problem

The goal of this study is to discover ways to manage the change triggered by online learning implementation in my university. Well-known methods to manage change (such as increasing change recipients' readiness level with regards to this change by providing training, by regularly communicating the organizational benefits of this endeavour and by eliminating barriers to online learning implementation) have proven ineffective in reducing resistance towards this change. Even if all agree that online learning implementation changes the way faculty members teach (Al-araibi et al., 2019; Salmon and Asgari, 2019; and Zheng, Gibson, and Gu, 2019), few have addressed the change process it entails (Shahbaz et al., 2019). For some, the adoption of online learning involves loss of power (Lawrence and Tar, 2018) which triggers resistance towards the change itself (Dumont and Raggo, 2018). This resistance might increase if the change is imposed on faculty members instead of being driven by them (Kearney et al., 2018), as is the case in my university. In other words, empowering faculty members to initiate a bottom-up change might increase the likelihood of successfully implementing online learning (Aubusson et al., 2014; and Dermentzi and Papagiannidis, 2018). The influence of peers and other incentives might help move the change forward (Samarawickrema and Stacey, 2007) as long as first- and second-order barriers have been eliminated (Kearney et al., 2018). However, the literature offers no definitive list of first- and second order barriers that, once eliminated, increase the adoption of online learning by faculty members. Thus, resistance might not be triggered by management's inability to eliminate these barriers, but rather by the loss of power and status that online learning implementation entails for faculty members.

Thus, investigating how micropolitics might help manage the change is an endeavour worth pursuing, particularly because it could shed some light on how it can sustain or hinder cooperation (Burns, 1961). It could also help clarify the concept of organizational politics by focusing on organizational actors' behaviour as they try to prevent loss of power (McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart, 2012). Investigating the micropolitical behaviour of both change recipients and the change agent (myself) might serve to determine if and how coalitions (Cyert and March, 1963; March and Olsen, 1976; and Vigoda, 2003), building alliances and managing scarce resources (Pfeffer, 1981) including power bases that people have or have access to (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986; French and Raven, 1958) are tools that can be used to either facilitate or block the change. Furthermore, micropolitical behaviour might assume many forms: is there a repertoire of political behaviours used by change recipients, as Küpper and Felsch (2000) suggest? How effective are those behaviours in influencing others (Allen et al., 1979; Dean and Sharfman, 1993; Farrell and Peterson, 1982; and O'Connor and Morrison, 2001)?

What are the “back-stage” and “front-stage” political activities (Burns, 1961; Pettigrew 1985a, and 1985b) of people at various levels of the organization (Demers, 2007)? What triggers such behaviour (Buchanan and Badham, 2008; and Mayes and Allen, 1977)? Finally, investigating micropolitics in the context of organizational change might help to answer the following questions: Do people exhibit the same political behaviour towards top-down and bottom-up organizational change? Do organizational rules and norms impact political behaviour? Do people engage in political acts to hinder organizational change for legitimate purposes? What is the most effective political behaviour, if any, that change agents should engage in to help move the change forward? Many of those questions remain unanswered. This research might provide some answers and, thus, contribute to disciplinary knowledge.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

Organizational micropolitics can be investigated through various frameworks. For example, Ferris et al. (2002) and Ferris and Treadway (2012) studied political skill (social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity) in terms of its effectiveness in everyday organizational settings, as a variable underlying leadership effectiveness, and as an antidote for stressors. They did not investigate how political skill can help manage organizational change. Kimura (2015) argues that it would be worth examining managers’ political skill, as defined by Ferris et al. (2002) and Ferris and Treadway (2012), in the context of organizational change: “Such perspectives are important in qualitative studies that are designed to reveal the process of political struggle in organizational change and strategic management.” (p. 325)

Fligstein’s (2001) theory of skilled social actors could also be used to investigate micropolitical behaviour. Skilled social actors exhibit various behaviours such as framing “stories that help induce cooperation from people in their group that appeal to their identity and interests, while at the same time using those same stories to frame actions against various opponents” (p. 133), setting agendas, convincing others that what they can get is what they want, and engaging in “brokering more than blustering.” Such behaviour could be deemed political in nature, especially with Fligstein and McAdam’s (2011) concept of “strategic action fields” which are “the fundamental units of collective action in society.” Power and advantage play key roles in this concept: strategic action fields are socially constructed arenas within which actors with varying resource endowments compete for advantage. Their approach has more to do with broad societal changes rather than changes occurring at the micro-organizational level such as the one I want to investigate. I could also have chosen other theories as a theoretical framework, such as Roger’s (2003) theory of diffusion of innovations or actor-network theory (Latour, 1992). Although Roger’s theory has been used in several studies on the adoption of learning technologies (Li and Lindner, 2007; Shea, Pickett, and Sau Li, 2005; and Wilson et al., 2000), it fails to take into account external conditions which can include and/or be distorted by political factors (Wilson et al., 2002). It also does not clearly define adoption. As for actor-network theory, which also has been used to study the adoption of technology (Samarawickrema and Stacey, 2007), it considers actors as physical objects and intangibles, and studies their interactions. It does not, however, offer any insight into the political nature of these interactions and their underlying dynamics: since change is inherently dynamic, the theory might not be appropriate.

Crozier’s and Friedberg’s (1977) theory, which is a view reflected in the tenets of micropolitics (Willner, 2011), presents a nuanced picture of how micropolitical strategies are construed and used in the context of organizational change; this theoretical framework might be most appropriate for investigating how people exert power in the context of the organizational change taking place in my school. More specifically, applying the framework developed by Crozier and Friedberg (1977), using action research to study organizational actors’ micropolitical “strategic games,” might increase my understanding of the way people form coalitions, build alliances, manage scarce resources, and develop and use micropolitical strategies with others, in the context of the organizational change in

my school. The change currently occurring in my organization is generating resistance and power struggles that impede the change process, so using the framework developed by Crozier and Friedberg seems appropriate to interpret these phenomena, and to manage them in such a way that they become a force for, rather than against, change. Furthermore, Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) concept of "strategic games" offers an interesting way to study collaboration and competition among organizational actors as they constantly try to change the "rules of the game" to their advantage by influencing others at the micro-organizational level. In doing so, they attempt to gain power and increase their freedom of action. Consequently, management (and change agents) have no choice but to get involved in those games if they want to "win," i.e., successfully implement change (Quinn, 1980). These games can take many forms such as coalition building, developing alliances and using power bases to influence others. One could argue that they represent "survival strategies" (Burns, 1961) to gain power and influence over the change process so that the outcomes are most beneficial to the change recipients. Resistance takes the form of political behaviour that faculty members engage in to block the change (Hardy, 1995; Markus, 1983; and Pfeffer, 1981). Thus, their micropolitical behaviour is a way to retaliate against top-down change which imposes losses on them. They sustain a competitive dynamic against management to derail the change process. Some collaborate with management as they foresee positive outcomes from the change process; they are more likely to engage in a bottom-up change to innovate and help move the change forward (Kanter, 1983; Pettigrew, 1985b; Giddens, 1979; and Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) theory provides a framework that could help explain the many situations I have encountered in my organization in my attempt to manage the change brought about by the implementation of online learning (such as specific acts taken by some faculty members to slow down the project, some withholding relevant information that would have helped me move the change forward, attempts to involve others to oppose the change, and acts to block the change such as overtly opposing the goals of the change or delaying one's involvement in the project for obscure motives, to name a few) and could potentially provide answers to many questions outlined in the last paragraph of the previous section. (Is there a repertoire of political behaviour that is used by change recipients? How effective are those behaviours in influencing others? What "back-stage" and "front-stage" political activities do people at different levels of the organization engage in? What triggers such behaviour?)

The framework is widely used to study organizational micropolitics (Willner, 2011). For example, Bogumil and Kissler (1998a, 1998b) have applied the framework to study organizational (radical) change, specifically, reforms in public administration organizations in Germany. These consisted of reducing the hierarchy, redefining government's responsibility, and creating new structures and procedures. These reforms generated many conflicts among organizational members involved in the process. The authors analyzed power struggles and resistance to change, and used Crozier's and Friedberg's framework to interpret the underlying causes of the change failure. Crozier and Friedberg (1977) argue that organizational change basically results from the strategies that organizational members put forward: they constantly strategize in order to increase their power and gain influence over others, which leads to power struggles. Those with more power have the advantage over those with less power and, thus, have more impact on the outcome of the change by exerting their influence on the change process. Finally, the theory has also been used to study ways to reduce the cost of training in organizations (Seddik, 2017), to study absenteeism (Lux, 2015) and to investigate the management of knowledge (Brauner and Becker, 2006).

The strength of Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) framework is that it takes into account the idea that change is a multi-level process that includes actors at every level of the organization who initiate and/or become involved in organizational change: anyone can initiate strategic games in the context of organizational change to either promote or oppose the change, depending on their evaluation of the outcomes that the change entails, and on the power that they wield in order to exert their

influence. Consequently, organizational actors engage in micropolitical behaviour to gain power and influence. Also, the framework helps to present a nuanced picture of how micropolitical strategies are construed and employed in the context of organizational change.

2.5.1 Key Concepts of the Theory: Definition and Evaluation

The theory has four basic components (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977): (1) the concept of organizational actors (called “players”) who act in their own interests (they want to “win”) and interact with other actors in their quest of maximizing their gains and minimizing their losses; (2) the concept of a concrete action system, which is formed by the interactions with other actors; (3) the concept of a strategic game where actors seek to exploit “zones of uncertainty” and increase their power; and (4) the concept of power itself, which is viewed as a set of relations between actors. The definition of an actor is flexible: an actor is a social entity in the sense it enters into relationships with other actors and has objectives, which may or may not be different from the objectives of the organization. An actor always has freedom of choice, even if this choice is passivity, i.e. to do nothing. An organization is seen as a set of relationships or “concrete action systems” which are created by the players themselves. Within these, actors negotiate, exchange, make decisions and bargain. Such systems are usually a compromise between the formal objectives of the organization and those of the actors themselves. The strategic game is the method used to regulate these systems and through which the actors come to cooperate or compete. The game is about both freedom and constraint. The actor has to accept the rules of the game and, at the same time, develop a strategy to achieve their own objectives. The organizational forms that result from this are a series of interconnected games. Figure 1 below provides an illustration of the framework.

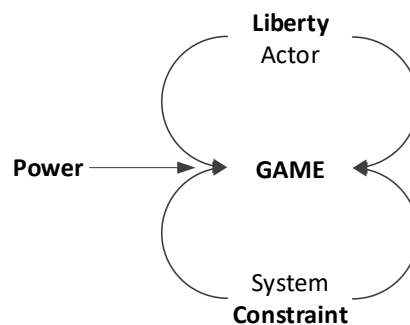


Figure 1: Crozier’s and Friedberg’s Framework

The idea that organizational actors seek to preserve the power they hold and want to increase in an attempt to gain more freedom in a particular situation is particularly relevant in the context of organizational change which can disrupt power relations. Greater freedom means less uncertainty about what the outcomes of the change may be in that particular situation; in other words, the actor has the liberty to choose from a wide variety of actions from which positive outcomes are possible. The organization might constrain available options in order to foster cooperation among organizational actors from which positive outcomes for all are foreseen. Consequently, Crozier’s and Friedberg’s (1977) strategic analysis of intra-organizational power provides the conceptual apparatus to analyse micropolitical behaviour in all types of organizational change (Willner, 2011). When applied to organizational change, the theory is mostly articulated based on the following concepts:

- **Strategic (Political) Games:** Crozier’s and Friedberg’s (1977) framework conceptualizes the behaviour of both change agent and change recipients as “strategic games;” change recipients engage in these games to either facilitate or impede the change process, depending on the gains that the outcome of the change might yield, or the losses that the change entails.

- **Behavioural Patterns:** These “games” take the form of patterns of behaviour that can be described by the “players” themselves, or by an observer. It is through this behaviour that organizational members exert their power to influence others.
- **The Concept of Resistance is Useless:** Describing these patterns of behaviour initiated by organizational members can help us to understand why and how they might collaborate or compete in the context of organizational change (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Resistance to change, as it is generally defined in the literature and from a Lewinian perspective (as a force against change), is futile: within Crozier’s and Friedberg’s framework, resistance is conceptualized as a “competitive” strategic game that those opposed to the change engage in to block it; resistance is merely the symptom of underlying power struggles among those who promote the change, and those who oppose it.
- **Interactions Among Organizational Actors:** Strategic games can be described by analyzing (1) how people define a particular organizational problem, (2) the goals that they will pursue in that context, (3) their stakes (in terms of gains and losses), and (4) the resources that they will use to achieve their goals. An individual’s decision to act in a certain way is based on an analysis of these variables; one might choose from a set of possible actions those that are likely to help to “expand” one’s zone of uncertainty (and scope of action) and increase the chances of achieving one’s goals. People might engage in offensive strategies to increase their zones of uncertainty, and in defensive strategies to protect their zones of uncertainty (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Consequently, analyzing interactions among faculty members using this framework might help to uncover some of the strategic games that they have engaged in and/or initiated to block the change. These strategic games might involve building alliances and developing coalitions, which entails that strategic analysis encompasses both coalition and alliance building.

The theory examines the actions posed by organizational actors among themselves and rejects any contextual determinism. Organizational actors follow bounded rationality when they decide to act in a certain way, but are convinced that they behave in a rational manner based on the information available in their context. Despite limited and/or biased information, organizational actors are persuaded that their actions result in the best possible outcomes for them and for others as well.

This involves the organization being socially construed through the interactions among actors. It is a fabric of multiple power relations among actors who comprise the organizational system. While the organization might restrict freedom and actors’ capacity to act, they still have the ability to shape the context in which they operate. Actors are always active and try to act in the social system of which they are part in such a way as to increase their relative freedom. Organizational actors, thus, need to act strategically to increase their relative freedom aimed at reducing uncertainty associated with the context. In other words, to act strategically means to take advantage of a particular situation, and/or to avoid losing the benefits that are already acquired in that context, which entails interacting with others. “Games” are the mechanism by which actors regulate their relationships among themselves. The game allows organized actions by balancing actors’ freedom of action and constraints.

There are multiple games in which an actor can be involved. To “play the game,” organizational actors rely on their power. In theory, power is an exchange relationship and renders possible mutual negotiations among actors. Since the exchange among organizational actors is negotiated, this entails a certain unpredictability: an actor can never be sure whether others will collaborate because of the resources that actors exchange among themselves. The concept of strategy refers to the deliberate action of the actor to allow or deny access to resources that are useful to other actors. Being dependent on others is a sign of weakness: an actor will always seek to reduce the level of dependency that they have on other actors and to increase (and preserve) the level of dependency of others on them.

A limitation of the framework can be found in the nature of the resources that organizational actors use to gain and exert power and influence. The theory posits that organizational actors use expertise, networks, information, and rules to gain power (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). I would contend that this is quite restrictive, and that organizational actors can utilize coalitions, a variety of resources and alliances to exert power and influence, by manipulating the pervasive dimensions of power, as described in the literature review. For example, they might use personal relationships to gain influence over the change process, or engage in covert activities (“back-stage activities,” as Burns, 1961; and Pettigrew 1985a, and 1985b, call them) to manipulate rules and procedures.

Another limitation of the theory is that it does not include concepts such as trust (Edmondson and Moingeon, 1999) and legitimacy, two concepts that organizational actors rely on to exert influence. Furthermore, the framework fails to offer a classification of strategic games (or any criteria to help do this) which would be useful in understanding people’s micropolitical behaviour. It does not explain the underlying dynamics of those games, and how they fit into the larger context of organizational change. Despite its limitations, however, the framework might help:

- 1) To understand the underlying motives of faculty members’ reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning;
- 2) To investigate the role that micropolitics might play in this change using action research; doing so might help me address power issues more effectively;
- 3) To find ways to change faculty members’ opposition to the change through action learning; and
- 4) To develop a framework that will help address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to help move the change forward, thus generating actionable learning.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to use action research to investigate faculty members' micropolitical behaviour, and to generate actionable knowledge to facilitate the implementation of online learning. Action learning would help to find ways to address power issues in order to help me manage the change process more effectively. The overall objective of this endeavour was to induce faculty members to be actively and constructively involved in the change process underpinning the implementation of online learning in my organization. This would involve taking action to assess their motives for opposing the change, and addressing these issues using action learning in such a way as to engage them in online learning.

Consequently, the focus of the research was twofold: firstly, to identify micropolitical behaviour (and the underlying motives) exhibited by faculty members in their attempts to influence others, and assess the effectiveness of these attempts. Drawing on existing literature, micropolitical behaviour is any deliberate attempt made by faculty members to mobilize power for a specific purpose (i.e., to promote or oppose the change associated with online learning implementation). Mobilizing power refers to activities to acquire, develop, and use power such as coalition building, using scarce resources and acting strategically to create alliances aimed at influencing others, i.e., inducing them to act in a certain way (Allen et al., 1979; Dean and Sharfman, 1993; Farrell and Peterson, 1982; and O'Connor and Morrison, 2001). Following Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) contention, faculty members' bounded rationality would not prevent them from justifying their actions since they would be persuaded that their actions bring the best possible outcomes for them and for others as well. The challenge would stem from covert political acts which would certainly not be addressed openly by faculty members in the course of the research if they felt that these acts were reprehensible (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Consequently, data would consist of discussions that would take place openly during the meetings, interpreted within the framework of Crozier and Friedberg (1977).

Secondly, the research focussed on the change induced by the adoption of online learning. A member of faculty who adopts online learning would frame the endeavour as being worthwhile and would be able to make a case that it should be pursued, and act accordingly. A person could well say that the entire project is worth it, but would do nothing to help move it forward. These individuals would be "passive supporters" of the change since they would not use their influence to actively advance the project. Investigating why they are passive might shed some light on their real motives: are they just conforming to norms that they don't really agree with because of peer pressure, or are there constraints that prevent them from becoming active supporters of the change? Similarly, someone could be a passive resistor or an active resistor of the change as resistance can be considered a subset of non-adoption (Patsiotis, Hughes, and Webber, 2012). A resistor can be active and wield power to influence others not to get involved in online learning, while passive resisters lack sufficient power to influence others and would most likely try to increase their power in an attempt to gain more influence and, hence, more freedom. Since greater freedom means less uncertainty about the outcomes (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), it was safe to assume that faculty members would discuss their attempts to gain power and influence to either support or oppose the change by exhibiting specific micropolitical behaviour.

3.1 Studying Micropolitical Behaviour: Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Some researchers (Ferris et al., 2002; Kipnis et al.; 1984; and Vigoda, 2003) have studied micropolitical behaviour within a quantitative, functionalist paradigm, and argue that power and micropolitical behaviour are objective and inherent realities of organizations. These scholars tend to promote a positivist approach to studying micropolitical behaviour, and argue that it can be objectively assessed. A few have designed models to explain and predict micropolitical behaviour in organizational settings

(Fedor, Maslyn, and Bettenhausen, 2008). Others (such as Buchanan and Badham, 2008) have used an interpretive framework to study micropolitical behaviour, and argue that it is socially constructed. Finally, some believe that power and micropolitical behaviour constitute a reality constructed by the powerful (Hardy, 1995; Hardy and Clegg, 1996; and Hardy and O'Sullivan, 1998). Furthermore, Buchanan and Badham (2008) argue that there will never be an agreed upon definition of micropolitical behaviour, as many commentators have contended (Bradshaw-Camball and Murray, 1991; Drory and Romm, 1990; and Kacmar et al., 1999), because micropolitical behaviour is socially constructed. Evidently, there is a wide diversity of perspectives about what power is really about and how it should be studied.

Because of the many, sometimes divergent, definitions of the concept of "micropolitical behaviour" (Buchanan and Badham, 2008), and because I agree that it is socially constructed, I have chosen to investigate micropolitical behaviour based on a constructionist research philosophy to better understand how people perceive and assess their behaviour (and those of others) as micropolitical (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). Furthermore, using a constructionist approach to study micropolitical behaviour could shed some light on how faculty members gain and use their power to influence others in their pursuit of individual and/or organizational goals. Through action learning, the behaviour with which they exert their influence might become more apparent and form the basis of their repertoire of micropolitical strategies (their "strategic games," to use the words of Crozier and Friedberg, 1977) for use in the context of the change brought about by the implementation of online learning. This is why my intention was to use action research to focus on a single phenomenon (change) taking place in the context of the research participants and to be involved with them so that we jointly construct an understanding of online learning from a political stance, the problem, the actors involved, the types of games being played, the goals, the stakes and the resources at play. Learning would be derived from the actions to use power and exert influence in the context of the change.

McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart (2012) have found that qualitative methodologies (such as action research) are techniques rarely used to investigate organizational politics, despite the nature of this phenomenon; they argue that qualitative inquiry results in more in-depth, comprehensive information, and that it can lead to new insights "that may not be recognized in existing theoretical work" (p. 116). They offer the following recommendations for the use of qualitative methodologies in investigating organizational politics: (1) detailed notes and recordings should be made before and during data-gathering sessions (i.e., action learning meetings); and (2) data analysis and conclusions should be triangulated, that is, participants' perceptions should be verified in a systematic manner. Finally, maintaining that most scholars recognize that behaviour is a function of the context,² they suggest that situational factors should be taken into account when investigating micropolitics. I integrated McFarland, Van Iddekinge, and Ployhart's (2012) recommendations into the action research process of this research: detailed notes of each of the meetings were taken and incorporated in a log and the analyses of participants' perceptions of their micropolitical behaviour (and that of others) were compared in terms of their impact on the context (the change process and outcomes).

Cassell and Johnson (2006) suggest that any action research project should be evaluated in the context of ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the researcher. Consequently, I am aware that using a constructionist approach to study micropolitical behaviour entails that the results obtained during the action research cycles may not apply to other organizations in which change is being conducted and where change recipients are apparently engaging in micropolitical behaviour to derail it. Moreover, investigating micropolitical behaviour using action research and action learning is compatible with the approach taken by Crozier and Friedberg to study micropolitical behaviour.

² Which somewhat goes against Crozier's and Friedberg's Methodological Individualism approach which consists of first analyzing actors' behaviour to account for structure instead of analyzing structure to explain actors' behaviour (Structuralism).

The first step in their methodology consists of establishing the actual situation as it stands and reconstructing the logic of situations from the actors' experience (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). This corresponds to the first step of any action research process: constructing the issues. Knowing how the actors construct the issues helps the researcher plan for ways to foster learning among actors. Bounded by their rationality, the actors are encouraged by the researcher to expand their understanding of the issues and to assess the effectiveness of their previous actions in such a way as to get them to act more effectively to solve the problem (planning action, the second step of the action research process). The researcher then looks for data on the actors' experiences following actions that they took (the third step, taking action) and involves them in assessing the impact of those actions. The goal is to reconstruct the logic underlying the concrete action system among actors and to look for underlying micropolitical strategies to bring about learning and new ways of doing things. This is how I planned to generate actionable knowledge for my school.

3.2 Action Research Design and Implementation

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study was to use action research to investigate faculty members' micropolitical behaviour, and to engage them in learning sets to get them to support the implementation of online learning in an attempt to generate actionable knowledge. This knowledge would ultimately help me: (1) foresee change recipients' micropolitical behaviour when they oppose or support the change; and (2) support change recipients' micropolitical behaviour when it sustains the change process, or counteract micropolitical strategies that impede the change process. Achieving these two objectives might constitute a contribution to professional practice, as "micropolitics is an underestimated topic in literature on action research" (Eilertsen, Gustafson, and Salo, 2008, p. 304). Moreover, since actionable knowledge "reflects the learning capability of individuals and organizations to connect heterogeneous elements (social, political, economic, and technological); [...] (and) the focus of actionable knowledge is on (learning) practice as a form of self-organization that is fluid, dynamic" (Antonacopoulou, 2008, p. 2), I incorporated learning sets in the action research process in such a way that we learn together to use influence constructively to help the change move forward; in other words, to come up with a repertoire of influence strategies ("games") conducive to change.

Coghlan's and Brannick's (2010) four-step action plan for developing and implementing an action research process, namely (1) managing insider action research; (2) framing the issue; (3) enacting the core action research cycle; and (4) learning in action, formed the basis of the research design. The research followed the process described in Figure 2 below.

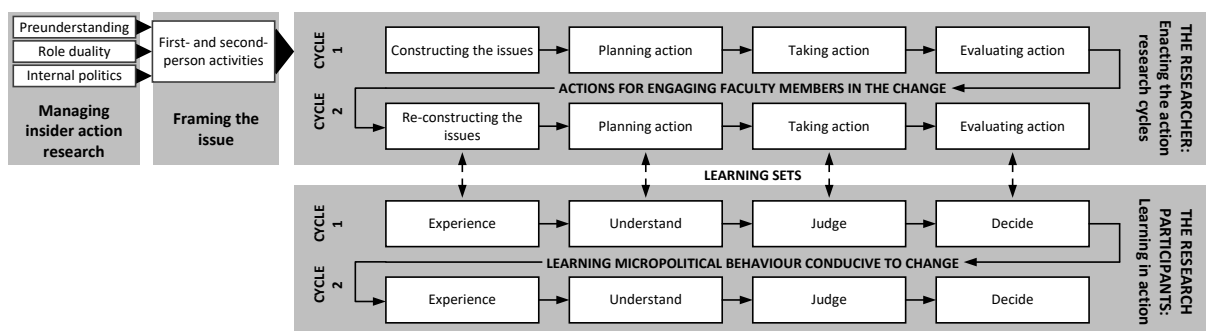


Figure 2: The Action Research Design (based on Coghlan and Brannick, 2010)

According to Eilertsen, Gustafson, and Salo (2008), action research implies by its very nature that taken-for-granted routines, social relations and cultural "world-views" are unveiled more often than in other research strategies. This also includes the micropolitical order of things, formal and informal power and influence ascribed to individuals, positions and groups, and how these are culturally ranked.

They argue that action research can not only shed light on people's political behaviour, but can also "change established roles and relations within an actual group of participants [...]" (p. 304). Thus, action researchers need to reflect on the micropolitical consequences of their actions, especially when action research is used in the context of organizational change, as Mangham (1979) argues:

"In essence, power and politics dramatically affect and even drive all key dimensions of change and innovation in organizations. They typically reflect the strong advocacy of some and the strong opposition of others. The self-interest of both groups is at stake and every trick and resource will be called into service to bring about or successfully oppose the innovation under consideration."
(Mangham, 1979, p. 133)

Badham, Couchman and McLoughlin (1997) have used action research to demonstrate the importance of adopting contextualized politicized change strategies. Furthermore, using action research to investigate the micropolitics of organizational change can take multiple forms:

"[...] we know of an individual manager whose Master's Action Research Project was about the organizational change he was leading. His second-person intervention work to manage the politics, power dynamics and the conflicts between key protagonists was central to both his managerial role in leading change in his organization and his action research dissertation. His reflection in action was central to his dissertation."
(Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, p. 48)

This form is somewhat similar to the research I conducted.

The first action research cycle in the four groups of participants opened with a dialogue about the desirability of online learning implementation, while the desired future state (the outcomes of the project) was to be co-constructed with faculty members. Establishing "fair power relations" (Hilsen, 2006) with faculty members at the outset has not always prevented power struggles (namely in groups 3 and 4 in which the second action research cycle broke down). In some groups, this has eventually led to enhanced collaboration, based on mutual trust and respect. Some faculty members engaged in a dialogue to co-construct the issue and future actions (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010), and defined the steps to manage the change. With faculty members who were resisting the change initiative, I needed to learn how I could bring their assumptions to light. We learned that building alliances with those receptive to the change initiative, and encouraging them to influence others to participate, proved useful. My implicit goal in the action research cycles was to engage faculty members in the research process in order to address resistance to change more effectively (Ford and Ford, 2010), to help them deal with their anxiety about the change process, to promote reflection and learning, to support a dialogue and to develop "collaborative alliances" (Wood and Gray, 1991).

3.3 Action Learning as a Mode of Action Research

Grieves (2000) argues that change initiatives precipitate the need to learn. He proposes five key learning processes to enhance organizational capacity for change, one of which is action learning. Incorporating action learning into each of the two cycles of the action research process to co-create a vision of things to come has undoubtedly increased my organization's capacity to change. Zuber-Skerritt (2001, p. 15) argues that transformational change is facilitated when "action learners' vision aligns with the organization's mission and goals."

My approach to action learning in this study is the one put forward by Coghlan and Brannick (2005), more specifically that action learning:

“[...] is an approach to the development of people in organizations which takes the task as the vehicle for learning. [...] In action learning the starting point is the action. [...] Its three objectives are (1) To make useful progress on the treatment of some real problems or opportunity; (2) To give nominated managers sufficient scope to learn for themselves in the company of others; and (3) To encourage teachers and others in management development to help others learn with and from each other.” (p. 15).

In engaging faculty members in the learning sets, I hoped that, together, we would learn better ways to gain and use power to exert influence in the context of the change induced by online learning implementation. The four phases of the action research process (constructing the issues, planning action, taking action and evaluating action) were indeed conducive to action learning, as it was decided to bring together in the learning sets both members who have adopted online teaching and those who were still resisting it at the time the meetings took place, in order to involve resisters (non-adopters) in a dialogue in which they could learn from colleagues who have chosen to engage in online teaching.

The first meeting with the research participants in each of the two cycles would start with the experience phase (constructing the issues) during which factual events would be discussed by initiating a dialogue around several questions such as the following: “Is online learning relevant to the organization and to our students? Why? Is it being implemented properly? What could have been done differently? (The meetings took place in 2017 and the project started in 2013.) What were the events that you experienced recently, in relation to the change brought about by the implementation of online learning? What was the impact of those events on you and others? How did these events affect power relations in the school?” The goal of this step was to help set members become attentive to their own personal experiences. Thus, each learning set member was encouraged to discuss their common experience of events related to the implementation of online learning, such as their perception of the change caused by the implementation, their feelings about the change that was imposed on them, the gains and losses that the change entailed for them and/or for the institution, and the way they tried to exert power and influence to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Through the lens of a constructionist approach, the expression of both positive and negative views about the change was encouraged in such a way that resisters would engage in actions that would help the change move forward. The ultimate goal of the action learning process was to initiate a third order attitudinal change (Argyris, 1977) among participants opposing the implementation of online learning. Based on how research participants experienced these events, I would then try to involve them in co-constructing the issues in such a way that these issues would be seen as encompassing the concerns of most participants. It is during this phase that personal issues would tend to overshadow collective ones and that ethical issues were addressed.

The following phase for them was to make sense of these events and their political impact on a micro, meso and macro level (“Understand”) so that we plan adequate action (planning action): “What might explain people’s reactions towards these events? Why do some people react positively, others negatively? What is the best course of action?” The goal of this phase was to make sense of their experiences and devise an action plan. The “Judge” phase would serve to assess the effectiveness of the action plan using a list of criteria determined by set participants: “How can one influence most effectively the change process in such a way that it is most beneficial for all? What are the micropolitical strategies that might help the change move forward? What are those that might block the change?” Answers to these questions would help us choose a proper course of action to move the change forward. Encouraging set participants to reflect on/weigh available evidence was the goal of this phase. After taking action, the “Decide” phase would allow for the agreement on which action brought about the best outcomes, and the last phase would serve to find out why these actions were more effective than others and their outcomes more desirable.

The second cycle would then be initiated and start by reconstructing the issues based on knowledge acquired in the first cycle. This process engaged people in double-loop learning to produce actionable knowledge. The process would then unfold for a second iteration. Figure 3 below illustrates the embedded action learning cycle within the action research process.

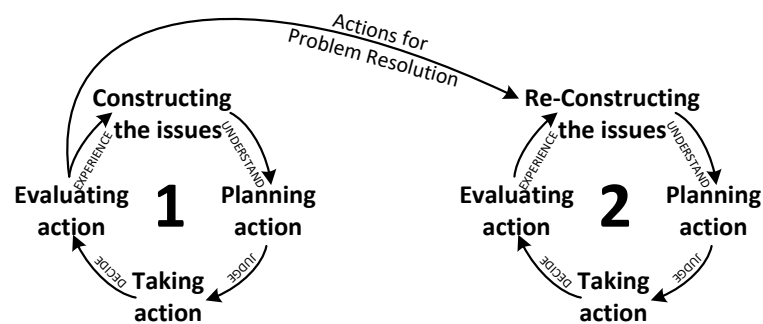


Figure 3: Embedded Action Learning within the Action Research Cycles

The purpose of the action research process was to produce actionable knowledge in order to improve the way change is being managed in my school. The purpose of the action learning cycle was to induce new mental models among set participants to solve the problem, i.e. the lack of participation in online learning implementation. This implies that action learning “asks for critical reflection about self and others, and action research asks for critical reflection about [management] practice” (Willis, 2010, p. 176).

Finally, incorporating reflexivity in the action research process served as a learning device to “shape my understanding of the costs and benefits of different behaviours and courses of action” (Lawrence, Mauws, Dyck, and Kleysen, 2005, p. 187) that I adopt as a change agent. Using a log, at the end of each meeting with set participants, I consistently wrote what I had learned, both on a personal level and as the change agent. My reflections are summarized in the last chapter.

3.4 Setting and Set Participants

My approach to investigating the micropolitics of organizational change has consisted of conducting group discussions with faculty members impacted by the implementation and the change process. Out of a total of 272 faculty members (at the time the research was conducted), 13 members had adopted online teaching, and about 25 members were being directly or indirectly impacted by the change, and were actively resisting it at the time of the research.

My selection criteria of set participants were the following: (1) in the case of those who already had adopted online learning (the adopters), I mostly selected those who had at least a year’s worth of experience teaching online so that the person had accumulated sufficient knowledge about what it implies (those with less experience would not be excluded as they could learn from their most experienced colleagues). In the case of those resisting online learning (the resisters), I targeted those whose course was supposed to be offered online at the time of the research but implementation was delayed because of a lack of interest on their part; (2) I chose participants who were vocal about their position on online learning in such a way that I knew where they stood: there was no ambiguity about how they view online learning. I particularly did not want to end up with having recruited exclusively “silent” resisters who would not express their opposition and would tacitly agree to everything that was said.

I first made contact with potential subjects. I sent an e-mail to approximately 40 individuals (who were not informed of who else was contacted) to ask for their voluntary participation in the research. The e-mail was sent at the beginning of April 2017 to the 25 members who felt impacted negatively by the implementation and were vocal about it, and 15 e-mails were sent to those who had adopted online teaching (the 13 faculty members who adopted online teaching almost a year before the research, and 2 new adopters who had their first experience with online teaching in January 2017). The rationale was to put in place learning sets made up of those resisting the change, as well as those who have already adopted online learning, so that we have a variety of perspectives in the learning sets. In the e-mail, participants were informed of the reason why they were contacted, and the e-mail briefly outlined the objectives of the research, and the methodology (action research, data collection and transcription, confidentiality issues, and communication of final results), and the informed consent form was attached to the e-mail. They were also informed that during the first meeting with those agreeing to participate in the research, the study would be described in more detail, and relevant documentation would be distributed (meeting schedules, information about action research and action learning, etc.). The consent form would be reviewed, and questions would be answered. Consent would be documented via signature by all participants, on site. Eight 3-hour long meetings were scheduled, approximately 2 meetings every month for 4 months. This would allow for two full cycles of the action research process (constructing the issues, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action, (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010).

Out of the 40 e-mails sent, 32 positive responses were received during the following two weeks. The recipients of the e-mail were informed that they needed to respond in the course of the following two weeks so that the research could take place during the months of April to September: this is the period during which most participants do not take on teaching assignments. It was assumed that they would have time to actively participate in the research, which proved to be the case. An e-mail was sent to those 32 who had responded to confirm their participation in the research. A week later, 4 participants declined to participate in the research without providing any reason, and 4 did not respond. A total of 24 participants agreed to be part of the research, 14 of them resisting the change, and 10 already teaching online. The 24 participants were divided into 4 groups of 6 participants each to foster interactions among them. Each group comprised a certain number of “Resistors” (R) and “Adopters” (A). Table 1 below describes the group composition and key relevant characteristics of research participants. (A indicates an Adopter of online teaching, and R a Resistor of online teaching at the time the research was initiated in April 2017.) Between April and September 2017, 8 meetings were held with Group 1 and Group 2, 6 meetings with Group 3, and 7 meetings with Group 4.

Participant 1-A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Tenured • 59 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Tenured • 57 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Non tenured • 35 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Tenured • 68 years old • Prior experience with online learning
Participant 1-B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Non tenured • 41 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Non tenured • 53 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Non tenured • 35 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Tenured • 63 years old • No prior experience with online learning
Participant 1-C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Tenured • 62 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopter • Non tenured • 36 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 58 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 62 years old • No prior experience with online learning

Participant 1-D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 56 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 68 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 46 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 50 years old • No prior experience with online learning
Participant 1-E <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 58 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-E <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Non tenured • 54 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-E <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 53 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-E <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 53 years old • No prior experience with online learning
Participant 1-F <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 57 years old • Prior experience with online learning 	Participant 2-F <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Non tenured • 49 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 3-F <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Non tenured • 59 years old • No prior experience with online learning 	Participant 4-F <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistor • Tenured • 61 years old • No prior experience with online learning

Table 1: Group Composition and Key Relevant Characteristics of Research Participants

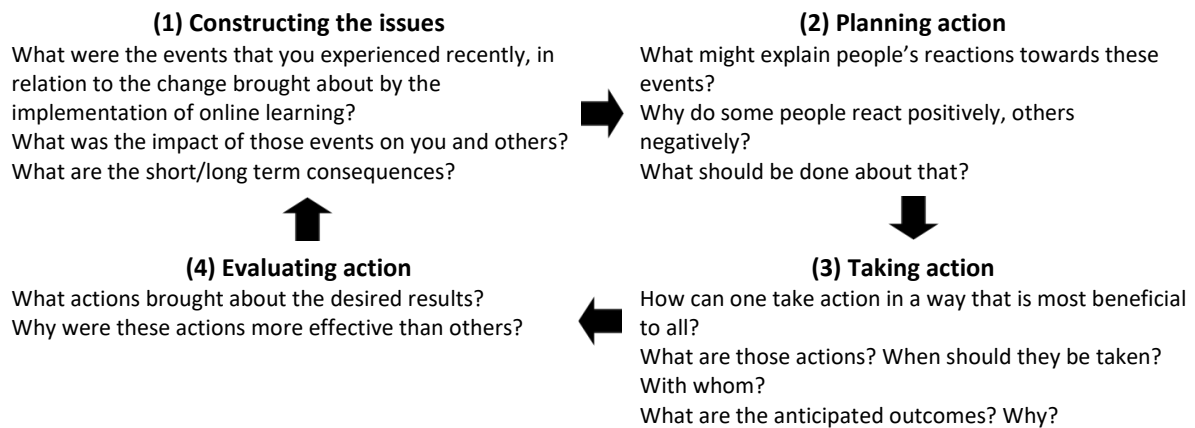
The initial distinction between adopters and resisters proved useful in setting up the learning sets as I wanted to gather data both from those who actively participated in the development of online learning and were engaged in the change process, and those opposing it. Using the distinction made by Crossan et al. (2016), adopters are those whose attitude towards change is one of enthusiasm and willingness, and resisters are those who project an attitude of opposition and reluctance. Gradually, as meetings took place, resisters projected a more positive attitude towards the change.

In the selection process, I did not take into account participants' prior (positive and negative) experience with online learning, level of appointment, tenured/contracted, length of time at the school, age, or other characteristics that have been associated with online learning adoption, primarily because I did not have this kind of information about everyone when I extended the invitation and, secondly, because my focus was on the micropolitical behaviour that they exhibited in the context of the change induced by online learning implementation. Nonetheless, in the course of the research, a few would mention some of those factors as being important in the adoption process of online learning. Throughout the meetings, this type of (sociodemographic) information was made available by most set participants and is presented in Table 1 above.

Some of those characteristics might have played a role in the comments made by the participants and influenced the findings. For example, those who are tenured might have felt free to express their opposition to the change since there were no consequences for them in doing so, as opposed to those who were not yet tenured and might have been more reluctant to oppose the change because they thought it might prevent them being promoted. Also, those with more experience with traditional teaching might have acquired certain habits that might be more difficult to change and they would oppose the initiative. They might also rely on their experience, positive or negative, to make a case for or against online learning. While those factors could have influenced the data, they were not taken into account when analyzing it.

3.5 Data Collection

Approximately 8 meetings were held with each group; the first four meetings were for the first action research cycle, and the other four, the second action research cycle. The first meeting of each of the four groups consisted of "constructing the issues," the second, of "planning action," the third, of "taking action," and the last, of "evaluating action." Typically, for each of the four phases of the action research process, I would ask the following generic questions:



Answers to those questions brought up more specific questions pertaining to micropolitics such as “How is this event an example of loss of power? What goals are you pursuing in that particular context? What are the goals that others might pursue? Why? How might they achieve their goals using their power? What are your stakes? What are the stakes of your colleagues? Of the school? What would be the most appropriate strategy to use in that context? Why? Who are your allies? Your opponents? What power bases do you have to exert influence? What are the power bases of other, important stakeholders?” A series of guiding questions (Figure 4) were addressed in the course of the meetings. Guiding questions are questions that are related to context and which help to enact the action research cycle and the action learning process. They are questions pertaining to the action research process itself and relating to management practice of conducting change, and action learning questions are questions related more specifically to set participants. I kept the focus on these questions as the action research process was unfolding and the meetings were taking place.

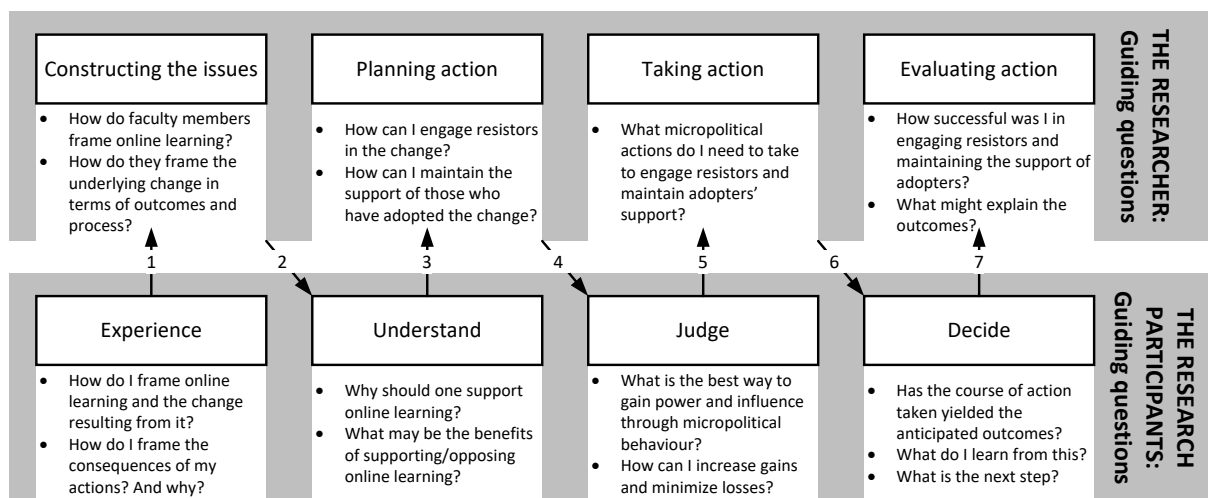


Figure 4: Guiding Questions Asked in the Meetings

I facilitated each of the meetings. The meetings were held in the morning and the afternoon, on the premises where the participants work. Meetings took place in a room where they apparently felt free to express themselves. Interruptions were minimal (e.g., a participant leaves for a few moments to take an important call). From 8 to 10 chairs were arranged around a large round table, and no place was assigned initially. In the course of the meetings, participants mostly sat at the same place they chose to sit in the first meeting. Refreshments (coffee and water) were provided. Participants took a 10-minute break at mid-point in the meeting. Most of the meetings started on time. Discussions were recorded using a Sony ICDBX140 Digital Voice Recorder. All meetings were held in French. Data took the form of electronic audio files for all 29 meetings, each lasting approximately 3 hours.

3.5.1 Forms of Data Collected

All of the data collected come from dialogues and discussions during the set meetings. The topic of micropolitics was brought out more explicitly in the second action research cycle even if the research subjects were all informed in the invitation that the research dealt with organizational micropolitics (Appendix A). During the first cycle, set participants were more reluctant to address the issue of micropolitics; when they did, they tended to assign such behaviour to those opposing the change. In the second cycle, many acknowledged that they had engaged in such behaviour and a clearer, more positive definition of political behaviour emerged in the discussions. My intention was to let participants raise the topic without my intervention and then to encourage them to share their accounts of their own experiences of micropolitical behaviour. In the course of the meetings, some used micropolitical behaviour to influence others, but their attempts were overt and acknowledged as such. In analyzing the data, I have used only what was shared in the learning sets as I did not have access to what was discussed among set participants outside the meetings.

Finally, I used a log to take notes in each of the meetings. Many of my notes were reflections about my role as a change agent, about myself as a researcher, and about my interpretations of what I observed in the meetings. In my journal, I made two columns: the left hand column to write down some of the comments and non-verbal reactions of those participating in the meetings that appeared relevant, and the right hand column to take notes about how some of the items in the left hand column might shed some light on the research questions. Figure 5 below is a synthesis of the participant selection process and meeting schedules.

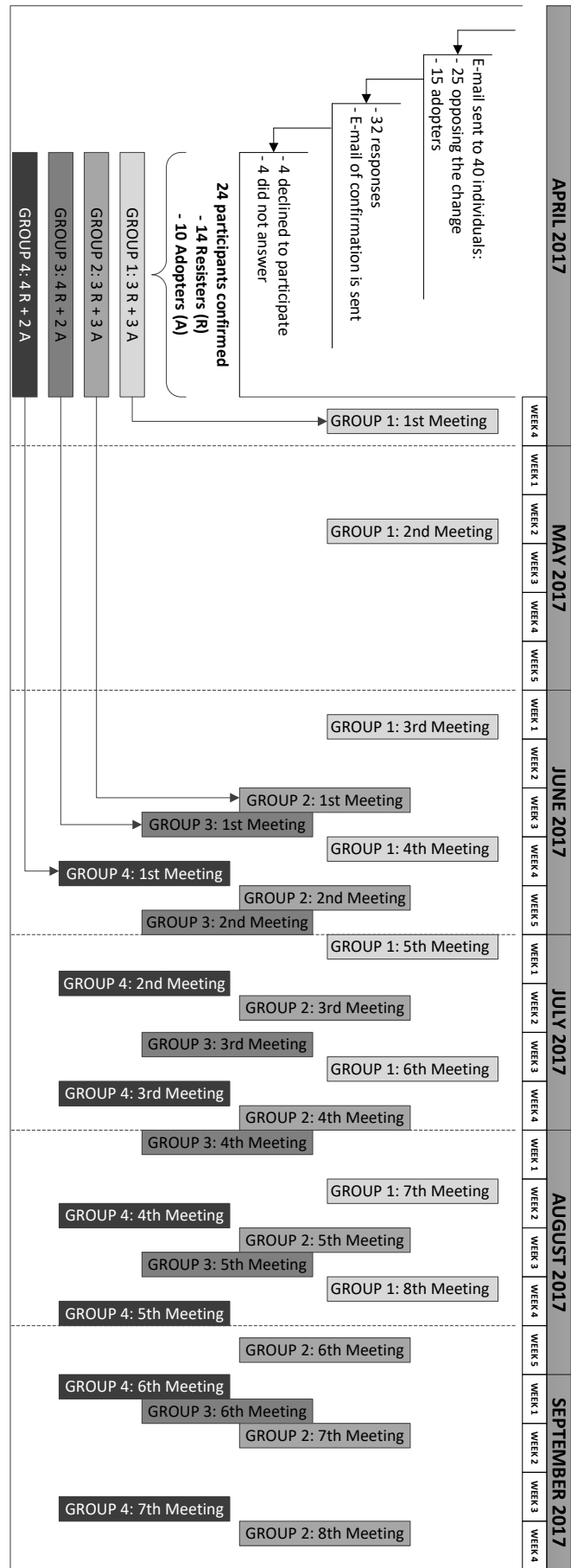


Figure 5: Participant Selection Process and Meeting Schedules

Since the phases of the action research cycles for each of the four groups of participants overlapped, I was able to use data from one group to feed the following groups. For example, data obtained in the first phase of the first action research cycle for Group 1 helped me prepare questions to better grasp how participants in Group 2 experienced online learning implementation, and then use data obtained in both the first and second group to adapt questions and validate data in the third group, and so on (Figure 6).

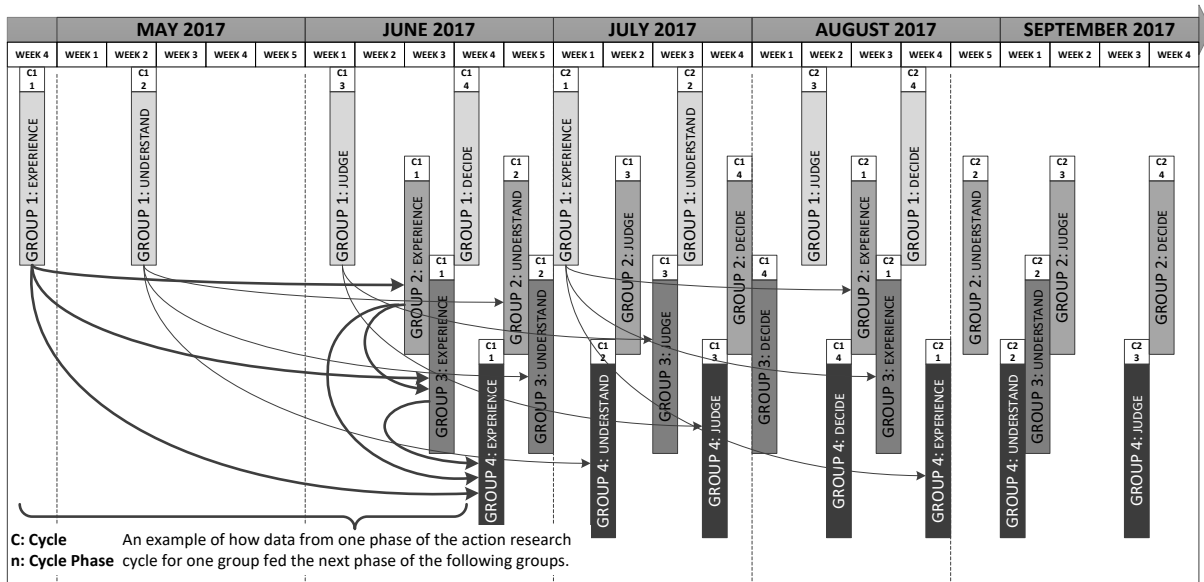


Figure 6: Overlapping Phases of the Action Research Cycles for the Four Groups of Participants

Below is a summary of each group's contextual background, and an overall description of the groups' dynamics during the set meetings for the two action research cycles.

3.5.1.1 Group 1

The first group met in the last week of April 2017. It was the first meeting of the entire research process. I was becoming acquainted with my role as researcher/change agent. I am known by all members of the group, having worked with them on other institutional projects. I wrongly assumed that group dynamics would be constructive and evolve in such a way as to change the attitude of Participants 1-D, 1-E, and 1-F who, at the time, resisted the implementation of online learning. Everybody attended the first meeting, but attendance dropped by the third meeting. Participants 1-A and 1-C are enthusiastic adopters of online teaching, and have been with the university for over 10 years. They were among the first to teach online. Participant 1-B was hired 8 months prior to the meeting, and has taught online ever since. Participant 1-C has a good reputation among her colleagues, but does not seem to have much influence over them. In the meetings, her point of view seldom contradicted those of others, even those of the resisters. Participant 1-D and 1-E are long-time faculty members, and are strong resisters: they have voiced their concerns about online teaching since the beginning, but are now being compelled to adapt their course content which would be offered online the following year. Participant 1-F appeared to be a "weak" resister: he did not seem to support online teaching, but had only voiced his opposition privately to me. During the first three meetings, group dynamics evolved from "forming" in the first two meetings to "storming" (Tuchman, 1965) by the third meeting in June. Only 4 participants attended the meeting in June, Participants 1-D and 1-F being absent; prior to the meeting, they did not provide any reasons as to why they did not attend. I met with them after the third meeting, on an individual basis, to inquire into their absence.

They felt that the first two meetings were a waste of time, and that whatever they would say or do, their concerns would not be heard by management. They appeared to have talked to each other because the reasons they provided for not attending the third meeting were very similar. The dynamics of this meeting among the participants in attendance were very positive as two resisters, one of whom had not voiced his concerns against online teaching before (but his absence spoke volumes), were absent. Only one resister, Participant 1-E, attended. Participants 1-D and 1-F returned to attend the following meetings, and their attitude was much more constructive in those final meetings.

3.5.1.2 Group 2

The second group of participants first met in the third week of June. Like the first group, three adopters and three resisters were brought together so that the adopters would have the possibility of expressing themselves and offering their input about online learning implementation to counterbalance the view that resisters had that this entire project was doomed to fail. Based on prior contacts that I had with the three resisters, Participants 2-D and 2-E appeared to be less forcefully opposed to online learning implementation than participants 1-D, 1-E, and 1-F of the first group. Participant 2-F is a strong resister. It appeared, though, that the latter had influenced the former prior to the first meeting as similar comments were made by Participants 2-D, 2-E, and 2-F about the idea that management was not interested in considering faculty members' concerns in the implementation process. All six participants of the second group have been long term faculty members. They have met before, but have not been involved in any particular project together. Participant 2-B is very much focused on rules and procedures, and tends to be somewhat authoritarian. Participant 2-C is an adopter, but his reputation as a teacher is not very good: students often complain about his teaching methods, both in-class and online. Participant 2-F is a "strong" resister as he seems to be greatly influenced by Participant 1-D with whom he shares certain deeply held views on academic freedom; he believes that faculty members should never be told what to do, and should be free to participate in the projects of their choice.

The group dynamics among participants were driven by the adopters, namely Participants 2-A and 2-B. Those two participants were willing to share their experience, as well as the influence "strategies" that they used to overcome some of the obstacles they encountered, namely in obtaining resources to help them deal with particular technical issues, with other set members. They sometimes overshadowed the resisters, who must have felt compelled to support a positive view of online learning implementation. Consequently, the effect of conformity (Asch, 1956) might have played a role in the dynamics among set members. This group engaged in action learning more directly than any other group as they tested some of the influencing strategies discussed in the set.

3.5.1.3 Group 3

The third group was made up of 2 "strong" adopters and 4 "weak" resisters. The group was purposefully configured that way so that the views of the resisters did not overshadow those of the adopters. All set members are long-time faculty members. Many of them have worked together on other assignments in the past, and have developed a strong sense of teamwork. Some have had contact with participants from other groups, especially with Participant 1-C who is an influential adopter with a very good reputation. Participants 3-A, 3-B, and 3-D have had contact with her, and discussed some of the issues that were addressed in other groups. I know all of the set members very well, and have developed friendly relationships with some of them (Participants 3-C and 3-D). Other set members were aware of this, and I was careful not to let those relationships interfere with the research process. Even though all set members are long-time faculty members, three of them (Participants 3-C, 3-E, and 3-F) were more or less interested in participating in the research: they had seen projects come and go within the university, and many fail. They were somewhat reluctant to get involved in an action learning process that would yield nothing much, in their view.

Their scepticism proved contagious to a certain extent, which could explain why the second action research cycle was not completed. Two participants (3-A and 3-B) were in line to obtain a promotion, so they kept a very low profile throughout the entire process: their participation in the discussions was sporadic, and they never once challenged other participants' perspectives, even if those points of view contradicted one another.

The group dynamics were somewhat positive at the start of the first action research cycle but became much less constructive at the beginning of the second cycle. A factor that might explain this is the "non-involvement" of Participants 3-A and 3-B, who chose to remain silent or support contradictory views on the issues discussed, allowing the resisters to control the agenda. I tried unsuccessfully to steer the discussions toward a more constructive mode. At the start of the second action research cycle, things went astray: the participants would initiate and engage in discussions that had nothing to do with online learning implementation, and some comments fuelled opposition to this project: in other words, the "weak" resisters (Participants 3-C, 3-D, 3-E, and 3-F) became "strong" resisters. They had more reasons to be opposed to the project than reasons to support it.

3.5.1.4 Group 4

The final group brought together the most senior faculty members: among them, 4 "strong" resisters, and 2 "strong" adopters. I had hoped that by bringing together those with extensive working experience within the school, discussions would shed some light on underlying, historical issues related to online learning implementation. Among the resisters, there appeared to be a coalition of three (Participants 4-C, 4-D, and 4-F) who consistently shared the same concerns, and voiced the same apprehensions about online teaching in each of the meetings they attended. Furthermore, they have been among the most vocal opponents of online learning implementation: they would challenge management publicly on their decision to implement online learning, and some would even resort to threats if the project went forward. I had cultivated strong, positive relationships with the two adopters (Participants 4-A and 4-B), thus alienating the resisters who, nevertheless, contributed to advancing the discussions in the initial meetings. There had been implicit competition among some group participants: Participant 4-F was recently involved in a project that failed, while Participant 4-A was involved in a similar project that succeeded. There was intense competition among Participants 4-B and 4-C for financial resources when the meetings took place: each had hoped to obtain much needed financing to move their other projects forward, but in the face of declining public funding (in 2017), money was rather scarce, and they were told by management that they would not get the money. Participants 4-A, 4-C, and 4-F were a few years away from retirement (4-F just retired in June, 2019). Participant 4-E refused to participate in online learning implementation despite recurring pressure from management. He threatened to quit and go to another university. Stakes are high among this group.

I was apprehensive about the meetings with this group, because as the change agent, I could have become the focus of the resisters' frustrations with the project. Instead, the group dynamics evolved in such a way that the already tense relations among adopters and resisters increased in intensity and became more predominant as the meetings took place. The two groups became polarized, which brought about the emergence of two clearly defined subgroups: the two adopters got together to justify online learning implementation, and the four resisters worked together to find arguments against the project. The micropolitics underlying the project were never more apparent than in this group. I found myself having to manage the internal politics of this group as each subgroup regularly tried to persuade me to side with them. The politics had to be managed, both during the meetings and outside the meetings: I would be the target of influence attempts from both adopters and resisters. To neutralize these attempts, I had to remind them of the research objectives, and steer clear of any situations that could have affected my credibility and legitimacy as a researcher.

3.6 Data Analysis

Audio files containing approximately 85 hours of discussions held in French were transcribed by a certified steno typist. Those transcripts were then coded using *N'Vivo* 10 software for Windows to classify, sort and arrange information, and to examine relationships in the data using thematic analysis (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012), and more specifically theoretical thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 58) “[...] where the researcher brings to the data a series of concepts [...] to code and interpret the data.” Thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorize the socio-cultural contexts, and structural conditions, that lead to the individual accounts that are provided. Following Creswell’s (2013) recommendations for phenomenological analysis, “significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (p. 82) were highlighted in the transcripts. The concepts that I used to code the data were derived from the theoretical framework, which means that concepts such as power, influence, strategy, coalitions, alliances, games, etc. were used as coding categories. As codes “can provide a pithy summary of a portion of data” (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 61) or be descriptive of the data, I have chosen to follow that route as I felt this would capture the essence of what research participants shared in the learning sets. In reality, codes are often a mix of the descriptive (what the participants said) and the interpretative (how I think what they said relates to theoretical concepts derived from the framework).

At the beginning of the analysis, the amount of data made it very difficult to sort out what was most relevant, and I ended up with many more descriptive codes than interpretative codes. As I went back to the data with a better grasp of the theoretical framework, it became easier to determine which codes were relevant to my research. Once I had identified a code that would capture the essence of what was said by participants and could be linked to the theoretical framework, I went back to the data to identify the next excerpt to which the code could apply. If it did not, I asked myself if a new code should be generated. As I was progressing, I modified and refined some of the codes that I had established earlier. All in all, I generated 43 different codes which represent first-order concepts (categories of meaning assigned to data). This first cycle of coding was done using *N'Vivo*. I then searched manually for emerging themes among those first-order concepts. At this point, coding gradually shifted to thematic analysis. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question.” (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 63) Similarities and overlap among first-order concepts gave rise to 15 second-order themes which are more abstract (Saldana, 2015). Finally, I was able to aggregate second-order themes into 11 second-order theoretical aggregate dimensions (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012) which can be linked directly to theory. Using concepts from the theoretical framework, it was easier to analyse data and assess convergence among themes (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012) and to come up with second-order theoretical aggregate dimensions.

This entire process can be captured visually in a data structure that “provides a graphic representation of how we progressed from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analyses—a key component of demonstrating rigor in qualitative research” (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012, p. 20) (Figure 7).

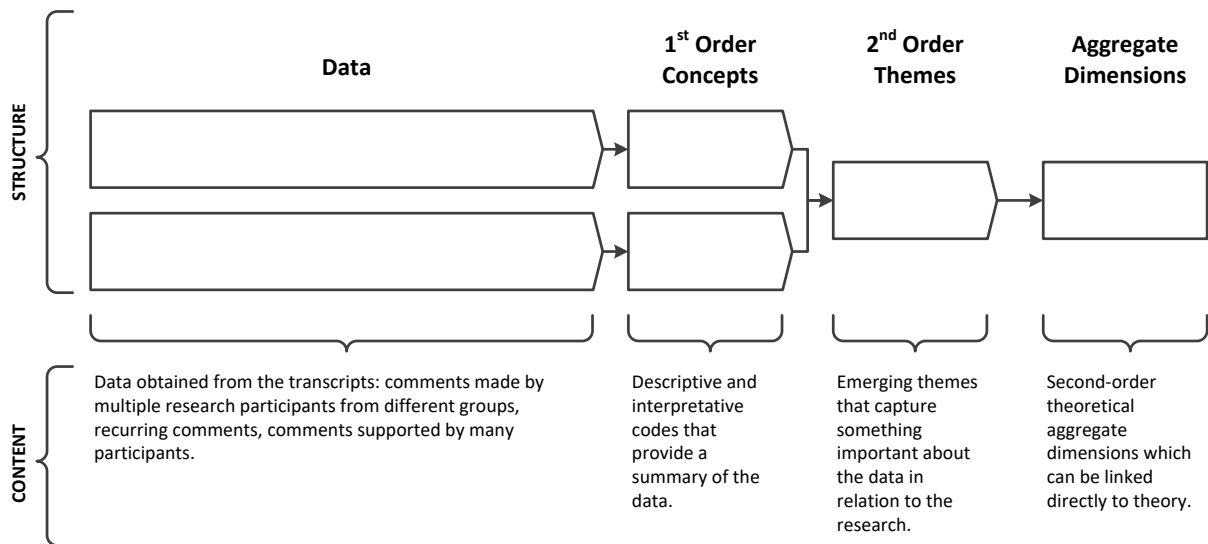


Figure 7: Data Structure (based on Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012)

Convergence of the first order concepts derived from statements and sentences obtained during the meetings was assessed and gave rise to second order themes which described the way participants experienced the phenomenon (change) and the underlying political dynamics. When these second order themes appeared in more than one set, they were aggregated in dimensions that would help to answer the research questions. Thus, through theoretical thematic analysis, common experiences of participants (which gave rise to dimensions) emerged and are discussed in the following chapters. For example, at one point during the first action research cycle, set participants in three groups agreed that a collaborative strategy should have been put forward by management to increase the likelihood of the change succeeding (aggregate dimension). Many comments were made that it is important to convert opponents to the change into allies (second order theme) which management did not do at the onset of the project. To achieve that, set participants argued that being more visible to change recipients, managing relationships with them, acknowledging interdependency and demonstrating that online learning is relevant (first order concepts) constituted the best approach. Figure 8 summarizes data collection and the analysis phase of the research.

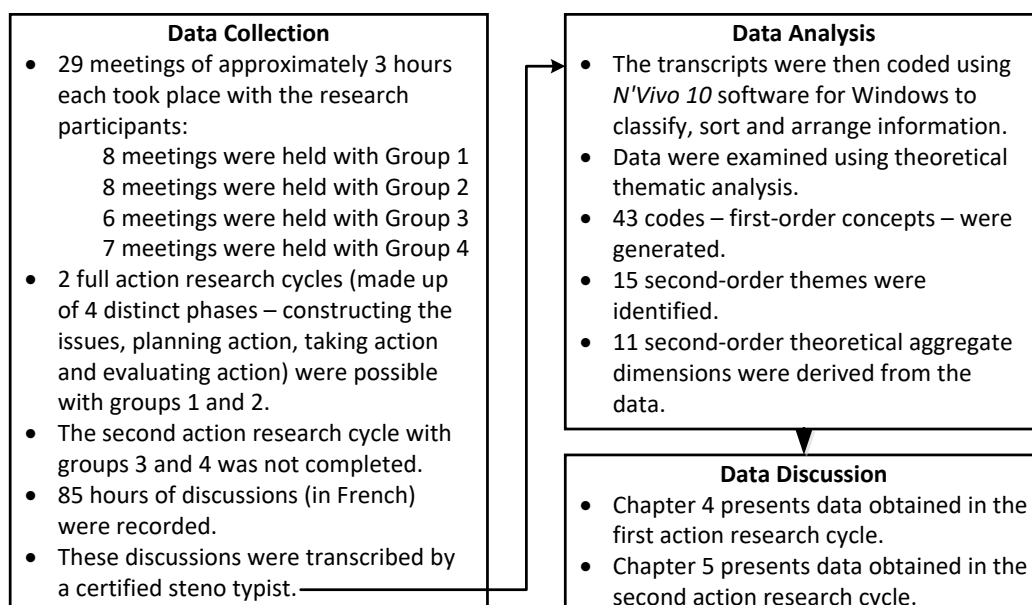


Figure 8: Summary of Data Collection and Analysis

3.7 Ethical Issues

Several ethical issues needed to be addressed in conducting this research: (1) handling potential conflicts that may arise by mixing adopters and resisters; (2) dealing with the risks of discussing political behaviours and inviting participants to see themselves and others as political actors; (3) managing people's unwillingness to disclose information on micropolitical behaviour in the presence of others; and (4) possible Hawthorne effects and other related phenomena.

In addressing the first issue, it was made clear, from the onset and in each of the learning sets, that resistance to change is not necessarily a threat to the change process, but rather an opportunity to engage participants in an open and honest dialogue to address their concerns. Dialogical inquiry taps into the information underlying resistance to change (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). A dialogue with resisters was initiated to "engage [them] in constructing what the issues are" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 9). Thinking about their own assumptions about resistance to change, and challenging them shed light on how underlying "beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, strategies and behaviour" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 18) shaped the non-adoption process.

The second issue was tackled by framing political behaviour as a way to influence others. Influence can be used as a means to promote the change or to oppose it, which then takes the form of resistance strategies that might be totally legitimate. This was accomplished in the initial meetings. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) argue that "it may be that organizational members embrace problems with a sense of loss, wondering about the organization's ability to reach a satisfactory resolution and often preferring to remain somewhat detached and uncommitted" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 54). This accounted, in part, for resisters' reluctance to participate in the change process, and presented an opportunity for me to engage in second-person activities, such as building relationships with them, and "listening well and having a range of ways of interacting with them so that collaborative inquiry and joint action can take place" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 29). This was the purpose of the following meetings. Moreover, framing the issue as an opportunity has given rise to divergent thinking (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010), which supported the problematizing process and opened paths to problem resolution. Second-person activities helped reveal "embedded assumptions" about the change (Palmer and Dunford, 2008). Finally, framing problems through "public reflection" (Raelin, 2001) within the learning sets has helped in exploring claims and assumptions about online learning (Gold, Holman, and Thorpe, 2002).

The third ethical issue posed the most important challenge as people are undoubtedly reluctant to disclose their own micropolitical behaviour when it only serves their interests. Each participant signed a consent form (Appendix B). I addressed ethical issues that have arisen in the learning sets when some set participants seemed to put their own self-interests above organizational interests. Hilsen (2006) argues that "the focus in [action] research should be on the best interests of the other." (p. 28) While remaining truthful and authentic, I aimed to engage faculty members to "work in the best interests of others," and to encourage them to participate actively in the success of online learning implementation by demonstrating that they stand to benefit from the change. The following tasks in the meetings helped to neutralize the negative use of power that might impede the change (Seo, 2003): addressing ethical issues using "critical reflexivity" (Cunliffe, 2004), discussing the determinants of unethical behaviour in the organization (Trevino, 1986), addressing what was perceived to be devious, unethical behaviour (Batten and Swab, 1965; and Gandz and Murray, 1980), and promoting the ethical use of power (Cavanagh, Moberg, and Velasquez, 1981).

As for the last issue, Hawthorne effects and other related phenomena seemed minimal: research shows that consequences of research participation for behaviors being investigated do exist, although little can be known with certainty about the conditions under which they operate, their mechanisms of effects, or their magnitudes (McCambridge, Witton, and Elbourne, 2014).

My ability to manage these issues was influenced by three factors: preunderstanding, role duality, and internal politics. Taking into account these three factors and managing them effectively helped me maintain my position as an insider action researcher within my school. Preunderstanding refers to explicit and tacit knowledge that I have accumulated over the years. I have worked in my organization for over fifteen years, and have acquired tacit knowledge of the organization's culture, norms and traditions (the components of "pervasive" power). My familiarity with the internal political landscape was enhanced through the learning sets. Many adopters engaged in discussions that revealed a much more complex landscape than I had anticipated. I also learned that this landscape was fluid and that certain individuals had more power than others to alter this landscape. This proved useful in preparing questions to pose to set participants.

Role duality refers to my role as both a change agent and an action researcher. Management placed me in charge of managing the change related to the implementation of online learning in my organization, and holds me accountable for this endeavour. My official role is that of a change agent. Conducting research while implementing this change had the potential to create confusion: How would I be perceived by faculty members? Could they become suspicious of my motives? My roles as researcher and change agent overlapped in certain instances (more specifically when interacting with those resisting online learning implementation). As Coghlan and Brannick (2010) recommend, I cultivated role flexibility and permeability, and negotiated stakeholder demands when possible. For example, following the first action research cycle, participants and I agreed that the change had to be conducted bottom-up instead of top-down so that resisters have a voice in how online learning was being implemented. This was a major shift in what I had considered my role to be: to steer the change with the help of resisters and accept that they exert their influence on the change process instead of imposing the views of management. Internal action researchers also "show a high potential for self-destruction, particularly if roles and politics are not managed well" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. xi). Deciphering political agendas and understanding the origins of power struggles initiated by faculty members who, in their roles as "tempered radicals" (Attwood, 2007), could have derailed the project, are actions that I undertook. A clearer understanding of the internal political dynamics, and developing my skills as a "political entrepreneur" (Buchanan and Badham, 2008), including building alliances and negotiating, have allowed me to more effectively address ambivalence in this context (Meyerson and Scully, 1995).

3.8 Limitations

I became aware that, in the action learning cycles, it was sometimes difficult to engage people in discussions about power, and more specifically, about how they used it to achieve personal goals. Power in organizations and political behaviour is often negatively connotated (Buchanan and Badham, 1999). This might explain, at least partially, why some learning set participants were disinclined or unwilling to engage in conversations about power and organizational politics in everyday organizational settings. This poses a major challenge for research on the topic of power and internal politics (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). It may seem paradoxical that organizational members will not engage in discussions about power and politics, as political activity is widely viewed as an important element in understanding organizational change (Demers, 2007). To increase our knowledge of the role that political activity plays in the context of organizational change, one needs to explore how people use their power to engage in political activity, and their underlying motivations (Hardy, 1995).

Waters-Adams (1994, p. 197) considers the imperative to collaborate in action research to be suspect: "[...] although knowledge construction within action research may need collaboration for validity, the same process may also have acted against the likelihood of it happening" as people may be enthusiastic about working together at the onset of action research, and then the action research process may uncover underlying feelings and conflicting views impeding collaboration. This can result in "adverse social processes (e.g., groupthink, intimidation) [that] can undermine true participation" (Kidd and

Kral, 2005, p. 191). Although there are numerous discussions about why collaboration is essential in the action research process, “there is often very little recognition of how it is supposed to develop” (Waters-Adams, 1994, p. 198). I would argue that collaboration does not occur just by putting people together in a group and asking them to discuss what the issues are and how to interpret them; individual needs have to be met in the process: “the need for collaboration [is] intrinsically linked with the [individual] motivation for the inquiry” (p. 199). Wood and Gray (1991, p. 161) support the idea that stakeholders have “to derive some benefit (individual or collective) [that] makes collaboration possible.” Thus, the action researcher has to demonstrate how, through stakeholders’ mutual action, their individual needs and concerns can be met. This imposes on the researcher the necessity to negotiate collaboration with stakeholders by “going step-by-step through a process of negotiating authority, clarifying tasks and roles, and setting boundaries among the group members” (Ospina et al., 2004, p. 49). Therefore, collaboration does not just occur by putting people together and asking them to have a discussion; it is an ongoing negotiation effort that takes work to contribute to creating the conditions for stakeholders’ participation in the action research process.

In terms of meeting stakeholders’ interests in my project, Taylor (2002) has examined the pros and cons of online teaching, and recommends asking reflective questions to assess stakeholders’ interests in the action research process. Answering these questions helped to mitigate faculty members’ opposition to the change. Lack of information about the change and uncertainty may have fuelled their opposition. Some research participants seem to have adopted an avoidance conflict-management style (Meissonier and Houzé, 2010) which may have prevented them seeking pertinent information regarding the change. Engaging faculty members in the action research process by questioning the “salient features of the situation and underlying evidence, the desired outcomes for individuals, teams and the organization (taking into account interlevel dynamics), why these outcomes are desirable, and what actions would deliver these outcomes” (Dick, 2002, cited in Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 78) helped to collectively address the need for change, the desired future and the work to be done. The fact that faculty members did not—yet—have the opportunity to participate in an open dialogue about the change and the desired outcomes may account for their resistance to the change. As Coghlan and Brannick (2010, p. 96) rightly point out: “resistance is a healthy, self-regulating manifestation which must be respected and taken seriously by the action researcher.” This reflects the current theoretical perspective on the topic of resistance (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Ford and Ford, 2010; and Isabella, 1990).

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, my goal was to provide a clear argument about my philosophical stance and the underlying research methodology for the study of micropolitical behaviour in my school. I contend that constructionism can shed some light on how faculty members gain and use their power to influence others in the change brought about by the implementation of online learning. Engaging research subjects in action learning to identify their micropolitical behaviour in their attempts to influence others, and to assess the effectiveness of these attempts would hopefully lead to new mental models to help solve the problem. As for the action research cycles, they would produce actionable knowledge in order to improve the way change is being managed in my school. The methodology is compatible with the approach taken by Crozier and Friedberg to study micropolitical behaviour.

In the following two chapters, I present data which helped to answer questions in Figure 9 on the following page. I have chosen to present the data obtained for each of the four phases of the action research process as it makes it easier to understand how the change was affected by the micropolitical behaviour of the stakeholders. Chapter 4 describes data obtained during the first action research cycle, and Chapter 5, data obtained during the second action research cycle. Using the literature, an analysis of the data is provided at the end of both chapters.

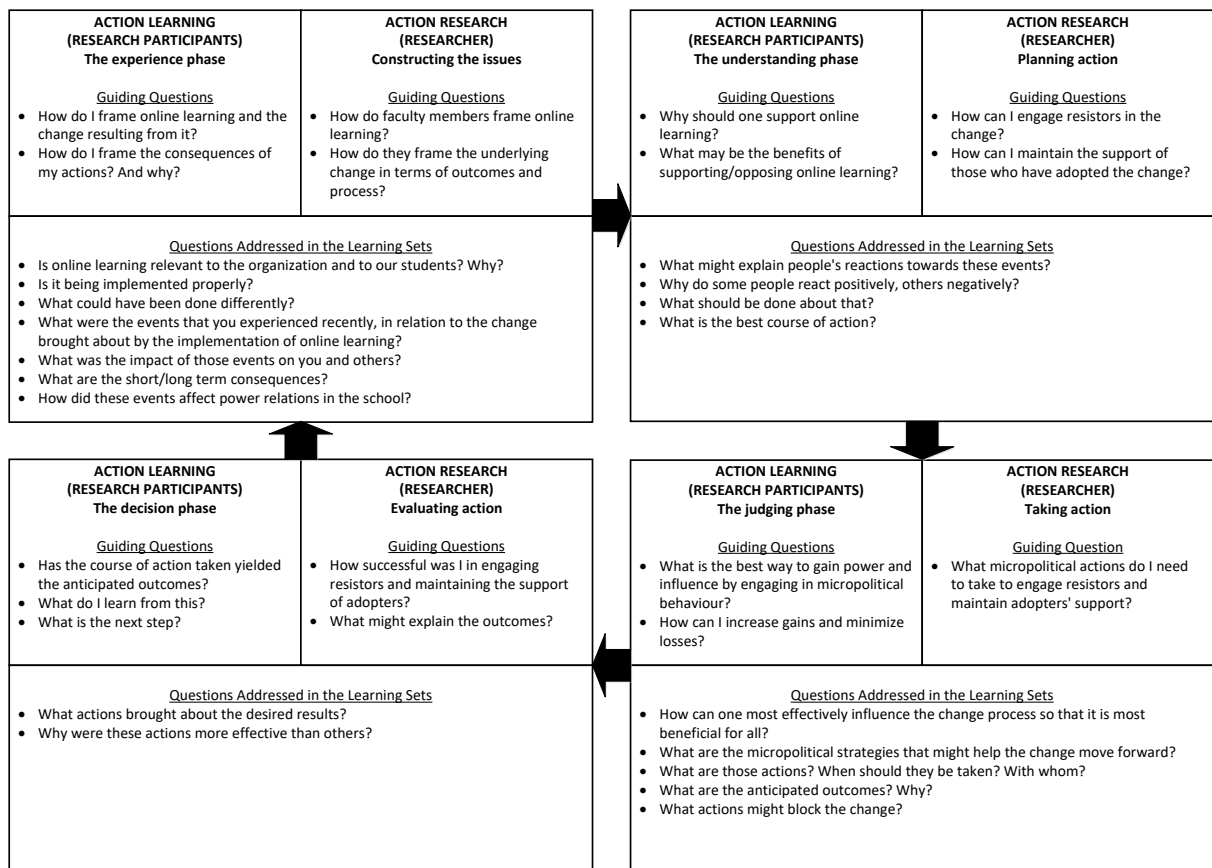


Figure 9: Summary of the Questions Addressed in the Action Learning Process and the Action Research Cycles

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

The first action research cycle began with constructing the issues with faculty members. My goal was to better understand how faculty members framed online learning and the underlying change it entailed. Based on this understanding, I planned to take micropolitical action to engage resisters and maintain adopters' support. I would then evaluate the effectiveness of those actions prior to initiating the following action research cycle. As for action learning, I hoped to help participants determine the current situation (online learning implementation was stalling, opposition was gaining momentum...) and reconstruct "the logic of situations from their experience" (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Helping set participants become aware of how they constructed the issue(s) was the first step in fostering learning. Bounded by their rationality, I encouraged them to expand their understanding of the issues ("Understand"), to assess the effectiveness of their previous micropolitical actions ("Judge") that brought about the current situation, and to decide what should be the next step.

4.1 The First Action Research Phase: Constructing the Issues

In the initial phase of this first action research cycle, I was able to better understand how both adopters and resisters view online learning implementation and the rationale that they put forward to justify their stance. Very early on in the learning sets, the participants addressed the fact that the change was top-down, and that it was the catalyst to all the political activity surrounding it. Adopters quickly framed the change outcomes positively. They argued that the technology would yield positive outcomes mainly for our students. In most of the learning sets, adopters were less vocal than resisters about implementation and the way the change was being managed. They were more inclined to focus on the positive outcomes of the change, without offering any guarantee that those outcomes would materialize (Figure 10).

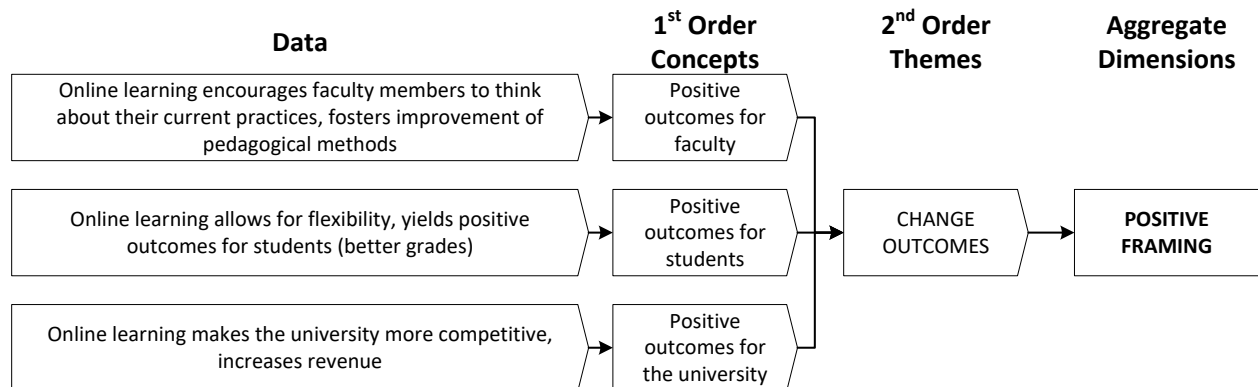


Figure 10: Positive Framing of the Change Outcomes by Adopters

Some of those who framed the project in a more positive light (most of the adopters) apparently engaged in influence tactics to counter the influence attempts of those opposed to the project. They consistently argued that online learning would yield positive outcomes for all groups of stakeholders: faculty members, students and the university. However, at this point in time, their influence attempts did not have much effect on the resisters, who were more forceful in making their point.

There were some early attempts by adopters in the learning sets to cast online learning implementation in a positive light in their efforts to support the change, but the negative view put forward by resisters remained largely overwhelming in each of the four groups, at least at the beginning. Strong adopters highlighted the positive outcomes of online learning implementation. For example, in the fourth group, the adopters took the lead and were the first to speak to outline the

positive consequences of online learning implementation: it has forced them to rethink their pedagogy, it has allowed them more flexibility in interacting (online) with students, grades have gone up, and this has helped the university to become more competitive with other institutions which have already implemented online learning (Comment 4.4.3.1-2). Adopters' comments clearly focussed on the positive impact that online learning can have on all stakeholders, mainly faculty, students and the university as a whole. These attempts can be interpreted as micropolitical behaviour to gather support for the change. The impact of such behaviour was not as strong as the impact of the behaviour that resisters engaged in to oppose the change. Nevertheless, adopters appeared to support the change by constantly stressing the positive outcomes of the change for themselves, for students, and for the university.

Among the positive outcomes for faculty, adopters argued that online learning supports innovation (Comment 4.4.3.1-1) and allows for flexibility (Comment 4.4.3.1-2). Those comments were met with scepticism by strong resisters participating in the meetings: they argued that those outcomes do not benefit everyone, and faculty members are the ones who are the most negatively impacted by this endeavour (Comment 4.4.3.1-3). According to many adopters, although an enhanced learning experience and better grades were among the most important benefits for students, they were unable to provide proof to support their claim. Had they referred to the literature, they would have found compelling data to support their stance. Finally, the obvious benefits for the institution (online learning makes the university more competitive and provides increased revenue) did not have much impact on resisters, who maintained their claim that management was pursuing undisclosed goals in the project. Figure 11 offers a synthesis of the reasons given by resisters to oppose online learning implementation.

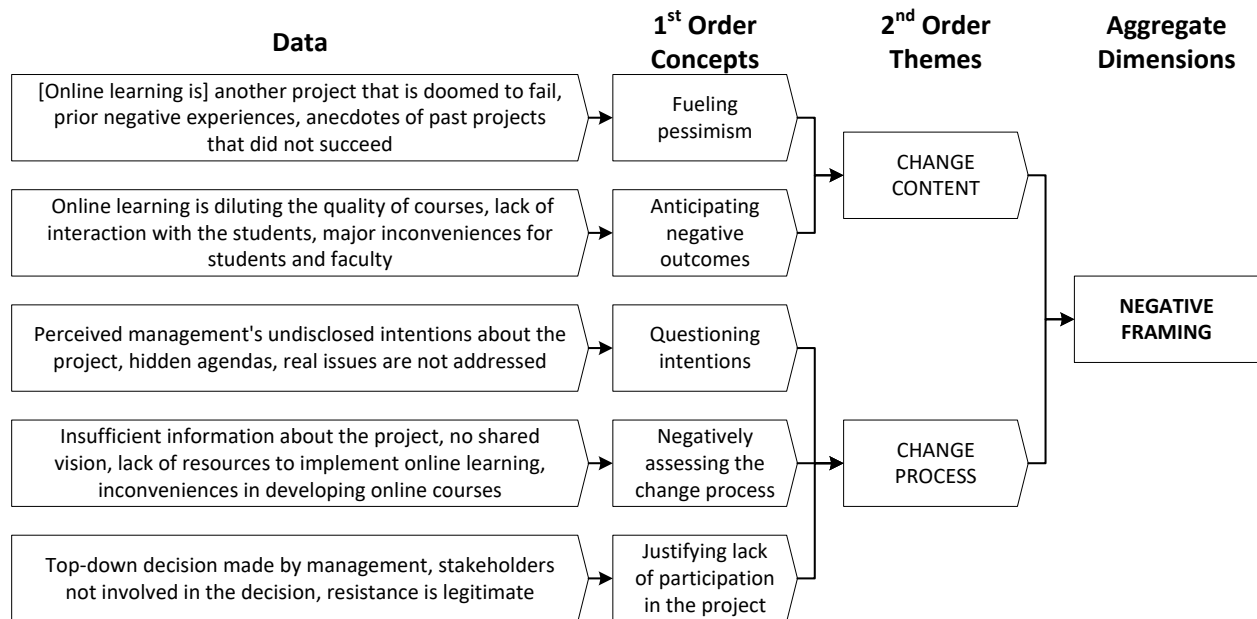


Figure 11: Negative Framing of the Change Content and the Change Process by Resisters

To a certain extent, opposition to change content by resisters was somewhat predictable as management, in their communication efforts to engage faculty members in online learning implementation, kept insisting on the positive outcomes that online learning would bring. Resisters disagreed, some more forcefully than others, and early on framed online learning in a negative way. In what appear to be attempts to generate greater opposition to the project, many resisters resorted to another influence strategy (a “game”) and overtly questioned the change process itself put forward by management. Some resisters would use both strategies to justify their stance against online learning implementation. Resisters framed management’s communication strategy as a “PR exercise” to entice faculty members to participate in the project, and “those gullible enough to do so” (i.e. the

adopters) were being led “to the slaughterhouse” (Comment 4.1.3.1-2). This vocabulary is an example of how intense the opposition of some resisters was towards online learning. To give legitimacy to their stance in challenging the content of the change, resisters engaged in two micropolitical strategies (“games”): fuelling pessimism and anticipating negative outcomes.

Fuelling pessimism

This was mainly a ploy adopted by those who had some kind of previous experience with institutional projects that had failed in the past. They did not trust management as they had witnessed many projects fail despite management’s assurance that those projects would succeed. In their attempt to fuel pessimism, resisters never explicitly addressed the underlying causes of such failures as some of them might have had a role to play in derailing those projects. They forcefully argued that newly hired faculty members should not support online learning implementation and should not blindly follow every project put forward by management: scepticism was in order (Comment 4.1.3.1-1). A strong resister (Participant 3-F) talked about his disastrous experience with online teaching at another university. He had had some previous experience in teaching online and had not appreciated it. Without considering that the technology used in the current project has proven to be much more stable and reliable than that used at the institution where he used to teach, he insisted that online teaching was not for everyone: some like it, some do not; some have the abilities to teach online, and some lack the required abilities. His main argument was that the decision to teach online should be entirely voluntary (Comment 4.3.3.1-3): forcing people to engage in such an endeavour was surely doomed to fail.

These comments (and similar ones) were obvious attempts to influence the less-experienced, newly hired faculty members to get them to oppose online learning implementation. These comments were somewhat deceptive (prior projects that had failed had nothing to do with online learning), but that was never brought up by adopters who were present and who knew that these comments were misleading. When I raised this issue, resisters resorted to another tactic: they couldn’t trust management as they had had “bad” (undisclosed) experiences with them before and were reluctant to engage in “another project that will fail—online learning is just a fad” (Participant 1-E). These comments intensified the lack of trust in management and gave credence to the belief that management had purposefully withheld crucial information from faculty members (Comment 4.1.3.1-2). A common belief among resisters was that management was not credible, and whatever positive outcomes management anticipated from online learning would not happen. The project was doomed to fail, and that would be confirmed when people realized that anticipated positive outcomes would not materialize.

Anticipating Negative Outcomes

The second micropolitical behaviour that resisters engaged in to challenge online learning was to anticipate and predict negative outcomes from online learning implementation. Participant 1-E argued that this project was clearly aimed at reducing the costs of the institution’s functioning in the face of declining public funding, and not really at offering students more flexibility and an enhanced learning experience. When a discussion about personal versus collective outcomes was initiated, resisters consistently put the focus on the negative consequences that online learning would have on others (mostly the students) but not on themselves; for example, Participants 3-D and 3-E mentioned that online learning was diluting the quality of courses offered by the institution:

“One has to agree that to teach online will never be the same as teaching in class... having the possibility of interacting face-to-face with students makes all the difference in the world! This is why students come to school: they want to have the

opportunity to talk to professors... this makes it all worthwhile for them!"
(Participant 3-D) (Comment 4.3.3.1-1)

For the most part, discussions that took place in the learning sets remained largely unfavourable to online learning implementation. If the project was to move forward, nothing positive would come of it. The obvious lack of trust in management might have compelled many resisters to question the way the change was being managed. In what appear to be undisclosed attempts to derail online learning implementation, some resisters challenged the change process itself that was (and is currently) used to implement online learning. In doing so, they used three micropolitical strategies: overtly questioning intentions, negatively assessing the change process, and justifying their lack of participation in the project.

Questioning Intentions

Clearly, many resisters lacked trust in management. This was deepened by the perception that management intentionally withheld information about the project (Comment 4.1.3.1-2), which in turn fuelled resisters' claim that the real issue—and management's undisclosed intention, in the face of declining public funding—was to reduce the costs of the institution's operations by implementing online learning. This strategy of overtly questioning intentions put forward by management to justify their decision to implement online learning, to suggest that management had hidden agendas and was not addressing the "real" issues (i.e. the issues faced by faculty members), appeared to be micropolitical behaviour used by resisters to discredit those who had initiated the project.

Negatively Assessing the Change Process

The argument that management was pursuing undisclosed objectives and had hidden agendas pertaining to online learning implementation was met with scepticism by some as those making these claims had no proof whatsoever. Resisters then quickly resorted to another strategy to challenge the change process by negatively assessing the actions (and mitigating measures, or lack thereof) put forward to implement online learning, and by complaining that all of this was wasting valuable institutional resources:

"The number of hours that I put in my work is already too high: I will never find time to adapt my course material... by the way, why should we get involved? Let younger faculty members take the responsibility for the project. I'll be retired in four years... I don't want to waste the last four years implementing something that others will benefit from..." (Participant 4-F) (Comment 4.4.3.1-3)

"This [the project] is all a waste of resources..." (Participant 4-D) (Comment 4.4.3.1-6)

A common understanding of the importance of having the right information from the beginning to build a shared vision of the project gradually emerged from the discussions in each of the four groups. Management had obviously failed to offer a compelling vision of online learning implementation.

Justifying Lack of Participation in the Project

In the second group, Participant 2-B (an adopter) prompted a discussion about the idea that the decision came from management, and that they expected faculty members to follow the decision, whether they liked it or not. Pressed by other participants to know if Participant 2-B would have actively participated in the project if a colleague had put it forward, she said that she would not have participated because of time issues. Her argument (to comply with the decision) did not have much

impact on other set members. It is in this group that some resisters started to develop an argument to justify their “non-participation” in the project. Because the decision to implement online learning was imposed on them, and the change was being conducted top-down, many resisters felt that their resistance was justified and legitimate. In their attempt to justify their lack of participation in the project, they argued that if they were given an opportunity to question management, they might have agreed to participate; they essentially blamed management for their lack of involvement:

“We would have liked it if management had taken the time to answer some of the questions we have about the project... it still is not clear how many courses will be transformed to be offered online... what is the timeline? What training will we be given...?” (Participant 2-F) (Comment 4.2.3.1-2)

Some argued that the decision to teach online should rest entirely with the individual: top-down managerial decisions to “coerce” people to teach online are bound to be met with resistance. This effort to legitimize resistance appeared to be a recurring tactic that resisters engaged in to derail the project: justifying lack of participation as a way to resist top-down managerial decisions.

In the next phase of the action research cycle, I devised an action plan to engage resisters in online learning implementation and to maintain the support of adopters. I developed the action plan using data from learning sets: adopters were more than willing to share how they tried to gather support for online learning implementation. Using this data, I came up with an action plan that might serve to engage resisters in the project. Also, discussions about failed attempts made by management to get people to participate in online learning implementation taught me what not to do.

4.2 The Second Action Research Phase: Planning Action

In this second phase, my goal was to plan action to engage resisters in the change based on data obtained in the first phase of the action research cycle. Also, I wanted to maintain (and hopefully increase) the support of those who had adopted the change. Finding answers to questions such as “Why should one support online learning? What may be the benefits of supporting/opposing online learning?” would hopefully help find ways to engage resisters.

I developed an action plan that had two goals: discussions during the first phase of the action research cycle in the learning sets showed that adopters were not seeking to gain influence over the change process. They were relatively passive in the context of this top-down change. Management was implementing online learning that adopters felt was beneficial to all stakeholders. Adopters might not have felt the need to gain power and exert influence as management was “taking care of business.” Consequently, the first goal was to plan action so that adopters gain power and actively influence the change process. The second goal of the action plan was to “sell the change” to resisters. It appeared that they did not have much influence over the change process, and were trying to gain power to actively influence the change process and derail it. Before they gained too much power, I was hoping to engage them in the change. I needed to find ways to get them to reframe online learning in a more positive way. Extensive discussions in the learning sets offered some cues on how to do that. For instance, data obtained provided information about how faculty members made sense of the actions taken by management to implement online learning, which would prove helpful in formulating a narrative to counteract the efforts made by resisters to generate opposition to the change.

Management (and, to a lesser extent, adopters) had engaged in micropolitical behaviour to generate support for the change, and resisters tried to generate opposition to the change, both in an apparent attempt to bring together the largest number of adopters/resisters to facilitate/impede online learning implementation. Aggregated data from the learning sets show that adopters relied on five different micropolitical strategies to support their narrative (Figure 12), and resisters, on two (Figure 13).

Using some of those strategies put forward by adopters might help me more effectively engage faculty members who were not participating in the learning sets.

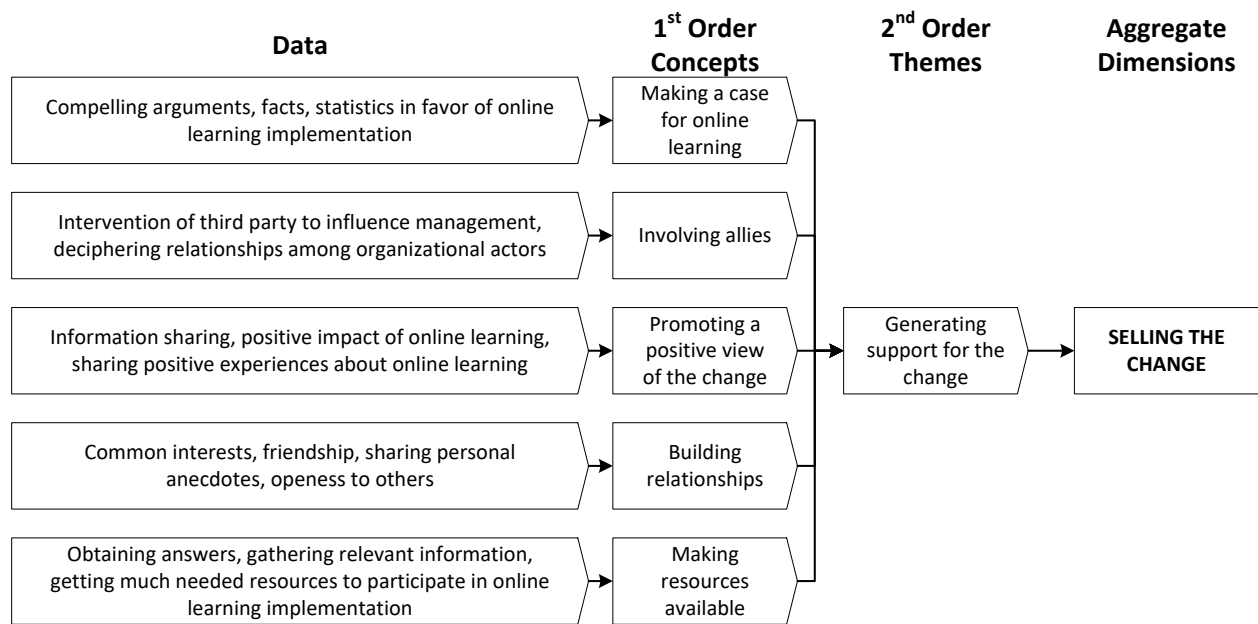


Figure 12: Micropolitical Strategies for Selling the Change

Indeed, adopters apparently engaged in several micropolitical games to generate support for the change in their effort to “sell” the change to many people as possible:

Making a Case for Online Learning

Challenging the various interpretations about online learning appeared to be one way to convince others to participate in this endeavour. Strong adopters were the ones who initiated these discussions, mostly in the first and second group of participants, in their efforts to offer a different perspective on online learning. These rhetorical attempts to influence other set members (mostly resisters) were not very successful as resisters had already framed the project as certain to fail. In a way, resisters were successful in “contaminating” the discourse about online learning implementation. For instance, adopters tried making a case for online learning through compelling arguments; this was useful in generating some support for the project, which quickly faded as the project moved forward. For example, Participants 1-A and 1-C shared the information they had gathered about the project: they had met with management the week before, and they provided other set members statistical data showing a growing interest in online learning among the institution’s students. (These data were based on the 2009 survey on students’ perceptions of online learning, and their intention to enrol in such courses.) I was asked to validate those statistics, which I did. Participants agreed that those numbers were compelling (over 88% of those surveyed mentioned that they would enrol in online courses if they had the chance), and a shift in the group dynamics took place. For instance, Participants 1-A and 1-B took the lead and reframed the issue of online learning implementation in a much more positive way than in the first meeting, although they were already adopters of online learning.

Involving Allies

This event changed the group dynamics which became much more positive, temporarily at least. A discussion followed about ways that “tempered radicals” (organizational members who want to change the system from inside – Meyerson and Scully, 1995) might exert influence to attain both their goals and the organization’s goals as well.

Participant 1-C volunteered to meet with management to share the set's concerns about the implementation of online learning: since she has experience within the institution, and a good reputation, set members decided that this would be the first step towards gaining access to management about this change that was imposed on them. These discussions about micropolitical strategy are illustrative of how behaviour can be interpreted as influence attempts and power plays. The ability to reach out to others to gather information and obtain access to much needed resources in order to actively participate in online learning implementation was interpreted as an effective micropolitical game involving allies:

“We met with Mr. X who was more than willing to answer our questions... Despite the fact that the project has met with so much resistance, he is very optimistic that it will succeed. He provided us with lots of info that we did not have before...”
(Participant 2-A) (Comment 4.2.3.2-1)

Allies (adopters) were helpful in building a common vision of the change, mostly in the second group of participants, and planned to engage faculty members less willing to participate in the project by sharing with them the information they had obtained:

“We should go out there and let others know about this... we will need to work with them... I have two colleagues who will be teaching the course next year. They are not willing to participate in the project... not yet. They obviously don't have this information, and management has done a lousy job of sharing information with them... if they learn what we know, they will most certainly agree to participate in online learning implementation...” (Participant 2-B) (Comment 4.2.3.2-3)

A few adopters agreed that they would talk to their most reluctant colleagues about the project, and share what they had learned from management, in their attempts to garner support for online learning implementation and come up with a shared vision of the project. There was agreement among learning sets that developing alliances can serve to increase one's own power and influence; allies can provide information that may help frame the issue differently, which might assist in determining the most appropriate course of action. Also, information is power, as Participant 2-B mentioned, and adopters can share it to get others to support a project, and to actively participate. Those who are most vocal against a project have to be heard in order to influence them to change their stance.

Promoting a Positive View of the Change

Promoting a positive view of the change was another micropolitical behaviour to gather support for online learning implementation used by quite a few adopters: when asked why they had agreed to participate in online learning implementation, Participants 3-A and 3-B responded as follows:

“I think it is a great learning experience: getting to know how to use the technology, getting some advice about how we can improve our teaching techniques... this has proven to be quite worthwhile.” (Participant 3-A) (Comment 4.3.3.2-1)

“Not to mention the flexibility that online teaching permits: I can teach from home, in my basement, without having to take the car and drive to the university... I know a colleague from [another university] that gives talks on the benefits of online teaching: we should invite him...” (Participant 3-B) (Comment 4.3.3.2-2)

Many adopters felt that management had not devoted much energy to promoting the project, and that left considerable opportunity for resisters to impose their views on others. In their efforts to make their case for online learning, adopters had no counterarguments to offer to those opposed to the project. For many adopters, the next steps would be “to go out there and promote online learning.”

Building Relationships

Discussions about ways to obtain much needed resources that could be shared with resisters to get them to participate in online learning clearly indicated that the ability to decipher and build relationships with powerful organizational actors, and to use this “map” to influence the right people, was a valuable micropolitical skill that many adopters planned to use. Ideas such as including colleagues and other departments in supporting the strategy, and involving outsiders, like consultants, to gain credibility, were mentioned in some of the sets. Some adopters had a lot of experience in dealing politically with management, as they focused more on relationship building with members of management rather than on defending a particular political position.

Making Resources Available

The approach of modulating relationships to increase one’s impact on others in order to obtain resources met everyone’s approval in the sets. Others argued that to obtain additional resources, one needs to identify people, both within the institution and outside, who have access to those controlling the resources. Getting allies with good reputations to set the stage for further discussions with management can be fruitful in problem resolution. Set participants discussed other approaches, such as formal committees and task forces, as ways to exert pressure on those who control the resources so that they make those resources available, which could be interpreted as a micropolitical game. Again, participants agreed that relationship building is important, and those relationships would last if and only if trust existed among people; trust was seen as essential to get others to do what is asked of them. Two participants in the learning set volunteered to meet the person who controls financial resources in the school in an attempt to obtain additional resources for online learning implementation.

Participants discussed the idea that one’s opposition to online learning implementation can be legitimate and justified, prompting the resisters to acknowledge that they might be “radical” in their approach to resisting online learning implementation. Since opposition to online learning implementation could be legitimate, opening up a discussion with management to inform them about resisters’ potential concerns could prove to be the best short-term approach. Also, proactively seeking information to understand the issues might foster the idea that management was an ally. Meeting with management would help to understand their points of view. Adopters could become active proponents of online learning by influencing those who oppose change in an effort to build a common vision that benefits all. Coming together and working toward a common goal could increase one’s own influence; this common goal might be to help the project succeed, or to derail it. Participants agreed that building and sustaining trustworthy relationships with those who have a wide internal network of people was an effective strategy to gain access to those who controlled organizational resources.

Resisters, for their part, used two strategies to get adopters to oppose online learning: referring to views of “unbiased” experts, and justifying their opposition to the change (Figure 13):

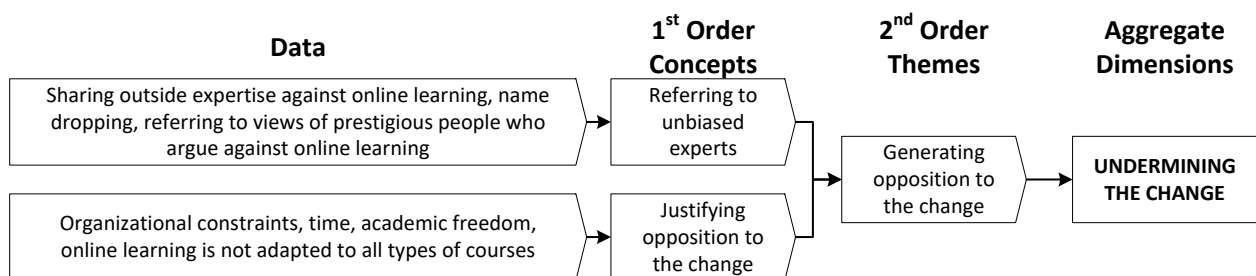


Figure 13: Micropolitical Strategies for Undermining the Change

Referring to Unbiased Experts

During set meetings, many attempts were made by resisters to convince other less reluctant faculty members to refrain from participating in online learning implementation as, from their perspective, the entire endeavour “was doomed to fail.” As such, they acknowledged that they exerted their power to influence others’ actions with respect to online learning. Thus, in a university setting, it is not surprising that many resisters would refer to views of outside experts who are deemed unbiased, and whose stance against online learning appears to be well founded:

“It’s time-consuming... with all the research and writing that we’re asked to do, how can one find time to adapt course materials to teach online? Mr. X [a renowned expert in management] thinks that university professors should not get involved in such endeavours that take them away from their research.” (Participant 3-D)
(Comment 4.3.3.2-3)

The perceived effectiveness of this micropolitical strategy was discussed among all four groups of participants and having influential and/or prestigious references was considered effective as long as “those experts we are referring to are well-known and have some kind of credibility within the academic community” (Comments 4.3.3.2-3/4/5). According to many resisters, this micropolitical behaviour was often not sufficient to increase opposition to the change.

Justifying Opposition to the Change

A certain number of resisters reminded other set members (and faculty members not involved in the research) of the reasons they were not participating in the project. For example, Participants 3-D, 3-E, and 3-F (all of them resisters) constantly shared their grievances about online learning implementation: the fact that they were not consulted prior to the implementation, that the choice to adapt certain courses for online delivery seemed arbitrary, that the resources to help faculty members participate in online learning implementation were not clearly described nor made available, and that the implementation schedule seemed unrealistic, were among some of the concerns voiced by faculty members opposed to the change. This appeared to be a deliberate use of a tactic to convince others through repetitive (although not always convincing) arguments. When I asked the question: “What are some of the more pressing issues that should be addressed,” I was met with comments such as: “There is nothing we can do...,” “Management has already made its decision...,” “Resisting is futile... we should just do what we’re asked to do, that’s it...” The prevalent feeling emerging among set participants was that they were powerless to solve some of the issues surrounding online learning implementation.

The resisters who chose to expose their grievances about the project and argued that their opposition was legitimate were in fact engaged in an attempt to convince others to oppose the project. The fact that management did not consult them, and that decisions seemed arbitrary (from their standpoint) justified their opposition. Despite adopters sharing their favourable opinions about the project (Comments 4.3.3.2-1 and 4.3.3.2-2), resisters insisted that their losses were still greater than potential gains. Since the implementation of online learning was imposed on faculty members, management should have devised a plan to convince resisters to adopt online teaching.

The next phase of the action research cycle would be an opportunity to test some of the micropolitical games (change the narrative, fuel optimism, insist on collective and personal gains that the change entailed, get management to clarify their intentions, and involve resisters in the change process) in two different settings: within the learning sets in an attempt to steer the dynamics among set members so that resisters become less opposed to online learning, and with other faculty members not involved in the research, but who were opposing online learning implementation.

4.3 The Third Phase: Taking Action

At this point in the research, it was becoming clear that the actions in the previous phase were the ones I needed to take in order to engage resisters and maintain adopters' support. Those actions would clearly be political in nature as they would help set participants answer the following questions: "What is the best way to gain power and influence by engaging in micropolitical behaviour? How can I increase gains and minimize losses that the change entails?"

The third phase of the action research process was useful in taking action to change the narrative, to fuel optimism, to insist on collective and personal gains that the change entailed, to get management to clarify their intentions, and to involve resisters in the change process. At the beginning of each learning set meeting, I would promote a positive narrative about online learning implementation. Adopters (who had become allies) would quickly join in to do the same. Instead of letting resisters impose their point of view, adopters would take the lead. My hope was that this would empower passive adopters to become active supporters of the change as they felt more confident in being part of a guiding coalition. Also, taking action to sell the change to strong resisters who might have felt that they were losing ground and becoming less powerful was necessary as they were confronting management whom they framed as opponents.

The positive narrative put forward by adopters promoted optimism about the change, even if some strong resisters accused us of being overly optimistic. Many comments were made about people feeling more empowered, even more so when, in the context of learning set meetings, it became possible to address the change process itself without having to deal with the negativity of some strong resisters. Figure 14 presents the aggregate data obtained in the learning sets.

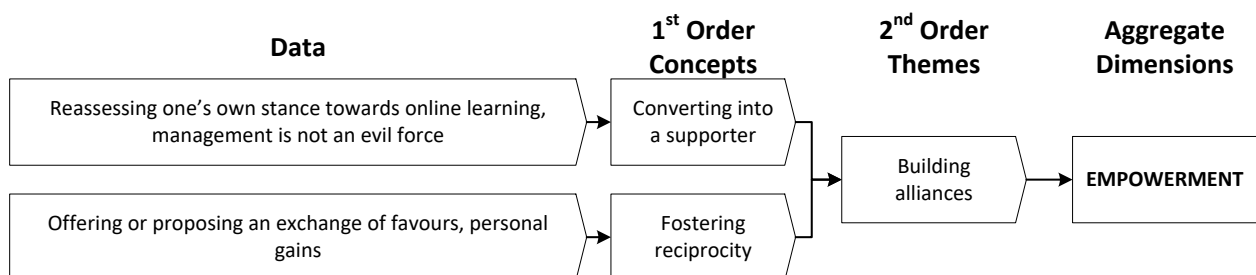


Figure 14: Empowering Adopters (Allies) to Influence Resisters

Converting into a Supporter

Resisters in each of the four groups appeared to be more willing to allow the adopters to share their experience with online learning, which led some resisters to reassess the reasons underlying their opposition to the project. To some extent, adopters had some kind of influence that they used, intentionally or not, to convince resisters to change their stance. Some resisters were gradually becoming allies to adopters and were more willing to support the change. Some adopters used the tactic of demonstrating the feasibility and relevance of online learning that I myself used with some resisters in other sets. Participants discussed ways to persuade someone to change their position and to convert into a supporter of the change and concluded that adopters could build alliances and gather support for the change. However, the idea that management was really an "ally" in helping faculty members meet their goals, as Participant 1-C put forward:

"We need to stop seeing management as the 'evil force'... they make decisions that are in the interest of everyone..." (Participant 1-C) (Comment 4.1.3.3-2)

was met with scepticism by resisters, but at least engaged them in a dialogue about the goals that management was pursuing in this project, and those that other faculty members, not involved in the research, might have. It became obvious that, whether to support or oppose the change, building alliances was crucial, both for those impacted by the change, and for management. The more allies a person could count on, the more influence that person had in determining what the outcomes of the change should be, and how management should conduct the change.

Influencing someone to reassess their stance towards online learning might take many forms, all of which participants addressed and assessed in the learning sets. They claimed that compelling those with an opposing perspective to change their minds by using arguments and information that directly challenge their ideas is the most common strategy that people use when implementing change. This micropolitical behaviour was assessed as risky: watch out for opponents' reactions to the arguments presented to them as they could retaliate and find more powerful counterarguments to neutralize initial arguments. A participant referred to this as akin to experts with opposing views who argue in front of a judge. To lower the risk, "when you make an argument [to convince others that the change is worthwhile, and that they should get involved themselves], always be well-prepared to analyse, explain, demonstrate, prove and reason rationally with allies [those with whom you share the same goals] whose support you are soliciting."

Fostering Reciprocity

Many set members agreed that it is much easier to build alliances when others believe that their allies are competent and can make a strong case for or against online learning. However, for the alliance to be effective and to last, allies need to foster reciprocity:

"My colleague X feels that management must clarify their expectations. I agree. They did a lousy job in communicating with us... he thinks, as I do, that management should own up to their mistake and suggest a solution or, better still, alternative acceptable solutions to all of us who are not convinced, and provide sufficient resources... then I might reconsider..." (Participant 2-F) (Comment 4.2.3.3-1)

Participants agreed that reciprocity is the basis of any successful alliance between two people: the success of any effort to build alliances will depend on the benefits that allies can reap by engaging in and maintaining an alliance. Also, allies need to know why others solicit their participation in online learning: they will be more willing to help if the reasons are valid and ensure personal gains and/or allow them to avoid personal losses. Finding allies who have influence and who are able to contribute to the change (or to act against it) is one of the best tactics to gain influence in the context of the change, according to many participants. Explaining how the goal can have a positive impact on a person's career, reputation or performance, and the gains that allies are likely to reap from the change, as long as these gains are feasible, can help establish a lasting alliance with another organizational actor. As one participant put it: "You need to know whom you are dependent upon to achieve your goals, and who depends on you. When you know that, then you know with whom reciprocity is possible."

Fostering reciprocity supposes that trust is well established between allies, and that they are willing to engage in a relationship in which they share resources and information. Sharing information might not be sufficient, though, to gain the support of those opposed to the change and convert them into allies, as some set participants experienced (Comment 4.2.3.3-1). Lack of trust in management, which has prevailed from the beginning of the project, might fuel resistance to becoming management's ally. A great number of set members, resisters and adopters alike, felt they needed to be involved in upcoming management decisions about online learning implementation, in other words, to be treated as allies.

If not, then some might become more or less active “opponents” to management and resisters to online learning implementation. These discussions about the best course of action to take in that instance led to an assessment of ways to deal with implicit or explicit opposition.

At the onset of online learning implementation, a few set participants had tried to obtain additional resources from management to handle the change but were not successful for reasons that seemed unclear to them. This crystallized the perception that management was hiding something and was uninterested in hearing about the resisters’ real concerns (Comment 4.4.3.3-1). In other words, management was not an ally, and was not interested in becoming one. A more confrontational strategy with management would have to be adopted to compel them to consider issues faculty members are facing. “Let’s brainstorm about some of the ways to get management to address your issues...,” I suggested in one meeting. The discussions that followed were characterized by an overall feeling of powerlessness: “There is nothing we can do...,” “We don’t have the leverage to change the situation to our advantage...,” “If only we had additional resources...” This apathy, revealed mainly by Participants 4-A and 4-B, was argued against by resisters who proposed a more forceful approach. They quickly jumped in to complain about the non-receptivity of management, that they were not interested in hearing about faculty members’ issues, and that that was just a repetition of past situations. Some argued that the best course of action would be to try to convince the most reluctant representatives of management one-by-one in private, while recognizing their contribution in public (Comment 4.4.3.2-2/3). The rationale for using this tactic, according to some adopters who felt that their contribution to the project was not fully recognized, was that

“because they risk losing face, management representatives will not let themselves be convinced in public, in front of a crowd; convincing them in private and then acknowledging their contribution in public carries a powerful message about our ability to convince them without holding them to account for their initial reluctance to consider us as significant allies. Never hold a grudge.”

Others argued differently, and suggested meeting with management to create obligations, extract promises, and make them accountable in public (Comment 4.2.3.3-3). It was pointed out that publicly compelling a person to accept concessions involves risks. It must be done with care: it is never about “settling a score” (Participant 4-C).

Despite putting forward a positive narrative to fuel optimism, insisting on collective and personal gains, clarifying management’s intentions and involving resisters in the change process, some strong (active) resisters adopted a more confrontational stance. They engaged in what I called “active resistance” (Figure 15).

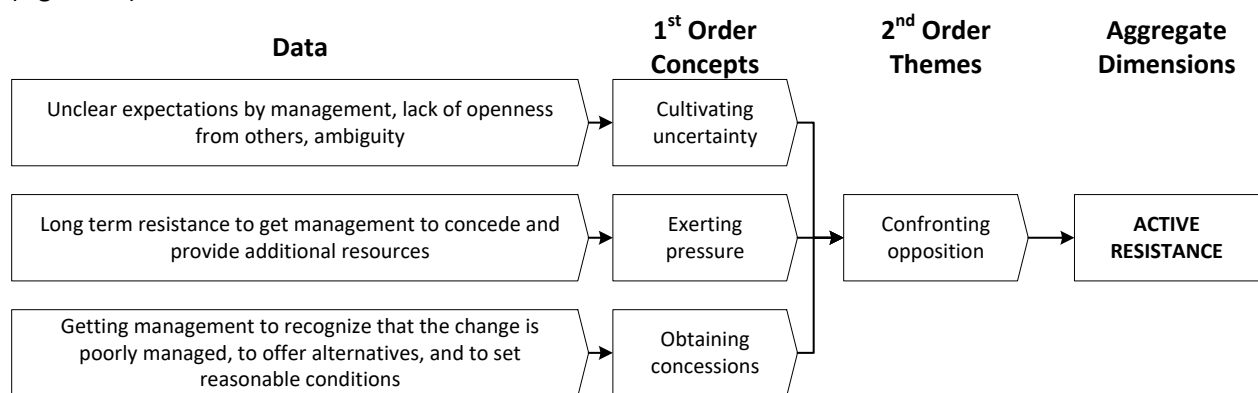


Figure 15: Active Resistance

Despite some attempts to rally active resisters (for example, some adopters opted for a more positive approach to impress resisters: “The point is not to quash the opposition but to rally it. Positive and courteous behaviour is essential,” Participant 4-F, Comment 4.4.3.2-4), we did not succeed. Resisters argued that a more forceful approach with management would yield better results: “Oppose, protest, play devil’s advocate; let’s confront them without delay, and attack their ideas and positions” (Comments 4.1.3.3-2, 4.3.4.1-3). The idea, according to them, was to compel management by using arguments and information that directly challenged their ideas: “I’m right, you’re wrong!”

Cultivating Uncertainty

Resisters accused management of cultivating uncertainty in the project so that they would not have to commit to provide the resources that resisters were seeking; in one instance, a meeting took place between management and two resisters, and the feeling was that management was intentionally vague about many aspects of the project:

“The meeting didn’t go all that well... Mr. X was not very receptive... I’m surprised that he was not open to hearing our arguments: I know him well, and his attitude at the meeting is something that I have not seen before... he must be under a lot of pressure at the moment. My feeling is that he did not inform the other members that he was meeting with us, so he could not commit to anything...” (Participant 4-A) (Comment 4.4.3.3-1)

“That’s my feeling too... His answers were evasive, and he did not provide any clear answers to our questions...” (Participant 4-B) (Comment 4.4.3.3-2)

If management was intentionally cultivating uncertainty, then resisters could resort to the same tactic to counteract management’s so-called “undisclosed intentions:” not participating in meetings, being discreet about one’s position on online learning, and not volunteering information were some tactics that might generate uncertainty and influence management to soften their position towards online learning. However, the effectiveness of such tactics was difficult to assess. As one participant pointed out, if someone is not participating in meetings, does not share their opinion on online learning with management, and does not volunteer information when asked, they could be perceived as being disengaged or unmotivated, and not necessarily as actively (and politically) opposing the change.

Exerting Pressure

Set participants assessed resistance as one way to exert pressure upwards, and to force management to involve faculty members in the decision-making process about online learning implementation (Comment 4.2.3.3-3); this would constrain management to revise their strategy and find other (more constructive) ways to manage the change. This strategy might have yielded positive results as long as those resisting the change and exerting pressure were instrumental in online learning implementation: “Powerless resisters have no effect whatsoever in compelling management to change their decision” (Participant 2-D). Some resisters argued that they were already exerting pressure on management, but to no avail: were they in fact perceived by management as powerless actors? Was their most effective strategy to gain power in the first place and then exert pressure on management? Online learning implementation was moving forward, and the consequences for resisters were intensifying. A few strong resisters (in the fourth group) argued that resisters should only exert pressure when it is possible to obtain something in exchange.

Obtaining Concessions

Getting management to recognize that the change is poorly managed (from the resisters' point of view) was discussed and could serve to negotiate an alliance. This course of action was assessed as promising, as long as management was trustworthy, which was not perceived to be the case. Negotiating mitigating measures might be the most that resisters could obtain from engaging in negotiations with management.

At this point, I considered soliciting management so that they could, once again, clarify their intentions, provide information and exhibit some of the tactics based on my notes in the previous section of the action research process. Unfortunately, I was not successful in getting management representatives to come and address active resisters' concerns in the learning sets. Management was apprehensive about the reactions of resisters. This was a clear demonstration that a few strong resisters had indeed acquired power and influence, enough to discourage management from meeting with them and addressing the more pressing issues regarding online learning implementation.

4.4 The Fourth Action Research Phase: Evaluating Action

The last phase would help to assess actions taken in the previous phase: How successful was I in engaging resisters and maintaining the support of adopters? What might explain the outcomes? How did set participants assess their actions? In the previous phases of the action research process, I was hoping to help adopters gain influence and become active supporters of the change in order to initiate a bottom-up change. Being aware that resisters were becoming more powerful by engaging in active resistance, I was able to gain influence, but not enough to weaken active resisters; some of them engaged in an adversarial dynamic with management as adopters unsuccessfully tried to convert them into allies (Figure 16).

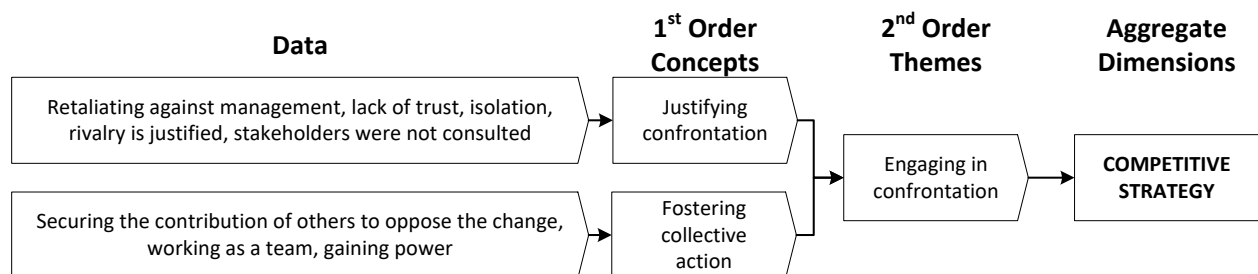


Figure 16: Competitive Political Strategy

Confrontation with management was a strategy proposed by strong resisters, mainly in the fourth group. They argued that this was the only remaining option to induce management to change their stance on online learning implementation because management had turned a deaf ear to the concerns they had voiced repeatedly in the past. Listening to their explanations, it became clear that their opposition was based mainly on the fact that they were not consulted and felt left out of the entire process. When asked what management should have done to avoid confrontation, resisters argued that soliciting their opinions and suggestions would have confirmed that they had some kind of relevance to the process: "Opponents' rivalry is often legitimate; asking them to express it can provide new and previously unknown information, which could be relevant to the change. This demonstrates that you are ready to listen to opponents and to acknowledge their point of view, as long as this is perceived as genuine: if you ask for their point of view without any intention of taking it into account, this behaviour may increase rivalry instead" (Comments 4.3.3.4-1/2/3/4). This comment highlighted the fact that opposition to a project can indeed be legitimate, and those in opposition are sometimes able to justify their position in a compelling fashion.

Justifying Confrontation

Gaining power and influence in order to get their voices heard by management was a prevalent micropolitical strategic game suggested by set members, specifically those in the third and fourth group in which resisters outnumbered adopters. Confronting management was deemed legitimate and justified on the basis of the actions that management had taken from the onset of the project. I then asked a different question: “How might those actions be effective in getting what you are hoping for?” Answers were quite revealing:

“When you have power, people have no choice but to come up to you and ask you for advice: they acknowledge that without your input, things cannot move forward. When you don’t have any power, people tend to isolate you; they’re not interested in hearing about your concerns.” (Participant 3-D) (Comment 4.3.3.4-4)

“Power is in the eye of the beholder... you might think that you have power, but others don’t necessarily see things the same way... We need to show [management] how the project impacts us and others in a negative way, and that they [management] need our contribution if the project is to succeed—this is how you gain respect: retaliation!” (Participant 3-E) (Comment 4.3.3.4-5)

“We should be more forceful in letting others [management] know that they depended on us for the project’s success... we waited for them to come to us: we should have imposed ourselves on them.” (Participant 3-C) (Comment 4.3.3.4-6)

Most resisters believed that confrontation was justified, and that it was their only possible course of action, regardless of the consequences of this strategy. I tried to steer the discussions around alternative ways to deal with management, but to no avail: strong resisters had taken the lead, and would confront management who, in their minds, bear sole responsibility for this because of their failure to consult and include all stakeholders in online learning implementation. Set members agreed that confrontation would be most effective if done in groups, rather than on an individual basis.

Fostering Collective Action

Fostering collective action to gain power and influence and using it to confront management (the opposition) was assessed as a useful political tactic to use prior to confronting management. Confrontation is more effective when many participate; however, this may incur some undesirable consequences:

“There is also the sacred principle of academic freedom... I was talking to X [Participant 2-F] yesterday, and we felt that imposing decisions on us goes against academic freedom... management is all for money; they don’t care about us. If we are too forceful in our attempts to oppose online learning, I’m pretty sure that management might impose conditions on funding for our research.” (Participant 3-F) (Comment 4.3.3.4-8)

Strong resisters tried very hard to minimize the consequences that would come out of their confrontational strategy with management, but some (weak) resisters confided to me in private that they saw that as an influence tactic to engage them in confrontation with management. It became obvious that some resisters who led the charge against management did not have much credibility from the point of view of other resisters. When participants addressed that openly, there was a shift of perspective in the learning sets, and discussions about ways to convince management to become allies ensued. This led to a more positive outlook on the change and to the possibility that management might become more receptive to resisters’ demands (Figure 17):

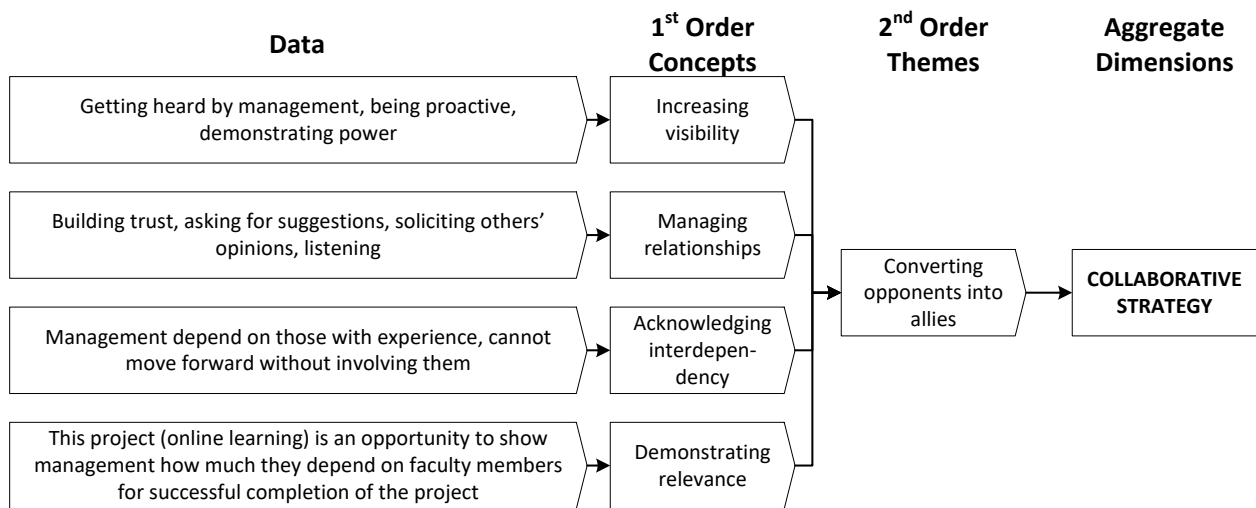


Figure 17: Collaborative Political Strategy

Increasing Visibility

With the shift (mostly in the first and second group of participants), adopters became more vocal (they apparently felt more powerful being part of a coalition) and changed the conversation; they claimed that adopting a more constructive strategy with management would yield better results than adopting a confrontational stance. Most resisters disagreed but did not offer any compelling argument to support their point of view. Adopters suggested that they should meet with management and convey the concerns of the resisters about online learning implementation. Some of them had already tested this tactic in the past, and were hopeful that it would work in the current context. Adopters appeared to be much more optimistic about the effectiveness of this approach than strong resisters who decided to move ahead with their confrontational strategy. Participants agreed that the consequences of using a more confrontational strategy and an alliance-based strategy would be assessed in upcoming meetings.

Becoming more visible to management, meeting with them on a regular basis, being proactive, was perhaps a course of action that would bring positive results, according to adopters. They agreed to come up with an action plan to communicate to management some of the comments made by the most resistant faculty members, but without divulging names. The overarching feeling was that it would be important to share any kind of information with management to help them better administer this change. It was generally agreed that the change was poorly handled by management from the beginning, but many were convinced that the project could still yield positive outputs for both the students and the institution.

Managing Relationships

In all four groups, discussions evolved around the best course of action to build alliances with management. Some felt that the most influential members of management should be contacted and made aware of the concerns of the resisters; others argued that all members of management should be informed, whatever their roles. A set participant already knew one member of management (a former colleague) and volunteered to talk to him privately to get some feedback about the best "strategy" to put in place to build alliances with management. Others disagreed, arguing that the information could be leaked to other management members who are less inclined to build alliances with faculty members, especially with those with a reputation for being strong resisters; this might make some members of management become more defensive:

“If they [management] become aware of this information, they’ll freak out and retaliate... some of them have been on the defensive from the start, and this has increased in the face of all this opposition to the project...” (Participant 2-D) (Comment 4.2.3.4-1)

Whatever the course of action, both adopters and resisters agreed that building and maintaining trust with management would be crucial for the successful implementation of online learning. That called for acknowledging interdependency.

Acknowledging Interdependency

Participants agreed that developing relationships with management in a proactive manner and managing those relationships as the project evolved constituted an important micropolitical strategy. Resisters argued that the effectiveness of this particular political strategy could only be assessed once the strategy had been deployed. There was no way to predict how management would react to adopters’ influence attempts. Adopters agreed but being accessible to people considered allies and fostering a constructive relationship with them create opportunities for reciprocity: “securing senior management’s support by actively participating in online learning implementation and asking them to reward people for their support in return” (Comment 4.1.3.4-1) is a good example of a reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, “senior management has structural power; having allies in senior management is a very effective way of gaining power and influence” (Comment 4.4.3.4-1). As another participant put it: “Having strong allies only makes you stronger.”

Building alliances, especially with those with differing perspectives about online learning, might take some time. One participant suggested that building alliances with resisters might be the first step to take, and recommended the following to fellow adopters: “Take small steps; for example, propose an idea and then come back to it several times; persevere to gradually engage new allies in moving the change forward” (Comment 4.1.4.1-4). Others added, in situations in which powerful allies’ support is solicited to influence other, less powerful resisters: “When you are not in a position of strength, you have no control over the pace at which allies provide support. Being well-informed about their context makes it possible to adjust the frequency of your requests and obtain their support” (Participant 1-C) (Comment 4.1.4.1-4). These comments highlighted the fact that allies might depend on one another to gain power and influence that they could use to either support or oppose online learning implementation.

Resisters to online learning implementation might have allies who could influence management, as is also the case with adopters. Resisters might engage their allies to block the change, and adopters would do the opposite. In most of the learning sets, participants believed that converting your “opponents” (those who promote a divergent view of the change outcomes and/or of the change process) into allies is a micropolitical strategic game that is relevant to both resisters and adopters. Through the discussions that took place in the learning sets of the second and third group of participants, I realized that, as the change agent, I needed to become a more active political player in the project, and that I had to work more closely with resisters to convert them into allies before they use their relationships and try more vigorously to persuade current adopters to become resisters to online learning implementation. Acknowledging interdependency and acting as a “political entrepreneur” (Buchanan and Badham, 2008), I could gradually gain the support of those most opposed to online learning implementation by stressing that their input was valuable and that the project’s success depended, at least in part, on their input. This could instil a change in attitudes in the most vocal resisters. I already had succeeded in converting a weak resistor into an ally; that person was slowly being perceived by others as a proponent of online learning. Asked about his change of perspective, he said that the fact that I had met with him made him aware that his input was valued, even if his view was not shared by other set members:

“This [action] research project might be an opportunity to get ourselves heard by management... at last. They would understand our concerns and recognize our efforts to make the project succeed.” (Participant 1-D) (Comment 4.1.3.4-1)

Allies have to be relevant to one another: “Having influential, competent, trustworthy allies and identifying how they can support you” (Comments 4.1.4.1-3, 4.1.4.3-1, and 4.4.3.2-1) is a political strategy that cannot be neglected, particularly in large projects. This is why it is important to “ascertain how allies can help [to move the change forward]; their support can consist of actions that contribute to common goals.” It appeared that resisters had felt that their potential contribution to the project was irrelevant from the onset: perhaps if management had consulted with them and engaged them in decision-making, they would have felt they had a role to play in the success of the project. This was a strategy that management needed to consider using soon.

Demonstrating Relevance

Adopters and resisters used distinct micropolitical strategies when generating support for, or opposition to, the change induced by online learning implementation. They actively tried to demonstrate that their position for or against the project was relevant. In doing so, resisters referred to so-called “unbiased experts” to justify their opposition to the change. Adopters relied on making a case for online learning, involving allies through the help of others, promoting a positive view of the change, getting to know others and building relationships with them, and making resources available to initiate and sustain participation in the project. However, adopters and resisters used similar micropolitical strategies when building alliances in influencing others to become advocates of their position and in fostering reciprocity. When confronting opposition, both adopters and resisters cultivated uncertainty, exerted pressure and obtained concessions from those with an opposite perspective on online learning implementation. Finally, when involved in confrontation, adopters and resisters offered strong arguments to justify confrontation and foster collective action by securing the contribution of others. Adopters and resisters who attempted to convert opponents into allies increased their visibility with allies, managed relationships with others to build trust, acknowledged interdependency by making others (their allies) aware that their input was important for project success (failure), and demonstrated their relevance as allies.

4.5 Analysis of the Data

This section is an analysis of the data obtained in the first action research cycle based on the literature. The goal is to provide answers (1) to understand the underlying motives of faculty members’ reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning; (2) to investigate the role that micropolitics might have played in this change, with the aim of addressing power issues more effectively; (3) to find ways to engage faculty members opposed to the change through action learning; and (4) to develop a framework that might help address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to help me, the change agent, move the change forward more effectively, thus generating actionable knowledge. Figure 18 on the following page is a synthesis of the data.

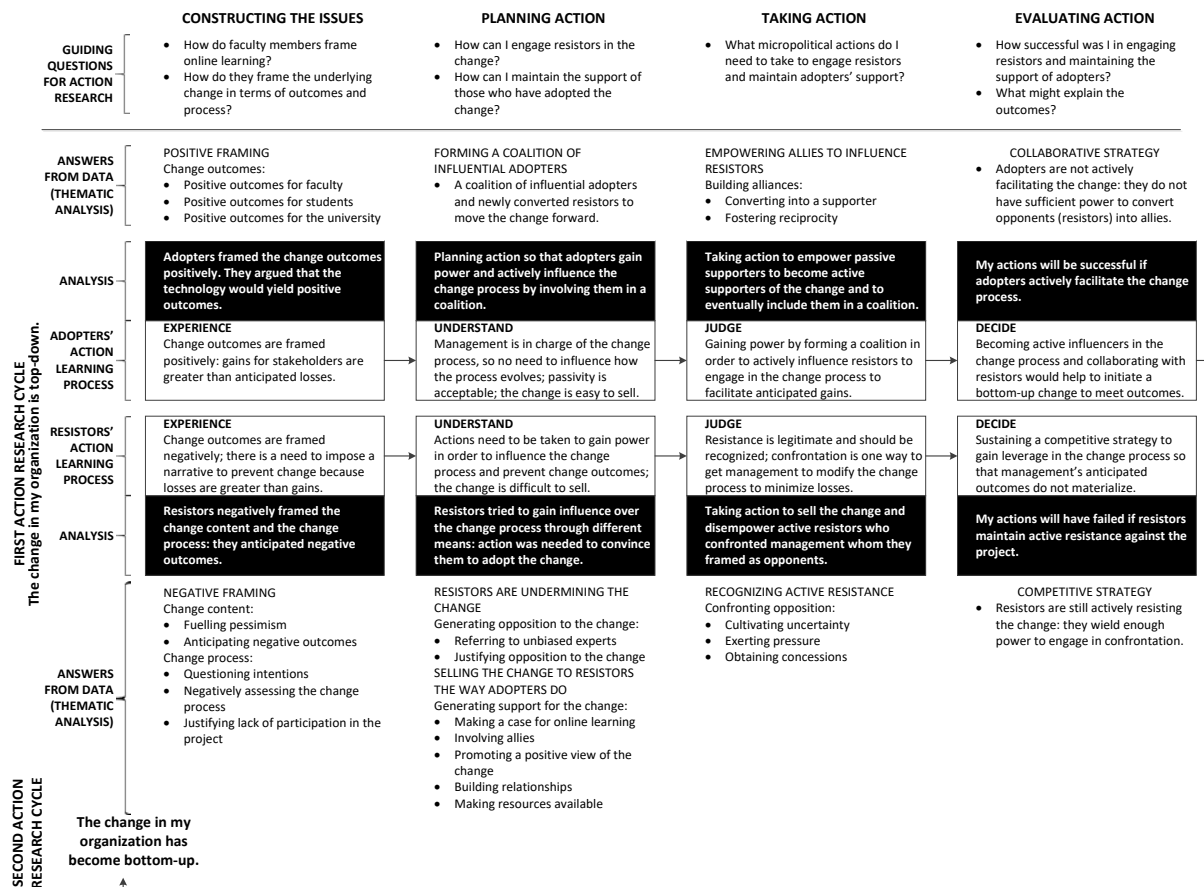


Figure 18: Synthesis of the Data Obtained in the First Action Research Cycle

Analyzing the data obtained in each of the four phases of this first action change research cycle has permitted me to come up with the following conclusions:

(1) In the change brought about by online learning implementation, adopters framed the change outcomes positively. They argued that the technology would yield positive outcomes. Resistors negatively framed the change content and the change process: they anticipated negative outcomes.

This first phase of the action research cycle clearly demonstrated that online learning implementation can become highly politicized, even more so when the decision to implement it is imposed on those who are expected to participate in it. In reaction to this decision, people might use framing as a “political tool” to construct the issues to their advantage and to influence others to share their perspectives (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010).

In the learning sets, framing as a political tool was used in four different ways in constructing the issues related to online learning implementation, namely: (1) in how both resistors and adopters framed themselves; (2) in how they framed other faculty members who do not share their stance towards online learning; (3) in how they framed management who made a unilateral decision to implement online learning; and (4) in how they framed the change brought about by online learning implementation.

Resistors framed themselves in a positive light by framing online learning in a negative way: online learning was doomed to fail as it would never yield the positive outcomes it promised. This contrasted with how adopters framed themselves: online learning would bring many benefits to faculty, to students and the school, and they would help to make those benefits materialize. However, without

any proof to support their contention, adopters were not successful in influencing resisters. This seems to have given credence to those opposing online learning, even if they too did not offer any strong argument to support their claims. Resisters were much more vocal in expressing themselves in the learning sets, and this might be an illustration of the endowment effect and loss aversion (Halpern and Hakel, 2003; Tagg, 2012; and Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). This cognitive bias induces intense negative reactions in people when they frame outcomes as a loss. However, resisters were never specific about what those losses were for them: they kept insisting on the losses for others if we would move forward with online learning implementation: it is as if they were engaged in an altruistic endeavour to protect those who might be impacted in a negative way by online learning, and that they were not in any way protecting their own interests.

In framing others who held a different view about online learning implementation, resisters and adopters did not make their opinions explicit. This has helped to maintain relative harmony among set members. However, resisters implied that less-experienced, newly hired faculty members (some of whom participated in the learning sets) should not get involved in online learning and they should oppose it. This appears to be an attempt to influence social norms which, in a higher education setting, are only affected by peer influence (Dermentzi and Papagiannidis, 2018).

Resisters were actively involved in the learning sets in framing management in a negative way (at least, in the beginning): they strongly argued that the decision to teach online should rest entirely with the individual, and that top-down managerial decisions to “coerce” people to teach online are bound to be met with resistance. Management had made many mistakes in implementing online learning, mostly by failing to provide the “right” information from the start to develop a shared perspective on the project. Management had failed to offer a compelling vision of online learning implementation. Indeed, management had taken a decision which was widely perceived as unstructured (a decision that cannot be justified to the satisfaction of those impacted by the decision). Unstructured decisions are among the most common political triggers as organizational actors will seek to support these decisions by forming alliances if these decisions generate gains for them, while if these decisions generate losses for them they will oppose them. In doing so, they will engage in micropolitical behaviour (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006).

The perception that the decision to implement online learning was unstructured entailed that “nobody in their right mind should trust management.” This perception was reinforced by resisters who had had “bad” experiences with them but they did not disclose to other set members what those “bad” experiences were. They also attributed their opposition to online learning to the fact that the change process was badly managed. Whatever efforts management had taken to mitigate the negative effects of online learning implementation, those mitigating measures were never sufficient to generate positive consequences. Many complained that all of this was wasting valuable institutional resources that could have been used for other, more relevant projects. Consequently, given the way that institutional resources were being used, management could not be trusted. This indicates that without trust, it is very difficult to exert influence on others, a concept that is absent from Crozier’s and Friedberg’s (1977) framework (Edmondson and Moingeon, 1999).

Finally, comments made by resisters in this first phase confirm that online learning implementation is not only related to improving learning (a contention with which resisters did not agree), but also to the politics of top-down authority directives (Samarawickrema and Stacey, 2007). In the course of the learning sets, resisters showed that they were less concerned about the positive consequences of online learning implementation than being compelled to participate in the endeavour: forcing people to engage in it was “surely doomed to fail” (Comment 4.3.3.1-3). Some resisters went as far as to mention that, because of time issues, they would not have participated in the project if they had a choice. Indeed, forcing faculty members to engage in online learning implementation might directly affect their routines and has a negative effect on their work setting (Samarawickrema and Stacey,

2007). This negative effect was obvious in the way resisters framed online learning. It is interesting to note that, in justifying their reluctance to participate in the implementation, resisters consistently referred to first-order barriers (Kearney et al., 2018) found in the literature.

The fact that management had taken a unilateral decision and imposed it on faculty members may be the consequence of authority appropriation by management because of certain institutional characteristics, such as a highly differentiated vertical structure, a culture of conformity, and complex processes (Claver et al., 1999). Their decision might not have been politically motivated, but rather an almost routine management decision taken to benefit the organization. However, it might have been perceived as having political undertones by resisters and was most likely to generate consequences that were assessed by them as being political, such as loss of power and influence (Markus, 1983) which then gives rise to power struggles (Frost and Egri, 1991).

As for those who adopted online learning and the change it entailed, the anticipated gains (for faculty, for students and for the school) were perceived as greater than the losses that the change would generate (Ford and Ford, 2010). In general, adopters did not hesitate to support the goals put forward by online learning implementation because they found them to be beneficial. In the learning set discussions, the adopters would go from “them” to “me” at first when speaking of the change, and to “us” at the next stage since, and this was one of their distinctive traits, they hoped to be involved in the implementation of the change within the organization, as it would bring positive outcomes.

Politically speaking, adopters are more than allies; they are promoters of the change who seek to influence colleagues who are less favourable to change (Ford and Ford, 2010). However, their influence tactics in the first phase of the action research cycle were rather limited. Adopters stressed the benefits that online learning entailed for faculty members, students and the institution, but they did not go further in exerting influence over the resisters: they had no hard data, such as statistics, reports, etc., to support their point of view. They mainly put forward arguments based on personal values and convictions.

In framing the change in a negative way, resisters focussed on both the change content and the change process. More specifically, resisters came up with many more reasons for their opposition to online learning implementation than adopters did for their support, even when adopters outnumbered resisters in some learning sets. Reasons offered by resisters fell into two categories as defined in the current theory on change: reasons related to the change content and those related to the change process (Self and Schraeder, 2009). Change content refers to the technology itself, i.e. online learning: some strong resisters have had prior negative experiences of failed attempts by the institution to implement the technology, and used these instances to justify their stance.

For those who did not have such negative experiences, they projected that online learning would never bring positive results, thus predicting negative outcomes. As for the change process, it refers to how the change was being conducted and how resources were allotted to help people manage the change. Since the change in my school was top-down, this might explain why resisters framed it as a political act that prompted them to engage in political activity to oppose top-down change (Hardy, 1995; Markus, 1983; and Pfeffer, 1981). In such circumstances, resisters view resistance as legitimate. They rationalize their lack of participation as a “normal” reaction to top-down change. Also, a lack of trust in management might explain resisters’ efforts to try to (rightly or wrongly) undermine management’s credibility by overtly questioning their intentions. This is one of the most important political factors underlying unsuccessful organizational change (Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder, 1993): questioning the credibility of those who have initiated the change is a strong, political act to derail the change (Buchanan and Badham, 2008) to prevent losses associated with it.

Gain maximization and loss minimization is captured in Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) framework. Clearly, in the learning sets, resisters perceive the change as a process whereby they would lose something. According to Beer and Nohria (2000), resisters have the tendency to get involved and even to get those around them involved in order to oppose the change. They will resort to specific, political acts to stop or neutralize change (Ford and Ford, 2010). Resisters obviously did not accept the content of change, which was clearly reflected in the language they used to frame the change: there was systematic use of "they" and "them" when referring to the change.

Ambiguity of losses might also explain resisters' political behaviour. Efforts to uncover shared losses that resisters anticipate in the project were unsuccessful. Although attempts were made to pinpoint the gains and losses that faculty members experienced during the implementation of online learning, coming up with a definitive list of concerns shared by all resisters was not possible. Buchanan and Badham (2008) argue that undisclosed, personal factors such as ambition, a strong desire to be the best, and values can explain a person's political behaviour. Although these personal factors were never made explicit by set participants, one can infer that they might explain, at least partially, why some faculty members engaged in micropolitical behaviour to either oppose or support online learning implementation.

Finally, it appears that resisters engaged in micropolitical behaviour to influence adopters to support their stance to challenge the change outcomes and the change process. These influence attempts, such as fuelling pessimism and anticipating negative outcomes from the change, are used by resisters to frame the entire endeavour in a negative way so that adopters change their position towards online learning and eventually come to oppose it. Indeed, research confirms that when change recipients have had prior negative experiences with change, they tend to adopt a more pessimistic view of a similar change when asked to participate in it (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999).

(2) It appears important to plan action so that adopters gain power and actively influence the change process by involving them in a coalition. As resisters tried to gain influence over the change process through different means, action was needed to convince them to adopt the change.

This second phase of the action research cycle showed how important it was to negotiate the top-down change that was imposed on faculty members (Quinn, 1978, 1980). These negotiation attempts would take two forms: selling the change to resisters and convincing adopters to come together to form a guiding coalition in order to gain power and influence to help move the change forward.

Selling the change is not a micropolitical strategic game per se within the framework developed by Crozier and Friedberg (1977) as the authors do not provide a list of what those games may be. I would argue that "selling the change to resisters" might be one of them, and would serve to counteract their attempts to undermine the change. In doing so, one would gain power over the resisters. Their underlying motives to undermine the change were made clear in the learning sets: the fact that they were not consulted prior to the implementation, that the choice to adapt certain courses for online delivery seemed arbitrary, that the resources to help faculty members participate in online learning implementation were not clearly described nor made available, and that the implementation schedule seemed unrealistic, were among some of the concerns (mostly first-order barriers – Kearney et al., 2018) voiced by faculty members opposed to the change. The overall motive appeared to be that they felt powerless to solve some of their issues surrounding online learning implementation.

Had they been consulted by management prior to implementation, they would have engaged in a negotiation which would have increased their freedom of action (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Since resisters kept insisting that their losses (whatever they may be) were still greater than potential gains, and that implementation of online learning was imposed on them, management should have devised a plan to convince resisters to adopt online teaching. This action plan would have consisted of five

major steps: (1) changing the narrative put forward by resistors; (2) fueling optimism; (3) insisting on collective and personal gains that the change entailed; (4) getting management to clarify their intentions; and (5) involving resistors in the change process. These steps would unfold in this particular order since it appeared obvious that, before involving resistors in the change process, we needed to “convert” them into adopters of the change.

In constructing the issues, resistors had clearly built a narrative against the change. A few adopters were successful in changing this narrative by selling the change to others through five micropolitical strategies: making a case for online learning, involving others to share the message, promoting a positive view of the change, building relationships, and making resources available to those needing them. They were very active in selling the change. Most of the adopters were much less active, but nevertheless supported online learning implementation. It appears this was also the case for resistors: some were more active than others. Those few adopters who were more active were also the most forceful in arguing for online learning. In learning set meetings, they initiated discussions about online learning and were sometimes successful in bringing a few resistors on board. They obviously felt empowered to do that, as more silent (“passive”) adopters did not. Was it that “active” adopters were more extroverted than “passive” adopters, or were there other factors to take into account to explain why some adopters were more successful than others in changing the narrative?

By examining the behaviour exhibited by active adopters in making a case for online learning within the context of learning sets, some clues emerged about ways to fuel optimism towards the project. For example, active adopters would regularly rely on outside expertise to justify their stance, they would always be ready to provide answers to difficult questions posed by strong (“active”) resistors, they would demonstrate objectivity and sound judgment in analyzing the issues, and they would present relevant information to engage others in seeing things differently. They obviously had influence and knew how to fuel optimism in the project to bring others on board. On the other hand, the less active (passive) adopters were not as effective in engaging others. These micropolitical behaviours exhibited by active adopters seemed to be the manifestation of “power bases” found in the literature, such as those defined by French and Raven (1958), who have argued that power results from the use of five bases: reward power, coercive power, referent power, legitimate power, and expert power. These five power bases provide influence to those who can mobilize them. Benfari, Wilkinson and Orth (1986) claim that there are eight power bases which could be used “strategically” by organizational members to either support or oppose the change initiative: reward, coercion, authority, referent, expert, information, affiliation, and group power.

Also, active adopters would reach out to others and build alliances to help disseminate optimism about the change: for example, they would identify influential people, consult and network with them in getting the word out there that online learning is a good thing; they would have influential, competent, trustworthy allies and engage them in supporting and disseminating this narrative; some would secure senior management’s support in their effort to generate support for the project; and many would rely on the support of colleagues. These micropolitical behaviours are clearly the manifestation of power based on the group (coalitions) and affiliation (networks). Finally, active adopters would ask management for resources (mostly information) to be made available to those seeking them. It became clear that to change the narrative, I needed to build a stronger case for online learning, develop and sustain solid relationships with active adopters, and obtain from management the resources resistors had been seeking.

From the beginning of the project, it was clear that resistors complained that they were insufficiently informed about the outcomes of online learning implementation. More specifically, notes taken during learning set discussions indicate that resistors had hoped that management would provide more information about the goal of the change and that management would clarify the collective and personal gains that the change entailed. Management should have argued logically to demonstrate

the feasibility or relevance of the goal of implementing online learning; arguments that were presented had clearly not been convincing; management needed to find other, more compelling arguments, to rally them. They should also have related the objective of the change to resisters' needs and values, and explained how the goal of implementing online learning would have had a positive impact on resisters' careers, reputation or performance. Explaining the gains that resisters would likely make from the change, as long as these gains were feasible, might have helped management to engage them. Analyzing how people define a particular issue, their goal in solving this issue, and their stakes (in terms of gains and losses) are actions to take to determine how people might expand their zones of uncertainty (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977).

Also, information about management's intentions would have been useful. Management should have asked resisters for their opinions and suggestions about the way the change should proceed, and then explained their intentions in implementing online learning. Resisters' opposition to the project might have been legitimate; asking them to express it could have provided new and previously unknown information, which might have proven relevant to the change. This would also have demonstrated that management was ready to listen to them and to acknowledge their point of view. Furthermore, management should have tried to reduce the uncertainty and insecurity associated with the change process, as much as possible. They should have provided resisters with information that would have reduced their apprehension about the situation, in terms of their uncertainty about the extent and/or frequency of their losses. In order to rally resisters, management might have needed to temper their uncertainty about potential disadvantages, if possible. Consequently, providing information about foreseeable losses would most certainly have been an effective strategy. Management should have recognized the losses that resisters anticipated in the context of the change, without trying to undermine them; it might have been a way to gain their trust. Management should also have de-dramatized the discourse of strong resisters and brought it back to facts. Some resisters tended to exaggerate their actual or potential losses. Management might have needed to reassure them in this regard to gain their trust.

Indeed, trust appeared to be a major issue in involving resisters in the change process. Maintaining resisters' trust by listening to their arguments, and expressing sincere empathy, might have helped management. They should have developed resisters' trust, both with their image and the quality of the change pursued. Resisters obviously did not have faith in management's ability to lead the change; management needed to reassure them. Management should have tried to convince the most reluctant resisters one-by-one in private, while recognizing their contribution in public. Because they risk losing face, strong resisters would certainly not let themselves be convinced in public; persuading them in private and then acknowledging their contribution in public carries a powerful message about management's ability to convince others without holding them to account for their initial opposition.

All those actions to sell the change to resisters would be accomplished at the same time as actions to bring adopters together in a guiding coalition. The literature shows that building a powerful coalition of adopters is a major success factor in organizational change (Kanter, 1983; Kotter, 2008).

The ability to form coalitions is a source of power (Cyert and March, 1963). When change is bottom-up (emergent), then political activity among organizational members is considered a force for change and a source of organizational innovation (Kanter, 1983). This is the approach taken by Crozier and Friedberg (1977), Pettigrew (1985b), Giddens (1979), and Tsoukas and Chia (2002). In addition, I was keenly aware that resisters might also initiate bottom-up change to derail the entire project. Consequently, two micropolitical strategic games could have emerged: resisters might have tried to compete for power and influence against management who imposed a top-down change on them, and adopters might have tried to share power and influence with their allies and maintain the coalition in place to move the change forward (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977).

These strategies were indeed put forward by set participants as a means to solve their issues as they were becoming more political in their approach to doing so.

(3) Taking action to empower passive adopters to become active supporters of the change and to eventually include them in a coalition was deemed the best course of action. Also, taking action to sell the change and disempower active resisters who confronted management whom they framed as opponents was considered.

Empowerment is an essential requirement to bottom-up change (Kanter, 1983). Kotter (2008) argues that empowering change recipients underlies successful organizational change. Again, “empowering others” is not a strategic political game that Crozier and Friedberg (1977) have identified, as they do not offer a repertoire of strategic games, but I would contend that it is a strategic game to use in the context of organizational change. I would further argue that when people are not empowered, they will try to gain power in such a way as to impose their views on those who failed to empower them. Power struggles then become more apparent (Gunn, 2001), as when resisters engaged in “active resistance” in online learning implementation.

When taking action in this third phase of the action research cycle, empowering passive adopters to become active and including them in a coalition gave them sufficient influence to move the change forward. This was apparent in their attempts to influence resisters. In selling the change to resisters and fueling optimism, they have countered some resisters’ pessimism towards the change. Many resisters felt that, from the beginning, management had not promoted the project sufficiently to engage as many people as possible in online learning implementation. If it had been recognized that they had legitimate concerns, resisters would probably have been more inclined to get involved in the change.

Indeed, I asked those resisters who justified their opposition to the change for their opinions and suggestions. For some of them, their opposition to the project was indeed legitimate; asking them to express their concerns provided new and previously unknown information, such as certain losses that had not been foreseen (loss of prestige and the fear of being seen as incompetent to teach online). I showed that I was ready to listen to them and to acknowledge their point of view. I listened to opposing arguments to my requests, and expressed empathy. Recognizing the losses that resisters anticipate in the context of online learning implementation, without trying to undermine them, was a way to maintain their trust.

I also needed to establish trust with other, more reluctant resisters, both with respect to my image and to the quality of the change pursued. Strong resisters may have not trusted my ability to lead the change; I felt I needed to reassure them.

Actions that were taken in this phase stressed collective and personal gains. In their seminal article, Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth (1986, p. 13) argue that people “see power positively when they benefit from the situation. That benefit may be economic, symbolic, or personal. When the person on the receiving end perceives power as positive, the interaction takes on a win/win character. The recipient senses support, increased motivation, and ego enhancement.” In other words, when people accept being influenced by other parties, they must reap some kind of benefit (tangible and/or intangible) in the process. Thus, influence attempts are most successful when the person influencing others is able to explicitly frame the situation as a win-win process, something that management did not do in the current project.

Describing the benefits that strong resisters would enjoy if they engaged in online learning was not a strategy that management had put forward, thus apparently exacerbating resisters’ opposition to online learning. During the discussions taking place in the learning sets, it became clear early on that

resistors saw no benefit whatsoever in doing what management wanted them to do. Management had failed in using their authority positively by erroneously expecting that faculty members would comply and commit to the project: “Recipients can short-circuit authority power in subtle or undetected ways. The manager may be buying short-term compliance at the expense of long-term commitment” (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986, p. 14). The more management insisted that resistors participate in the project, the more they demonstrated active resistance. Management would have been more successful in their influence attempts with resistors if they had shared relevant information with them so that they could get answers to their questions, and by actively engaging them in finding solutions to the problems brought about by the implementation of online learning.

Finally, involving resistors in the change process would have been politically desirable. I needed to find some kind of activities in which resistors were willing to participate. For example, these could include: establishing a group to discuss the advantages of adopting online learning (Aubusson et al, 2014; Dermentzi and Papagiannidis, 2018; and Kearney et al., 2018); fostering discussions about the degree to which the technology is compatible with existing values, past experiences and actual needs; involving resistors in finding solutions to current/future problems faced during implementation; and encouraging resistors to experiment with the new technology on a limited basis, and making the results of adopting the technology explicit and visible (Surry, 1997). These were some of the approaches, based on the attributes of adopting new technology, which I planned to use to engage resistors in the change process.

(4) In evaluating the upcoming outcomes, my actions will have been successful if adopters actively facilitate the change process, but will have failed if resistors maintain active resistance toward the project.

The fourth phase of the first action research process showed that political action is assessed on one’s ability to gain allies and to engage them in either a collaborative strategy or in a competitive strategy, or both. Competitive strategic games are initiated by those opposing organizational change as resistance is merely the symptom of underlying power struggles (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Those who support the change will most likely engage in a collaborative strategic game.

It appears that efforts have to be made to sustain a collaborative strategic game, and less effort to engage in a competitive game. Reciprocity (and acknowledging interdependency) helps to sustain collaboration (Crozier, 1973). Indeed, it forms the basis of collaboration and alliance-building among organizational members. The next action research cycle confirmed my ability (and adopters’ ability) to initiate and sustain a collaborative strategic game to transform a top-down change into a bottom-up change.

Finally, analysing the action learning process underlying this first action research cycle has permitted me to come up with the following conclusion: Unsurprisingly, adopters and resistors seemed to have engaged in an action learning cycle that yielded two opposite outcomes. Adopters learned to gain power and to exert influence to facilitate the change process in such a way that the outcomes of the change would materialize. Resistors learned to use power to influence the change process to prevent anticipated losses. Since the change was top-down, they gained power and used it to confront management. I learned that spurring adopters to form a coalition to become more active in influencing others was probably the best course of action. This was a form of empowerment of those allies who would help the change move forward. To do that, I needed to let them steer a bottom-up change and to enroll resistors by initiating a collaborative strategic game with them. The next action research cycle reveals whether this course of action was successful.

4.5.1 Analyzing the Data Using Crozier's and Friedberg's Framework

Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) framework is useful in analyzing the data from the first action research cycle to unearth the micropolitical behaviour of both adopters and resisters that facilitated or blocked the change. Applying the four components of the framework (strategic games, behavioural patterns, resistance as competitive strategic games, and interactions among organizational actors) to the data offers some insights about how the change recipients tried to influence the change.

4.5.1.1 Strategic Games

Data from the first action research cycle shows that adopters and resisters engaged in strategic games to either maintain or increase their liberty (in Crozier's and Friedberg's words, to "maintain their scope of action") in the case of the adopters, or to increase their scope of action, in the case of the resisters who felt constrained by the system (the university) as online learning was imposed on them.

In framing the change positively, adopters clearly hoped to maintain their position as a guiding force in online learning implementation. By siding with management, they upheld their power and relative influence on the change process. It might have been a "safe place" for them, especially for those who were seeking tenure. However, most of them did not try to exert influence on the change process as management was in charge. Some adopters might have come to the conclusion that opposing management could have had some dire consequences for their careers. Whatever their motivations, adopters projected a positive attitude towards both the change outcomes and the change process, and gradually engaged in "collaborative strategic games" by exhibiting behaviour to influence resisters in changing their stance towards online learning. Such micropolitical behaviour took the form of becoming part of a broader coalition of adopters and being more active in influencing the change process. I facilitated the emergence of this coalition through discussions in the learning sets.

As for the resisters, they framed both the change content (online learning) and the change process (how it was being implemented) negatively. They tried to change the narrative put forward by the adopters and attempted to undermine the change. They hoped to gain power through different means such as referring to so-called "unbiased" experts and justifying their opposition to the change. They were obviously involved in a competitive strategic game which adopters tried to counteract by selling the change through a wide repertoire of micropolitical behaviours (making a case for online learning, involving other allies, promoting a positive view of the change, building relationships with resisters and making resources available to them).

4.5.1.2 Behavioural Patterns

It was clear that both adopters and resisters engaged in patterns of behaviour which reflected their power bases. It is through this behaviour that organizational members exert their power to influence others. The way people try to exert influence is through organizational power bases (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986). Here are examples of the influence tactics used by some research participants, and the underlying power bases:

- Reward Power: "Explain how the goal [to support or oppose online learning implementation] can have a positive impact on an opponent's career, reputation or performance."
- Coercion: "Threaten your opponents with blocking a promotion; threaten them with a strict performance assessment;" and "Emphasize the consequences of your opponents' actions, and list possible sanctions."
- Referent Power: "Build opponents' trust, both with your image and the quality of your goal;" "Adopt positive behaviours to impress opponents;" and "Listen to opposing arguments to your requests, and express empathy."

- Expert Power: “Argue logically to demonstrate the feasibility or relevance of the goal [to support or oppose online learning implementation] that generates opposition from other people;” and “Use expert assessments or examples of unfavourable ‘experiences’ with others to discourage opponents.”

Organizational members gain power through allies willing to share it; through reciprocity, allies share power and influence, and engage in such transactions for gain maximization and loss minimization (Cohen and Bradford, 1989). This supports Crozier’s and Friedberg’s (1977) contention that people engage in patterns of behaviour to gain power and influence. These patterns can be observed and described as “strategic games” because they serve one purpose: to gain enough power and influence to maximize one’s gains and minimize one’s losses, especially in the context of organizational change where uncertainty and scarce resources exacerbate the need for gain maximization and loss minimization. This has clearly emerged in the data, namely that faculty members have engaged in micropolitical behaviour to initiate “strategic games” with others in such a way as to gain power and influence over the change process and/or the change outcomes in their attempts to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. The more power bases they had or had access to, directly or through their allies, the more influence they exerted over the change process in such a way that the change outcomes would benefit them. As such, they used their influence to maximize gains and minimize losses that the change entailed. In the context in which they did not have much influence, they had to deal with people who imposed losses on them (namely, higher management); these “opponents,” who had more power and influence, engaged in adversarial “political games” because their gains were the other actors’ losses, and vice-versa.

4.5.1.3 Resistance as Competitive Strategic Games

In the third phase of the action research cycle, resistance was assessed as a legitimate way to get one’s voice heard. It serves to increase one’s own scope of action and was used by resisters to justify their confrontational stance with management who had imposed this change on faculty members. The less one feels that one’s voice is heard, the more inclined that person will be to confront those who have been deaf to their concerns. This is what happened in the context of the change as resisters engaged in confrontation with management by cultivating uncertainty, exerting pressure and trying to obtain concessions from management. My perception of resisters’ behaviour gradually became more positive at this point as they argued that they were opposing the change for legitimate motives.

4.5.1.4 Interactions among Organizational Actors

Analyzing interactions among faculty members helped to uncover some of the strategic games that both adopters and resisters have engaged in and/or initiated to facilitate/block the change. These strategic games involved building alliances and developing coalitions by interacting with other organizational actors. For example, adopters and resisters gained power from their ability to solicit allies for support, and by ensuring that support was provided. As one research participant put it: “It is the art of asking without begging;” this consists of obtaining assurance that allies will help the individual acquire influence by increasing the number of power bases that individual has. A request for allies’ support is the most evident proof of trust, of respect for their power bases, and an expression of alliance. If the person’s request is granted, it is proof that the alliance is strong (Cohen and Bradford, 1989). However, if the request for support is denied, the person should try to understand the cause of the refusal: an ally may want to help, but may not be able to due to unavoidable constraints; conversely, if an ally refuses, and it is not due to factors over which they have no control, it is an indication that they are most likely an opponent whose refusal is intended to generate a loss for the person. In the third phase of the action research process, empowering adopters to influence resisters was made possible by getting them to work together as a coalition engaged in converting resisters into adopters and then fostering reciprocity to sustain resisters’ involvement in online learning.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE SECOND ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

The findings following the first action research cycle indicated that empowering adopters to drive a bottom-up change to counteract the detrimental effect that resisters had on the change process was a solution to be considered. However, it might not be sufficient to move the change to fruitful completion as resisters might engage in power struggles to gain influence over the bottom-up change process in their attempt to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Adopters and resisters had opposing views and interests with respect to the change: would it be possible to put forward a bottom-up change process that would take into consideration their issues? To find out, the four phases of the second action research cycle would address the following questions: In their attempts to solve their issues, how did the political action of both adopters and resisters contribute to or impede the emergence of bottom-up change? Did they frame their political action as deliberate attempts to initiate bottom-up change? What are the actions that management should take to initiate and sustain a bottom-up change? How should adopters (and resisters) take part in a bottom-up change process that would minimize resistance? As I was somewhat successful in empowering adopters and forming a guiding coalition to move the change forward in the first cycle, what actions should I take to empower them more in the second cycle and engage them to actively participate in a bottom-up change? And finally, are there specific modes of political action that are more effective in empowering adopters and engaging resisters in a bottom-up change?

The chapter is again divided into four sections, one for each of the action research phases. The last section offers an analysis of the data using the current literature. A conclusion is drawn at the end of the chapter.

5.1 The First Action Research Phase: (Re-)Constructing the Issues

The first phase of the second action research cycle served as the basis for reconstructing the issues, both from an adopter's and a resistor's standpoint. The aim of reconstructing the issues was to increase (or at least maintain) adopters' involvement in the change by framing their role as active political allies, and to show resisters that they were not "enemies" of the change, more specifically that their concerns were legitimate and could provide valuable input to help move the change forward. However, their opposition to the change was not stalling the change as a powerful coalition of adopters was gradually being established and would hopefully make the entire process successful.

From the beginning, adopters had wanted the implementation of online learning to succeed as they foresaw the positive outcomes of this endeavour. In their attempts to solve their issues (i.e., prevent the failure of online learning implementation) and increase the probability that the positive outcomes would materialize, they needed to realize that they had an active role to play in the change. Becoming active allies in search of other allies among faculty members not involved in the research would undoubtedly contribute to the success of online learning implementation. Putting together a formal coalition (for example, a committee) of adopters might increase the likelihood that resisters would become less influential in the change process and finally participate in the project. Strong resisters were still opposing the change and hoping to gain more influence to undermine it. Acknowledging that their concerns were legitimate and that, as the coalition grew, resistance was becoming less effective, might be a way to convince them to join the coalition. Figure 19 synthesizes data obtained during discussions taking place in the learning sets.

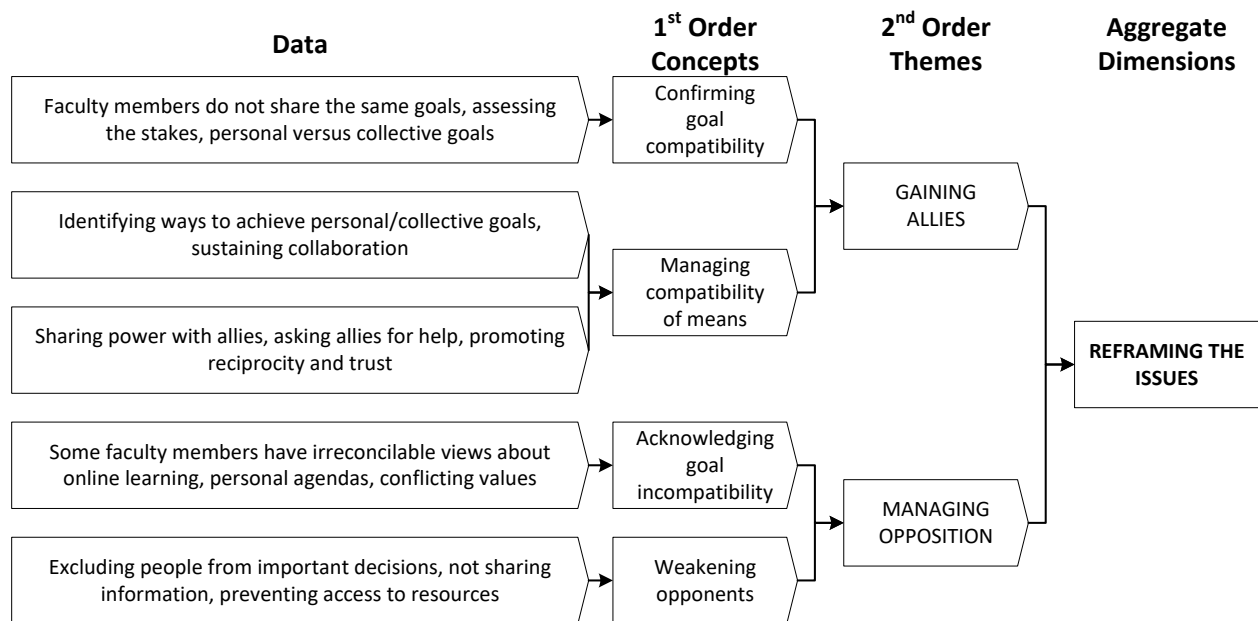


Figure 19: Reframing the Issues of both Adopters and Resistors

To initiate a dialogue about their experience in using micropolitical action to solve some of their issues pertaining to online learning implementation, the initial questions I asked participants in each of the four groups were the following: “How effective have you been in actively getting other people to support the change? How effective have you been in opposing the change? Were you able to convert those with opposing views into allies?” Answers to those questions varied according to participants’ stance on online learning implementation: those who supported the change needed to find allies to help them move the change forward, and those opposed to the change hoped to find allies who would block the change. Whatever their opinions about online learning, participants mentioned that their experience in solving their issues using micropolitical action could be defined by two approaches: gaining allies and managing opposition.

In their attempts to gain allies, participants acknowledged that it was, for some, quite a challenge to determine who their allies were, and which influence tactics would have the most impact on them in order to convince them to support/oppose online learning implementation. Those who had had previous experience within the institution argued that they had developed the skills to gain allies very effectively. For example, Participant 1-C (an adopter) initiated this discussion by sharing her experience within the institution. The fact that she has a solid reputation among organizational members is proof, according to her, of her “good” political skills, which proved useful in devising and implementing a strategy to influence others to become allies. She is a proponent of a more “direct” (face-to-face) strategy, and she argued that it enables her to receive immediate feedback when influencing others. A discussion followed, during which the participants shared anecdotal evidence about trying to exert influence. Some contended that both direct and indirect influence strategies should be employed, as they are complementary. Some argued that the micropolitical strategies below helped them to exert influence:

“When meeting with potential allies for the first time, you should always be prepared to analyse the context, to explain your point, to demonstrate to them that what you’re proposing is good, to prove that you’re right, and to discuss rationally; you need a strong business case to convince people to become your allies.”
(Participant 1-E) (Comment 4.1.4.1-1)

“Always show your potential allies evidence of objectivity and solid judgment about what is going on; bring them the facts: show them that they need our input for the project to succeed.” (Participant 1-F) (Comment 4.1.4.1-2)

These suggestions prompted a discussion about the inability of some resisters to gain allies; participants argued that management would have been willing to engage in a dialogue with the most vocal opponents to online learning implementation if only resisters had used more appropriate and constructive influencing strategies. When I shared this comment with resisters in other groups, they acknowledged that management’s behaviour (namely imposing online learning) might have been induced by their own inability to exert their influence constructively upwards. One participant suggested that everybody should act on the premise that others are “potential allies,” until they clearly demonstrate that they are not; in his opinion, this is an effective approach to building alliances with those whose actions might impact others. Many agreed and argued that this was even more important in the context of organizational change that impacts many people. In these instances, an alliance is possible when the goals of those forming this alliance are compatible, and when they agree on the means adopted to achieve change outcomes.

Confirming Goal Compatibility

There is a plurality of views within the institution pertaining to the goals that online learning could achieve. In the first action research cycle, adopters framed the outcomes of the change as goals that would meet the needs of faculty members themselves, as well as those of the students, and of the school. Some goals are personal, some are more organizational, and some fall in between. It was obvious in the first cycle that faculty members do not all share the same goals and do not have the same stakes in the project. In their efforts to gain allies, participants stressed the importance of confirming that those who might become allies have similar, or at least, compatible goals. Of course, this is only possible when people are willing to reveal what their true goals are:

“Mr. X mentioned to me that members of management do not understand what all the fuss is about... a few management members think that some faculty members have underlying motives that they won’t divulge, and that they’re trying to block the implementation because, if the project is successful, then they might not get out of it what they are hoping for...” (Participant 2-B) (Comment 4.2.4.1-1)

Again, alliances are possible only if those engaged in the alliance trust one another. Set members agreed that there has been some mistrust between faculty members and management for a while, and that this was not solely the consequence of mismanaging the implementation of online learning. There were a few discussions about the causes for that mistrust: Was it that management thought that faculty members were more self-interested, and that they had lost sight of collective interests? It was agreed that, in order to build a shared vision, the interests of both faculty members and management needed to be met. Therefore, an ally may become an opponent if their needs are no longer met as the change progresses. In other words, one has to monitor how the change impacts the needs of those considered allies as they might become resisters to the change if they believe that the change (and its consequences) no longer meets their needs at one point in the change process. Finally, although some people could be perceived as resisters, they might simply be unaware of the detrimental impact of their actions and decisions on others with whom they should initiate an alliance.

Managing Compatibility of Means

Once compatibility of goals has been confirmed, compatibility of means has to be assessed because allies need to agree on how the goals will be achieved since they will be working together in achieving the goals:

“We need to come together with our allies and try to find some common ground about how the change should be done... you are all aware that the project cannot succeed without the input of everyone: you [referring to Participant 4-F], you have unique expertise in your field. Without your input, we will not be able to adapt our courses for online delivery. As for you [referring to Participant 4-E], you are the only one here who has such an expertise in [...]: without it, we can't go ahead.” (Participant 4-A) (Comment 4.4.4.1-1)

Allies needed to forge some kind of agreement about the means that will meet the goals if they are to work together in a constructive way; those participants in the learning sets who were successful in gaining allies argued that allies need to learn to work together to achieve the goals, either personal or collective, that are beneficial to them and/or others. Consequently, they help one another, and, on a micropolitical level, they share power with one another: this is how reciprocity emerges among allies, and trust becomes possible. As one participant put it, “you make your allies more powerful when you help them in getting others to do what your allies want them to do.” Sharing information, expertise, and contacts can help to empower allies.

Acknowledging Goal Incompatibility

It appeared that managing opposition first might be necessary to gradually gain allies: admitting that goals are incompatible might be the first step in understanding why opposition to online learning implementation exists. Some set participants argued that before people agree on how the change should occur, they need to agree on the goals of the change. Discussions among faculty members about opposing views concerning online learning implementation took place in all of the four groups. They posed questions such as “What might explain the apparent impossibility of reconciling the views of the resisters and those of the adopters? What could be the underlying motives of each group?” The objective of asking those questions was to initiate a dialogue that would evolve into collaboration between adopters and resisters. It could be an opportunity to get set members to agree on common issues (i.e., compatible gains) but, unfortunately, this did not happen in all four groups.

Tensions among adopters and resisters rose to such a point that it was agreed to terminate the second action research cycle in the third and fourth group of participants. These unsuccessful attempts to find common ground among adopters and resisters were fueled by suspicion; for example, Participants 4-C and 4-F (both resisters) quickly dismissed the insinuation that their (undisclosed) goal was for the project to fail. Instead, they argued that management was not dedicating the needed resources to support them in their efforts to get the project to move forward. There was obviously no way to find common ground, and these irreconcilable views were supported by the belief that resisters were pursuing hidden agendas in the project, and that their stance against online learning was too entrenched to be changed. Consequently, some set participants (adopters and resisters alike) were unable to convert their opponents into allies. According to them, it was impossible to recall events that their opponents had encountered and that necessitated some kind of resolution that would have presented an opportunity to work collectively and find common ground. Some met with management, and tried to establish some form of alliance with them, but to no avail:

“We calmly met with management, and asked for more money: if they wanted me onboard, they would have to give me what I needed to hire an assistant who would help me adapt my course for online delivery... I won't do it by myself, with all the work that I already have...” (Participant 3-C) (Comment 4.3.4.1-1)

“We let management be aware of the consequences of not having consulted us prior to deciding to put the project in place... it was time to let them know that we should have had a voice in those types of decisions!” (Participant 3-D) (Comment 4.3.4.1-2)

These comments highlight the idea that compatibility of goals is essential for an alliance to exist. If goals are incompatible, then tension among people may arise and gradually generate opposition.

Weakening Opponents

Goal incompatibility meant that the only way that goals could be achieved, while resisters were using their power and influence to derail the process by which the goals could be met, was to weaken them through several means. In their efforts to weaken the resisters, some adopters engaged in “power struggles” to lessen the grip that their opponents had on the means that would help to achieve their goal to derail the change. Those resisters retaliated and engaged in a confrontational mode of political action with management, demanding additional resources and negotiating the timeline. These efforts were assessed by set members (resisters mostly) as effective strategies to use with management to impose their own agenda:

“We should refuse to further participate in the project, resist pressures, keep up our end and force compromises!” (Participant 3-E) (Comment 4.3.4.1-3)

The notion of interdependency was discussed as a way to force compromise (Comment 4.3.4.1-4). Those who had framed online learning implementation as a zero-sum political game were proponents of excluding opponents from important decisions, not sharing crucial information with them, and preventing them from accessing resources so that they could not facilitate (in the case of resisters) or impede (in the case of adopters) the change process:

“Let’s play devil’s advocate, and confront them immediately... this project is a great opportunity to let them know about how much they depend on us...” (Participant 3-C) (Comment 4.3.4.1-4)

Some disagreed and argued that interdependency can serve as the basis of a win-win strategy, even more so with allies who gain something from maintaining their alliances in place. For example, adopters of the change who were successful in being part of the coalition increased the likelihood that the change would succeed and that their goals would be met.

5.2 The Second Action Research Phase: Planning Action

I initiated discussions in the second phase of the action research cycle with questions such as “What are the actions that management (and adopters who have become active allies) should take to involve resisters in a bottom-up change? What actions would help to sustain a bottom-up change? How should adopters and resisters take part in a bottom-up change process that would minimize resistance?” Answers to these questions helped plan future steps to sustain adopters’ political action and to engage resisters in online learning implementation (Figure 20).

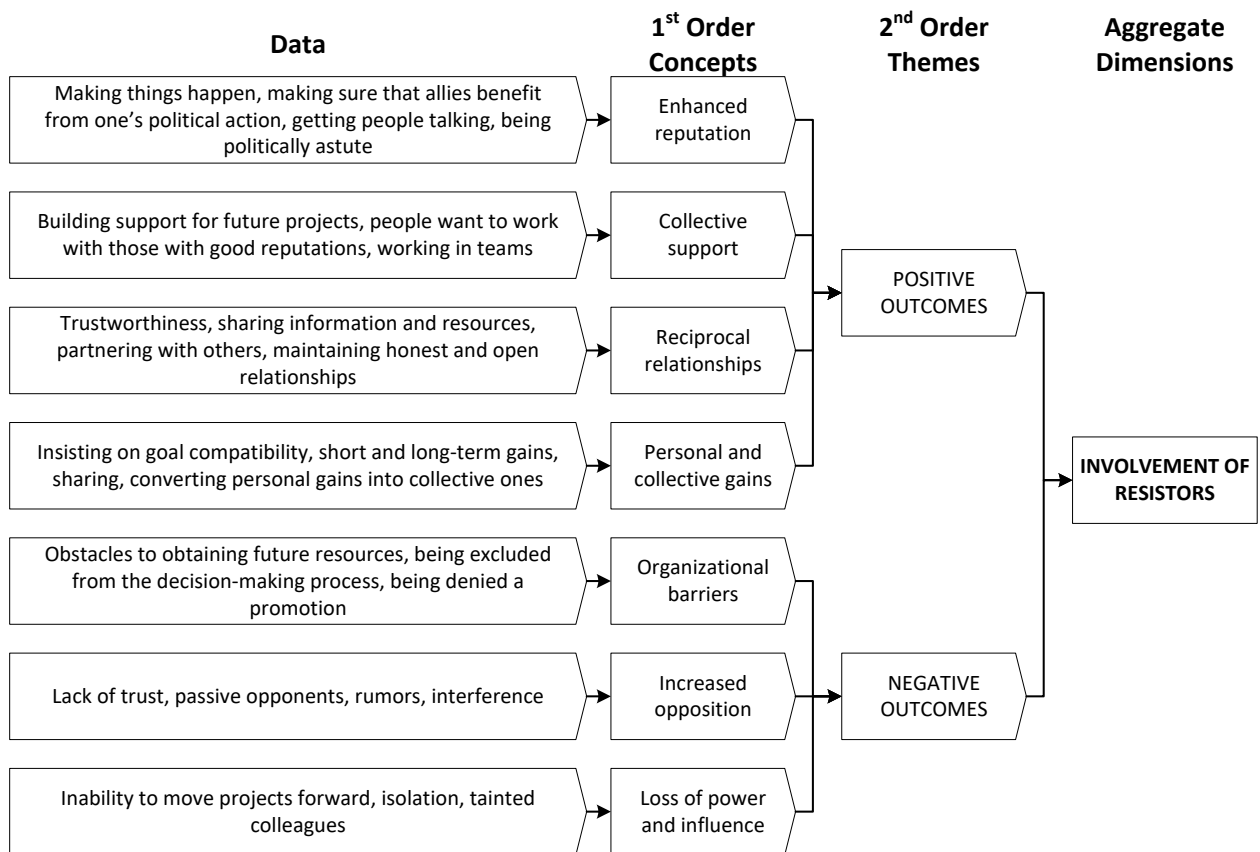


Figure 20: Involving Resistors: Positive and Negative Outcomes

Discussions in the learning sets were useful in identifying positive outcomes of involving resistors and gaining allies, and inviting them to join a coalition of adopters, namely:

Enhanced Reputation

Discussions among set members highlighted the idea that an enhanced reputation might be one of the most interesting consequences of being competent at gaining allies and managing opponents. Being considered someone who makes things happen with the help of allies, who ensures that allies reap some kind of benefit for helping, is possibly the most important reward for being politically astute. All set participants agreed that this is the most compelling argument for getting involved and involving others in a coalition. However, the reputation that one wields is a function of those around them: “we always think that our allies have much better reputations than our opponents...” (Participant 2-C).

Collective Support

Other set members argued that an organizational actor who is effective at gaining allies and managing opponents might have no problem building support for upcoming projects; they insisted that people are much more inclined to work with those who are able to initiate and maintain long-term alliances with others.

Reciprocal Relationships

Numerous comments were made in the learning sets that getting others to reciprocate and share information and resources, to either impede the change or help move it forward, forms the basis for interpersonal collaboration.

Set participants agreed that creating partnerships and fostering open and honest relationships were key short-term consequences of gaining allies and managing opponents. In building reciprocal relationships with management, one participant recommended that they meet with management and straightforwardly address their perception of faculty members' hidden agendas, as this would "clear the air" and consolidate relationships among all those concerned with online learning implementation. Insisting that organizational members all work for the greater good and emphasizing that sharing issues might help remove barriers to collaboration with management, a participant commented:

"We need to meet with them [management] and be clear about our intentions... we need to clear the air. If we don't do that, trust among us will never be possible. The stakes are high: we are all aware that management will do whatever it takes to push the project forward. We all know that public funding will be declining in the next few years. Online courses are not a fad: we need to offer our students an alternative to traditional courses... this is how we might increase enrolment." (Participant 2-A) (Comment 4.2.4.2-1)

This comment outlines the notion that allies engage in reciprocal relationships to maintain the alliance in place. As one participant put it: "It's a two-way street."

Personal and Collective Gains

Achieving personal and collective goals through the use of power and influence is "perhaps the most satisfying feeling there is." (Participant 1-C) Allies who work together to achieve goals that are compatible, who share power with their allies when they need it, and who are able to take power away from their opponents who were not convertible into allies, increase the probabilities of achieving personal and collective goals:

"Those opposing the project are only thinking about themselves, their career, their interests... we work in a larger community, and we should try to contribute to collective endeavours from which everyone will benefit, perhaps not to the same degree... Some have lost focus on what a university is all about: it's about working together, learning to put aside some of our immediate goals to contribute to the greater good..." (Participant 4-A) (Comment 4.4.4.2-2)

There are negative outcomes of not being able to gain allies and invite them to join a coalition: this might generate organizational barriers, increase opposition and translate into a loss of power and influence.

Organizational Barriers

There are negative consequences of not being able to gain allies and manage opponents. These include: the occurrence of organizational barriers, increased opposition, and loss of power and influence. "Building an agenda and imposing it on others to promote their [the university's] interests" is how most resisters framed the action taken by management (Comment 4.2.4.2-2); there was some discussion about the effectiveness of this strategy, but it was generally assessed as ineffective as it generated organizational barriers such as faculty members' (resisters') refusal to share their expertise in developing online courses.

Furthermore, excluding faculty members from the decision to implement online learning might foster a reluctance on their part to participate in upcoming important decisions. Management's inability to gain allies and to manage opposition created more barriers to online learning implementation:

“We need to come up with our agenda... we need to frame the project from our point of view. Let’s not give management a choice: let’s make a list of the items that we want to discuss with them, and send it to them. Then let’s wait for their response.” (Participant 2-E) (Comment 4.2.4.2-2)

This shows that an inability to manage opposition effectively might create barriers to change. People become opponents because they don’t feel that they were treated as potential allies.

Increased Opposition

During the second cycle, many resisters justified their opposition to online learning implementation based on management’s inability to gain allies and manage opposition to the project. This was less apparent in the first cycle, when resisters justified their opposition to online learning implementation, not as a retaliatory measure against management’s inability to gain allies and manage opposition to the project, but rather as a reaction to unfavorable external factors (time constraints, loss of academic freedom, etc.).

Loss of Power and Influence

Finally, management’s inability to gain allies and manage opposition resulted in becoming powerless: “allies make you stronger” (Participant 3-B) and lack of allies makes it more difficult to carry out important projects. Powerlessness can impede major initiatives: in the case of the resisters, some felt that they did not have sufficient power and influence to change the course of action taken by management. Getting their allies to help them gain power and influence might engage them in pursuing goals not necessarily compatible with those of the institution.

In taking action to engage resisters, I was careful not to make the same “mistakes” that resisters were blaming management for, and to put forward the positive outcomes of joining an ever-growing coalition of adopters. Many allies were quite active in generating support for this bottom-up change as people felt they were empowered to make decisions about how the change affecting them would unfold.

I took action to sustain alliances such as getting to know adopters on a more personal level to better grasp their concerns and help address them (I wanted them to remain allies), by involving them in decisions regarding the bottom-up change process, and by working with them more regularly than management had done. In doing so, I gained power and influence that I was willing to share with them, which fostered group cohesiveness, all the while objectively acknowledging the shortcomings of not having enough power and influence.

5.3 The Third Action Research Phase: Taking Action

As I was becoming more successful in empowering adopters to form a guiding coalition and move the change forward, what actions would consolidate my power and influence so that I could eventually address the detrimental behaviour of those still opposing the change? Would gaining power suffice to convert resisters to become adopters as they came to feel that resistance was futile (as one participant pointed out: “If you can’t beat them, join them”)? Figure 21 outlines the actions that I undertook to consolidate my power:

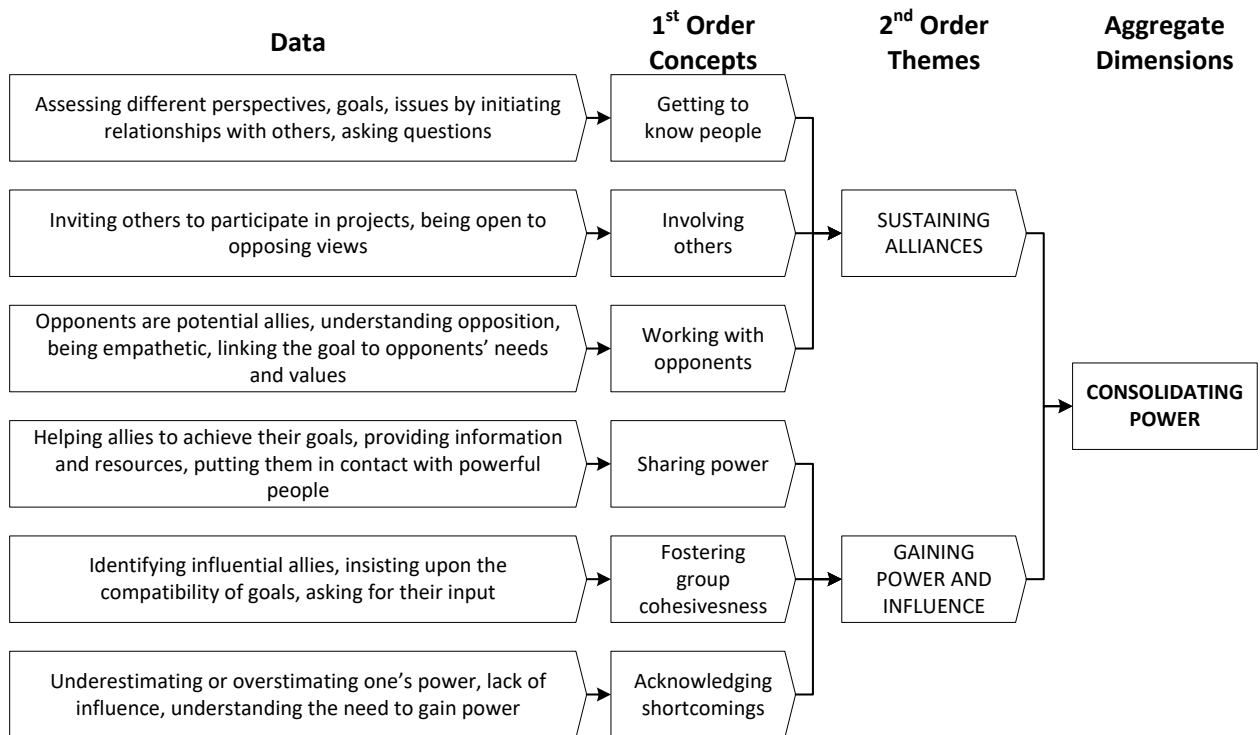


Figure 21: Consolidating Power

Getting to Know People

It became quite clear that devising an effective bottom-up change should include allies (adopters) who share compatible goals. Set members (adopters and resisters alike) agreed that building and sustaining alliances were most useful to them in moving their agendas forward. Allies can become opponents if goals become incompatible, so it is essential to monitor how the context (events, people, decisions, etc.) might impact the goals that allies are pursuing. Getting to know people who might become allies, actively involving them in micropolitical action, and working with opponents to determine if they can become allies, constitute lessons learned by set participants and myself. Furthermore, being proactive, assessing the different perspectives that people (colleagues, superiors, employees, etc.) have on organizational issues, understanding their goals, both personal and organizational, and asking them questions about their work environment are actions that help in getting to know others, some of whom might become allies. Relationships with allies should be based on mutual trust and a keen understanding of what “makes our allies tick” (Participant 1-A).

Involving Others

Data suggest that once allies have been identified, they need to be involved in micropolitical action. Set participants, many of them adopters, argued that inviting allies to participate in projects, assigning specific tasks, asking for help and acknowledging their contribution are important activities because, as one set participant mentioned: “Allies who are not involved become disengaged and the alliance will fall apart.” (Participant 1-C) Allies need to feel useful and involving them in projects and different initiatives serves to maintain the alliance. There are many ways to involve them:

“We need to develop influential, competent and confident allies, and prepare them to intervene on our behalf. I know that X is an ally; he could talk to Y to convince him.” (Participant 1-C) (Comment 4.1.4.3-1)

“We need to help our allies to build a strong rationale, and refer to views of recognized experts. I know someone who could help us do that.” (Participant 1-B)
(Comment 4.1.4.3-2)

Finally, it appears that allies will hope to reap some kind of benefit in getting involved because the goals pursued are compatible with those initiating the alliance.

Working with Opponents

One of the most common insights among set participants was that opponents should not be seen as adversaries nor enemies, but as potential allies (Participant 1-E, comment 4.1.4.1-1; and Participant 1-F, comment 4.1.4.1-2). This entailed perceiving resisters to online learning implementation as potential adopters if their opposition to the project was recognized as legitimate. Engaging in dialogue with them and being empathetic might help to address their issues and shed some light on their needs and values. Linking the goal pursued to their needs and their values (as was mentioned in the first cycle) was one way to convert them into allies, as a participant suggested. One participant (1-F) mentioned that, oftentimes, people tend to ostracize their opponents, which could be risky because powerful opponents might then use their influence to derail the project, being unaware that the project might yield positive outcomes.

Sharing Power

A second lesson learned and shared by participants (namely in the first and second sets) was that gaining power and influence and sharing it is “how one gets things done” (Participant 1-B); it seemed that the only way to move an agenda forward was to influence others to become allies and engage them in helping push the agenda in the right direction. The concept of interdependency (“who depends on you and whom you are dependent upon”) was discussed and some argued that it determines how much power one has over others: “If others depend on you, then you have more power than they do; you can influence them by sharing your power—resources, information and/or expertise with them—in exchange for desired behaviour on their part” (Participant 3-C). It appeared that sharing power was, thus, an important lesson learned by some participants. Sharing power with allies (empowering them) by helping them achieve their goals, providing them with relevant information and resources, and putting them in contact with those who can help them achieve their goals, seemed to be an effective way to gain power because if one has empowered one’s allies for a specific project, they might be more likely to reciprocate and share their power with that individual in the context of a different project. Reciprocity, as participant 4-B suggested, should never be underestimated in the context of micropolitical action.

Fostering Group Cohesiveness

It was suggested in two learning sets that resisters who joined forces to oppose online learning implementation and who cooperated with each other were more able to exert influence on the bottom-up change process than those who did not work in teams. This supposed that group cohesiveness was possible. Some set members (namely Participant 4-A, Participant 2-B and Participant 3-B) argued that working with teams of people who have built alliances among themselves and becoming an ally by insisting upon the compatibility of goals, and asking for their input, are ways to foster group cohesiveness and gain power.

Acknowledging Shortcomings

Finally, a few set participants mentioned that power is dynamic, and its intensity varies according to context: one might be powerful in a particular context, but be powerless in a different context or when

the initial context has evolved. Data suggest that being able to assess how much power one has in a specific context and how it fluctuates is a skill that organizational actors need to develop. Thus, underestimating or overestimating one's power is a major limitation because one never knows how little power one has or how powerful one may be. The need to gain power depends on one's ability to assess one's own power in specific situations. I would argue that when one is aware of how little power one has, one can ask allies for more power; and if one has considerable power, it can be shared with allies, with the expectation that they will eventually reciprocate.

The last phase of the action research cycle was to engage participants in a discussion about the future: "if you had to do it again, what would you do differently? In other words, how would you exert influence on those you want to have as allies, and those whom you perceive as opponents? And why?" These discussions took place with participants in the first and second groups as there were an equal number of adopters and resisters in each of these two groups. I was not successful in initiating a discussion on this topic in the third or fourth group as resisters, in greater numbers in these groups, did not see this discussion as being "relevant." The most interesting data accumulated in that last phase were related to the justifications offered for using a particular tactic: the context in which a tactic is being used seems to largely determine its effectiveness, a tactic being effective when the person using it is able to get others do what he or she wants them to do.

5.4 The Fourth Action Research Phase: Evaluating Action

Are there specific modes of political action that are more effective in empowering adopters and engaging resisters in a bottom-up change? So far, asking allies (adopters) for help proved useful as they were willing to help, and assisting them in achieving their goals (and thus fostering reciprocity) seemed to be the best way to sustain bottom-up change. Since only two groups participated in this last phase (the first and second group) and that data is sparse, thematic analysis did not appear relevant. Instead, I offer a synthesis of what was discussed in these sets as it relates to data obtained so far.

Asking Allies for Help

A set member argued that soliciting the help of others to accomplish certain tasks that result in specific goals is to admit that some goals cannot be achieved alone, and that the contribution of allies is essential. Furthermore, obtaining the help of allies is a persuasive demonstration of political astuteness. As data seem to suggest, one needs to build alliances to acquire influence in a particular context. Finding allies who have influence and who are able to contribute seems to be one of the most effective tactics to gain influence in the context of organizational change. Having influential, competent, trustworthy allies and identifying how they can support the project might be useful in large projects. It seems obvious that allies will be much more willing to offer support if they perceive that they are likely to achieve their goals. Moreover, they will probably be interested in associating with those who have the skills, expertise and/or information to enable them to achieve their goals:

"When you make an argument [to convince others that the change is worthwhile, and that they should get involved themselves], always be well-prepared to analyse, explain, demonstrate, prove and reason rationally with allies [those with whom you share the same goals] whose support you are soliciting." (Comment 4.1.4.1-1)

The consensus among participants in the first and second group seemed to be that demonstrating objectivity and sound judgment in analyzing the situation in which support from allies is required, and with respect to the nature of the request, is another micropolitical behaviour they identified to persuade allies to help.

They commented that decisions should be based on observable and measurable facts and data. As one participant noted, the ability to provide a convincing rationale for action was more likely to convince potential allies.

Taking small steps (for example, proposing an idea and then coming back to it several times; persevering) to gradually engage allies in moving the change forward, was deemed useful because “when you are not in a position of strength, you have no control over the pace at which allies provide support.” (Comment 4.1.4.1-4) Being well-informed about their context makes it possible to adjust the frequency of requests.

Obtaining expert opinions to justify the requests made of allies is another persuasion tactic that was discussed because expert opinions are often valued in organizations (such as universities) and can encourage allies to provide support if they perceive that this is justified by expertise. Presenting allies with relevant information, and providing the rationale behind the request, might be a powerful tactic as allies need to know why their support is being solicited. They might be more willing to help if the reasons are valid and ensure gains and/or allow them to avoid losses. Producing and managing influential information (such as survey results) was assessed as a useful tactic as relevant information can sometimes shed new light on a situation, which may be sufficient to secure support from allies. References from prestigious people may also open doors with allies. (Comments 4.3.3.2-3/4/5)

Helping Allies

Helping allies was another influence tactic that seemed an effective way to initiate reciprocity. Generously sharing expertise and skills with allies with the aim of making them stronger, always keeping them informed, being accessible to allies, and fostering positive relationships with them are means by which help can be given to allies. Sharing benefits and resources with allies, collaborating spontaneously, and getting involved without waiting for allies to request support, were assessed as influence tactics that demonstrate political astuteness. Encouraging allies to collaborate and to form coalitions, and publicly recognizing allies’ contributions, is how alliances are maintained. Finally, public recognition shows one’s ability to work in a team and to recognize the fair value of teammates’ contributions (Participant 1-D).

5.5 Analysis of the Data

Figure 22 on this page offers a synthesis of the findings of the second action research cycle.

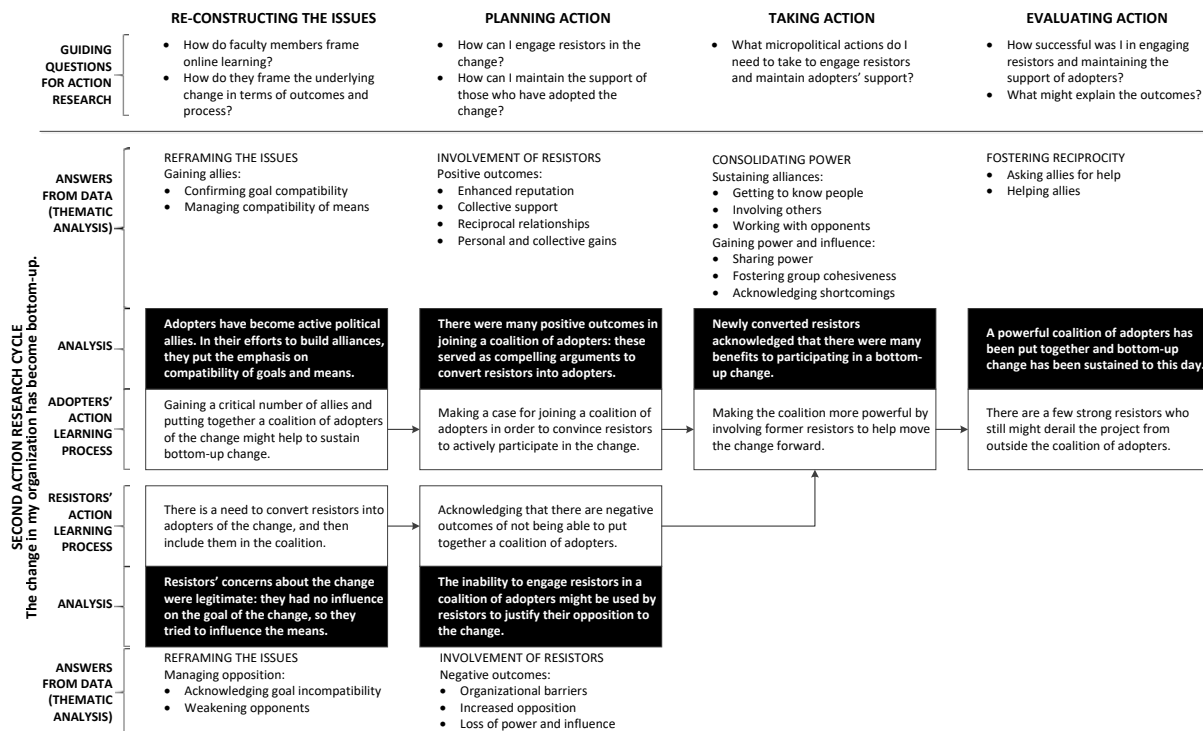


Figure 22: Summary of the Findings in the Second Action Research Cycle

Discussions that took place in the learning sets during the second action research cycle were much more focused on micropolitics than in the first cycle. Analysis of the data obtained in the second action research cycle shows that:

(1) Adopters have become active political allies. In their efforts to build alliances, they put the emphasis on compatibility of goals and means. Resisters' concerns about the change were legitimate: they had no influence on the goal of the change, so they tried to influence the means.

The data accumulated in the first phase of the second action research cycle suggests that the effectiveness of micropolitical action is determined by one's ability to gain allies by managing compatibility of goals and compatibility of means: allies agree on what the goals of the change should be, and how the change should be conducted (Mangham, 1979). I would argue that as long as allies agree on compatibility of goals, disagreement about compatibility of means might engage them in a fruitful dialogue about the way the change process could be improved. I would further contend that the purpose of confronting those with incompatible means and/or goals is to convert them into allies by showing them the gains that the change entails for them, and/or the losses that the change prevents for them. These attempts frequently increase the occurrence of political activity within the organization (Mintzberg, 1983).

A skilled change agent must be able to identify proponents and opponents to the change in order to influence them, with the aim of implementing the change (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). By managing compatibility of goals and compatibility of means, the change agent might gain allies who will make the change possible. Moreover, this suggests that the change agent must acquire sufficient power to be able to share it with those who support the change (the allies), and if compatibility of goals cannot be achieved with some, then with sufficient power, the change agent might need to force them to engage in the change process.

(2) There were many positive outcomes in joining a coalition of adopters: these served as compelling arguments to convert resisters into adopters. The inability to engage resisters in a coalition of adopters might be used by resisters to justify their opposition to the change.

One of the outcomes of joining a coalition is to gain power and influence (Cohen and Bradford, 1989). What I saw in this data confirms that the way people try to acquire power is sometimes potentially through organizational allies (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986). If they are to do this, they can do it in a number of ways: organizational members gain power through allies who are willing to share their power bases; through reciprocity, allies share power bases with each other, and they engage in such transactions for gain maximization and loss minimization. This supports Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) contention that people engage in patterns of behaviour to gain power and influence. These patterns can be observed and described as "strategic games" because they serve one purpose: to gain enough power and influence to maximize one's gains and minimize one's losses, even more so in the context of organizational change where uncertainty and scarce resources exacerbate one's needs for gain maximization and loss minimization.

This has clearly emerged in the data, namely that faculty members have engaged in micropolitical behaviour to initiate "strategic games" with others in such a way as to gain power and influence over the change process and/or the change outcomes in their attempts to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. The more power bases they had, or had access to, directly or through their allies, the more influence they exerted over the change process in such a way that the change outcomes would benefit them. As such, they used their influence to maximize gains and minimize losses that the change entailed. In the context in which they did not have much influence, they had to deal with people who imposed losses on them (namely, management); these "opponents" who had more power and influence, engaged in adversarial "political games" because their gains were other people's losses, and vice-versa.

Also, the positive outcomes in joining a coalition of adopters can serve as compelling arguments to convince resisters to become adopters of the change as they might benefit from becoming members of the coalition. Management was not successful in doing that, and it appears that their inability to engage resisters was used by resisters to justify their opposition to the change. Insisting on the positive outcomes of joining a coalition of adopters might convince resisters to actively participate in the change.

(3) Newly converted resisters acknowledged that there were many benefits to participating in a bottom-up change.

Participating in a bottom-up change provides an opportunity to exert influence on the change process so that gains can be maximized, and losses, minimized. Within Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) framework, it increases one's scope of action. A condition under which bottom-change might succeed is when those participating in it are able to use their power bases to effectively influence others in the change process (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986).

Newly converted resisters acknowledge that, to this day, there are indeed many political advantages to participating in a bottom-up change. They have become outspoken proponents of the change. As the change agent, being able to achieve that consolidated my power and influence. I have become an "informal" member of the coalition, representing management and making sure that the coalition still has the power and influence that it had lacked originally, and which had led, at least partially, to many of the problems I had encountered. The goal of the change is the same; however, there is much more flexibility in how the change is being implemented. Self-determination helps facilitate the acceptance of change (Gagné, Koestner, and Zuckerman, 2000).

(4) A powerful coalition of adopters has been put together and bottom-up change has been sustained to this day.

Adopters have indeed become active political allies. Following the first action research cycle, I took action to empower adopters so that they became more active politically, ultimately forming a powerful coalition of adopters that would drive the change, which would become bottom-up. After the first cycle, they had become more active, but a strong coalition had not yet taken shape. This was the goal of the second action research cycle. In the meantime, adopters were seeking people with whom an alliance was feasible. In their efforts to build alliances, they emphasized compatibility of goals and means. Gaining a critical number of allies (adopters) and putting together a coalition of adopters of the change helped to sustain bottom-up change (Kanter, 1983; and Kotter, 2008). Efforts to include resisters in the coalition started with acknowledging that their concerns about the goal of the change were legitimate, albeit not always explicit: since they had no influence on the goal of the change, they tried to influence the means and in doing so, undermine the change. There was a need to convert resisters into adopters of the change by listening to their concerns, and then including them in the coalition as active adopters. That powerful coalition of adopters remains in place, but it is fragile. There are a few strong resisters who still might derail the project from outside the coalition of adopters.

What did set participants learn in this second cycle? Adopters learned that gaining a critical number of allies and putting together a coalition of adopters of the change might help to sustain bottom-up change, and resisters learned that their concerns about the change were indeed legitimate: they had no influence on the goal of the change, so they learned ways to influence the means. Adopters quickly learned that there were many positive outcomes in joining a coalition of adopters: they used this as a compelling argument to convert resisters into adopters. They were not always successful in doing this, and they learned that their inability to engage resisters in a coalition of adopters might have been used by resisters to justify their opposition to the change. For those newly converted resisters, they learned that there were many benefits to participating in a bottom-up change. As for myself, I learned how to put together and sustain a coalition of adopters to drive bottom-up change that is still active to this day.

5.5.1 Analyzing the Data Using Crozier's and Friedberg's Framework

It is in the second action research cycle that strategic games became more prevalent as adopters were becoming more active in the process of influencing the resisters to become adopters of online learning. Behavioural patterns of both adopters and resisters showed more clearly how they used their power bases to exert influence. Resistance was reduced by involving resisters in a collaborative strategic game in which they were able to influence the change process and, thus, increase their scope of action. Finally, the interactions among adopters helped to sustain a powerful guiding coalition to help implement online learning.

5.5.1.1 Strategic Games

Adopters became involved in a collaborative game and encouraged others to do so by confirming goal compatibility and managing compatibility of means. This shows that collaboration is indeed difficult to sustain (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Their efforts proved useful as the coalition that emerged provided many benefits, the most important one being able to influence the (bottom-up) change process so that the outcomes of the change (online learning) are most beneficial to the members of the coalition. Other benefits outlined by set members include an enhanced reputation, collective support, reciprocal relationships, and personal and collective gains. Personal gains were not specifically identified nor assessed in the learning sets as they took different forms depending on each individual. As mentioned in the previous section, ambition, a desire to be the best, and values can explain a person's political behaviour (Badham, 2008), and vary considerably from one person to another.

5.5.1.2 Behavioural Patterns

The third phase of the action research cycle showed that adopters took action to consolidate their power as they were gaining more and more influence over the change process. In doing so, they used tactics to leverage power bases to exert influence over allies with whom they needed to consolidate their position as a guiding coalition. Their general strategy of consolidation was to identify influential allies and emphasize their compatibility on certain issues. The goal was to ask allies to share their power bases, and to specify their expected contribution. These influence tactics were used as a strategy to gain support from allies in order to manage their own stakes, i.e., to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, which were also similar (not necessarily identical) to allies' gains and losses. Alliances are based on compatible issues (Cohen and Bradford, 1989). When requesting support, individuals must be able to leverage their limited power bases (from a weak position of power) to secure power bases from allies or other organizational actors who have access to them. In a consolidation mode of political action, the person's influence tactics are limited. They must secure power bases relevant to the context, and which their allies are able to mobilize in order to expand their repertoire of influence tactics.

5.5.1.3 Resistance as Competitive Strategic Games

The fact that many resisters converted into adopters of online learning after they had their voices heard and were given ways to influence the change process constructively makes a strong case that resistance as defined in the literature on change management is not a phenomenon that should be eradicated and necessarily a force against change, but can become a force *for* change if properly managed. The concept itself is currently undergoing a major transformation among scholars and is increasingly being defined as encompassing many other phenomena that change recipients experience during change (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999): loss of power, anxiety, cynicism, and organizational silence, to name a few. In other words, resistance is the symptom with multiple causes, one of which is loss of power.

5.5.1.4 Interactions among Organizational Actors

It became clear in the second action research cycle that sustaining a coalition of adopters rests on their ability to interact constructively: getting to know people in such a way that it becomes possible to learn the benefits they hope to reap in the change, involving them, working with opponents as "potential allies," sharing power with others with the same goal, fostering group cohesiveness, acknowledging one's own shortcomings and asking others for help, and reciprocally helping others, are all micropolitical behaviours that adopters exhibited in their efforts to maintain the coalition which, to this day, still exists and is contributing to the success of online learning implementation.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was (1) to understand the underlying motives of faculty members' reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning; (2) to investigate the role that micropolitics might have played in this change using action research with the aim of addressing power issues more effectively; (3) to find ways to engage faculty members opposed to the change through action learning; and (4) to develop a framework that might help address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to help me, the change agent, move the change forward more effectively, thus generating actionable knowledge. The following sections present my conclusions with respect to each of those four goals.

6.1 Faculty Members' Motives for Opposing Online Learning

In terms of understanding the underlying motives of faculty members' reluctance/refusal to participate in the implementation of online learning, I was unable to uncover any that were common to most set participants opposed to the project. Many referred to first-order barriers despite the fact that quite a number of these had already been addressed by management at the onset of the research. They predicted multiple losses if the change succeeded without being able to identify clearly what those losses would be. This was most obvious in the initial phase of the first action research cycle when resisters framed the change brought about by online learning implementation. As for the adopters, the gains they anticipated for faculty, students and the school were very clear. It became apparent during the first action research cycle that many resisters tried to impose a narrative that both the change content (online learning) and the change process (the way it was being implemented) were problematic. A recurring comment they shared was that they were involved neither in the decision to implement this nor in the way it would be done. In other words, they felt powerless as the decision was imposed on them. As for the adopters, they felt no need to become active supporters of the change and gain power and influence to move it forward since management was overseeing both content and process. Hence, loss of power and/or lack of recognition that they had power seemed to have been the catalyst underlying resisters' opposition behaviour. Their motive for opposing online learning was political, which triggered the goal to investigate the micropolitics of online learning implementation.

6.2 Using Action Research to Investigate Micropolitics of Online Learning Implementation

Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) strategic analysis of intra-organizational power provided the framework to investigate the role that micropolitics played in implementing online learning. It appears that early in the process, resisters engaged in micropolitical strategic games to undermine the change by generating opposition to both change content and change process. They tried to influence others not to participate in the endeavour. Had they succeeded, they would have gained power over management, and could have negotiated many aspects of the change. Conceptualizing their resistance behaviour as "competitive strategic games" against management was useful in unearthing the power struggles underlying the change in my school.

In reaction to resisters' behaviour, adopters tried to influence them to engage in online learning. They employed a wide variety of means to sell the change, which I used to try to enroll resisters in online learning, but to no avail. Resisters' competitive strategic games were gradually helping them gain power and influence over the change process in their attempt to prevent the outcomes (online learning implementation and related losses) from becoming reality. A solution to counteract this was to get adopters to form a coalition to empower them to become active supporters. Through alliance building, they gradually gained power which they actively used to engage resisters. They succeeded in getting a few (weak, i.e., less influential) resisters on board.

Strong resisters retaliated and engaged in active resistance that sustained their competitive strategy which fueled power struggles and might explain why the second action research cycle for Group 3 and 4 was not completed.

Nevertheless, I needed to get most resisters to collaborate with adopters. This was the purpose of the second action research cycle, which consisted of finding ways to enroll resisters. Figure 22 summarizes the political dynamics of the project from data obtained at each phase of the first action research cycle. Using the aggregate dimensions from the data for each of the four phases of the action research cycle, Figure 23 shows that adopters gradually gained power to influence the change process so that the outcomes would materialize. As for resisters, they maintained their strong power position throughout. They were already in a strong position from the onset, which explains why it was so problematic for me to move the change forward at the beginning of the research.

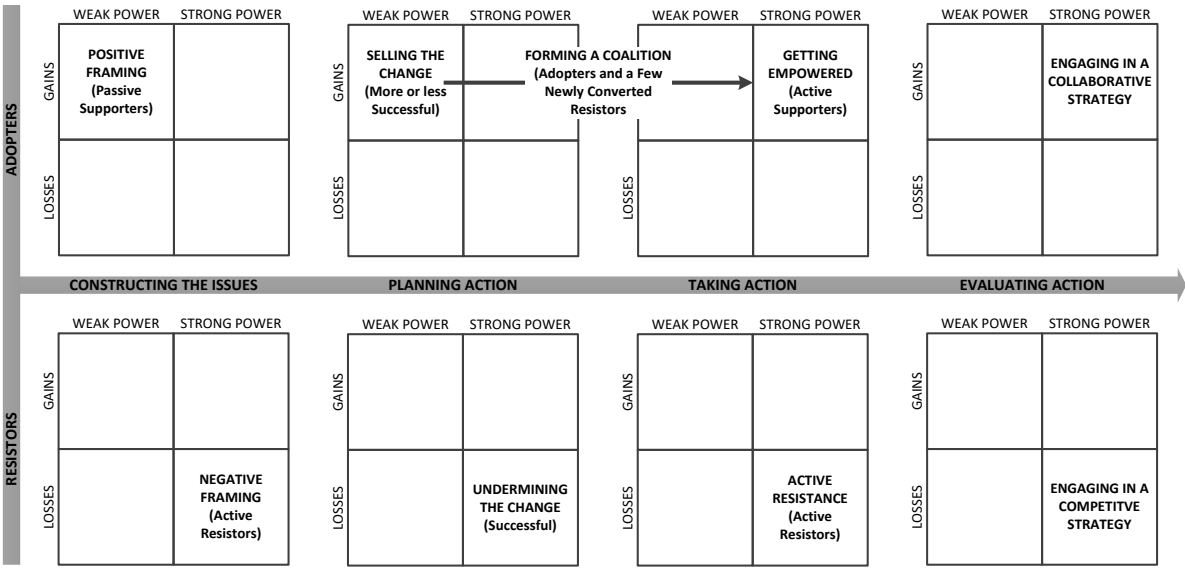


Figure 23: The Political Dynamics of Online Learning Implementation Derived from the Analysis of Data Obtained at Each Phase of the First Action Research Cycle

The second action research cycle allowed me to delve deeper into the micropolitical behaviour of those impacted by and engaged in the change (Figure 24). Adopters became much more active in the coalition and worked hard to gain allies and manage opposition to the project. Reframing the issues helped to address resisters' behaviour constructively. They became less reluctant to listen to the arguments put forward by adopters, and realized that it would be more beneficial for them to engage in an emerging bottom-up change, in which they could voice their concerns and influence the change process accordingly, than to stall the change. In joining the coalition of adopters, many resisters consolidated their power in driving the bottom-up change as adopters were willing to share some of their power bases with them. A coalition of powerful adopters emerged and was instrumental in sustaining the bottom-up change which has made possible the successful implementation of online learning in my school.

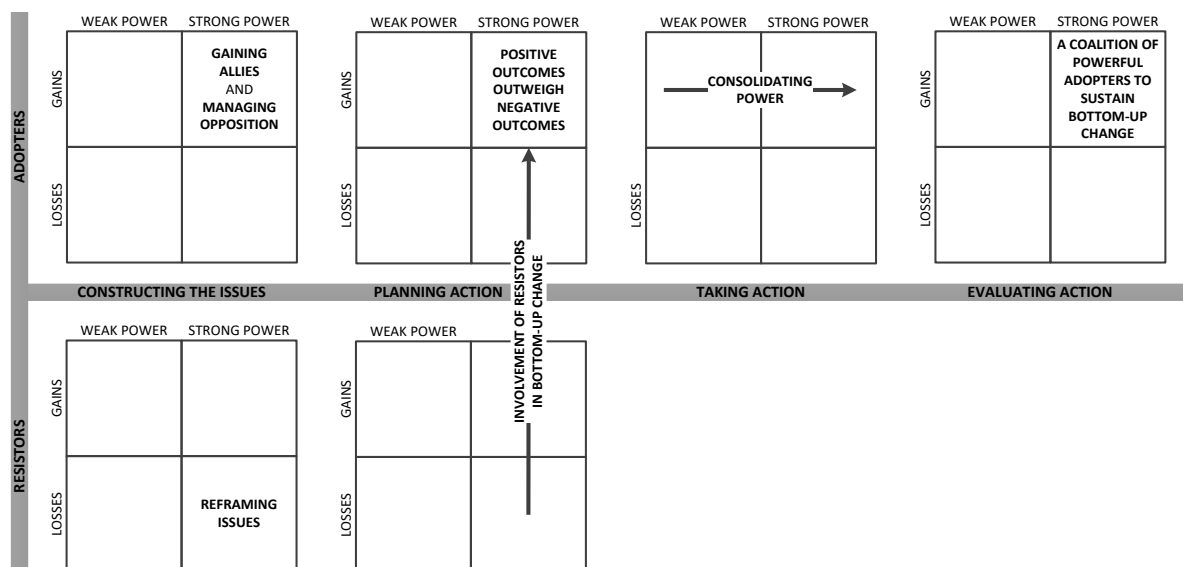


Figure 24: The Political Dynamics of Online Learning Implementation Derived from the Analysis of Data Obtained at Each Phase of the Second Action Research Cycle

The third purpose of the study (to find ways to engage faculty members opposed to the change through action learning) was met and is discussed in the following section.

6.3 Engaging Faculty Members Opposed to the Change through Action Learning

Action learning took place at every step of the research as participants convened in “Learning Sets” and were regularly reminded that the purpose of a learning set is to foster social learning. Indeed, the idea that both adopters and resisters could learn from one another was stressed throughout the meetings. Resisters might have had good reasons to oppose online learning, and adopters’ support for online learning might have been legitimate despite their lack of trust in management. As adopters became more active in gaining power and using their influence to move the change forward, learning was taking place: they learned how to gain power and how to use it to help implement online learning which they believed was worthwhile. As for resisters, their assessment of what they learned in the process was not made explicit despite the fact that the great majority now support and actively participate in online learning. I would hypothesize that they learned to use their power and influence more constructively by interacting with adopters engaged in the change.

To summarize learning that took place in the action research process, I would say that in constructing the issues, participants realized that organizational change is indeed politically loaded: people who feel that the change is worthwhile will try to gain power to influence the change process. Those who disagree will try to gain power to obstruct the change process so that the outcomes do not materialize. In planning action, adopters learned ways to gain power (through building alliances and forming a coalition) to actively influence the change process, and resisters learned that engaging in power struggles can only hurt them in the long run. When taking action, adopters and resisters learned to use their power to help them achieve their goals, whatever they may be, and finally, when evaluating action, they learned the positive and/or negative impact that their influence attempts had on others and on the school.

The last purpose of this research was to develop a framework to help me address micropolitical behaviour in such a way as to move the change forward more effectively, thus generating actionable knowledge. This is discussed in the next section.

6.4 Actionable Knowledge: Four Modes of Political Action as “Strategic Games”

It appears that in the context of top-down, organizational change such as the one that took place in my organization, change recipients who had more gains than losses (the adopters), but who had weak power and influence over the change process, were more likely to be passive; they did not have enough power and influence to steer the change process. In helping them gain power and influence to move the change forward, I helped initiate a bottom-up change in which they became active members. They actively facilitated the change process (by engaging resisters in a powerful coalition) so that they could reap the benefits that the change entailed. Furthermore, in the context of the top-down change that was put forward by management and which imposed losses on some organizational members, they became resisters and gained power to resist the top-down change; they could also have initiated their own, bottom-up change to neutralize the other by engaging in micropolitical behaviour to derail the official, top-down change. From their point of view, a bottom-up change would have provided better gains and/or prevented greater losses than the change imposed on them. Instead of initiating their own bottom-up change, they engaged in the one put forward by adopters in which they wielded influence over the change process so that their desired outcomes become possible.

Not only did adopters’ micropolitical behaviour facilitate the change process by allowing them to build alliances and a coalition that moved the change forward, resisters’ micropolitical behaviour impeded the change process by allowing them to build alliances that they used to undermine the change, or at least neutralize it. Two types of strategic games (using Crozier’s and Friedberg’s terminology) that either helped to support the change or to impede it, took place in my school:

- Collaborative strategic games based on people’s attempts to gain power and influence through their allies, and by helping their allies gain power and influence, to help the change move forward.
- Competitive strategic games based on people’s attempts to prevent their “opponents” (i.e., those with different or opposing views about the outcomes of the change) from blocking or moving the change forward by reducing their opponents’ power and influence. Competitive games can be seen as resistance to change when someone blocks the change by reducing other people’s influence over the change process.

The more power and influence organizational members have, the more impact they have on the change process (and, ultimately, change outcomes). Top-down change, such as that in my organization, created the context in which those who were negatively impacted by this change initially had no power over how the change was being conducted and the outcomes that the change would yield. They strived to gain power and influence to block the change, which gave rise to competitive strategic games. Bottom-up change, on the other hand, was initiated by adopters who gradually gained sufficient power and influence to impact the change outcomes and/or how the change unfolded and to initiate collaborative strategic games with resisters. As I was analyzing the data and using the framework developed by Crozier and Friedberg (1977), it became clear to me that both adopters and resisters got involved in four types of “strategic games,” i.e. clear patterns of behaviour to influence the change process, either to move the change forward or to block it. Furthermore, using these four games helped me provide a rationale to explain the successful “conversion” of resisters into adopters in the context of the change. According to Crozier and Friedberg (1977), people engage in patterns of behaviour to gain power and influence. These “strategic games” are deemed successful when people are able to acquire organizational power or gain access to the people who hold it. These games serve one purpose: to maximize one’s gains and minimize one’s losses, especially in the context of organizational change where uncertainty and scarce resources exacerbate one’s needs for gain maximization and loss minimization.

In the context of this research, the theoretical framework developed by Crozier and Friedberg provided the terminology to analyse and address adopters' and resisters' micropolitical behaviour in the context of the change. Concepts such as allies, opponents, strategic games, coalitions, power bases, influence, reciprocity, scarce resources and many more helped me to make sense of what was going on in my organization. Using these concepts and data obtained during the learning sets, I propose the following framework (Figure 25) as actionable knowledge for managing change in a highly political environment such as a university. This framework serves as a guide to help me address people's micropolitical behaviour during organizational change in my school. This 2 X 2 matrix is based on data obtained in the action research cycles (and presented in the previous chapters), as well as observations that I made throughout the research and that were compiled in a log.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WEAK POWER • GAINS > LOSSES • ALLIANCES <p style="text-align: center;">THE GAME OF CONSOLIDATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STRONG POWER • GAINS > LOSSES • ALLIANCES <p style="text-align: center;">THE GAME OF EXPANSION</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WEAK POWER • LOSSES > GAINS • OPPOSITION <p style="text-align: center;">THE GAME OF PROTECTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STRONG POWER • LOSSES > GAINS • OPPOSITION <p style="text-align: center;">THE GAME OF CONFRONTATION</p>

Figure 25: Four Modes of Political Action in the Context of Organizational Change

In the context in which people have weak power and might gain something from the change if it succeeds, they may involve their allies to gain power and influence to ensure that those gains are possible. This game of “consolidation” takes place in the upper, left-hand corner of the matrix. I observed that in order to move the change forward, both adopters and resisters tried to consolidate their power with their allies, with whom they shared compatible gains, or hoped to avoid similar losses.

In the top right-hand box, those who had considerable power (i.e., they possessed and/or had access to a great number of power bases) would work with their allies to expand their power to help them maximize their gains and minimize their losses. This strategic game of “expansion” helped many to maintain their alliances in place. In the bottom left-hand corner, those who had more to lose than to gain from the change and no allies in sight needed to protect the power they had, and had to prevent their “opponents” (those with a different view about the outcomes of online learning implementation) from weakening them further. This “protection” mode of political action became likely among strong resisters as they realized they were losing ground to adopters who, in the first action research cycle, formed a coalition and gradually became more powerful than them. In what appears to be retaliation, resisters gained power and engaged in active resistance.

Finally, in the bottom right corner, if someone had many power bases, they used them against their opponents who were imposing losses on them, which is what resisters did by framing the change negatively (information power), by generating opposition to the change (group power), by exerting pressure (group power), and by confronting their “opponents,” to name a few strategies.

The strategic games of consolidation and expansion were observed in the first action research cycle. Adopters realized that they had insufficient power to influence the change process that, from their standpoint, would yield positive results. Resistors had more power and influence and threatened to derail the change process. Adopters needed to gain power, acquire allies and move into expansion to be successful. Adopters pursued the strategic game of expansion in the second action research cycle. They gradually gained power and influence through different means such as coming together and working as a coalition, confirming goal compatibility and compatibility of means with some resistors. The change gradually evolved from a top-down endeavour to a bottom-up initiative driven by an ever-growing number of adopters.

The strategic games of protection and confrontation were those in which resistors got involved. In the first action research cycle, resistors protected themselves from losses imposed on them by management's decision to implement online learning. They anticipated negative outcomes and succeeded in gaining power and influence to block the change process and confront management whom they did not trust and framed as "opponents." They engaged in active resistance that jeopardized online learning implementation. With the help of influential adopters, I was able to reduce resistance which became less intense in the second action research cycle as adopters were able to "convert" many resistors into adopters. As the change emerged, newly-converted adopters joined a growing coalition of people in favour of the change and were able to consolidate their power to influence a change process which they had deemed unworthy a few months earlier. Discussions in the learning sets (and what participants have learned from their discussions) have shown that there is a "strategic" (almost "normative") way to use power and influence to help both people and the organization maximize their gains and minimize their losses. The following section is an account of my interpretation of how people got involved in those games to either facilitate or impede the change process and what I learned from it.

6.4.1 Gaining Power through a Consolidation Mode of Political Action

In this mode, I observed that each person's goal was to strengthen their power bases, both quantitatively (increasing the number of power bases that the person had or had access to) and qualitatively (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986). Cohen and Bradford (1989) argue that organizational members gain power through allies who are willing to share their power bases; through reciprocity, allies share power and influence with each other, and they engage in such transactions for gain maximization and loss minimization. This supports Crozier and Friedberg's (1977) contention that people engage in patterns of behaviour to gain power and influence. In that mode, the person can rely on their allies to gain access to power bases that they do not have access to at a particular moment in time. Consequently, I observed that consolidation involved engaging with allies who had common or at least compatible goals in implementing online learning. This implies that both adopters and resistors who realized they had less influence on the change process might have felt the need to consolidate with their allies. The game of consolidation was observed in the first group of adopters, who decided to form a coalition. They realized that by coming together, they increased their chances of steering the change process in the right direction (so that it yields positive outcomes for faculty, students and the university). Thus, in this context I saw that when a person depended on other people to achieve their goals, permitting them to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, one strategy was to adopt a consolidation mode of political action with allies who had the necessary power bases.

Many set members had various power bases such as competencies, expertise and information (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986) and agreed that sharing them with other members of the coalition would make their coalition more influential in the change process. It appeared that the next step would be to reach out to resistors and try to convert them into allies. The rationale in the learning sets was that if individuals can consolidate their power (and increase their influence), this implies that they are in an advantageous political context, surrounded by allies who are politically stronger (i.e., they have more

and better power bases), and on whom they can depend to consolidate their own power. Resistors would not “resist” gaining power and influence as they felt that they were disempowered throughout a change that was imposed on them. The only condition was to support the change and to do this, they needed to realize that overall the change would be beneficial and that they would gain something from it.

Discussions among set members have shown that, in order to successfully engage in a consolidation mode of political action, the individual must identify allies, assess their power bases, and determine how they can maximize their gains and minimize their losses if their allies choose to support them. The dynamics underlying this political mode of action seemed to unfold as follows: when consolidating his or her position, a person in a weak position of power in a particular context solicited allies for support. As the “political game” is a game of interests, the person tried to convince allies of the gains they were likely to make and/or the losses they could avoid if they supported the person. The political game is anything but altruistic, according to one set participant. The goal of all organizational actors is to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, although these gains and losses are usually intangible (e.g., reputation gains, reduced situational uncertainty, etc.) (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977). Therefore, it appears that clearly identifying the political attributes of other actors (what they want to get out of the game, i.e., their stakes and interests; what they have, i.e., their resources, namely their power bases) is an asset in the game: it prepares organizational actors to effectively exercise their influence, in full awareness of the gains their allies want to make and the losses they want to avoid, and what resources to request from them.

It also appears that consolidating one’s own power depends on the person’s ability to solicit allies for support and ensure that support is provided. As one research participant put it: “It is the art of asking without begging;” it consists of obtaining assurance that allies will help the individual acquire influence by increasing the quantity and quality of the person’s power bases. I would argue that a request for allies’ support is the most evident proof of trust, of respect for their power bases, and an expression of alliance. If the person’s request is granted, it is proof that the alliance is strong, and that the person will be able to shift to gain power and influence. If the request is denied, then the person might need to move into a protection mode of political action.

6.4.2 Protecting One’s Own Power through a Protection Mode of Political Action

Participants engaged in action learning have argued that protecting oneself from “opponents” is obviously an uncomfortable situation. An “opponent” was defined as someone who not only has a differing view about the outcomes of the change, but who also refuses to share their power bases with others and/or uses them to derail the change and impose losses on others. In this mode, a person is in a weak position and is up against opponents to the change that they want to implement. It seems that this is the position that most resistors found themselves in from the onset of online learning implementation. They felt disempowered by management who had decided to impose the change on them. They apparently assumed that they had more to lose than to gain from this endeavour. In the first action research cycle, it was clear that resistors framed management as the “great villain,” not to be trusted in any way. To counteract this, resistors tried to gain power and influence over the change process (and succeeded). Their resistance attempts jeopardized the change. This is when I found myself in a protection mode and decided to conduct action research to better understand and address their concerns. In hindsight, had I not done so, the change would certainly have failed entirely.

As discussions took place in the second action research cycle, management was no longer the “great villain” but, instead, the fault lay with people who had made the mistake of thinking that imposing online learning on faculty members would succeed. One participant rightly mentioned: “While it is tempting to consider opponents (management) as adversaries, an opponent is never an enemy, but a potential ally.” The basic principle that was put forward by a participant is: individuals who express a

form of opposition may have very good reasons, of which the change agent is perhaps unaware, and which he or she should discover. This change of tone was what I adopted towards resisters to gradually involve them in the change process in the second action research cycle. An opponent is an individual who anticipates losses in a situation and goes up against the person in an effort to avoid these losses. Opponents, in this scenario, may be resistant to the person's influence and may attempt to obstruct their efforts to implement their change. An opponent is likely to have no interest in allowing someone who will generate a loss for them to gain power: instead they will likely push the person into a protective mode where, due to limited influence, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for them to carry out projects, fulfil mandates, or implement changes that would benefit the organization. Resisters had indeed forced management (and myself) into a protective mode. As the representative of management, I needed to convert resisters (opponents) into allies. I could not do it alone and I needed the support of adopters who agreed to consolidate their power and form a strong coalition for online learning implementation.

It appears that opponents can deny the person access to the resources needed (such as information) to implement actions to achieve their goals, as resisters did. Too often, people in a protective mode of political action tend to isolate themselves from others, avoiding opponents to escape their anger (Pettigrew, 1985b). This is the least effective strategy, as one research participant pointed out. On the contrary, it seems from the experience in this context that a person in a protective mode of political action should be very active in the political game.

This is exactly what I and the allies did in the second action research cycle. Discussions were sometimes heated as people often react emotionally to loss, because it is felt more intensely than gain (due to the psychological phenomenon of loss aversion—Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). The atmosphere was tense, and opponents (adopters and resisters alike) often strongly expressed anger and disagreement in an attempt to neutralize the person's efforts to achieve a goal that would, sooner or later, generate losses for them. However, by taking the initiative to meet the opponents, to better understand the reasons for their opposition, I was able to gain knowledge that was useful. By having the courage to demonstrate the merits of our ideas, while being receptive to opposing ideas, we (adopters and I) were able to engage with the resisters. Thus, those in a protective mode can be politically very active in their attempts to convert opponents. However, if their efforts to convert their opponents into allies fail, it seems that the only possible alternative is confrontation. This is probably why protection is an uncomfortable political position: it is first preferable to convert opponents and if this is not possible, to confront them. This is what resisters had tried to do at the onset of online learning implementation (meeting with management to voice their concerns), but they felt they were not heard. They then decided to confront management by resisting the change.

One research participant argued that rather than convert or confront opponents, persons in a protective mode of political action sometimes need to consider a third option: withdrawing from the "game" (the situation). By withdrawing, the individual gives their opponents *carte blanche*. This strategy would most certainly only be harmful to the person withdrawing, who would then be perceived as unable to cope with the pressure and lacking in political courage. Their reputation would likely be tainted, and they would become very vulnerable. As a result, their longstanding allies might desert them. This is the worst possible situation, "which is why it is important to choose your battles!" as a research participant concluded. Rather than an end, a protective mode of political action seems to be an opportunity for the person to apply their talents of persuasion to rally opponents; if attempts are inconclusive, and if the goal cannot be achieved without incurring losses for opponents, it may be necessary for the person to shift to an offensive (confrontational) mode of political action, and to assert their ideas through power struggles, by inflicting losses on opponents if they do not comply.

6.4.3 Reducing the Power of Opponents through a Confrontational Mode of Political Action

Confrontation may be politically necessary when it becomes impossible to convert opponents into allies, but should be a last resort (as one participant mentioned). It seems likely that an organizational actor will shift to confrontation when opponents have given them no alternative. This is what resisters did when they decided to block the change: they had tried unsuccessfully to be heard by management who had imposed the change on them. Resisters then engaged in confrontation in which they asserted themselves. Management retaliated and also engaged in confrontation rather than jeopardize the change that they had initiated, and which served the collective interest of most (with the exception of opponents). This is when I decided to conduct this research.

It seems that confrontation is absolutely not about settling a score, as one participant put it: it is an assertion of power that aims to help the organization maximize gains and minimize losses, at the expense of incurring losses for opponents who do not collaborate. A politically skilled (astute) person would have to keep in mind that an opponent is always a potential ally, which is why confrontation is not personal, even if it is perceived as such (Cohen and Bradford, 1989). I would further argue that confrontation is not an attack: the aim is never to attack the individual on a personal level, but rather to confront their ideas, arguments and actions. It is important also to choose the right way to express confrontation: Will it be public or private? How forceful will it be? Because the intensity of a confrontation depends on opponents' potential losses, it might be worthwhile to identify opponents' stakes before confronting them, as one would do with allies. Finally, there is clearly potential to damage relationships in this mode of action and the confronting person should be careful not to damage the relationship with opponents, maintaining some room for manoeuvre to convert them into allies after a confrontation. I would argue that confrontation should never be the goal of a political game; rather, it might be a necessary step where there is no other recourse with opponents. This was made obvious in the second action research cycle when many resisters decided to join the coalition of adopters as they realized that there were benefits in influencing the change process so that their gains become attainable.

6.4.4 Empowering Allies through an Expansion Mode of Political Action

As the change agent, I found myself in the second action research cycle adopting an expansion mode of political action. I had succeeded in building a strong coalition of adopters who had become my allies. They had many benefits in associating with me because I was able to empower them and make them more influential in helping them maximize their gains and minimize their losses, whatever they may have been.

When in an expansion mode, the person's likely most difficult challenge will be to stay there, as I observed. It was a delicate balance between directing allies without forcing them, in order to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. Since we shared similar gains and losses, I needed to make sure that those gains and losses remained the same as the change was moving on. To help allies achieve their goals, I found it necessary to carefully identify the gains they hoped to make and the losses they wanted to avoid. This is why, as the change agent, I needed to stay "on top of my game" by showing how competent I was in managing the change, staying well informed about the concerns of my allies and sharing information with them, involving them in decisions and providing them with the needed resources to help the change move forward. This means that in an expansion mode of political action, the person may have greater flexibility to achieve their goals. It also means that, to maintain this flexibility, it makes sense for the political actor to carefully study the context and grasp its dynamics in order to anticipate potential changes in the political terrain within the organization that could impact the number of power bases available and their relevance (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986).

In summary, I have tried to show from this research that political modes of action (and the underlying power dynamics) are indicative of a person’s power bases and the presence or absence of allies in their context with whom to share those power bases. In a consolidation mode, the aims of the actor seem to be to increase the number of their power bases and create alliances, enabling them to shift to an expansion mode. Once in this mode, the individual can maintain their political position by empowering their allies. If they do not succeed in consolidating their power and alliances, the person will likely have to shift to a protective mode of action, and then try to convert opponents (who are making them weaker, politically) into allies to shift out of it. If this is not possible, there is an option to consider an offensive (confrontational) mode of political action in order to make opponents less powerful, to then help them make gains and convert them into allies. In an expansion mode of political action, the organizational actor has a large number of power bases and allies with whom to share them. The basic strategy that worked in my research was to help allies manage their stakes (to make gains and avoid losses). Consequently, by sharing my power bases with allies I was able to make them more powerful and succeed in moving the change forward.

6.5 Initiating a Bottom-Up Change by Empowering Allies (Adopters) and Involving Opponents (Resistors)

The implications of this research in my context are that there seems to be a relationship between an individual’s power and how this will be exerted in the context of organizational change (Figure 26). In an expansion mode of political action, an individual can rely on allies to either facilitate or resist (impede) the change process, depending on the gains and losses associated with the outcomes of the change. The political position (consolidation, expansion, protection and confrontation) determines power and, therefore, the individual’s capacity to exert influence. The change agent (and change recipients) should try to shift to the most advantageous political position, expansion, maintaining it as long as possible. This strategic game allows more flexibility, access to resources, and coalition development. It is in an expansion mode of political action that the change agent—and recipients—are most likely to succeed.

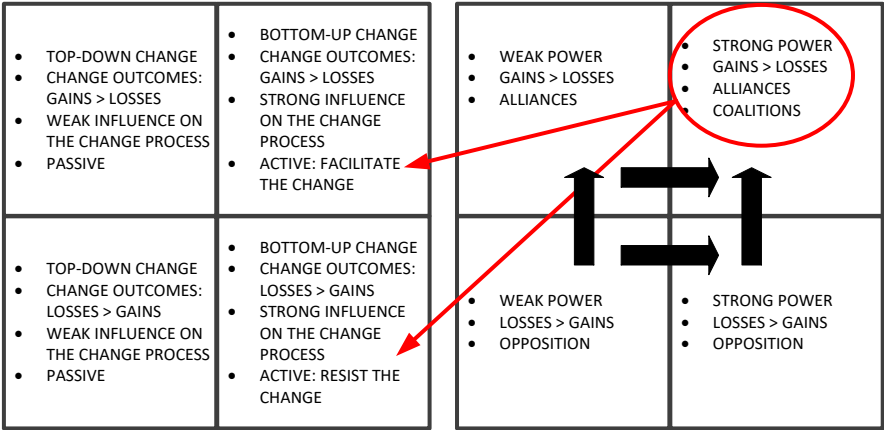


Figure 26: Links between an Individual’s Power and Organizational Change

The left-hand matrix is a generalization of the data obtained in the first action research cycle and which support the idea that people adopt a passive role in top-down changes in which they feel disempowered. They do not have much influence over the change process, so the outcomes (their gains and losses) are those that have been decided by management. If those outcomes take the form of gains that are greater than losses, then people might hope to acquire power and influence in such a way as to actively move the change process forward.

If those outcomes take the form of losses that are greater than gains, then people might try to gain power and influence in such a way as to actively impede the change process (as was the case in my university). In both instances, people tried to gain power and influence and, thus, became actively engaged in strategic games.

The right-hand matrix is based on data obtained in the second action research cycle. Data show that the individuals' political aim was to increase and maintain their flexibility on the organizational terrain and reduce their uncertainty about gains and losses that the change entails. In an expansion mode of political action, I, as the change agent, had the most flexibility: because my context was favourable, I could "lead the change" and address resistance most effectively. Allies were willing to comply with my requests and were receptive to my influence attempts. In this scenario, "opponents" (i.e., resisters) became allies when they saw the benefits of facilitating the change. This position of expansion has the least uncertainty. Conversely, I saw that a protective mode of political action had the greatest uncertainty since it implies an unfavourable context. Here change agents are surrounded by opponents, and the quality and quantity of their power bases is suboptimal. The likelihood of losses against opponents is thus increased. Change agents would have to extricate themselves from this political position. It appears that by moving strategically on the right-hand matrix in the following manner (as indicated by the arrows in the matrix), the change agent increases the likelihood of making the change successful. This can be summarized as follows:

- If—after identifying the context and assessing the quantity and quality of their power bases—the person conducting the change determines that they are in a consolidation mode of political action, the goal would be to increase the quantity and quality of current or available power bases with the support of their allies. Consulting influential allies, asking them to share their power bases, requesting their help, specifying the contribution anticipated, being objective and showing sound judgement, and asking allies to intervene might help to consolidate power. These were some of the tactics used by adopters in the first action research cycle when they formed a coalition and became more active in the change process. Comments made by set participants confirm that they are the same tactics that management should have used to consolidate their power prior to implementing online learning.
- If the change agent is in an expansion mode of political action, the goal is to help allies maximize their gains and minimize their losses; politically skilled change agents should maintain their power and alliances based on the principle of reciprocity and actively share their power with their allies to make them more influential on the change process, and to make their opponents less influential until they become allies. Helping allies to make gains and avoid losses, sharing power bases with them, keeping them informed about the change, being accessible to them, responding quickly to their requests, consulting them, sharing responsibilities with them, and making them participate in decisions are all tactics that one could use to expand, as the data show.
- If the change agent is in a protective mode of political action, their goal would be to shift to a consolidation mode of political action by converting their opponents (resisters) into allies (adopters). In this mode, tactics such as arguing to show the feasibility or pertinence of the goal which has met with opposition, linking the goal to opponents' needs and values, listening to the opposition voiced against the change, and explaining how the goal pursued will help opponents to maximize their gains and minimize their losses, might all be useful in converting opponents into allies. If this is not possible, the change agent might need to consider confrontation, but only as a last resort.

- If the change agent confronts their opponents, and opponents have no choice but to comply, the change agent's goal might be to shift to an expansion mode of political action by converting them into allies after they have complied (albeit reluctantly) with the change agent's demands, and then make them more influential so that they actively participate in the bottom-up change driven by allies. I contend that the ultimate goal of politically astute change agents is to direct all their efforts towards achieving an expansion mode of political action, which has proved fruitful in solving my problem.

This "strategic" way to use power proved useful in the change I am conducting. It cannot be generalized to other contexts; nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to repeat this research in other contexts to find out if there is a "normative" or more effective way to use power when implementing change.

6.6 Concluding Reflections

This research was developed and conducted by establishing many linkages among concepts relating to online learning implementation, change, power and micropolitics. Action research was incorporated in the research design to help understand why faculty members engage in micropolitical behaviour in the context of top-down change, and how this behaviour (and the change agent's behaviour) might facilitate or impede the change process. The research explored how the loss of power among faculty members might explain their resistance to the change and found ways to address those power issues in order to help me manage the change process more effectively. The overall objective of this endeavour was to get faculty members actively and constructively involved in the change process underpinning the implementation of online learning in my organization. Learning sets were put in place to foster action learning among research subjects in order to help them navigate the change more constructively.

6.6.1 Contribution to Disciplinary Knowledge

The research has provided a small but useful extension to Crozier's and Friedberg's (1977) framework through its mapping of strategic games onto a change process model. Process theories of change focus on the various phases for change agents to follow in implementing change and on ways to understand how organizational members experience change as it unfolds (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999). Many of the multi-phase processual models for change fail to account for the political nature of both change recipients' and change agents' behaviour (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). Those which do (Egan, 1994; Kotter, 1995; Pettigrew, 1985b; and Robbins, 2005) describe which micropolitical behaviour (mostly of change agents) might help move the change forward, but not how to engage in such micropolitical behaviour as a tool to influence change recipients as the change unfolds. For example, Egan (1994) offers advice on choosing a political strategy, but his advice is rather generic: "learn the name of the game in your organization: how are politics played here? Enlist your supporters early; form powerful alliances and coalitions; identify the key players." How can one decipher the game? How does one form powerful alliances and coalitions and keep them in place as the change moves on? How does one identify the key players? Who are the key players? Are they the ones who wield the most power or those who have a wide network of contacts? How can one engage them in the change?

Another example is Kotter's (1995) recommendation to form a powerful coalition of individuals who embrace the need for change and who can rally others to support the effort as a necessary step for successful change is certainly relevant. However, how can such a coalition take shape? How can change recipients increase their power and influence over the change process by actively participating in a coalition? How can a coalition help initiate bottom-up change? As for Pettigrew (1985b), he advises the change agent to pay attention to the organizational context because change processes are often untidy, iterative, and politicized. However, he does not offer advice about how such politics should be managed by the change agent.

Robbins (2005) recommends that change agents frame their arguments in terms of organizational goals and develop powerful allies. How does one manage conflicting frames, those put forward by people supporting the change and those opposing it? How can one develop powerful allies? How does one distinguish between a strong and a weak ally? Finally, many of those models fail to describe and explain the micropolitical behaviour of change recipients: how does this behaviour manifest itself and what are the different forms it can take? Which behaviour is conducive to change and which is not? How can the behaviour of those opposing the change be transformed to become a force for change? This research provides answers to many of the questions above and, as such, contributes to our understanding of the politics of organizational change.

Another contribution to disciplinary knowledge is to have shown that political strategic games unfold and change over time. Political games are highly dynamic: a player can be in a consolidation stance one day and in protection the next; in other words, they may count on allies only to suddenly find they have none because the stakes have changed. Similarly, they may have a large number of power bases in a given situation, but lose some when the situation changes. Moreover, the dynamics of political games vary with the nature and magnitude of gains and losses. Consequently, as the change agent's political position (and related tactics) constantly change, identifying the factors that impact the dynamics of political games is undoubtedly an asset for the change agent.

6.6.2 Contribution to Practice

Managers can learn to identify and assess the quality and quantity of their power bases and their starting mode by reflecting on their own power bases and those of others. Based on accumulated data and in an attempt to provide consistency to a fragmented theoretical framework about how people gain and use power, I have argued that micropolitical behaviour is the manifestation of certain types of power bases that people have and/or to which they can have access (Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth, 1986). Based on the model of organizational power bases of Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth (1986) (which is a revised – and extended – version of French and Raven's model), micropolitical behaviour revealed in the research can be associated with the different power bases developed by Benfari, Wilkinson, and Orth (1986):

- Legitimate power enables the manager to compel people to carry out a given course of action.
- The manager can choose to reward those who perform to these expectations.
- Otherwise, coercive power can be used to achieve the desired results.
- Skill is a source of power based on education-driven knowledge and know-how. Someone who has developed their skills in a particular field can wield this power to make other people act in a given way.
- Expert power is related to experience and practice. It is developed over time. Someone with expertise can wield this power to make other people act in a given way.
- Information power depends on what a manager knows about others (their stakes) and the overall situation, the organization's strategic priorities and so forth.
- Referent power lies in the personal qualities of the person exerting it in predisposing others to do their bidding.
- Connection (affiliation) power stems from a player's formal or informal network of contacts. These contacts are apt to share power bases that the person does not actually possess but that are such as to help them achieve their objective.
- Finally, group power is a collective power that a person has by virtue of a formal or informal group with which they are associated within an organization.

The more power bases managers have, the more influence they might wield in a particular context. The quality of those power bases can be inferred by context: if they are relevant in a particular context, one could conclude that these power bases are of good quality. For example, a manager who has

expertise in conducting a specific type of change has more power and influence than a manager who doesn't. One who has relevant information about other people's stakes has more influence than one who doesn't. If managers don't have enough power, they should then try to build alliances so that their allies share their power bases with them. More specifically, when in a consolidation mode of political action, the manager should identify influential allies, consult them, spend time with them and insist upon the compatibility of their respective stakes. They should ask them to share their power bases, and never hesitate to request their allies' help. They should be objective and show sound judgement in what they ask of their allies. They could also ask their allies to intervene on their behalf (affiliation power).

If managers are in an expansion mode of political action, they should help their allies manage their stakes (to make gains and avoid losses). They should share their power bases with their allies, for example by making them better skilled in dealing with the change and fostering group cohesiveness. They should keep their allies informed, be accessible to them, and respond quickly to their requests. They should consult their allies, share their responsibilities with them, and make them participate in decisions. They should always remain visible and accessible to their allies.

In a protection mode of political action, managers should meet with the "opponents" (the resisters) and argue to show the feasibility or pertinence of the goal which has encountered opposition. They should try to link the goal of the change to opponents' needs and values. They should listen to the opposition's request and show empathy. Finally, they should explain how the goal pursued will help their opponents maximize their gains and minimize their losses.

If a protection mode of political action does not help to convert opponents into allies, managers should gain power (with the help of their allies) and then move into a confrontation mode of political action with the opponents. They should state their conditions and show how they allow the opponents to make gains and avoid losses. They might need to impose or demand, but without aggressiveness. They should try to obtain their opponents' trust in both their image and the quality of the change pursued. They should try to convince their most determined opponents one by one, in private, and then publicly acclaim their contribution.

This is how managers can use their power bases and manage them to engage in the strategic games of consolidation, expansion, protection and confrontation to influence both allies and opponents to become adopters of organizational change.

6.6.3 Limitations

There are obvious limitations to the research, the most important one being the peculiarities of the context in which the research was conducted: universities are indeed peculiar organizations in which the rules and behaviour of their members are quite different from those in "normal" organizations. The principle of academic freedom provides their members with much liberty to do what they want, a degree of freedom that is not found in other types of organizations. This might explain why resistance to change (and underlying competitive political games) is so intense in a university setting. Power games are very much determined by context, which is why contextualism, according to Pettigrew (1985a) (and which has been the basis of this research) is the only process by which a researcher can methodically uncover legitimation and delegitimation processes that organizational change entails.

Another limitation related to context is that power is culturally determined: the way people wield power and exert influence is a reflection of cultural norms (Buchanan and Badham, 2008; and Scott-Morgan, 1995). The games of consolidation, expansion, protection and confrontation might not be "played" the same way in places with differing cultural norms. Finally, further research might help to unveil ways by which people enter into transactions of power bases. This topic was not investigated in

great depth in this research, but appears to be an important aspect underlying political games: any type of game involves at least two players who agree to play, either within the framework of a win-win game (as in the case of consolidation and expansion) or within the framework of a win-lose game (as in the case of protection and confrontation).

6.6.4 Self-Reflection

I have learned a great deal in conducting this research despite the many challenges that I faced throughout. The most important challenge was to sort out and make sense of the amount of data that I have accumulated. I had difficulties in determining what was relevant. I spent a great deal of time going back to the data, trying to understand how it could help me better grasp the underlying political dynamics of online learning implementation. Thematic analysis helped me make sense of the data and focus on the problem that I was hoping to solve: engaging resisters in online learning implementation.

Another challenge was that this issue (online learning implementation) is a highly politicized one in my university, and I had to deal with set participants dropping out of the learning sets for undisclosed motives. The few who chose to drop out are less active in opposing the change as it has gained momentum with the coalition that was put in place to move it forward. They might feel less powerful in opposing the change, which does not mean that they have abandoned their “crusade” against online learning. Also, in making my allies (the adopters) more powerful, I have gained a reputation for “making things happen.” The administration is pleased with the way things are unfolding, and there is a possibility that many more courses will be offered online in the next few years. I have become more politically astute and less reluctant to engage in micropolitics.

Throughout this research, I realized how much I hate conflict, to the extent that I will tend to minimize or discard opposing views. In my attempts to avoid conflict, I tend to overemphasize the positive. Hearing discordant voices, instead of suppressing them, can allow a new perspective on issues to emerge. Not listening gave resisters the impression that their views were irrelevant or not worth discussing. I realized that to address the issue at hand, I must learn that “confronting” opponents might be necessary for problem resolution. I also learned about the importance of giving allies the space they need to convince the “opponents.” Letting the allies conduct learning set meetings had a more positive impact on the resisters than I could have had. Self-regulation among set members, I learned, is a powerful political force: some adopters took the lead, and steered the discussions in such a way that their issues were addressed for the first time. Being more of an observer than an active member of the situation unfolding proved to be a good “strategy” on my part. My inclination to exert control over group processes was tempered by the results achieved.

I also realized that my inclination to obey and do what is expected has jeopardized the change. Challenging management on certain decisions and demanding that information be shared with change recipients might have helped move the change forward. I should have tried from the beginning to build a coalition with those in favor of the change. Encouraging them to influence those opposed to the change early on would have had a positive impact on the implementation of online learning. Instead, I worked alone in moving the change forward. I could have increased my power earlier in the project by gathering adopters in a coalition. Having confidence in the group’s ability to assess and solve organizational issues proved to be an effective strategy, but it is a stance that I seldom take. Based on the success achieved to this day, I have started doing this more often.

From an ethical perspective, I addressed ethical issues that have arisen when certain participants appeared to put their own self-interests above organizational interests. I aimed to engage faculty members to “work in the best interests of others,” and to encourage them to participate actively in the success of online learning implementation by demonstrating that they stood to benefit from the change. Management placed me in charge of managing the change related to the implementation of

online learning in my organization, and holds me accountable for this endeavour. I was worried that conducting research while implementing this change would create confusion: How would I be perceived by set participants? Could they become suspicious of my motives? This did not seem to be the case.

At one point, though, I did have undisclosed motives (mostly with groups 3 and 4 in which the number of resisters was greater than the number of adopters): I hoped that adopters would retaliate against resisters who kept opposing online learning implementation. This was unrealistic as resisters were greater in number. I realized that in doing so, I was taking sides and letting my own biases interfere with the research. As a change agent, I was hoping that resisters would be defeated by adopters, but as a researcher I was keenly aware that encouraging resisters to share their concerns might help find ways to move the change forward.

Thus, my roles as researcher and change agent did overlap in these instances but following Coghlan and Brannick's (2010) recommendation, I cultivated role flexibility and permeability. This was conducive to creating a dialogue, which helped to sustain "a subjective and intersubjective process of inquiry and confrontation" (Cunliffe, 2010, p. 406).

I started this research in 2016, not knowing where it would lead me. Three years later, I find that many of my assumptions about power, change and resistance were wrong. Power is indeed a useful tool to engage allies in becoming adopters of online learning, as it is a tool to persuade opponents, who are resisters of the change, to become allies. Although it is reassuring to conduct a top-down change as one feels that they are in control (as I did), the probability of succeeding is better if the change is bottom-up and involves everyone, even those who are opposing it: the only way to convince someone to become an ally is to listen to them. Finally, resistance is not so detrimental to change: it is the symptom that, perhaps, resisters feel that they have not been heard.

REFERENCES

- Aarrevaara, T., Dobson, I.R. & Wikström, J. (2015) "Changing employment and working conditions." Fumasoli, T., Goastellec, G. & Kehm, M.B. (eds.), *Academic Work and Careers in Europe: Trends, Challenges, Perspectives*, Springer International Publishing, Basel, pp. 95-115.
- Akbarilakeh, M., Razzaghi, A., & Moghaddam, H. D. P. (2019) "Attitudes of faculty members towards using e-learning." *Research and Development in Medical Education*, 8 (1), pp. 12-19.
- Al-araibi, A., Naz'ri, A. M., bin Mahrin, M., & Yusoff, R. C. M. (2019) "Technological aspect factors of E-learning readiness in higher education institutions: Delphi technique." *Education and Information Technologies*, 24 (1), pp. 567-590.
- Alhabeeb, A., & Rowley, J. (2018) "E-learning critical success factors: Comparing perspectives from academic staff and students." *Computers & Education*, 127, pp. 1-12.
- Ali, S., Uppal, M. A., & Gulliver, S. R. (2018) "A conceptual framework highlighting e-learning implementation barriers." *Information Technology & People*, 31 (1), pp. 156-180.
- Allen, I. E., Seaman, J., Lederman, D., & Jaschik, S. (2012) "Conflicted: Faculty and online education, 2012." A joint project of the Babson Survey Research Group and Inside Higher Ed.
- Allen, R. W., Madison, D. L., Porter, L. W., Renwick, P. A., & Mayes, B. T. (1979) "Organizational politics: Tactics and characteristics of its actors." *California Management Review*, 22 (1), pp. 77-83.
- Al-Mashari, M. & Zairi, M. (1999) "BPR implementation process: an analysis of key success and failure factors." *Business Process Management Journal*, 5 (1), pp. 87-112.
- Alt, R. (2001) "Mikropolitik," in E. Weik and R. Lang (eds.). *Moderne Organisationstheorien. Eine sozialwissenschaftliche Einführung*. Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag, pp. 285-318.
- Ammeter, A. P., Douglas, C., Gardner, W. L., Hochwarter, W. A., & Ferris, G. R. (2002) "Toward a political theory of leadership." *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13 (6), pp. 751-796.
- Antonacopoulou, E. (2008). "Actionable Knowledge" in *The International Encyclopedia of Organization Studies*, S. R. Clegg & J. R. Bailey (eds.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., pp. 2-6.
- Argyris, C. (1977) "Double loop learning in organizations." *Harvard Business Review*, 55 (5), pp. 115-125.
- Armenakis, A. A. & Bedeian, A. G. (1999) "Organizational change: a review of theory and research in the 1990s." *Journal of Management*, 25 (3), pp. 293-315.
- Armenakis, A. A., Harris, S. G., & Mossholder, K. W. (1993) "Creating readiness for organizational change." *Human Relations*, 46, pp. 681-703.
- Attwood, M. (2007) "Challenging from the margins into the mainstream—improving renal services in a collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit." *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, 4 (2), pp. 191-198.

- Aubusson, P., P. Burke, S. Schuck, M. Kearney, and B. Frischknecht (2014) "Teachers Choosing Rich Tasks: The Moderating Impact of Technology on Student Learning, Enjoyment and Preparation." *Educational Researcher*, 43 (5): pp. 219-229.
- Bacharach, S. B. & Lawler, E. J. (1981) *Power and Politics in Organizations: The Social Psychology of Conflict, Coalitions, and Bargaining*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bachrach, P. & Baratz, M. S. (1962) "Two Faces of Power." *The American Political Science Review*, 56 (4), pp. 947-952.
- Badham, R., Couchman, P., & McLoughlin, I. (1997) "Implementing vulnerable socio-technical change projects." *Innovation, Organizational Change and Technology*, pp. 146-169.
- Ball, S. J. (1987) *The Micropolitics of the School: Towards a Theory of School Organisation*. London: Methuen/Routledge.
- Ban, C. (1995) *How Do Public Managers Manage? Bureaucratic Constraints, Organizational Culture, and the Potential for Reform*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.
- Bates, A. W. & Sangrà, A. (2011) *Managing technology in higher education: Strategies for transforming teaching and learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Batten, J. D. & Swab, J. L. (1965) "How to crack down on company politics." *Personnel*, 1965, 42, pp. 8-20.
- Baum, H. S. (1989) "Organizational politics against organizational culture: A psychoanalytic perspective." *Human Resource Management*, 28 (2), pp. 191-206.
- Beer, N. & Nohria, N. (2000) "Cracking the code of change." *Harvard Business Review*, 78 (3), pp. 133-141.
- Benfari, R. C., Wilkinson, H. E., & Orth, C. D. (1986) "The Effective Use of Power." *Business Horizons*, 29 (3), pp. 12-16.
- Bigley, G. A. & Roberts, K. H. (2001) "The incident command system: High reliability organizing for complex and volatile task environments." *Academy of Management Journal*, 44 (6), pp. 1281-1299.
- Blase, J. (ed.) (1991) *The Politics of Life in Schools: Power, Conflict and Cooperation*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Blumer, H. (1969) *Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs: NJ.
- Bogumil, J. & Kissler, L. (1998a) "Die Beschäftigten im Modernisierungsprozess: Akteure oder Agierende?" *Industrielle Beziehungen*, 3, pp. 298-321.
- Bogumil, J. & Kissler, L. (1998b) "Verwaltungsmodernisierung als Machtspiel: Zu den heimlichen Logiken kommunaler Modernisierungsprozesse." In: D. Budäus, P. Conrad & G. Schreyögg (eds.), *Managementforschung 8, New Public Management*. Berlin/New York, pp. 123-149.
- Bolliger, D. U. & Wasilik, O. (2009) "Factors influencing faculty satisfaction with online teaching and learning in higher education." *Distance Education*, 30 (1), pp. 103-116.

- Bradshaw-Camball, P. & Murray, V. V. (1991) "Illusions and other games: A trifocal view of organizational politics." *Organization Science*, 2 (4), pp. 379-398.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012) "Thematic analysis." *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology*, 2, pp. 57-71.
- Brauner, E. & Becker, A. (2006) "Knowledge Management in Interaction: Transactive Knowledge Systems and the Management of Knowledge". In: Renzl B., Matzler K., Hinterhuber H. (eds.) *The Future of Knowledge Management*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braybrooke, D. & Lindblom, C. E. (1963) *A Strategy of Decision*. New York: Free Press.
- Buchanan, D. A. & Badham R. J. (2008) *Power, Politics, and Organizational Change*. London: Sage.
- Buchanan, D. A. & Badham, R. J. (1999) "Politics and organizational change: The lived experience." *Human Relations*, pp. 609-629.
- Burnes, B. & Cooke, B. (2013) "Kurt Lewin's Field Theory: A Review and Re-evaluation." *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15 (4), pp. 408-425.
- Burns, T. (1961) "Micropolitics: Mechanisms of institutional change." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 6 (3), pp. 257-281.
- Cassell, C. & Johnson, P. (2006) "Action research: Explaining the diversity." *Human Relations*, 59 (6), pp. 783-814.
- Cavanagh, G. F., Moberg, D. J., & Velasquez, M. (1981) "The ethics of organizational politics." *Academy of Management Review*, 6 (3), pp. 363-374.
- Claver, E., Llopis, J., Gasco, J. L., Molina, H., & Conca, F. J. (1999) "Public administration: From bureaucratic culture to citizen-oriented culture." *The International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 12 (5), pp. 455-464.
- Clegg, S. R. (1989) *Frameworks of Power*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cobb, A. T. (1984) "An Episodic Model of Power: Toward an Integration of Theory and Research." *Academy of Management Review*, 9 (3), pp. 482-493.
- Coghlan, D. & Brannick, T. (2005) *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 2nd ed., London: Sage.
- Coghlan, D. & Brannick, T. (2010) *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 3rd ed., London: Sage.
- Cohen, A. & Bradford, D. I. (1989) "Influence without authority: the use of alliance, reciprocity, and exchange to accomplish work." *Organizational Dynamics*, 17 (3), pp. 5-17.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 3rd Edition, London: Sage.
- Crocker, J. (2019) "'We Will Handle It Ourselves': The Micropolitics of Resistance in Low-Wage Care Work." *Sociological Perspectives*, 62 (1), pp. 42-58.

- Crossan, M. M., Rouse, M. J., Rowe, W. G., & Maurer, C. C. (2016) *Strategic Analysis and Action*, 9th Edition. Toronto: Pearson.
- Crozier, M. & Friedberg, E. (1977) *L'acteur et le système*. Paris: Seuil.
- Crozier, M. (1963) *Le phénomène bureaucratique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Crozier, M. (1973) "The problem of power." *Social Research*, 40 (2), pp. 211-228.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2004) "On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner." *Journal of Management Education*, 28 (4), pp. 407-426.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2010) "Why complicate a done deal? Bringing reflexivity into management research." In C. Cassell & B. Lee (eds.). *Management research: Challenges and controversies*, (pp. 404-418). London: Routledge.
- Cyert, R. & March, J. (1963) *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- D'Angelo, P., & Kuypers, J. A. (eds.). (2010). *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Dahl, R. A. (1957) "The Concept of Power." *Behavioral Science*, 2 (3), pp. 201-215.
- Dawson, P. (2019) *Reshaping Change: A Processual Perspective*, 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Dean, J. W. & Sharfman, M. P. (1993) "The relationship between procedural rationality and political behavior in strategic decision making." *Decision Sciences*, 24 (6), pp. 1069-1083.
- Demers, C. (2007) *Organizational Change Theories: A Synthesis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dent, E. B. & Goldberg, S. G. (1999) "Challenging 'Resistance to Change.'" *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, 35 (1), pp. 25-41.
- Dermentzi, E. & Papagiannidis, S. (2018) "Academics' intention to adopt online technologies for public engagement." *Internet Research*, 28 (1), pp. 191-212.
- Dick, B. (2002) "Postgraduate programs using action research." *The Learning Organization*, 9 (4), pp. 159-170.
- Drory, A. & Romm, T. (1988) "Politics in organization and its perception within the organization." *Organization Studies*, 9 (2), pp. 165-179.
- Drory, A. & Romm, T. (1990) "The definition of organizational politics: A review." *Human Relations*, 43 (11), pp. 1,133-1,154.
- Dumont, G., & Raggo, P. (2018) "Faculty perspectives about distance teaching in the virtual classroom." *The Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership*, 8 (1), pp. 41-61.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. (2012) *Management Research*, 4th Edition. London: Sage.

- Edmondson, A. & Moingeon, B. (1999) "Learning trust and organizational change." In Easterby-Smith, M., Burgoyne, J., & Araujo, L. (eds.) *Organizational Learning and the Learning Organisation*, London: Sage: pp.157-175.
- Egan, G. (1994) *Working the Shadow Side: A Guide to Positive Behind-the-Scenes Management*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Eilertsen, T. V., Gustafson, N., & Salo, P. (2008) "Action research and the micropolitics in schools." *Educational Action Research*, 16 (3), pp. 295-308.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. & Bourgeois, L. J. (1988) "Politics of strategic decision making in high-velocity environments: Toward a midrange theory." *Academy of Management Journal*, 31 (4), pp. 737-770.
- Farrell, D. & Petersen, J. C. (1982) "Patterns of political behavior in organizations." *The Academy of Management Review*, 7, pp. 403-412.
- Fedor, D., Maslyn, J., Farmer, S., & Bettenhausen, K. (2008). "The contribution of positive politics to the prediction of employee reactions." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38 (1), pp. 76-96.
- Feldman, S. P. (1985) "Culture and conformity: an essay on individual adaptation in centralized bureaucracy." *Human Relations*, 38 (4), pp. 341-356.
- Ferris, G. R. & Treadway, D. C. (2012) *Politics in Organizations: Theory and Research Considerations*. New York: Routledge.
- Ferris, G. R., Adams, G., Kolodinsky, R. W., Hochwarter, W. A., & Ammeter, A. P. (2002) "Perceptions of organizational politics: Theory and research directions." *Research in Multi-Level Issues, Volume 1: The Many Faces of Multi-Level Issues*, pp. 179-254.
- Fligstein, N. & McAdam, D. (2011) "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields." *Sociological Theory*, 29 (1), pp. 1-26.
- Fligstein, N. (2001) "Social Skill and the Theory of Fields", *Sociological Theory*, 19 (2), pp. 105-125.
- Ford, J. D. & Ford, L. W. (2010) "Stop blaming resistance to change and start using it." *Organizational Dynamics*, 39 (1), pp. 24-36.
- French, J. R. P. & Raven, B. (1958) "The bases of social power." In D. Cartwright (ed.), *Studies in Social Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Frost, P. J. & Egri, C. P. (1991) "The political process of innovation." In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behaviour, Volume 13*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Frost, P. J. (1987) "Power, politics and influence." In Jablin, F. M., Putnam, L. L., Roberts, K. H., & Porter, L. W. (eds.) *Handbook of Organizational Communication. An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Newbury Hill: Sage, pp. 503-548.
- Gagné, M., Koestner, R., & Zuckerman, M. (2000) "Facilitating Acceptance of Organizational Change: The Importance of Self-Determination." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30 (9), pp. 1843-1852.
- Gandz, J. & Murray, V. V. (1980) "The experience of workplace politics." *Academy of Management Journal*, 23, pp. 237-251.

Gibson, L. & Groom, R, (2019) "The micro-politics of organisational change in professional youth football: Towards an understanding of 'actions, strategies and professional interests'." *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 14 (1), pp. 3-14.

Giddens, A. (1979) *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2012) "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology." *Organizational Research Methods*, 16 (1), pp. 15-31.

Gold, J., Holman, D., & Thorpe, R. (2002) "The Role of Argument Analysis and Story Telling in Facilitating Critical Thinking." *Management Learning*, 33 (3), pp. 371-388.

Gray, B. & Ariss, S. S. (1985) "Politics and strategic change across organizational life cycles." *The Academy of Management Review*, 10, pp. 707-723.

Grieves, J. (2000) "Navigating change into the new millennium: Themes and issues for the learning organization." *The Learning Organization*, 7 (2), pp. 54-74.

Gunn, C. (2001) "Effective online teaching: How far do the frameworks go," in Meeting at the Crossroads. Proceedings of the 18th Annual Conference of the Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, pp. 235-244.

Halpern, D. F. & Hakel, M. (2003) "Applying the science of learning to the university and beyond: Teaching for long-term retention and transfer." *Change*, 35 (4), pp. 36-41.

Hardy, C. & Clegg, S. (1996) "Some dare call it power." In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. Nord (eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies*. pp. 622-641, London: Sage.

Hardy, C. & O'Sullivan, L. (1998) "The power behind empowerment: Implications for research and practice." *Human Relations*, 51 (4), pp. 451-483.

Hardy, C. (1993) "What do we really mean by power and politics? A review of the literature." In Dlugos, G., Dorow, W., & Farrell, D. (eds.) *Organizational Politics. From Conflict-Suppression to Rational Conflict-Management*. Gabler, Wiesbaden, pp. 1-26.

Hardy, C. (1995) "Managing strategic change: Power, paralysis and perspective." In J. Baum (eds.), *Advances in Strategic Management*, pp. 3-30, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Heyden, M. L. M., Fourné, S. P. L., Koene, B. A. S., Werkman, R., & Ansari, S. (2017) "Rethinking 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' roles of top and middle managers in organizational change: Implications for employee support." *The Journal of Management Studies*, 54 (7), pp. 961-985.

Hickson, D. J., Hinings, C. R., Lee, C. A., Schneck R. E., & Pennings, J. M (1971) "A Strategic Contingencies' Theory of Intraorganizational Power." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16 (2), pp. 216-229.

Higgs, M. J. & Rowland, D. (2000) "Building change leadership capability: The quest for change competence." *Journal of Change Management*, 1, pp. 116-131.

Hilsen, A. I. (2006) "And they shall be known by their deeds: Ethics and politics in action research." *Action Research*, 4 (1), pp. 23-36.

- Hirschhorn, L. (2002) "Campaigning for change." *Harvard Business Review*, 80, pp. 98-104.
- Hoyle, E. (1999) "The two faces of micropolitics." *School Leadership & Management*, 19 (2), pp. 213-222.
- Hsbollah, H. M. & Idris, K. M. (2009) "E-learning adoption: the role of relative advantages, trialability and academic specialisation." *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, 26 (1), pp. 54-70.
- Isabella, L. A. (1990) "Evolving Interpretations as a Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Events." *Academy of Management Journal*, 33 (1), pp. 7-41.
- Ithaka S+R (2012) *Barriers to Adoption of Online Learning Systems in U.S. Higher Education*, retrieved online: <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/barriers-to-adoption-of-online-learning-systems-in-u-s-higher-education/> (retrieved August 2017)
- Kacmar, K. M., Bozeman, D. P., Carlson, D. S., & Anthony, W. P. (1999) "An examination of the perceptions of organizational politics model: Replication and extension." *Human Relations*, 52 (3), pp. 383-415.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979) "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk." *Econometrica*, 47, 1979, pp. 263-292.
- Kanter, R. M. (1983) *The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kearney, M., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., & Burke, P. F. (2018) "Teachers' technology adoption and practices: lessons learned from the IWB phenomenon." *Teacher Development*, 22 (4), pp. 481-496.
- Kidd, S. A. & Kral, M. J. (2005) "Practicing Participatory Action Research." *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52 (2), pp. 187-195.
- Kimura, T. (2015) "A Review of Political Skill: Current Research Trend and Directions for Future Research." *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 17, pp. 312-332.
- King, E., & Boyatt, R. (2015) "Exploring factors that influence adoption of e-learning within higher education." *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 46 (6), pp. 1272-1280.
- Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S. M., Swaffin-Smith, C., & Wilkinson, I. (1984) "Patterns of managerial influence: Shotgun managers, tacticians, and bystanders." *Organizational Dynamics*, 12 (3), pp. 58-67.
- Knodel, T. (2004) "Preparing the organizational 'Soil' for measurable and sustainable change: Business value management and project governance." *Journal of Change Management*, 4, pp. 45-62.
- Kotter, J. (2008) *A Sense of Urgency*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kotter, J. (1995) "Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail." *Harvard Business Review*, 73 (2), pp. 59-67.
- Küpper, W. & Felsch, A. (2000) "Organisation, Macht und Ökonomie." *Mikropolitik und die Konstitution organisationaler Handlungssysteme*, Wiesbaden 18, pp. 149-236.

- Latour, B. (1992) "Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artefacts." In Bijker, W. E. & Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping technology/building society: Studies in sociotechnical change*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lawrence, J. E. & Tar, U. A. (2018) "Factors that influence teachers' adoption and integration of ICT in teaching/learning process." *Educational Media International*, 55 (1), pp. 79-105.
- Lawrence, T. B., Mauws, M. K., Dyck, B., & Kleysen, R. F. (2005) "The politics of organizational learning: Integrating power into the 4 I framework." *Academy of Management Review*, 30 (1), pp. 180-191.
- Li, Y., & Lindner, J. R. (2007) "Faculty adoption behaviour about web-based distance education: A case study from China Agricultural University." *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38 (1), pp. 83-94.
- Lin, C., Singer, R., & Ha, L. (2010) "Why university members use and resist technology? A structure enactment perspective." *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 1 (22), pp. 38-59.
- Lindle, J. (1999) "What can the study of micropolitics contribute to the practice of leadership in reforming schools?" *School Leadership & Management*, 19 (2), pp. 171-178.
- Lukes, S. (2006) *Power: A Radical View*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lux, G. (2015) "Adoption et usage des outils de gestion de l'absentéisme : l'importance des jeux d'acteurs et jeux de pouvoir." *Gestion et Management public*, 3 (2), pp. 83-106.
- Maguire, L. L. (2005) "Literature Review—Faculty Participation in Online Distance Education: Barriers and Motivators." *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 8 (1), pp. 1-12.
- Mangham, I. (1979) *The Politics of Organizational Change*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- March, J. G. & Olsen, J. P. (1976) *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.
- Markus, M. L. (1983) "Power, politics, and MIS implementation." *Communications of the ACM*, 26 (6), pp. 430-444.
- Martins, J. T. & Nunes, M. B. (2016) "Academics' e-learning adoption in higher education institutions: A matter of trust." *The Learning Organization*, 23 (5), pp. 299-331.
- Mayes, B. & Allen, R. (1977) "Toward A Definition of Organizational Politics." *Academy of Management Review*, pp. 672-678.
- McAdams, R. (2003) "Radical change: a conceptual model for research agendas." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24 (4), pp. 226-235.
- McCambridge, J., Witton, J., & Elbourne, D. R. (2014) "Systematic review of the Hawthorne effect: New concepts are needed to study research participation effects." *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 67 (3), pp. 247-253.
- McFarland, L. A., Van Iddekinge, C. H., & Ployhart, R. E. (2012) "Measurement and Methodology in Organizational Politics Research." In Ferris, G. R. & Treadway, D. C., (eds.). *Politics in Organizations: Theory and Research Considerations*, pp. 99-129.

- Mehta, A., Morris, N. P., Swinnerton, B. & Homer, M. (2019) "The Influence of Values on E-learning Adoption." *Computers & Education*, 141, p. 103617.
- Meissonier, R. & Houzé, E. (2010) "Toward an 'IT Conflict-Resistance Theory:' Action research during IT pre-implementation." *European Journal of Information Systems*, 19, pp. 540-561.
- Meyerson, D. E. & Scully, M. A. (1995) "Tempered Radicalism and the Politics of Ambivalence and Change." *Organization Science*, 6 (5), pp. 585-600.
- Mintzberg, H. (1983) *Power In and Around Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Mintzberg, H. (1985) "The organization as political arena." *Journal of Management Studies*, 22 (2), pp. 133-154.
- Mintzberg, H. (1999) "Reflecting on the strategy process." *Sloan Management Review*, 40 (3), pp. 21-30.
- Mitchell, B. & Geva-May, I. (2009) "Attitudes Affecting Online Learning Implementation in Higher Education Institutions." *Journal of Distance Education*, 23 (1), pp. 71-88.
- Mitchell, L. D., Parlamis, J. D., & Claiborne, S. A. (2015) "Overcoming faculty avoidance of online education: From resistance to support to active participation." *Journal of Management Education*, 39 (3), pp. 350-371.
- Neuberger, O. (1995) *Führen und Geführt werden [To lead and to be led]*. Ferdinand Enke: Stuttgart.
- Nullmeier, F., Pritzlaff, T., & Wiesner, A. (2003) *Mikro-Policy-Analyse: Ethnographische Politikforschung am Beispiel Hochschulpolitik*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.
- O'Connor, W. E. & Morrison, T. G. (2001) "A comparison of situational and dispositional predictors of perceptions of organizational politics." *The Journal of Psychology*, 135 (3), pp. 301-312.
- Ospina, S., Dodge, J., Godsoe, B., Minieri, J., Reza, S., & Schall, E. (2004) "From Consent to Mutual Inquiry Balancing Democracy and Authority in Action Research." *Action Research*, 2 (1), pp. 47-69.
- Palmer, I. & Dunford, R. (2008) "Organizational change and the importance of embedded assumptions." *British Journal of Management*, 19 (S1), pp. S20-S32.
- Panda, S. & Mishra, S. (2007) "E-Learning in a Mega Open University: Faculty attitude, barriers and motivators." *Educational Media International*, 44 (4), pp. 323-338.
- Patsiotis, A., Hughes, T., & Webber, D. (2012) "Adopters and non-adopters of internet banking: a segmentation study." *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 30 (1), pp. 20-42.
- Pettigrew, A. M. & McNulty, T. (1995) "Power and influence in and around the boardroom." *Human Relations*, 48 (8), pp. 845-873.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1973) *The Politics of Organizational Decision-Making*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1985a) *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in ICI*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Pettigrew, A. M. (1985b) "Examining change in the long-term context of culture and politics." In J. Pennings & Associates (eds.). *Organizational Strategy and Change*, pp. 269-318, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R. I. (2006) *Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths, and Total Nonsense: Profiting from Evidence-Based Management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pfeffer, J. (1981) *Power in Organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.
- Pfeffer, J. (1992) *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organization*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Porter, L. W., Allen, R. W., & Angle, H. L. (1981) "The politics of upward influence in organizations." In Cummings, T. G., & Staw, B. M. (eds.). *Research in Organizational Behaviour*. JAI-Press, Greenwich, CT, pp 109-149.
- Prasad, L. & Rubenstein, A. H. (1992) "Conceptualising organisational politics as a multidimensional phenomenon: Empirical evidence from a study of technological innovation." *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 39 (1), pp. 4-12.
- Quinn, J. B. (1978) "Strategic change: Logical incrementalism." *Sloan Management Review*, 20 (1), pp. 7-19.
- Quinn, J. B. (1980) "Managing strategic change." *Sloan Management Review*, 22 (4), pp. 3-20.
- Raelin, J. A. (2001) "Public reflection as the basis of learning." *Management Learning*, 32 (1), pp. 11-30.
- Reynaud, J.-D. (1997) *Règles du jeu, l'action collective et la régulation sociale*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Robbins, S. P. (2005) *Organizational Behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003) *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York: Free Press.
- Rouleau, L. (2007) *Théories des organisations : Approches classiques, contemporaines et de l'avant-garde*. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Saldana, J. (2015) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. London: Sage.
- Salmon, G., & Asgari, T. (2019) "Higher Education—the Last Bastion? Distance and e-Learning Policy and Development." *The Role of e-Learning and Distance Education in the Modernisation Process of Economies, Societies and Education Systems*, *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-learning*, 22 (1).
- Samarawickrema, G. & Stacey, E. (2007) "Adopting Web-Based Learning and Teaching: A case study in higher education." *Distance Education*, 28 (3), pp. 313-333.
- Schein, V. E. (1977) "Individual power and political behaviors in organizations: An inadequately explored reality." *Academy of Management Review*, 2 (1), pp. 64-72.
- Scott-Morgan, P. (1995) *The Unwritten Rules of the Game*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

- Seddik, B. (2017) "Manage the zones of uncertainties to reduce the cost of training in organizations." *Management interculturel*, 9 (38), pp. 7-12.
- Self, D. R. & Schraeder, M. (2009) "Enhancing the success of organizational change: Matching readiness strategies with sources of resistance." *Leadership & Organizational Development Journal*, 30, pp. 167-182.
- Seo, M. (2003) "Overcoming Emotional Barriers, Political Obstacles, and Control Imperatives in the Action-Science Approach to Individual and Organizational Learning." *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2 (1), pp. 7-21.
- Shahbaz, M., Gao, C., Zhai, L., Shahzad, F., & Hu, Y. (2019) "Investigating the adoption of big data analytics in healthcare: the moderating role of resistance to change." *Journal of Big Data*, 6 (1), pp. 1-20.
- Shea, P. (2007) "Bridges and Barriers to Teaching Online College Courses: A Study of Experienced Online Faculty in Thirty-six Colleges." *The Sloan Consortium*, 11 (2), pp. 73-90.
- Shea, P., Pickett, A., & Sau Li, C. (2005) "Increasing access to higher education: A study of the diffusion of online teaching among 913 college faculty." *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 6(2).
- Sirkin, H. L., Keenan, P., & Jackson, A. (2005) "The hard side of change management." *Harvard Business Review*, 83, pp. 108-118.
- Surry, D. (1997) "Diffusion theory and instructional technology." *Proceedings of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology*, retrieved online: www2.gsu.edu/~wwwitr/docs/diffusion/ (August 2017).
- Sussman, L., Adams, A. J., Kuzmits, F. E., & Raho, L. E. (2002) "Organizational Politics: Tactics, Channels, and Hierarchical Roles." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 40 (4), pp. 313-329.
- Tagg, J. (2012) "Why Does the Faculty Resist Change?" *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 44 (1), pp. 6-15.
- Tanner, J. R., Noser, T. C., & Totaro, M. W. (2009) "Business Faculty and Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Online Learning: A Comparative Study." *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 20 (1), pp. 29-40.
- Taylor, R. W. (2002) "Pros and cons of online learning—a faculty perspective." *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 26 (1), pp. 24-37.
- Trevino, L. K. (1986) "Ethical decision making in organizations: A person-situation interactionist model." *Academy of Management Review*, 11 (3), pp. 601-617.
- Tsoukas, H. & Chia, R. (2002) "On Organizational Becoming: Rethinking Organizational Change." *Organization Science*, 13 (5), pp. 567-582.
- Tuchman, B. W. (1965) "Developmental sequence in small groups." *Psychology Bulletin*, 63, pp. 384-399.

- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981) "The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice." *Science*, 211 (4481), 453-458.
- Valle, M. & Perrewé, P. L. (2000) "Do politics perceptions relate to political behaviors? Test of an implicit assumption and expanded model." *Human Relations*, 53 (3), pp. 359-386.
- Vigoda, E. (2003) "Developments in Organizational Politics: How Political Dynamics Affect Employee Performance." In *Modern Work Sites*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Voyer, J. J. (1994) "Coercive Organizational Politics and Organizational Outcomes: An Interpretive Study." *Organization Science*, 5 (1), pp. 72-85.
- Waters-Adams, S. (1994) "Collaboration and action research: A cautionary tale." *Educational Action Research*, 2 (2), pp. 195-210.
- West, M. (1999) "Micropolitics, Leadership and All That: The Need to Increase the Micropolitical Awareness and Skills of School Leaders." *School Leadership & Management*, 19, pp. 189-195.
- Whelan-Berry, K. S. & Somerville, K. A. (2010) "Linking change drivers and the organizational change process: A review and synthesis." *Journal of Change Management*, 10, pp. 175-193.
- Wilkes, R. B., Simon, J. C., & Brooks, L. D. (2006) "A Comparison of Faculty and Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Online Courses and Degree Programs." *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 17 (2), pp. 131-140.
- Willis V. J. (2010) "Action Learning and Action Research." In Dilworth, R. L., & Boshyk, Y. (eds.) *Action Learning and its Applications*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Willner, R. (2011) "Micro-politics: An Underestimated Field of Qualitative Research in Political Science." *German Policy Studies*, 7 (3), pp. 155-185.
- Wilson, B., Sherry, L., Dobrovolny, J., Batty, M., & Ryder, M. (2000) "Adoption of learning technologies in schools and universities." H. H. Adelsberger, B. Collis, & J. M. Pawlowski (eds.), *Handbook on information technologies for education and training*, New York: Springer-Verlag, pp. 222-256.
- Wilson, B., Sherry, L., Dobrovolny, J., Batty, M., & Ryder, M. (2002) "Adoption factors and processes." H. H. Adelsberger, B. Collis, & J. M. Pawlowski (eds.). *Handbook on information technologies for education and training*, New York: Springer, pp. 293-307.
- Wood, D. J. & Gray, B. (1991) "Toward a comprehensive theory of collaboration." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27 (2), pp. 139-162.
- Zanzi, A. & O'Neill, R. M. (2001) "Sanctioned versus non-sanctioned political tactics." *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13 (2), pp. 245-262.
- Zhen, Y., Garthwait, A., & Pratt, P. (2008) "Factors Affecting Faculty Members' Decision to Teach or Not to Teach Online in Higher Education." *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 11 (3), pp. 1-12.
- Zheng, L., Gibson, D., & Gu, X. (2019) "Understanding the process of teachers' technology adoption with a dynamic analytical model." *Interactive Learning Environments*, pp. 1-14.

Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2001) "Action Learning and Action Research: Paradigm, Praxis and Programs." In Sankara, S., Dick, B., & Passfield, R. (eds.) *Effective Change Management through Action Research and Action Learning: Concepts, Perspectives, Processes and Applications*. Lismore, Australia: Southern Cross University Press, pp. 1-20.

APPENDIX A



Participant Information Sheet

1. Title of Study

The Micropolitics of Organizational Change: An Action-Research Study at a University Business School Implementing Online Learning (The Micropolitics of Organizational Change)

2. Version Number and Date

Version 1 (February 2017)

3. Invitation Paragraph

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information, or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and boss if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

4. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate how people use their power and influence to either support or oppose change initiatives in their organisation (namely, the implementation of online learning in a university business school), and to assess the effectiveness of these influence tactics.

5. Why have I been chosen to take part?

You are being chosen to take part in the research because you are currently involved in the implementation of online learning in our organization, or have been in the last six months.

6. Do I have to take part?

No. If you do accept to participate in the research, declining or discontinuing participation in the research process will not negatively impact your relationship with the researcher.

7. What will happen if I take part?

You are asked to participate in one of 6 sets of approximately 5 participants each. These sets (called "learning sets") will be made up of faculty members who have adopted online learning and those who have not. Each set will meet twice a month for 8 months in meetings that will last approximately 3 hours. Participants will be encouraged to get involved in action-learning cycles to learn from their common experience pertaining to the implementation of online learning, such as their perception of the change brought about by this implementation, their feelings of powerlessness towards the change that was imposed on them, the gains and losses that the change entails for them and/or for the institution, the way that they exert power and influence to maximise their benefits and minimise their losses, etc. Data will consist of transcripts of the discussions.

8. Expenses and / or payments

No expenses or payments are made: your participation is entirely voluntary.

9. Are there any risks in taking part?

There are minimal risks if you participate in the research. There are some risks such as being targeted by others as someone who works against organizational interests in opposing the implementation of online learning, risks that can alter the existing dynamics between the researcher and yourself, among participants, and between a participant and co-workers, such as being targeted as an “ineffective” co-worker, being ostracized by other participants, and stress that might result from these situations; there are legal risks if you disclose that you have engaged in unlawful behaviour to block the change, and/or behaviour that goes against workplace policies and management decisions, which could impede your professional reputation, promotion, or employability; there are no physical risks associated with the research.

Should you experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research that this should be made known to the researcher immediately.

10. Are there any benefits in taking part?

By participating in this research, you will gain insight into addressing current organizational problems through action learning cycles, and thus enhancing your understanding of the change brought about by the implementation of online learning.

11. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Pierre Lainey (514-550-3936) and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at ethics@liv.ac.uk. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

12. Will my participation be kept confidential?

Group discussions will take place behind closed doors; no recording devices will be allowed, except that of the researcher; participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to prevent any sensitive information pertaining to a participant, to be disclosed.

Recorded discussions and transcripts will be stored on a computer that belongs to the researcher; he is the only one to have access to the computer which is protected with a password that is changed every month. Transcripts from the discussions will be kept in a locked file cabinet, outside the organization, to which only the researcher has access. The transcriber will have signed an agreement to not divulge or share any data with other parties.

The data will be stored for at least 5 years. Should the transcripts be moved, proper measures will be taken to ensure that the transcripts be securely moved.

The study does not require that participants' names and contact information be recorded; for data analysis, each participant will be assigned a random number which will remain the same throughout the research process; participants will indicate consent by signing the consent form during the first meeting.

No demographic data will be recorded – they are not relevant to the research; also, the name of the organization will be masked in documentation disseminated outside the organization; random numbers assigned to participants will be used to identify them in transcripts.

A non-disclosure, confidentiality agreement will be signed by all participants AND the researcher; this agreement will be legally binding. The research report will not include names and the data will not be used for any purposes other than research.

13. What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be used by the researcher to write a doctoral thesis. Participants will have access to a copy of the thesis by contacting the researcher.

14. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal will be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. Since results are anonymised, they may only be withdrawn prior to anonymization. In the first meeting, random numbers will be assigned to all participants; you will be asked to identify yourself using this number in the course of the discussions that will be recorded.

15. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

You can contact the **Principal Investigator:**
Pierre Lainey
HEC Montréal
3000, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine
Montréal (Québec)
H3T 2A7
514-550-3936

APPENDIX B



Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: The Micropolitics of Organizational Change: An Action-Research Study at a University Business School Implementing Online Learning

Researcher(s): Pierre Lainey

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated February 2017 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Supervisor:
Name: Allan Macpherson
Work Address: University of Liverpool Management School
Work Telephone
Work Email: a.macpherson@liverpool.ac.uk

Student Researcher:
Name: Pierre Lainey
Work Address: 5255, avenue Decelles, Montréal
Work Telephone: 514-340-6425
Work Email: pierre.lainey@online.liverpool.ac.uk