

University of Liverpool
Doctor of Business Administration

**The impact of leadership changes on non- managerial employees in a bank that is undergoing change and transformation following change in shareholders and overall business philosophy
- a perspective of a bank in Zambia**

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

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May 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Being on this journey of the DBA program has been very exciting and knowledge enriching for me. It has been life changing in so many ways and I have grown in confidence as a practitioner. I would thus like to thank my Research Supervisors Dr. Lorenzo Lucianetti, Dr Macpherson Allan and the whole DBA team at University of Liverpool for the guidance and patience exhibited. It was not that easy for me to reach this far but for Dr Lorenzo and Dr Macpherson support and encouragement. Their attention to detail is second to none. Their dedication to excellence and willingness to read through the many drafts, provide constructive criticism and guide me through the various stages of writing this thesis was invaluable. To them I am forever indebted.

I would also like to thank the research participants for their time and their candid answers to my questions. I would like to thank the organization for having allowed me to conduct the research. I also wish to thank all my friends that kept encouraging me to soldier on even when it looked like the journey would not come to an end any time soon. To them I am forever grateful. To my family, my lovely wife Moono, my kids Luyando, Luumuno and Lushomo, thank you for tolerating my isolation times. I am forever indebted to you.

ABSTRACT

The central focus of this action research was to advance knowledge regarding how non-managerial employees felt impacted and reacted to a leadership change in a newly acquired organization and subsequently to help the organization to manage the impact of these reactions on its operations. The organization under study was a private bank, a subsidiary of a regional bank that had recently changed its main shareholders and its leadership in the process.

The study, which was based on action research methodology, followed a qualitative approach (Bryman 2008; Cunliffe 2010; Tracy, 2010; Marshall & Rossman 2016; Creswell & Poth 2016) gathering data from research participants using focus group method, observing the non-managerial employees during their duties and recording any significant change related to their actions. Further data was collected through semi structured interviews and formal questionnaires with non-managerial employees (Rowley, 2012).

The study reveals that the abrupt leadership change had a major impact especially on non-managerial employees who were experiencing the leadership change for the first time. The findings show the leadership change created a cultural shock which employees had not been used to before. Anxieties and stress affected the employees' sense of belonging to the organization. This created a managerial problem that needed to be addressed through a series of actions.

It was established that the major solution to this problem was for the organization to understand that the non-managerial employees needed to be engaged and helped through the change process. This means that the organization had to engage into deliberate actions meant to influence the non-managerial employees to align and accept the transformation taking place in the organization. The actionable knowledge thus focused around three key change activities:

- i) *Planning and preparing all the stakeholders for the leadership change management process* – done through provision of counselling services to

employees, encourage positive thinking through staff networks and the Human Capital department embracing the habit to communicate anticipated changes

- ii) *Choosing appropriate communication methods with all the key stakeholders throughout the leadership change process*-done through organized staff town hall meetings, encouraging positive informal meetings among staff members to discuss the benefits of the change.
- iii) *Deploying and maintaining deliberate non-managerial employee engagement methods throughout the change transformation process.* – staff awards, employees-leader meetings,

The study demonstrates that the best way to help non managerial employees through a leadership change and the transformation that goes with it is for the organization to look at its change management processes and ensure they support a strong stakeholder commitment. It demonstrates the need for non-managerial employees to have a 'voice' in the leadership change management processes and practices.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A subsidiary Bank in Zambia is undergoing an important turnaround process following the acquisition of its holding company by ATMA, a newly formed London listed financial group. Previously the Bank was part of a regional banking group operating in five countries (Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique). Before the acquisition by ATMA, the group was primarily focused on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region with the mission of providing world-class financial solutions initially as a corporate and treasury bank and, in 2009, as a retail bank.

ATMA is an organization formed in December 2013, listed on the London stock exchange, created with a vision of being a premier financial institution through acquisitions of banks in Sub Saharan Africa (Atlasmara, 2015). The mission of the new group is now to be a big banking group operating in the top 5 segments of each market. With the acquisition of the SADC banking group, the culture and business philosophy within the new bank acquired was progressively changing from an entrepreneur approach, encouraged by the previous owners (African Banking Corporation, 2011), to a new management philosophy focused on compliance and set business guidelines. The previous culture encouraged everyone to collaborate and bring to the table whatever they thought was useful to work in the business. This made every employee feels like an entrepreneur.

Things however began to change drastically as the new owners were promoting a new culture where the business lines and clients are defined in advance in the business guidelines. This has pushed back the entrepreneur thinking among employees representing a major shift in the business philosophy. With this transformation in place, the organization leadership has been changed starting from the top leadership with newly hired managers from larger banking groups.

In the first phase, the Group leadership was replaced with new executives hired from the larger Banking Groups, Barclays Bank group and the Standard Bank Group. Initially this decision created a wave of uncertainty and anxiety among the employees who questioned themselves about the future of the organization and its future culture. At the top of the list was the job security issue. The second phase of leadership changes took place with country leadership managers replaced with ATMA hired managers. The background of these new country executives was the same as of the new Group leadership meaning that the organization was now following the footsteps of the bigger banking groups. Anxiety was growing among employees who felt the changes were too drastic and probably leading to most staff being replaced by new hires from the bigger banking groups.

I was the country leader of the Zambian business during the first of year of the transition and witnessed some of the challenges that employees experienced as the leadership change was taking place in the organization. As a country leadership, we had to deal with the resultant employee challenges emanating from the leadership changes taking place. Leadership change created problems especially among non-managerial employees who were not used to these new ways of doing things. This had implication on how the employees behaved going forward.

This study hence focuses on the impact that the country leadership change was having on non-managerial bank employees. In the past Zammuto et al (2000) described the need for employees to be involved in the leadership change due to the new organizational turnaround process and how they can contribute to this change taking place in the organization. Therefore, some potential underlying causes relating to the employee resistance needed to be fully studied and carefully understood (Hoyle, 2007; Ford et al., 2008).

The leadership change was top-down and did not consider the perspective of employees especially at the lower level. This approach resulted into two facets related to employees. Firstly, the employees' uncertainty in terms of new ways of working, dealing with new

leadership styles, and adjusting to cultural change. Secondly, related to the employees' anxiety in terms of job security, loss of relationships, and change resistance. The organization found itself in the problem of understanding these two facets and how to manage them (Heiftz & Linsky 2002).

1.1 Research Context

My interest was to study the effect that the leadership changes, particularly at country management team level, was having on non-managerial employees and how this was influencing them in their day-to-day activities at work. As noted by Appelbaum et al (2017), employee feelings, especially about their sense of belonging, in an acquisition or transformation will have a major impact on the success of the organization transformation. Also, the way employees view and accept the leadership change has a major influence on the overall success of the organization transformation (Grint, 2005; Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007).

As, an outgoing leader in the organization, I see this as a major opportunity that need to be studied to manage a proper transition process. The main problem is at the non-managerial level where employees do not understand the benefit of having new leadership and a new group of shareholders in the organization.

This prompted the following research question:

How was the change affecting the non-managerial employees and how could this be managed?

On the surface it is clear to see the vivid concern among employee uncertainty about the leadership changes raising fear and concern of job security. Furthermore, ATMA has announced its intention to acquire another local Zambian bank creating the Zambia's 5th largest bank by assets and the largest bank by branch network (Atlasmara, 2015). This has impacted employee feelings further raising general fear. As a leader I understand that non managerial employees are key stakeholders (Stacey, 2011) who have formed working relationships with the country leadership that is now been replaced. These

networks help them to perform duties and understand the vision of the organization. However, with the country management leaders replaced entirely within a six-month period, it means there is a disruption among non-managerial employees in terms of networks, which needed to be appreciated by the organization. This has created organization complexities (Stacey, 2011) from the employee perspective. As highlighted by Moore & Westley (2011), the complexity mainly coming from the social structures that currently exist in the bank with a shift in leadership styles from the old group executives to the new executives.

Initially, under the new management transformation, there is no evidence of a shared consultation making the organization, especially at the lower level, unprepared for the change. I found this as the country leader to be causing uneasiness and creating problems in running the organization's affairs.

Adeleye (2015) noted that a successful organisation change management and transformation needs to pay careful attention and special focus on employees to be prepared for the leadership change. It is evident that this is not the case in the bank. Additionally, being in Africa, where the preferred leadership style in most organizations is consultative consensus-oriented (Wanasika et al., 2011), the evident lack of it as witnessed in the bank could affect negatively the organization in terms of behavioural implications, relationships between leader and employee behaviours which are contingent on culture-related characteristics (Herrenkohl et al, 1999).

Using the network relationship concept (Eisenberg et al. 2015), this helps to explain how the non-managerial employees are interacting amongst themselves to address the challenges they are facing going through the process of adapting to the leadership change (Grint, 2005). The cultural and operational challenges facing by the non-managerial employees are also examined in line with the view of Jumbe & Proches (2016), which states that the culture in an organization is a critical determinant of the success or failure of any forms of transformation taking place. Any perception among the non-managerial

employees that the new leadership has failed to connect employees to the new vision could create change acceptance problems within the organisation (Heiftz & Linsky 2002).

Thus, as pointed out by Brown (2012), it is necessary to study and understand the effect of employees' worldviews on the current organizational leadership changes and how they feel about the leadership change. As suggested by Appelbaum et al. (2017) all that involves directly the concept of change management especially in relation to the "resistance to change". The success of the organization transformation is thus largely linked to how the new leadership is capable to integrate employee emotions, cultures, concerns and feelings with the new leadership changes that is taking place (Hoyle, 2007).

1.2 Objectives of the study

This research study uses theory on organisation change management process and set the following as the objectives of the research:

- i) To understand how non managerial employees were viewing the change in leadership of the bank,
- ii) To assess how they were understanding the change and what challenges they experienced,
- iii) To understand how they were addressing the challenges and how the organization was supporting them.
- iv) To help the organisation to understand the implications of the change and deal with the resistance emanating from employees.

The objective of the study is to produce actionable knowledge to help practitioners in Zambia and Africa to carryout similar organizational changes. Practitioners and academics could have a deeper understanding of various forms of employee reactions when faced with a similar change and transformation.

1.3 Action Research

Based upon the research problem and the fact that I was a country leader, I decided to use action research. Action Research is rooted in a practice-based problem and it generates actionable knowledge. It also involves cycles of actions and reflections to co-produce knowledge for the organization (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). As affirmed by Marshall's (1999), the process of action research enables an inquiry that ensures that the action researcher remained professional to the research process while engaging staff on their feelings and experiences in a manner that they will not feel forced to give out explanations. This was important in order to produce credible findings both for the organization and for other researchers in understanding the impact the leadership change had on lower-level employees. As explained by Greenwood and Levin (2007), the advantages of using action research were firstly, that this methodology allowed for a good number of employees to participate in the inquiry, hence allowing for a collaborative process which, in turn, generated knowledge for researcher and for participants (Heikkinen et al, 2012). Secondly, the researcher engaged in a more reflective process that allowed an open dialogue with the employees on all data gathered, promoting a positive contribution.

Coghlan & Brannick (2014) elaborated action research as an opportunity to interact with staff more and more times to understand how they viewed the leadership changes. Given that the context of the leadership change problem taking place in the bank falls within the organizational complex adaptive systems theory that Stacey (2011) explains, it followed that the best research method to fully study the problem and come up with verifiable solutions is action research (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). This was the best suited inquiry method as it allowed the researcher to benefit from being an insider action research practitioner (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

The complexity of the change management process in place in the bank called for the use of action research methodology so that the data gathered was immediately collaborated with the actions being taken in the organization during the research period.

This provided a participatory research methodology and allowed the researcher to assess the common feelings prevailing among employees and the impact that the leadership changes were having on them (Bernard, 2012).

Further, through the action research process, as a practitioner researcher I was given an opportunity to test some possible solutions to the research problem as I witnessed the transition before leaving the organisation. This view is supported by Bushe & Kassam (2005), who concluded that the action research method leads to the researcher not only generating new knowledge but also triggering new action.

The research period consisted in the first two years of company transformation where the process of change was the most difficult to face as it was characterized by the highest degree of uncertainty and anxiety among lower-level employees. I was country leader during the first one and half year of the research. Then I was changed and continued to research from the outside.

The action inquiry considered the key leadership changes (country management team) and its replacement with new managers hired from outside the organization. The study considered and assessed how employees felt impacted by this change in the first two years. The time frame was adequate to come up with reasonable recommendations and actionable knowledge on how the organisation had to support non managerial employees to the new change management process. Two years represented a good amount of time to monitor and study the impact of a change management process before making proper conclusions.

As an action research practitioner, I was part of the change management process for the first one and half years as an out-going country leader.

1.4 Study Rationale

Very little has been empirically studied in terms of non-managerial employees' perspective in preparedness and acceptance of leadership change in Zambia. This research therefore

seeks to generate knowledge in this area which would be useful to practitioners in organization management especially in Africa and Zambia in particular.

1.5 Contribution of the Study

The findings of this research are expected to contribute to organizational knowledge on managing employees during a leadership change process. I expect to come up with practical ways that employees need to embrace and follow when faced with challenges of leadership change in their organization. The outcome of the study will assist employees in accepting leadership change and collaborate with the new leadership of the bank. Further, the research findings will contribute to the knowledge that practitioners need to be aware of when implementing organizational leadership change in a Zambian company. The knowledge gained also would help the human capital department of the bank to adequately prepare employees for any future leadership changes (Heiftz & Linsky 2002). Most importantly the study provides voices to the employees who are not considered as key stakeholders in the organizational transformation (Wilkinson et al. 2004; Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007).

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature relating to the research problem. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodology and methods of the inquiry used in this study. Chapter 4 describes a detailed account of the research findings. Chapter 5 discusses data analysis and the actionable knowledge identified. Chapter 6 provides the conclusions of the research suggesting theoretical and practical implications. Chapter 7 reports the reflections and the limitations, and future research avenues.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature relating to the concept of organizational change (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Cummings & Worley, 2014) and the impact that a leadership change has on employees (Hoyle, 2007). The first section outlines some key factors and frameworks of change as given by leading scholars and gives a brief analysis of how they define and describe the nature of change. This is reviewed in relation to organization leadership change. Then follows a discussion on the concepts of change management overview, focusing on review of the models of and approaches to change management. The various approaches are considered in relation to leadership change and likely impact on non-managerial employees. Then the chapter looks at the organization's preparedness for change with reference to employees and reviews the concept of employee resistance to leadership change. Finally, the ends by giving a synthesized summary of what has been significant learning from the literature review, expounding on the need for subsequent research work aimed at getting further insight on how leadership change initiatives impact on various stakeholders, especially non managerial employees (Ford et al., 2008). Employee's reaction to leadership change is represented as one of the major success factors in an organization transformation agenda (Hoyle, 2007).

2.2 KEY FACTORS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR CHANGE

2.2.1 Definition of Organization Change

Organizational change as noted by leading change scholars includes changes in terms of employee involvement, organizational structures, products or services, the market it serves, the way it interacts with customers or suppliers, among others (Oreg 2011). This definition of organization change is holistic and puts into perspective what a leadership change is. It captures the basis of the theoretical concerns of a leadership change on employees in a newly acquired entity. Over the last 30 years, research in organizational

change has evolved touching on several aspects of the organizational life (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Cameron & Green, 2019).

Fisher (2005) suggests that the only constant in life, is change. Organizational Change looks both at the process in which a company changes its operational methods, technologies, organizational structure, whole structure, and strategies, and what effects these changes have on it. Organizational change usually happens in response to external or internal pressures (King & Wright, 2007). Such change can be in form of improved organizational activities in line with the environment surrounding it. The variation created in the organization's being involves its structure and people in it (Raelin, 2006). This theory creates the basis of how leadership change, which is a form of organization change, ought to be viewed. As Huber et al. (1993) goes on to define organization change, leadership change is the variation in how an organization function. This specifically refers to the key elements of the organization like its leaders and members, its affairs, or how it distributes and allocates its resources. This includes how the organization decides to continuously reshape the activities of its members and employees. It is as simply put by Kanter (2003) as the crystallization of new possibilities.

This perspective of organization change theory is holistic as it refers to new policies and patterns, new behaviours, new markets, new employees and new leaders within the changed organization. It defines change as being an array of new activities within the organization (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Cummings & Worley, 2014). D'Ortenzio (2012) further adds that organization change is the reconceptualising of arrangements within the institution, and it denotes the alterations to structures, processes, regulations, and training. This highlights the foundation of leadership change as one form of organization change. And sets the bounds of leadership change evaluation in an organization. As argued by Busari et al (2020), the contextual factors which related to organizational change as defined represent the pre-existing forces present in the internal and external surroundings. Therefore, these surroundings are vital in analysing the success or failure of organizational change in particular leadership, as it might work as a catalyst for change

or as an impeding factor that restricts transition to the attitude and behaviour in a newly acquired organization.

Further, change is understood to be the process of making the organization embark on a new form. It is the same as making the organization shift in behaviour as it pursues competitive advantage in the market (Kanji and Moura 2003; Armstrong, 2013). For De Jager (2001) change is simply the process that takes place whenever the old is replaced with the new, while D'Ortenzio (2012) describes it as the travelling from the old to the new, leaving yesterday behind in exchange for the new tomorrow. As Higgs and Rowland (2005) put it, leadership change in a newly acquired organization has its route from how organization change is defined. It is the ability to influence and enthuse others through personal advocacy, vision, and drive, and to access resources to build a solid platform for change. This makes employees to be the major stake holder impacted in an organizational leadership change. They are the centre of the focus of leadership change activities making them the first priority for one wanting to understand how successful any leadership change is in an organization.

As Oreg et al. (2011) argue, an organization's existence depends upon the employees, to implement organizational transformation successfully and to improve the attainment of organizational objectives which are intended to arise from a leadership change. Hence in reviewing how successful leadership change is, a special focus must be on the impact that leadership change has on employees. As some recent scholars have argued, employees are active participants in any organization change (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2014; Uhl-Bien and Pillai, 2007). Therefore, in line with Bennis (2010) argument, for any successful organizational change, the recognition of the role that each individual employee play in accepting how they are influenced by the leadership change is very important and significant. This justifies my focus in this study, on the impact on non-managerial employees when looking at leadership change in a newly acquired organization.

2.2.2 The nature of Organizational leadership Change

What further informs the comprehension of an organizational leadership change impact in a newly acquired entity is the focus on how scholars have described the nature of the change to be in organizations. According to Burke (2017) to fully comprehend and analyse a leadership change, particular attention needs to be put in understanding the content (substance of the change), the context of the change (its environment) and the process used to initiate the change. Simply put, to understand the Change you need to understand the process of change in context. As argued by Garedda (2020), these three aspects of Change must be understood:

- Context – the environment in which it is happening.
- Content – what the Change is.
- Process – the way the Change is being implemented.

These key aspects of the nature of change help to inform the impact of change on employees and their likely reaction.

2.2.2.1 Content of change

Every change has the substance matter or what Oreg et al (2011) refer to as the essence of the change. Busari et al (2020) identify change content as the perceived meaningfulness or the degree of change. In the case of a leadership change in a newly acquired organization, the leadership change is the significant substance of the change to employees. The new leaders will exert new influence on employees hence leading them to react definitely to the change. It is this reaction triggered by the change substance which is of interest studying the impact of leadership change on non-managerial employees. This forms the basis for this study.

2.2.2.2 Context of change

The context of change is described by Johns (2006) and Pichault (2007) as the triggers that are expected to impact the process and content of change. Busari et al (2020) explain that the contextual factors relating to organizational change such a leadership change represent the factors leading to the change. Such factors as employees' feelings, trust in the new leadership and status quo are key in putting context to the leadership change. What lead or rather what forces were behind the leadership change. These surroundings are vital in analysing the success or failure of leadership change, as they might work as the reasons why the employees accept or resist the change. Hence when looking at the impact that a leadership change might have on non-managerial employees, the theory surrounding the context of change becomes critical in informing the study. The theory leads to the focus being put on understanding factors surrounding employee acceptance of the change such as how they feel and trust the new leadership as the change that has taken place. This understanding creates basis to link leadership change with critical employee reaction and acceptance of the change.

2.2.2.3 Process of Change

According to Burke (2017), the process of change refers to the "How" factor of organizational change. This refers how the change is communicated and effected within the organization. Learning from Oreg eat al (2011), processes of change provide important guides for intervention programs, since the processes are the independent variables that people need to apply, or be engaged in, to move from stage to stage. In my study of the organizational leadership change impact on employees, my focus will be on the covert and overt activities that employees use to progress through the stages of the change. This will then inform my study on how the change is implemented and understood from the employee perspective.

2.2.2.4 The Significance of the nature of Change

As suggested by De Jagger (2001), the nature of organization change is a *continuous* process and affects the environment in which individuals, groups or organizations operate. Both the environment in which the organization operates and the employees who are part of the organization are not static elements. This concept raises an important element of leadership change and its overall impact on employees. The research for success makes the organizational change process a continuous activity and a complex procedure that affects stakeholders leading to intended and unintended consequences (Wanberg & Banas, 2000; Cameron & Green, 2019). Cummings & Worley (2014) argue that the nature of organization change raises new procedures and activities. These would have effects on overall organizational structures and stake holders. As Burnes (2004a) states, these organizational changes could further be classified as small, large, incremental, hardly noticed, or dramatic. Thus, when dealing with any change related problem, understanding the classification of the change would help in dealing with resultant consequences. This would later be the basis for the taxonomy of changes explained later in this chapter. The magnitude of the organizational leadership change would help in understanding the resultant effects on employees in the organization. This point further supports the argument for me critically looking at the impact that a leadership change in a newly acquired organization has on employees. The organizational leadership change in such a scenario is large and dramatic affecting overall organizational structures especially relating to employees.

And to further deal with any possible leadership change related organizational problems it is important, as Lewis (2000) argues, that the type of change noted in the organization is differentiated between a planned and controlled change versus the unplanned or uncontrolled change. How the change came about is of significant interest to putting in perspective possible employee reactions and resistance to change. As both Lewis (2000) and Burnes (2004) explain, planned organizational change is due to deliberate efforts of organizational members, like for example where a merger and acquisition (M&A) of another organization takes place. This is planned and hence the steps and process

followed in enacting the change is able to be studied and reviewed. Where however the change is as result of uncontrollable or environmental forces like a market failure and a consequent bankruptcy as the result of an earthquake, the reactions may have a different impact on stake holders as this change is largely unexpected and properly planned and executed. The nature of change theory here thus sets the boundary in understanding that the leadership change in a newly acquired organization was planned and hence change related theories and models can be used to analyse the change and put it into perspective when looking at understanding how it was implemented, and what impact it has on the key stakeholders and what are the key learnings for the organization for future changes activities. Consequently, for my study focus, only change theory relating to planned change activities is thus used to understand the impact of the leadership change on employees.

A fundamental aspect of introducing planned changes into any environment is to gain insights into how well they will be received by employees and customers and implemented by the management. Organizations can use planned change to reframe shared perceptions, to solve problems, to learn from experience, to adapt to external environmental changes, to improve performance and to influence future changes. An organization that embarks on a planned change has the benefit of learning from the past. This has a major implication for any review of the impact of the organizational leadership change on employees.

The other key element of the nature of change is the theory that many change scholars have referred to and termed that change can lead to many other changes in the organization (Bamford and Forrester, 2003). According to Laster (2008), a single change action is likely to be the beginning of other changes that are overlapping and conflicting the outcomes expected from the initial change action. Arising from this argument, Laster (2008) advocates that change be looked at as a *multifaceted change* perspective. By just changing an organization leader, emphasis of employee deliverables often changes as well. For example, employees may welcome a new manager or leader as a change action. However, this change also comes with the requirement for them to adapt themselves to

new communication strategies and new workloads demanded by the new manager. This theory is very critical in understanding the impact of leadership change on employees. What did the leadership change bring on employees' welfare in the organization.? How has their being in the organization changed because the leadership changes? How has their work been changed? What are the many other changes that have taken place as a result of the leadership change?

It is therefore important when studying a change related problem to fully comprehend the theory that change by its nature can be viewed as either *multiple* (where several changes are made at once) or *multi-dimensional* (as in the case of an acquisition leading to an increase of customer altering the production schedules and hence forcing a staff reorganisation). What are the multiple changes emanating from a leadership change in a newly acquired organization? As Laster (2008) emphasises, this is a critical factor in understanding the nature of change.

Employees or stakeholders may either perceive change as being more than one singular action or simultaneous changes taking place at once. They may also perceive change as being one with smaller subsets or components of that same change (multidimensional change) as in the case of a change, in the leadership of an organization. In this case, it is clear that the leadership change, whilst may be a singular planned act, it is more than likely to result in a multi-dimensional change affecting employees and the organisation in various ways. Understanding the nature of change therefore sets the context and key considerations in understanding the leadership change and its impact on employees and the organization. As summed up by Garedda (2020) whenever Change Management is being examined, it must be thought of in these five elements.

- **Context**– the environment in which Change is taking place
- **Content**– what the Change actually is
- **Process**– the activities and approaches being applied to manage Change relevant to the context and content

- **People**– their view on Change, their ideas and commitment
- **Purpose**– apparent reason of why the Change is taking place, to help realise the benefits of change management.

The information is not just useful in choosing the most appropriate methodology and model, but also to plan the Change Management intervention, and above all, understand the support model that needs to be put in place. This will also greatly inform a review of any change management intervention such as leadership change impact on employees in a newly acquired entity.

2.2.3 The need for Frame works of Change

Different scholars as noted by Jumbe and Proches (2016) have pointed out that the degree of change and its impact on the organization can vary substantially due to the nature of change and how key stakeholders' perceive it. Change models reflect assumptions about how organizations work. As already noted earlier in this literature review and as echoed by By (2005), organizational change especially leadership change is vital in operational and strategic terms and is intimately linked to organizational strategy and willingness to be very competitive in the market. The key point being how is change conceived and deeply-reflected in the organization. As By (2005) argues, the assumption on how change is conceived and reflected then go on to help determine what will be possible to conceive and to achieve through the organization change initiative. This therefore sets the need to examine the frame works of change present in an organization to fully understand the content, context and procedure of any given organization change.

While different researchers agree on the complex nature of change, there are thoughts around how to effectively manage change initiatives. D'Ortenzio (2012) points out that employees require to comprehend the way in which the change procedure is able to modify prevailing frameworks that influence relationships in the organization. This is fundamental and critical in developing a wider comprehension of the change procedure (Lowendahl and Revange 1998).

Kuipers et al (2016) describe five key change factors which they view as being vital in understanding the frameworks of change:

- i) the context factor which, as pointed out by Philippidou et al (2008) refers to the organization's outside and inside atmospheres such as the changing political climate within the institution.
- ii) the content factor which, according to Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) focus on the substance of the change such as the organization's plans, systems and structures. A clear example could be new leadership appointed in the organization
- iii) the process factor which according to Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) depicts the processes and intermediations that are involved in carrying out the change. This allows for change to be distinguished between entrenched and emergent procedures.
- iv) the criterion variables or outcomes of change (Armenakis and Bedeian 1999) which incorporates behaviours, attitudes, and proficiencies of those engaged in the change (Tonkin, 2013).
- v) the leadership of change (Kuipers et al 2016) a phenomenon which has been gaining prominence in recent change management writings (Higgs & Rowland 2005).

These factors are cardinal to analysing and understanding change related issues in an organization. As Kuipers et al (2016) point out, an important consideration is to understand how stakeholders perceive and comprehend the change. How do employees for instance understand and feel about a leadership change in a newly acquired organization? Do the employees understand the context of the leadership change? How well do they know the contents of this change in relation to them and the organization? What key variables or outcomes do they associate to this leadership change? And finally, how did the organizational leadership lead the change? Was it well managed? Understanding the nature of the change from the five key change factors will help inform the critical aspects of the leadership change and likely impact on non-managerial

employees. As Higgs and Rowland (2005) mention, the nature of change is contemplated from various perspectives while Huber & Glick (1993) propose that changes are the outcome of the two stimulating powers in entities: the atmosphere (environment surrounding the organisation) and the top leadership (management at the helm of the organisation). To remain competitive and survive, organizations generally are swayed by environmental stimuli and may be obliged to change accordingly to turbulent and complex environmental requirements (Armstrong, 2013). It is critically important to understand if there were any external influences forcing the newly acquired organization to change leadership. What other external or internal factors are weighing on the employees as the leadership change takes route in the organization. Using this framework would better inform the leadership change study and clearly show how the change was implemented and what effect it is having on employees.

Furthermore, top organisational management influences change themselves by increasing or reducing it. This further helps to put in perspective the relationship between organization wide leadership change and the employees. How the change is implemented and how employees receive it and adhere to the change. This becomes vital in understanding how employees accepted and reacted to the change.

A frequently met taxonomy for probing forms of change as stated by Burnes (2004b) and Carnall (2007) is the dissimilarity concerning incremental and radical change (see also Nadler, 1997). According to Higgs & Rowland (2005), each of these concepts (incremental and radical change) has a different meaning though considered as overly simplistic. This, however, does give some guidance about the different orders of change. Bartunek and Moch (1987) make it clear that various orders of change can be recognized as: sub-system change (first order), organization change (second order) and sector change (third order). Using this taxonomy of change, it is possible to classify the change into one category which would then help in further understanding the change and its impact on employees.

The first step in defining a taxonomy change process is to categorize taxonomy changes by impact and scale (Simpson, 2017). An important consideration in categorizing the impact of changes to the taxonomy is that taxonomy data is often used by multiple internal tools and systems making critical tool in assessing and understanding the leadership change impact on employees.

Table 1 gives a summary of the taxonomy of orders of change as suggested by Bartunek & Moch (1987).

Order	Description	References
1 st : Sub-system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of systems or structures • Occurs within part of an organisation or sub-system • Incremental 	Burnes 2004 (c); Carnall 2007; Watzlawicz, Weakland and Fisch 1974
2 nd : Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational change • Movement in core organisational paradigms • Organisation-wide • Whole systems change 	Burnes 2004 (c); Carnall 2007; Watzlawicz et al., 2011; Van de Ven and Poole 1995
3 rd : Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In organization change • Cross-organisational change • Change spans specific organisational boundaries • Affects many organisations/sector-wide change 	Tsoukas and Papoulias 2005; Gratton 2005

This framework is used in literature to explore and describe change management and the processes that go with it. Learning from Burnes (2004), it is imperative to understand and use the taxonomy of change as a guide in evaluating the significance of the change in the organisation. Through the use of the taxonomy, the organisational leadership

change impact on employees is likely to be understood in terms of how deep it is influencing the employees in the acquired organisation. Based on the taxonomy of orders of change, leadership change may be understood and viewed as second order of the taxonomy of change underpinning the fact that it is transformational in nature leading to movements in the core employee paradigms. The leadership change is organizational wide affecting all the systems of the newly acquired organization. This is an important aspect when it comes to understanding the behavioural aspect of employees affected by leadership change. As a second order of change, the leadership change is at the centre of affecting the core of organizational paradigm hence providing the basis for investigating the impact that this is likely to have on employees.

However as noted and explained by Simpson (2017), the taxonomy in table 1 is not a complete list. For instance, recent organizational change literature has shown that change is complex and has so many variables to it (Stacey, 2011). And yet some of these variables have not been put into models of change yet and may not be part of the listed taxonomy of change. As more scholars have been studying change implementation and implication on organizations, more frameworks and models of change have been developed and used to explain organizational change. And more are yet to be developed. This makes change to be viewed as dynamic, challenging and the search for a formulaic approach that it could be argued is not possible given that humans are wonderfully unique and change situations can be highly different. The leadership change impact on employees in a newly acquired organization is most likely not to be guided by all the same variables noted from previous studies as given in framework and change models. The research data may bring out new variables which are not part of the taxonomy. Therefore, in line with Simpson's (2017) view, understanding, appreciation, flexibility and resilience coupled with a desire to learn are foundational capabilities that can help those delivering change to be in a resourceful state in order that they can deliver change in an effective and supportive way.

2.2.4 Models of and Approaches to Change and Change Management

Organizational change management literature has various models and theories of change Garedda (2020). Models of Change enhance the comprehension of change and change management process. As D'Ortenzio (2012) points out, change interventions are categorised in three main forms:

- i) Top-down change management – This is premised on the fact that change is initiated from the top and given down to everyone in the organisation. The presumption is that if the change initiators plan things correctly, change can be executed efficiently. Resistance from some employees is seen as the only hurdle in this process. To conquer this challenge, special attention in the change procedure is put on changing the culture of the organization.
- ii) Transformational change management - which arises as a result of leaders who are setting their own personal changes which then challenges individuals within the organization to think 'outside the box' (Liu et al., 2010). In this model, the transformational leaders provide a safe atmosphere for individuals to come up with innovative ideas (Hunt, 1999; Khan et al., 2012).
- iii) Strategic change management –which is in contrast with the top-down models discussed above as the objective for this model is to introduce new ways or behaviours at work. Through the newly introduced behaviours, employees are given an opportunity as Hiatt and Creasey (2003) note, to experience or rather witness the advantage of the change within the organization and based on the evidence witnessed, they would then internalise the change in their 'ways of working'.

Each one of these change categories could be effective depending on the circumstances that an organization is facing. However, as pointed out by D'Ortenzio (2012) the first category is generally acknowledged to be the weakest and the one that often fails the most. Leadership is the common factor in all these categories, together with the communication and the involvement of employees in the change process. Often, for any

organization, the challenge is to choose the right model matching the organization environment (Burnes, 2011).

Jumbe and Proches (2016) describe three theoretical frameworks which premise on the theory of any change management processes:

- i) control theory,
- ii) cognitive psychology, and
- iii) systems thinking.

These authors, Jumbe and Proches (2016), explain that control theory has its roots from the assumption that human beings are rational and can follow orders. Karp and Helgo, (2009) add that the control theory only works because it assumes that the leaders have the ability to control and direct individual members of the staff and because leaders have the ability to remove uncertainties dealing with any resultant resistance from the individuals (Ford et al., 2008). The key assumption under this theory is that individual members of the staff are rational and therefore will behave and act in a predictable manner. For example, individuals impacted by a change in the leadership process will be expected to act rationally by supporting the change.

Control theory goes further to assume, as Cameron and Green (2019) elaborate, when change is well organised and closely controlled, then the expected outcome will be achieved. This perspective is shared also by Orlikowski (1996). For these authors control theory outlines and proposes that change results are sort of predetermined which then allows leaders to quickly implement change. However, as explained by Garedda (2020) and Simpson (2017) it is not easy to control everyone in an organisation. Human beings by nature have free will and hence cannot be controlled in a predetermined manner like suggested by the control theory. Change in organisation is often dynamic making it difficult to control employees in a predetermined sequence. This is the most argument against this theory. Because human beings have free will, it is not possible to control their reactions to a change situation. But you can influence how they react through deliberate actions.

The cognitive psychology theory, according to Karp and Helgo (2009,) is based on the metaphor of the brain. Like the control theory it assumes and emphasises human rationality looking at the behaviour of both employees and the collective team in the organisation (Hayes & Allinson, 1998). This theory stresses on learning employees as the vital factor for any organization change implementation. This is very important in modern day change management theory as Jumbe and Proches (2016) explain that organization is assimilated as a mental model. Mental Models according to Jumbe and Proches (2016) form the foundation for learning and development. The argument put forward here leads to the success of organisation leaders in managing change. The success of a change practitioner is determined by their ability to influence learning. The implication on organization change is that it is possible that as you analyse change, you can attribute some of learning to how employees accept and react to change. However, because of change dynamism, the employees may not be rational as the model assumes. This then becomes a major criticism for this model (Hayes & Allinson, 1998).

System theory as explained by Jumbe and Proches (2016), is the newer model which seeks to comprehend how the organisational elements relate with their environmental elements to influence meaningful change. Systems thinking has a holistic view of the organization and as argued by Karp & Helgo (2009), it helps managers in planning suitable change initiatives by paying a lot of attention to the interactions among individuals, employee groups, structures, and key stakeholders, instead of looking only at employees. According to McGreevy (2008) system thinking considers organizations as open systems. By so doing, systems thinking gives credence to the idea of dialogic connections or relations between entities and their outside atmospheres as being necessary for the organization's success and survival.

This approach brings out what a modern practitioner needs to be aware of when managing change. Systems thinking is probably the best to follow if one is to comprehensively understand leadership change and the impact that it has on employees. Unlike purely looking at change as being influenced by employee rationality as the other models suggest, under system thinking the change seeks to look at all possible variables

including individual reactions and acceptance. This brings in the dynamism of change which Garedda (2020) refers to. It brings out the dynamism in change which other models do not necessarily bring out. As Dale (2017) explains, the best reason for engaging in systems thinking is that it correlates to improved performance. It allows a practitioner to think about all the elements in an organization hence providing an opportunity to clearly engage and manage the leadership change process. As Dale (2017) further elaborates, systems thinking competencies such as process orientation, systems logic and understanding of mental models have the highest correlation to improved organizational performance. This is achieved through intentional and planned selection and adjustment of multiple variables across disciplines in the organization which other models lack. This then means when looking at a leadership change and its impact on employees, through system thinking you are likely to not only examine resistance to change, but also the emotional elements suffered by each individual employee and the effects that the leadership change has on their overall work environment.

Gilley et al. (2009) observe that the majority of change models originate from the seminal Lewin's (1951) framework, which refers to the expressions of "unfreezing", "movement" and "refreezing" related to the change management process. Jumbe and Proches (2016) explain that the "unfreezing stage" of Lewin's model (see figure 2.1) includes scrutinising the present status in an organization, improving on the forces for change and then reducing forces against change. The "unfreezing" phase allows entities to proceed into the next phase of the "movement" stage. It is at the movement stage that the actual change is implemented, and leaders put into action the change initiatives.

According to Deszca et al., (2019) the movement stage is the most challenging phase of Lewin's model because individual members of staff are faced with significant doubt and fear about the change. It is during this phase that, according to Biech (2007), implementers of the change process must counter uncertainty by engaging employees to gain full commitment, and involvement to the change initiative.

The “refreezing” stage is the third stage of the model, and it involves adopting the new behaviours into everyday procedures and put into operation a reward mechanism. For example, relating to the leadership change, the refreezing stage requires the organisation stakeholders to work with the newly appointed leaders of the organization.

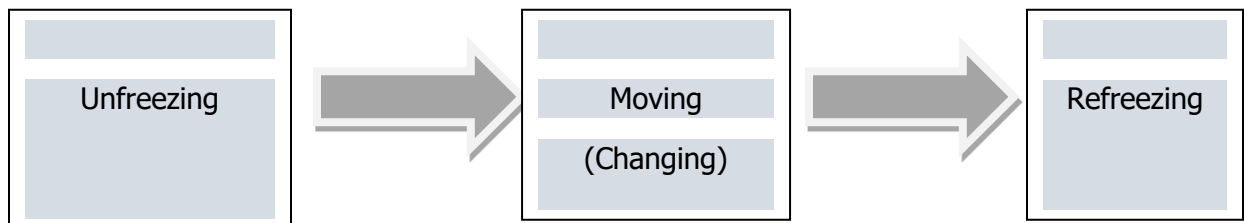


Figure 2.1 Lewin's Model of Change Source: Adapted from Lewin (1951)

The Kurt Lewin's model can be used to explain change management phenomenon such as leadership change and its impact on individual employees (Siddigui, 2017). However, there are some implications of the Lewin's Model which makes it not so useful at times. As leading scholars have noted, not all change can be focused, achieved and controlled in a linear manner. Instead as Simpson (2017) argues, individuals can learn hence assimilating the change at different intervals depending on their learning. Different people learn differently hence having a different implication on understanding employees in an organization and the influence that change would have on them. It is not always the organizational change can also change employees' behaviours. Furthermore, employees can choose to resist change. However, this resistance to change could be resolved through planning, management and leadership. In the change process, the sequence of events has also greater impact on the process of change as Lewin model suggests.

It is further argued that despite the fact that Lewin's model is significant yet and helpful in analysing and understanding change management process, it doesn't determine how change is affected, or how to accomplish each stage (Siddigui, 2017). This is serious drawback especially when looking at leadership change and its impact on employees. There seem to be an assumption from this model that the future outcome of change is better than the present which may not always be the case. As the future change outcome is unknown like in a case of leadership change and its implication on employees, it is possible that current employee productivity could be better than productivity after the

leadership change is made. The future cannot always be predicated, therefore; this model is criticized on assuming this notion (Simpson, 2017). Furthermore, it is based on the cause-and-effect relationship and does not pay heed to the unforeseen events which as we know now are more prevalent in organizations. Employees in organizations value different things such as relationships, culture, their comfort, status quo and they change because of psychological or emotional reasons which may not necessary be captured through the Lewin model. The model will not bring out the personal biases, favouritism, weak governance, systems and disconnection with those who planned the change process. However, as Reynolds (2015) acknowledges, Lewin's model is considered to have pivotal influence on the understanding of change management in organizations.

A deeper understanding of what transpires when organizations initiate change programs is presented in the research work of Bridges (2003). This a newer model of change and gives a better understanding of organizational change such as leadership change. He differentiates between change and transition, giving a new comprehension of why change is challenging and difficult to fully appreciate. Haneberg (2005) refers to Bridges' work and approach as transition management. Cameron and Green (2019) provide a definition of change as involving a transformation or alteration from one status to another. Transition is said to include a personal inner process that individual members go through as they come to deal with the change. In other words, transition is the changeover process within individuals' inner self (Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007).

Bridges (2003) mentions that most entities often overlook the transitional aspect connected to change when going through transformation. Bridges model is also founded on three phases of changeover: the ending, the neutral zone, and the new beginning.

In the stage one (the ending) individuals cannot start something new without accepting the ending of the past during the change process. In the case where leadership has changed, employees must accept that their time with the old leaders had ended, and they need to accept the new incoming leadership (Grint, 2005). This gives a deeper meaning to change (Raelin, 2006).

The next phase is the "neutral zone". According to Cameron & Green (2019), this stage implies that whilst the organizational change is going on, organizational members often feel disoriented and out of place or somehow displaced from the norm (see also Weick & Quinn, 1999; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). This is in line with Bridges (2003) stating that during this phase two individuals feel a sense of emptiness and apprehension which leads them to retreat and going back to their comfort zone. Therefore, the key challenge in this phase is for the implementers of the change to frequently engage individual members of the staff and updating them of what is going on and providing them assurances and support.

The third phase (New beginning) of Bridges change model requires the implementers of change to help individuals dealing with the new beginning. This is because as Bridges (2003) notes, individuals do not react at a similar speed and manner. Hence, the leaders of change need to be aware of that while getting everyone to accept the change. The common misconception is to assume that once the change has been executed every stakeholder will accept it. Therefore, as discussed by Cameron & Green (2019), implementers of change or organization leaders need to re-engage individuals once the change has been implemented to make sure that individuals do not retreat and become attracted to the previous manners of doing things. Some employees may identify themselves with certain groupings in an organization such as a gender group or union membership in the organization. However, Martin et al. (2006) reveal that some groups show a more positive adjustment to change than others concluding that employees may have different experiences related to the change initiative. Therefore, as concluded by Bridges (2003), effective change leaders achieve successful implementation of organizational change by taking into account the transitional or changeover points across the three phases of change. They ensure that everyone impacted by the change activities reacts positively with none left behind in the previous stages (Tasnim et al., 2014).

This model together with other multi-step models like Ulrich's Seven-Step model and Kotter's Eight-Step model (see figure 2), have been criticized by some scholars for being too simplistic as they assume that change occurs in a rigid sequential order. When

changing leadership, the process does not occur rigidly. Despite this criticism, Kezar (2001) points out that models of organisational change are essential since they systematize the comprehension of why organisational change takes place. The models help to understand how a change is managed and what is going to be the impact of the change. Most organisational change approaches still depend on change models. Many change models conceptualise change as predictable, rational, and implementable in rigid sequential steps which are simpler to manage. This is despite that most literature criticise the change models for being too simple and failing to recognise the complex and systemic nature about change. As Stacey (2011) argues, modern organisations are too complex to fully analyse the change impact.



Figure 2.2 Kotter's 8 -Step Model of Change
(Source: Adapted from Kotter 1996)

A leadership change impact on employees when examined using the systematic thinking approach would should there are various variables surrounding employees that need to be carefully understood in order to fully appreciate the change and its impact on employees. To what extent does culture for instance influence the outcome of the leadership change in the newly acquired organization? This where the use of another model developed by Hatch detailed in Raelin (2006) would be helpful. Hatch's model takes into account organisational culture that cognitively controls the implementation of

change. In the Hatch's model, change is a continuous process of sense-making by employees working in the organization. Employees accept organization change if such change makes fully sense to them (Raelin, 2006).

From a contingency perspective, Kerber and Buono (2005) argue that there is no one approach to change that is adequate for all organizations. Kotter (1995) reveals as over the 50 percent of organisational change failures take place because of change implementers failing to instill a sense of urgency in employees about the change being implemented. Kotter, thus, advocates for the formation of influential networks within the organisation to lead the change process.

Regardless of the model used for a change initiative, the first step to any change is addressing the status quo which Lewin model fully addresses. Kerber and Buono (2005) concur with this view which is widely supported by other scholars. The status quo is seen as the foremost opposition to change. Madsen et al. (2006) claimed that organizational change cannot endure without managers providing the appropriate interventions that guarantee that employees are well prepared for change taking place. As observed by Wren (2005), most of them employees may not carefully scrutinize the objective of the change initiatives. They rather tend to resist the change forces because to them, what is going to be changed, varies from the status quo they are used to (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

As argued by Kerber and Buono (2005) there is no one approach to change that is adequate but the models reviewed and discussed bring out a key learning for a practitioner to have a system in place to review and understand any change management process. No matter the type of change, its implementation and effectiveness in the organization follows some systematic approach. This is the key learning from the reviewed literature. And what is key is to use systematic thinking to understand all the elements in the change process and use the thinking promoted by Bridges (2003) and further explained by Cameron and Green (2019) to have a deeper understanding of what each individual member goes through as the change takes effect. It is clear from understanding these models and how they explain change management that each

employee in the organization is unique and has their own strengths and weaknesses. The implication of this is that not a single change management model can be suitable or preferred for any change initiative. Effectively, change management is crucial for organizations to be successful and be competitive in the market (Siddiqui, 2017). When you look at the implication of a leadership change in a newly acquired organization, through the analysis of the change models it becomes clear that change management is a process that needs motivated employees, good organizational structures and reinforcement of activities. It is clear that this process is not linear as described in the models of change management and neither do changes directly progress from the present to the future state in a predictable manner. Which therefore implies that there is not a right or wrong model of change management for change management in organizations. When looking at leadership change, a number of models could be selected based on the scope and application in a study and they are likely to help in information basis and bounds of the study. As Simpson (2017) argues, I have noted that for my study of the leadership change and its impact on non-managerial employees, the most important thing to remember in the change management process is to communicate the need for change and to clarify the process of adopting the change. This would help in making the organization become change ready and diminish the likely fears that employees may have. I have learnt from the described change models that change occurs within organizations when employees or members of the organization make their own personal transition as Bridges (2003) explains. This is important for a practitioner seeking to analyse and understand the impact of an organizational leadership change. For my leadership change study, this sets the base for clearly analysing the impact of leadership change on employees and what is likely to be their reaction and possible acceptance to change.

2.2.5 Concept of Change Management Overview

To further put into perspective the organizational leadership change and its impact on non-managerial employees, it is important to clearly understand what scholars have termed and defined organizational change management to be. From most recent

scholarly work, change management is understood to be a general procedure that oscillates in accordance with organizational requirements whilst upholding the vision of the change. Most change scholars agree that change is the only constant in organisational life. Szamosi and Duxbury (2002) define change management as on-going process and integral function of any organisations while Cameron and Green (2019) conclude that change is the only constant in the organisation life. D'Ortenzio (2012) suggests that organizations capable to successfully manage the process of change have a better benefit over their competitors.

However, Stewart & Kringas (2003) point out that 'the concept of change management' is hard to define. Different scholars have provided different perspectives of what is change management. Pettigrew et al. (2001) stated that the concept of change management is 'one of the great themes in the social sciences and organisation management theory'.

According to Nickols (2004), the expression 'managing change' has two connotations:

- i) the creation of change in a managed and planned systematic fashion and
- ii) the reaction to changes that the organization goes through over which the organization exercises little or no control.

Therefore, as mentioned by Pettigrew et al (2001) the requirement to recognize organization-wide change is an important and stimulating task for any organization. Kotter (1995, 1996) has gone further to uphold that, in addition to recognition of change, also the organizational culture influences the destinies of some entities (Bryan et al., 2012). Kotter (2008) and Kotter & Cohen (2002) expound further on this by explaining that organizations are now facing diverse challenges brought about by the globalization process. The need to manage change is now even more pronounced in organisations. D'Ortenzio (2012) points out that any process of change management presents difficulties for organizations which may momentarily stop them if these processes are not working

properly. As a practitioner managing change, you ought to be aware of these change management difficulties.

As argued by Beckhard & Pritchard (1992), change management is effective when the organization combines it with learning processes and when both leaders and employees perceive that the change process as a learning process itself (Hayes & Allinson, 1998). This is because as suggested by Dooley (1997) and Stacey (2011), modern entities are complex and need complex adaptive systems to thoroughly understand how the change should be managed and achieved. This is an important point and argument in change management process.

To fully manage change, it calls for a better comprehension of the organization's life as stated by Van de Ven & Poole (1995). These authors contend that to successfully manage change management processes in an organization, one needs to comprehend at what stage the organization is in its growth cycle as any organization that has been in existence for a long time, has probably undergone through an array of changes before. Such an organization is expected to have learned from the past changes and hence be well positioned to manage future changes. This supports the argument to ensure that any change such as a leadership change is fully studied so that the organization can learn from it to be prepared to manage any future changes.

Although it is factual that not all changes are similar, past experiences in facing any type of change will put an organization in a better position to handle future change. Henceforth, a comparatively young organization will be probably less ready as it does not have past knowledge to refer or benefit from when undergoing a change management process (Marquardt, 2002). This puts forward the argument for the newly acquired organization to examine the impact the leadership change is having on its employees so that it then begins to build on knowledge for any future organizational change. The knowledge should spurn across organizational culture and the emotional side of employees who are now faced with the task of working with new leaders and new ways of doing business. Studying employee emotions and reactions to a leadership change sets

a foundation for future change management process in such an organization. It provides key action learning knowledge to be referenced to in future organization change management process.

2.3 ORGANISATION READINESS FOR CHANGE

Literature has emphasised the preparedness of members of the organisation for change activity as being the critical and essential forerunner to the actual implementation of change (Cunningham et al., 2002; Gardner, 2006). Jumbe and Proches (2016) emphasise that both receivers and initiators of change, play a crucial part in guaranteeing the positive outcome of change efforts. They contend that organisation's continued existence is supported by cultural norms that regulate the behaviour of organisational members. Understanding the concept of organization readiness for change puts one in line to understanding change using any of the models that we have just examined.

The key factor is to get all organisation members to share the meaning of the change and in the process make sense of reality, occasions, experiences, and circumstances. In the same vein, Latta (2009) sustains that change resides at the heart of leadership and organizational culture emerges as pivotal in determining the success of leaders' efforts to implement change initiatives. Getting top managers to engage and appeal to the minds and hearts of prominent employees so that they are aligned with the new organisation plan would give the organisation a better chance at succeeding with its change initiative (Kaplan & Norton, 2006). This point is in line with the emphasis noted in the models discussed earlier. The implication especially when considering a leadership change is that change management must be thought through system thinking so that all possible factors and influencers of change are captured and understood. What is further means is the for change to be successful, there is need to get each individual member to be prepared for the change. Preparedness of organizational members ensures that the status quo is challenged and the base for change implementation is set giving an opportunity to every member to be in position to know about what to expect from the change about to be implemented.

Smith (2005) noted that the lack of employee readiness for change could lead to not reaching the desired outcome. This same perspective is shared by Armenakis and Harris (2002). They argue, and I concur, that being prepared for change serves to pre-empt the prospect of resistance or acceptance to change. They argue that paramount to the formation of being prepared for change is a convincing vision for change that must be set in the organization. This is in line with Weiner (2009) suggesting that employees need having the belief that the envisioned outcome of the change is appropriate. Weiner (2009) proposes that including employees in the preparation phases of the change initiative is a formidable method of reducing resistance to change and helping members of organisation in assessing the demands of the change task. Thus, when analysing the impact that a change may have on key stakeholders such as employees, it is important to analyse and understand to what extent the employees were prepared and involved in the whole change process.

Cameron & Green (2019) research underscores the importance of employee preparedness by showing the important role that visionary leadership continues to play in execution of organization change. Inspirational leadership was discovered by Luo et al. (2006) as playing a crucial role in the implementation of change. They claimed that leaders should ensure the preparedness of front-line employees and middle management before implementing any change initiatives. This is important as employees at the middle and lower levels of the organization can hold the view that the proposed changes are in their best interest if the change is to succeed. As pointed out by Kotter (1995) 'poor leadership succession decisions can derail a decade of hard change efforts.'

Then, to adequately prepare any organizations for change Nadler and Tushman (1990), suggest the necessity to recognise that organizations may contain many different views, all representing a variety of different employee perceptions.

As Stacey (2011) puts it, employees' function in 'complex adaptive systems' that carry all the official and unofficial elements into concurrent action all the way through continuous adaptation inside and amid structural systems. Waterman (1987) who makes a case for

organizations to be looked at as complex beings supports this view. Organisations are creatures deemed as rational decision-makers with 'irrational' habits. They are unpredictable products of internal power and politics (King & Wright, 2007). Hence, to avoid serious aftermaths relating to change management, the organisation system or the employees ought not be treated wholly or simplistically. As Wheatley (1994) correctly pointed out, 'the layers of difficulty, the logic of stuffs being further than our control and out of control, are but gestures of our failure to comprehend a deeper realism of structural life, and perhaps of life in general'.

As Singh (2013) puts it, to further evaluate whether an organisation is ready for change, we need to understand the reasons why organisations change and its organization preparedness to change. D'Ortenzio (2012) argues that organizations need to take into account the reasons behind the need for changes. As D'Ortenzio (2012) puts forward, organizations are subject to change from four fundamental influences: the environment, the diversification process, the technological effects, and the people within and outside.

- The 'environment' encompasses political, legal, and social behaviours that impact day to day operations of organisations
- 'Diversification' refers to business productions meant to satisfy customer demands and respond to competition.
- 'Technology' looks at the automation of existing practices within the organization considering the way business is conducted.
- 'People' looks at latest skill demands which arise as a straight result of new requirements from organisations.

McMillan (2003) named six factors as being accountable for the changes taking place in today's organisations. These are:

- i) New technologies – largely responsible for transforming modern communications, electronics, and consumer markets;
- ii) Globalisation – largely responsible for today's world being better connected and inter-reliant on goods, information and money moving around the planet;

- iii) Globalisation and new technologies – which when put together are responsible for increased world market competition and hastened rise and fall of market leaders;
- iv) New change processes and practices –these are taking place quicker than ever before in known history and are largely responsible for organisational change;
- v) Speed – The world today is moving faster and at an incredible speed with all the technological aspects in place and this has increased the pace at which business and peoples' lives are moving on.
- vi) Complexity and paradox – are more pronounced in today's organizations owing to all the changes taking place every day as a result of the factors noted already. This is contributing to making it more problematic for managers to run organisations smoothly especially that they lookout for certainties in order to bring about the ideals of stability and order in an organisation.

For Nadler (1988) change can take place due to outside or inside forces or for both of them. Harris (1997) argues that outside forces may still be swayed by political factors, which may be present in the organization's environment. For example, D'Ortenzio (2012) suggests that both private sector competition and privatisation have a great influence on organization change too. Harris (1997) cites social and technological factors as also playing an influential role regarding changes in organizations (also Thornton & Byrd, 2013). New technology such as computers for online shopping, use of satellite, internet cloud and out-sourcing of services do have a deep impact on change initiatives. In modern organisations where technological improvements are key factors any leader of change needs to consider the technology in place in the organisation when assessing the impact that any change would have on employees (McCarthy & Rich, 2015).

An M&A change process with a rival organization may come about because an organization wants to dominate its market and create a competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994; Barney, 1995) or to enter in new foreign markets. It therefore follows that in

getting an organization and its employees ready for change, comprehension of the factors that lead to change is very important. This has implication on how a leadership change impact is examined. This then falls in line with the systems approach to change that has been discussed already and sets a clear base for a practitioner looking to understanding the impact of leadership change in an organization on employees. By applying systems thinking and viewing change as being dynamic, the organization is assessed as to whether it was prepared for change helping a scholar practitioner to be in a better position to assess and understand the impact of the leadership change on employees. Assessing the organization preparedness helps to look at change beyond it being in linear or in controlled as Lewin Model suggests.

2.4 EMPLOYEES PREPAREDNESS FOR CHANGE AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE:

As the models reviewed have emphasised, to comprehend and understand the change process, special focus must be on the individual organisational members. Employees need to be understood in terms of their comprehension of the change. This is where the concept of understanding employees' preparedness for change and resistance to change becomes key to understanding the impact of the leadership change in an organisation. Employees' resistance to change, as argued by Ford et al (2008) and Jumbe and Proches (2016), is seen in most change literature as the major cause of organisational change failures. Employees will resist to the change if they feel their status quo will be damaged by the change or if the change is not what they expected. While most scholars in their literature have described resistance to change as an unwanted phenomenon that should to be limited, some scholars observed that employee resistance is not necessarily a bad thing seeing in it some positive aspects. Employees may resist to a leadership change for good reasons. Understanding this aspect through a research study would help the organisation to be in a much better position to have clear view of the real consequences of a change in the leadership structure.

2.4.1 Effect of Employee emotions on change acceptance

As the Bridges (2003) model puts emphasis on understanding the state of the employees in the change situation, it follows that employee emotions must be studied and understood in order to fully comprehend the effect on change acceptance and employee preparedness for change. This view is emphasized by Cumming and Green (2019) as being critical in getting employees being prepared for change.

The first learning is from Eriksson (2004) study that analysed the results of an organization change on employee emotions. The key argument from the author is that all employees affected by change experience some emotional turmoil. Some feel angered by the change process and may even go into depression. He notes that every individual in an organization is impacted by change experience. What will differ is how each employee responds and reacts to the change effect.

This argument is further emphasized by Sevda et al (2016) who point out that all organizational changes are emotionally charged processes. This point has been emphasized in most recent scholarly research putting emphasis on the impact of employee emotions on successful change management. It is argued that the idea of change can trigger an emotional response. Some common reactions to change include a desire to keep things the same and little confidence that the change will be successful and solve real problems. These reactions reflect the emotional phases that employees go through during change. LaMarsh (2021) states that even before a change is initiated, employees may feel personal loss, concerns about what will be required of them and apprehensions over their ability to meet any new expectations as a change takes place.

As Huy (2002) elaborates, an individual's emotional experience during a change process such as a leadership change can influence their commitment to facilitating a successful organizational change (see also Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). This is both a key learning and argument for ensuring the effect of employee emotions on change acceptance is part of study in understanding the impact of leadership change on non-managerial employees.

This impact according to Sevda et al (2016) has rarely been considered in light of most change approaches focusing on employee sensemaking. As Murphy (2005) argues, it is employees' reactions and responses to the change that mostly vary. The emotional experience also affects their behavioural contributions to the change process to a great extent. An angry or depressed employee maybe difficult to accept the change taking place. If their emotions are well understood and considered as the organization goes on to manage change, employees will have a better chance to be prepared for the change and accept it. Hence, it is important that employee emotions are well understood to fully comprehend any change related to the organization. As LaMarsh (2021) proposes, understanding the emotional phases that employees may experience can help a practitioner carrying out a change decide what to do in response.

Thus, the proposal put forward by LaMarsh (2021) regarding the interpretation of the seven emotional phases people experience during changes could be argued to be useful in engaging employees and getting them to accept and adopt the changes being undertaken in the organisation. This proposal could be used in understanding the impact the leadership change is having on employees and help the research practitioner to develop key learning and insights on the change process.



The figure denotes LaMarsh proposed 7 emotional phases that employees would go through as they encounter change. These emotional phases are further analysed and explained in the following table. The table tabulates the key interpretation of each phase and recommended actions according LaMarsh (2021).

Phase	Symptoms	Recommended Actions
Immobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty focusing on their job and responsibilities • Information about the change doesn't seem to sink in • Express feelings of disbelief and not knowing what to do next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the key facts about the change and the reasons for it • Say it more than one time • Know what channels of communication work for your audience • Use different methods and verbiage • Encourage them to get involved and give input
Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in denial think things like: "They won't do it," "They will start but not finish," or "We won't really have to do it anyway" • Ignore discussions about the change • Avoid participating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what is not working well today • Divide change into smaller steps and focus on what to expect first • Help them understand why each step is necessary and how they can support the change
Anger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to see anything positive about the change • Time is spent sharing their negative perceptions privately or publicly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't take it personally • Acknowledge the anger and defuse it • Empathize with the anger • Create an opportunity to speak openly about their concerns and set rules of engagement • Consider holding one-on-one meetings
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to be uninterested in the change • Loss of enthusiasm for their job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage employees to share their issues and concerns with their leadership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes the organization is unwilling to act upon their suggestions • Realizes that their role and responsibilities are changing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform them about resources that will be provided to help them • Help them see their place in the future and the value they bring
Negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to be uninterested in the change • Loss of enthusiasm for their job • Believes the organization is unwilling to act upon their suggestions • Realizes that their role and responsibilities are changing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only negotiate the parts of the desired state that are truly negotiable • Make it clear what parts (if any) of the desired state are negotiable • Be open to negotiation where possible • Understand the implications of offering concessions to one group or person versus broadly
Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking questions about the future state and how they fit • Participation and information sharing are improving • More positive attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge their progress • Emphasize how valuable their cooperation is • Encourage them to keep making steps forward • Emphasize the positive points of the change • Develop opportunities for them to participate in resolving or understanding the less favourable elements of the change • Publicize support and learning programs
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in helping others understand and accept the change • Offering support and input • Engaging in learning and communication opportunities • Demonstrating competency and supportive behaviours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their accomplishment and contribution to the success of the change • Understand what drove them to acceptance and share with others • Enlist them to help others reach acceptance • Share progress toward success metrics

The key learning from the table is that whilst it is possible that not every employee will emotionally encounter all the seven proposed phases in a linear manner as proposed by LaMarsh, the identified emotional phases and recommended actions to deal with them do build on scholarly work so far seen in literature. The table helps to understand and put into perspective what the employee experiencing major change, such a leadership, is going through and what could be done to ensure they are helped in the change process. Employees affected by change in an organization are often faced with multiple changes at the same time. Change is persistent and necessary, which culminates in complex emotional responses. This makes it very useful to understand the emotional side of employees experiencing a leadership change and becomes very useful in assessing the impact that leadership change could be having on them.

2.4.2 Effect of how change is communicated on change acceptance

To further be in position to fully understand how employees and the organization is well prepared for change, an analysis of how change is communicated must be done. Key learnings are noted from Eriksson (2004) study which describes how employees receive the change, mobilize themselves and learn about it. The change process tends to be more positive when leaders are receptive to employees' early stress and fears. Where communication is not handled properly the change is likely to be an issue. Therefore, as argued by Sten & Deimler (2006) it is important to examine the communication used in a change strategy to understand the impact that the leadership is having on employees.

To ensure organization change is well embedded into the organization's culture, Kotter & Cohen (2002) suggest that new behaviours need to be deeply anchored into common values and social norms of the organisation. They encourage a continuous communication about the advantages and benefits of change to all employees to reduce their resistance to change. This same view is further amplified by Appelbaum et al. (2017) who add that a better communication between sponsors and receivers of change should encompass realistic valuation of future obstacles and opportunities, such as downsizing plans and careers diversification if any. This is what Appelbaum et al. (2017) refer to as reinforcing

the notion of "realism." The advice from Appelbaum et al (2017) is similar to the recommendation from Messmer (2006) that in an organization change after a M&A process, an outline of both its advantages and disadvantages and its effects on organization need to be provided to all the employees.

Rubin et al. (2013) emphasise that employees in a change situation want to see and hear from their senior management or leaders to help them comprehend where the new organization is going, and how this change impacts their job and work situation as a whole. Bernerth et al. (2007) argue that communication turns out to be even more significant especially when trying to mitigate resistance to change and when employees do comprehend what the change is trying to achieve and feel they will not be hurt by the change outcome. As part of good leadership in any organisation change, Bernerth et al. (2007) contend that it is critical that senior management provide a proper communication of the change process. As leaders, they need to help focusing on the efforts of the change explaining the reasons behind the it and maximizing employees' commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Seo and Hill (2005) add that it is essential for managers to take time to listen to their employees and help them to cope with anxiety related issues.

Also, Amiot et al. (2012) point out that employee's realignment is influenced by the extent to which they feel that all the information has been communicated clearly to them. Appelbaum et al. (2017) therefore put the prominence on communicating as a moderating gauge for resistance to change in the perspective of an acquisition. Whalen (2002) also examined this and had similar conclusions: two of the biggest 'Day One' mistakes leaders make in announcing a merger or acquisition is not to provide useful information about it to employees and to make promises that cannot be kept. Employees provided with honest information covering detailed aspects of the merger or acquisition early enough in the change process can assess how the deal will affect them. However, evidence from Schweiger and Denisi (1991) suggest that communicating at the early stage of an acquisition has only slight influence on the general level of stress and feeling of uncertainty of employees.

In their study, Schweiger and Denisi (1991) aimed to find out whether the amount of communication given to employees did influence their performance over a certain period of time. Using a field experiment, they found out that in the medium and long-run, employees receiving the most communication about the change outperformed the other employee group that did not. They compared different groups of employees in terms of their performance related to global stress and perceived uncertainty, job satisfaction, commitment, honesty, caring, perceived trustworthiness and self-reported performance. This view can also be seen from an earlier study by Bastien (1987) where it was concluded that "formal communication is associated with either positive reaction or with stabilizing volatile situations". This understanding provides a key basis to understand the impact that a leadership change could be having on employees. How where they communicated to about the change?

As the various scholar studies have indicated on the concept of communication, it is important that care is taken on the information given out prior to change process. The information given out need to vary according to groups of employees. As concluded by Napier (1989) in his study of the merger of two banks, some employees have greater reasons to be concerned about job security than others, hence the amount of information channelled to them would impact more than the others. Using system thinking as an approach to change management would help in ensuring that all variables seen as major influencers on change are considered. The emphasis and argument here is that the change communication strategy is a key element in understanding both organisation and employee preparedness and acceptance to change, which is an important aspect in carrying out an assessment of any change process. Each employee affected by a change is likely to react differently, perceive the change differently and embrace it at their own pace. This is the implication of using system approach in understanding change and from it becomes clear that when assessing the impact of leadership change on employees, a systems approach should be used so that the dynamism in change is cleared captured through the various variables in the organization.

2.4.3 Impact of the Status quo on change acceptance

The concept of status quo has been identified by most recent scholars as a major consideration in comprehending the organizational preparedness and acceptance to change. This concept comes out clearly from Dealy & Thomas (2006) discussion of the many risks and issues related to the implementation of organization changes. They particularly identify the issue of status quo as one issue that affects employees' preparedness and acceptance of change. The Oxford learner's dictionaries define the status quo as the situation as it is now, or as it was before a recent change. Dealy & Thomas (2006) point that that in any organization, people may want to defend or restore the status quo (conservative approach), or, at the opposite, they aim to remove it (change approach). They argue that leaders in an organization are often in a better position to inspire and help the shift of employees, their employees from the status quo to a position where they would accept and support the change. As Ford et al (2008) point out, failure by a leadership to do so may result in resistance to change by employees. From this point of view, it can be concluded that the status quo concept places the responsibility to drive the shift on the leadership or the implementors of change.

For Dealy & Thomas (2006) a common mistake during the change management process is underestimating the influence of the status quo. They emphasize that nothing would really move or change without tackling the status quo firstly which is more or less what the unfreezing stage under Lewin explains.

Dealy & Thomas (2006) reveal that a leadership change in a transformation process may lead some employees to losing their deemed organisational identity in the social setting of the new organisation. Hoyte & Greenwood (2007) further observe that in an M&A scenario, it is crucial that the concerns of the organisation identity loss are addressed during the organisation transformation. This is what the social-identity organization theory suggests. Seo and Hill (2005) further point out that decisions made during an acquisition, such as employing new managers, giving the company a new name, consolidation of brands or eliminating some of them, consolidation of corporate value

statements play a major role in modelling a new company organization. Hence to avoid employee resistance, Griffin (2004) suggests to share the communication plan with all the changes about the decision-making process. This will likely help in managing the impact of the status quo and allow for less resistance from employees. This shows there is a direct link between the status quo and how change is communicated.

Although Sonenshein (2010), shows in his research study that the information shared about the change to the employees can be either positive or negative, depending on the status of the company at each point in time employees can be impacted directly or indirectly by the change. This, in turn, would influence whether or not employees would accept the change. Especially, where employees perceive the change as having a negative connotation, they would most likely think the change as leading to an organizational decline. Employees would then resist the change.

For Appelbaum et al. (2017) they point out that there does not exist a "right way" to depict the information. Presenting it as either important or unimportant does not convert into a direct acceptance or resistance to the change. Where a new leadership emerges as part of the organisation change, it becomes an imperative to discuss about the management support towards the employees otherwise resistance to change is likely to be rife.

2.4.4 Impact of Trust in Organisation leadership on change

To minimise resistance to change, Oreg (2006) notes that it is cardinal for leaders to earn the trust of their employees. A leader inspiring employees and instilling in them a sense of trust seems to be more successful in avoiding resistance to change. Trust, in this sense, is defined by Oreg (2006) as, an atmosphere that creates the feeling that employees can count on their leaders or supervisors to make the wise choice.

Carow et al. (2004) point out that leaders and managers are expected to be aware of some critical factors (for example in terms of uncertainty about employment) as they try to earn the trust of their employees. As explained by Lundqvist (2011), trust amid leaders

and their employees, allows an employee to feel comfortable to take part in the process and more likely to accept the changes.

Appelbaum et al. (2017) observe that even though an organization is undergoing a significant change (as in the case of an M&A) or a less significant change (as in the case of a change in a departmental supervisor), there is most likely to be a redistribution of organisational internal resources. According to Bernerth et al. (2007) organisation leaders can pay more attention on how employees view fairness in the entire process. Bernerth et al. (2007), argue that the organization change can be improved by paying more attention on organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987). Greenberg (1987) introduced the concept of organizational justice with regard to how an employee judges the behaviour of the organization and the employee's resulting attitude and behaviour (e.g., if a firm makes redundant half of the workers, an employee may feel a sense of injustice with a resulting change in attitude and a drop in productivity). Individuals react to actions and decisions made by organizations every day. An individual's perceptions of these decisions as fair or unfair can influence the individual's subsequent attitudes and behaviors. Fairness is often of central interest to organizations because the implications of perceptions of injustice can impact job attitudes and behaviors at work. A failure to acknowledge the importance of organizational justice would probably lead employees to be confused, angry, frustrated, and cynical.

Folger and Skarlicki (1999) suggest that employees would resist change because they feel threatened, particularly when they see the change as imposing hardship or loss on them. When employees feel a sense of justice and that they are treated fairly, they are most likely to develop attitudes and behaviours favourable to a successful implementation of change. Georgalis et al. (2015) look at employees' perception of justice to facilitate the relationship between manager and employee in the context of resistance to change. One of their findings is that employees may be less likely to resist change if they experience high-quality leader-member exchange relationships. This supports what Stacey (2011) points out as a good ingredient in supporting networking concept needed in today's complex organisation theory.

Courpasson et al. (2012) study the concept of "productive resistance". They prove that employee resistance to change is necessary as it provides precious comprehension into the imminent changes. They note that change is accompanied by the creation of two groups: the "champions of change", and the "resisters of change". From their findings, Courpasson et al. (2012) argue that there is no need for the two groups to necessarily have adversarial positions with regards to change, but rather they can work together to ensure the best outcome from the change. They found that by allowing all groups to provide insights with regards to their positions on the change, the resisters, can convert themselves into agents of change, capable of finding a settlement with the opposite parties who are usually the top management advocating for change. This understanding about the change creates a deeper insight into understanding employee attitudes, feelings and impact arising from a leadership change. It sets a base to understand the likely reactions which are both negative and positive when seeking to understand the impact that a leadership change would have on employees and the likely effects to manage the whole change acceptance process. It is an important concept to be aware of when seeking to analyse the impact of leadership change on employees.

2.5 SUMMARY

This reviewed literature gives credence for one to critically evaluate the impact that a leadership change has on non-managerial employees. The change literature has shown that in today's world, organizations and people are operating in a constantly changing environment and adapting to changing needs and circumstances which are vital for the success of organizations and development of its employees. This therefore implies that change should be perceived as a new challenge instead of a threat in organizations (Siddigui, 2017). The reviewed theories of change have helped me to put into perspective that change management, such as an organization leadership change, is deep rooted and widely spread in the organizations and hence involves all of its segments and not just employees. The impact or implication of the leadership change on employees is wide spread and varied. Therefore, analysing the change cannot be achieved and implemented in isolation. Neither can it be analysed using a single change model. Whilst the leadership

change had the characteristics of a top-down change model, to get a better understanding of its impact on employees, a system approach to change would have to be used so that all the change implication is seen beyond resistance to change. All the other variables such as organization preparedness to change, employee emotions, organization culture, structures and employee trust in leadership must be fully captured and analysed to fully appreciate the leadership change impact.

It is clear from the literature that change should be thought of as a bottom-up approach which is owned not only by the leaders but by the employees as well. It is crucial in an acquired entity as learnt from the change theory that all stakeholders own the change. It is not only the leadership but the employees too as they too are affected and impacted by the change. It is also very clear using systems approach that each organization and individual employees are unique and have their own strengths and weakness, therefore not a single change management model can be suitable or preferred when analysing leadership change impact on employees. These key learnings are fundamental and helped me in setting the boundaries of studying the impact of the leadership change on non-managerial employees.

Further as Appelbaum et al. (2017) highlight that most organisation changes related to M&A initiatives have low success rates. As Cartright (2002) points out that successful acquisition outcomes are linked closely to the extent to which management is able to integrate members of organizations and their cultures, and sensitively addressing and minimizing individuals' concerns. From this point of view, it becomes clear why there is the need to study further the impact on employees of a leadership change in a newly acquired organisation. Practitioners will be better prepared to deal with problems arising out of such changes, especially on how to manage and mitigate resistance to change, employee emotions and overall acceptance of change. Appelbaum et al. (2017) find that resistance is a normal expectation of employees faced with change as this demand for a cultural change. Resistance to change is normally influenced by employee embeddedness and engagement to their organisation. For Rubin et al. (2013) maintaining employee

engagement become a key element of the success of the change initiative as an engaged employee will provide significantly more effort to complete tasks.

The more engaged are employees, the less they will resist change. Bell and Barkhuizen, (2011) point out that resistance to change often emanate from the level of satisfaction with the organisation status quo of both employees and managers.

Accepting the new corporate culture is also a critical issue. Lee et al. (2014) study culture clashes in cross-border mergers. From their research findings, they were able to establish that national cultural differences could possibly have a negative effect on post-merger integration making acquired employees likely to experience serious organisational cultural stress especially depending on how cultural differences are perceived in the new organization.

Then, helping employees to develop a positive perception on the new change will lead to a success of the acquisition, especially if, as suggested by McKay et al. (2013), employee sense of belonging to the new organization is properly managed.

Therefore, in my study I will focus on evaluating the impact that leadership change has on non-managerial employees in an acquired company, investigating how the employees are emotionally affected by the change, how prepared they were for change and how they are accepting the change. This will contribute to increase knowledge on managing change and helping organisations in similar circumstances to succeed. The reviewed literature therefore has provided a solid basis for my study on how non-managerial employees are impacted by a leadership change in a newly acquired organisation. The change management literature reviewed will contribute to understand the role of leaders and employees during the change.

Chapter 3 Research Methods

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and discuss the research methods I used in carrying out the study. Appreciation of the research traditions, procedures and methods is necessary to produce quality research. In coming up with the research design and approach, I considered the need as a researcher to employ rigorous procedures and methods necessary to ensure I obtained data which was vital to understand how non-managerial employees were impacted by the leadership change. This was vital in order for me to ensure that my research is construed as being an argument rather than a search for an absolute truth (D'Ortenzio, 2012). This view guided the choice of my research methodology having in mind that the study should produce arguments to support the conclusion of the research problem (Campbell, 1988) and show a good theoretical understanding of the aim of my research, and knowledge of the appropriate fit between data type, research design, method tools and data analysis techniques.

In this chapter I provide an overall understanding of the methodology used in my action research. I describe the process I went through in choosing an appropriate method of inquiry and the use of action research as a research strategy to address the research questions. Thereafter, I discuss the principles of qualitative research giving an account of the data collection methods used in my study. Through the discussion, I give a full justification for using the qualitative multi -methods approach, illustrating the procedure, sampling framework, and instruments used in each phase of my study.

3.1 CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In coming up with the appropriate research methodology, I paid particular attention to the purposes of my research study, the epistemological and methodological assumptions as suggested by Depoy & Gitlin (1994). It was important for me to consider my epistemological influence especially that I was seeking to use the knowledge of change

management to adequately deal with the research problem under study. In choosing the appropriate research methodology, I followed the guidance offered by Crotty (1998) on what form the research process should take. This involves posing and answering to four main questions:

- 1 *What method should I propose?* According to Sarantakos (2005) methods refer to a tool or an instrument employed by researchers to collect data. Answering this question gave direction to the appropriate method for the research. I had to think critically about the available methods in line with what I wanted to achieve in the study.
- 2 *What methodology would govern my choice and use of methods?* Answering this question guided the choice of my methodology. According to Sarantakos (2005) methodology is defined as a model entailing the theoretical principles and frameworks that provide the guidelines about how research is done. This for me was relatively made easy as my study was already premised on action research being a scholar practitioner.
- 3 *What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology chosen?* This question helped to ensure the combination between the chosen methodology and the theory behind the research model (Campbell, 1988). Having done a detailed literature review, I had a clear understanding of the theoretical perspective behind the methodology I was going to use.
- 4 *What epistemology informed the theoretical perspective?* The meaning of epistemology is the theory of knowledge concerning the nature, source, and scope of the knowledge itself (Campbell, 1988). As Jupps (2006) puts it, epistemology is defined as "a field of philosophy concerned with the possibility, nature, sources and limits of human knowledge". It was thus important for me to critically examine myself in answering this question and being aware of my philosophical assumptions which would then increase

the quality of my research and contribute to the creativity as a researcher practitioner.

It is clear to conclude as Hockey (1996) notes that the underlying principles of research differ according to the discipline in which research is being undertaken. In my action research, it was necessary to be conscious of the fact that the selection of an appropriate paradigm depended not only on my personal taste and philosophy, but also on the nature of the research questions. I also paid particular attention to the emphasis made by D'Ortenzio (2012) that whilst research method choices may be made on practical grounds, it is also important that the philosophical ideas on which they are based are understood. As Plowman (1991) put it, the research methodology that I use must also be appropriate to the specific requirements and expectations of my study. This in turn leads to a consideration of the issue of appropriate 'epistemological considerations' pertinent to any research study.

3.1.1 Epistemological considerations

As an individual, I look at things mainly with a positive attitude trying to interpret what it is going to happen (Gummesson, 2003). As my study focuses on how employees felt themselves impacted by the changes due to a new leadership in an organization that had just been acquired, it was important that the methodology employed was based on realities being experienced by these employees (Campbell, 1988). I expected most of the views expressed by research participants to be subjective. Hence, I adopted an interpretivist approach to ascertain their understanding of the change they were going through and what challenges they were experiencing in adapting themselves to the leadership changes. I thus based my research on a qualitative interpretive approach (Gummesson, 2003; Irvine & Gaffikin, 2006; B Zryman 2008; Cunliffe 2010; Tracy, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Byers 2014; Creswell & Poth 2016) as described in the next paragraph.

In order to fully achieve the objectives of the research, the selection of an appropriate research method depended not only on my personal preferences, but also on the nature

of the research questions. There are several research methods available to a researcher when undertaking a research inquiry (Heikkinen et al, 2012). As Holloway and Wheeler (1996) caution, there is no "one best" method. The researcher needs to consider the method that best brings out the appropriate relationship with the issue being inquired on (D'Ortenzio, 2012). I was very much mindful of this when choosing the appropriate research methods. The research methodology employed should be appropriate for the specific expectations and requirements of the research study.

My research was thus primarily located within the qualitative interpretive approach. I had an interest in exploring my research participants' beliefs, values and practices embedded in situations, which are highly complex and dynamic. This made this form of research appropriate because qualitative research relies heavily on a dialogic relationship between the researcher and participants and generally focuses on an analysis of language that results from conversation or documentation (Sarantakos, 2005). Thus, this study has sought to interpret employees' subjective meaning of change and change management processes and practices by using ethnography as a research method.

3.1.2 The research design: ACTION RESEARCH

As a scholar practitioner, I was bound to use action research methodology in the study. Action research is rooted in a practice which looks at a particular organisation problem and generates actionable knowledge (Lewin, 2007). Action research is thus both a philosophy and methodology of research generally applied in the social sciences. This answer gives a clear understanding of action research as being a type of qualitative research, which is adopted by the researcher in order to solve the immediate problem arisen during the particular course of time. It is a way which bridges the gap between educational theory and professional practice by improvising their current practices. It seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection. Kurt Lewin (1944), coined the term "action research". Action research involves cycles of actions and reflections to produce knowledge for the organization.

The cycles of actions in my study involved observation of research participants, a series of focus group meetings, interviewing research participants through informal and formal process and administering questionnaires to staff in the branches where I could not travel to. Through this process, I interacted with as many employees as I could across the organization and shared a lot of time with them observing and understanding what they were going through as the organization changed its leadership.

From the beginning of the study, I was aware that a leadership change could impact all employees and their feelings in a different way. Their experiences about a change process and its effect on them is unique for each one of them. I therefore designed my action research in a way that enabled me have access to a wide number of non-managerial employees and their individual views. As a practitioner, I followed the action research methodology (Bartunek et al., 1993, Campbell 1988, Greenwood and Levin, 2007) to gather enough data to carry out an in-depth analysis of the research problem and support the conclusion of the research problem (Yin, 2014; Singh, 2014).

The action process, allowed for the study to be conducted in the employees natural setting which was within their branch operation areas. This enabled for purposeful chats which were informal interviews (Rowley, 2012) to be carried out. I took notes from the conversation and then came back again later to observe and chat to the same employees on how they were coping with the new leadership changes. In this way, I was able to appropriately propose actions and solutions and monitor how these were contributing to the transition.

I used the ethnography research method which Creswell (2014) describes as the most prudent way to study research participants in their most natural setting. I interacted with them, observing them and asking questions as they experienced and lived through the change process. I asked questions that I thought were best suited to help me in gathering enough data to have a clearer perspective of the problem from the research participants. This approach gave me first-hand data about employees' feelings on the leadership

change and shed light on the extent of the research problem, which, perhaps, was not sufficient explained in the questionnaire answers.

I was able to use the action research methodology because I was part of the management team from the beginning. I witnessed the early feelings that employees showed about the leadership change. In line with what Greenwood and Levin (2007) observes, the use of action research helped me to link research, theory, action, and the gathered local knowledge about the leadership change. This process also helped me to propose some solutions which I was able to follow up and check on whether they were meeting the objectives of the research.

Being part of the leadership team that was changed, created a bit of challenges for me during the data gathering process with some members of the staff being suspicious of my research work. I experienced the dual role of a scholar practitioner explained by Creswell (2005) and the implication that it could have on data gathering. I struggled to some extent to remain independent to ensure that my personal feeling did not affect the data collection process and the interpretation of the results (Gummesson, 2003). I was able to overcome these challenges by constantly reminding myself of the need to focus on the research problem and gather original information from the research participants without any bias. It was much easier to gather data once I was out of the organization and the research participants were aware, I was no longer part of the organizational leadership team. They felt freer to participate and explain than before as they understood that the data, I was gathering was only for doctoral research purposes and not being used by the organization.

In the next subsection, I discuss the use of qualitative methodology in my action research.

3.2 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Given the nature of the research problem and the need for me to gather data that best describes how the non-managerial employees were affected by the change of leadership, I opted to gather data using the qualitative approach. This approach has been identified

by many scholars to have the benefit of helping the researcher to capture accurate, in-depth insights on a research problem. It allows for fruitful data to emerge more freely from the research participants (Bryman 2008; Cunliffe 2010, Heikkinen et al, 2012). This was a key consideration for my study as it focused on getting non-managerial employees' perspectives on the leadership change. My research was more around getting insights on perceptions, emotions and reactions of employees and therefore the qualitative approach was best suited for it.

My decision was informed by the assertions put forward by renowned scholars. Creswell & Poth (2016) putting it right when they state that the purpose of inquiry is the foremost consideration in qualitative research. Garman (1996) noted that qualitative statements are supposed to illuminate, to explain, to interpret more than verify. Also, Ezzy (2002) and Maxwell (2013) suggest that the essential mode of inquiry of qualitative research is for portraying deeper understanding and not for verifying the phenomenon under study. Qualitative research approach by nature allows for an in-depth analysis of the research problem and allows for a collection of data that provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

With this in mind, looking at what I was trying to accomplish in my action research, this method was best to get vital responses to my research question and allow for achieving the research objectives (Bryman, 2008).

This meant I would not use the quantitative approach. The various perspectives and emotions arising out of the leadership change would not be obtained using a quantitative approach. I felt as D'Ortenzio (2012) points out that using the qualitative research would allow me to examine human aspects of the employees in their natural setting, which would then produce fruitful data based on their written and spoken words. Qualitative research, as Conger (1998) argues, is based on the individuals' frame of reference; it is ideally suited to provide richer insights, often offering radical new views to complex phenomena as in the case of a leadership change in a newly acquired organization.

My focus was on collecting data that could explain different feelings and views of employees. As Grint (2005) elaborates, data that would help the organization have better understanding of the impact of the leadership change on non-managerial employees. Using the qualitative approach as Miles and Huberman (1994) argues, offered me a natural research field enabling a description of the features recurring in a real setting.

Takahashi et al (2012) suggest that studying a leadership change using a qualitative approach enables data gathered to be triangulated. This is very important for action research. I had to adopt this approach in order to ensure my research findings are triangulated to give more credibility to the conclusions of the study. As already stated, the qualitative approach allows for information to be obtained through a variety of data sources as feelings from research participants without bias. This is enabled through collection of data using multiple sources which helps to compare and contrast different perspectives. The outcome would then be presented in both descriptive and interpretative details to allow a deep understanding of the effect that the leadership change was having on the employees in the newly acquired organization and further allow for actionable knowledge to be generated. This agrees with what Bryman (1984) states that the basic objective of a qualitative approach is the interpretation of events, action and views captured through the eyes of the research participants. This point is further emphasized by Gummesson (2003) who explains that by taking the research participants' viewpoint as the central focus in the form of narratives, such an approach brings to the surface issues and topics that are cardinal, yet which are omitted by relying on the researcher as the source of what is relevant.

Despite all the arguments I have put forward for using this approach, it is important to note that I was aware of some of its main limitations. For instance, Clarke (2002) points out that qualitative research may lack in evidence that rigor has been fully achieved and then question the reliability and validity of the research outcome. To mitigate this, I ensured that I was flexible all the time to detect and discern on the issues surrounding the research problem and at the same time offering the ability to expose rather than impose the meanings of the data collected from the research participants. By using this

approach, I had the freedom and ability to investigate the phenomenon of interest effectively.

In summary, I favoured the qualitative approach because of the following:

- i. it offered me a great opportunity to apply the concept of reflexivity which is an important part of the process of qualitative research (Ezzy, 2002). This is most especially important when dealing with non-managerial employees. As Opie (1998) points out, reflexivity ensures the empowerment of the employees taking part in the research process because they perceive that they are making a significant contribution to the description and analysis of the research issue.
- ii. The approach enabled me to look at the larger picture of the leadership change focusing on both how employees perceived the change, how they were prepared for it and accepted it.
- iii. It enabled me to examine relationships within the organization.
- iv. It gave me an opportunity to focus on understanding a new phenomenon not happened before without making predictions about it.
- v. This approach allowed me to be part of the research setting over time and experience the merits and demerits of being a research practitioner. I was able to incorporate informed consent decisions and to become responsive to ethical considerations in the process.
- vi. This approach allowed me to engage in ongoing analysis of the data and propose actions within the organization managing the leadership change.

In summary from the given analysis qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. This therefore means the basis of qualitative research lies in the interpretive approach to social reality and in the description of the lived experience of human beings. This is what I now explain and illustrate as my main approach used in this qualitative study in the following section.

3.2.1 The Interpretivist Approach to Inquiry

In line with my research philosophy, I undertook to use the interpretivist approach to inquiry in this study. This was because this approach is concerned with studying what is happening and being enacted among research participants. In line with D'Ortenzio (2012) explanation, the interpretivist approach to inquiry views reality as contextual, multiple and subjective. Looked at it differently, the interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. It allows for use of meaning oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects.

This approach understands that to be human is to be in the world, participating in social, cultural and historical contexts, all of which influence individual interpretation of self. This is what I noted about the non-managerial employees in an organization which has just undergone leadership change. Therefore, any inquiry focused on human activity like the one that I embarked on in this study must focus on meaning and explanation through the process of interpretation. I needed to focus on understanding how the leadership change meant to the employees and how were they impacted by it. In this context *Meaning* is as explained by Allen, Benner & Diekelmann (1986, p.28) as that which seat within a transaction between the individual and the situation, 'so that the individual both constitutes and is constituted by the situation'.

This is what in turn results in knowledge. The knowledge created through the interpretivist paradigm, is viewed as grounded knowledge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which is both discovered and justified from the field based, inductive methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1988) of interpretivist inquiry. This is as Greene (1990, P25) elaborates can be understood to be knowledge representing the 'emic' knowledge or inside understanding of the perspectives and meanings of those in the settings being studied, and it encompasses both propositional and tacit information.

3.2.2 Key assumptions of interpretive research approach

In using this research approach, the key assumption I had in mind which the approach assumes is that people (research participants) under study are conscious, thinking beings (Greene, 1990). The research participants are the subjects of study, and not objects to be studied. Therefore, the approach incorporates what is going on around people and what they think about a particular situation like the leadership change which is under study. This therefore makes it easier for me as an action researcher to gather data and understand how the people view the leadership change and the impact on them. Coupled with understanding their feelings and social interactions it also makes it easier to fully study them and understand what is going around them as regards this change.

I therefore favoured using this approach in the qualitative research taking a leaf from the views expressed by Taylor (1994), Sarantakos (1998) and Neuman (2000), based on the following:

1. Interpretive research is associated with the perceptions, feelings, and judgments of employees in relation to leadership change and how they are impacted
2. Interpretive research is primarily concerned with the identification of subjective meaning that employees attach to the leadership change and its impact on them;
3. Employees act intentionally and ascribe meanings and interpretations to their actions in relation to leadership change that had taken place in the organization.

In order to fully utilize this approach, I held the assumption that the non-managerial employees cannot set aside their values and views nor can they remain impartial to the leadership change and its values. This position therefore does not mean the voice of the non-managerial employees would not be heard, but rather it allows for the recognition that the data collected will also be influenced by their values and views held by all those involved and impacted by the leadership change. This Interpretive inquiry approach, in

my action research is a type of research that 'uses a unique way of penetrating to the meaning of the phenomena as opposed to critical exposition' (Tesch, 1990, p. 68). It was thus benefiting for me in research to use this approach.

3.3 MY RESEARCH PLAN

I planned to conduct the research over a 24-month period. My plan was initially gathering information about the leadership changes among non-managerial staff members at the Head office. This was done through informal chats so that I could formulate the problem statement and the research question before embarking on the action research conceptual framework (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). This conceptual framework largely involved choosing research participants with the view of getting a deeper insight on how they felt impacted by the leadership changes and propose some actions to both employees and the organization as solutions to this problem. I planned to use informal and formal interviews, focus group meetings, and administer questionnaires to employees that I could not reach for personal interviews (Rowley, 2012). I planned to obtain data from employees at Head office and in all the 10 branches. The initial phase of the research would take 6 months. After an initial informal approach, I went back to ask more questions to assess and reflect how they felt and whether they still viewed the leadership changes in the same way.

I commenced my research as soon as I obtained ethical approval. I provided the Participant Consent Forms and Research Information Sheet to each employee that agreed to participant in my research to ensure they were fully-informed and had time to review the objectives of my research before offering consent to participate. I thus obtained consent from all research participants before starting with data gathering for my research. I choose 15 members to be part of a focus group that I used to fully understand the research questions and research study parameters.

3.4 The Collection of Data Using Qualitative Methodology

The following table gives a summary of qualitative methods I used for data collection.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS	BENEFITS	LIMITATIONS	TIME LINE
Observations	Encouraged free and open conversation with participants Allowed identification of recurring patterns of behaviours that participants may be unable to recognize or reveal themselves	Takes time to build trust with participants Analysis of observation can be biased	This method helped in understanding the research problem. This was done at the beginning of the study and midway through the study among the retail staff.
Focus group meetings	Allowed organized discussion structured in an organized way Provided an opportunity to all focus group participants to participate and give their opinions study problem Provided a lot of insight on the research problem and possible solutions	As the researcher I had limited control over the flow of the discussions It was at times difficult to distinguish between individual views and group views	Carried out 3 focus group meetings. 1 st meeting 6 months into the research 2 nd meeting 6 months after the first meeting and 3 rd meeting 6 months after the 2 nd Meeting.
Interviews	Allowed participants to express their own ideas Allowed me as an action researcher to be responsive to individual differences and situational circumstances	This was very time consuming as I could only interview one person at a time. On a daily basis I could only interview a minimum of 3 participants. To interview 45 participants, it took me a month.	The main interviews were conducted after the first focus group meeting. This was 7 months into the research.
Questionnaires	Allowed me as action researcher to collect data from a 100 non managerial employees based outside the Head office in 10 different branches.	Because of the nature of open-ended questions, I had followed up on some of the participants to obtain clarity on their answers.	This was done in tandem with the interviews.

I conducted my action research study over a 24 months period split in 3 phases:

Phase 1 – month 1 to month 6	informal interviews Observations 1 st Focus Group meeting	30 participants Non-managerial 15 participants
Phase 2 - month 6 to month 12	2 nd Focus Group meeting Formal Interviews Questionnaires	15 participants 45 participants 100 participants
Phase 3 - month 12 to months 18	Observations 3 rd Focus Group meeting	retail sales team 9 participants

The initial phase was dedicated more to get a feel of the research problem and exactly design the study in the right manner. Hence, I spent the initial 6 months conducting informal interviews to get a clear understanding of the research problem. I observed how the non-managerial employees were responding to the leadership changes. From these unstructured observations I was able to collaborate the data with the sentiments from the interviews. I thus formed a focus group of 15 participants so that they can have a discussion on the research problem, express their views and come up with probable action points to help the non-managerial employees with the leadership changes.

The second phase was consisted of obtaining primary data on the study. From the discussion of the 2nd focus group meeting, I was able to come up a formalised interviews and questionnaires to obtain more qualitative data. The various methods were used to ensure a wider coverage of the participants as well as check on how effective the possible action solutions were in the organisation.

The third phase of the research consisted of observation of the retail department and a 3rd focus group meeting all aimed at understanding how the non-managerial employees responded to the proposed actions to help them deal with the leadership changes problem.

In the following sections I explain exchange data collection method in detail.

3.4.1 Observations

This was the first method that I used to gather very useful insights about the research problem. Fielding, Lee, & Blank (2008) describe the observation method as a qualitative data collection method of observing and describing the behaviour of a subject. As the name suggests, it is a way of collecting relevant information and data by observing. It is also referred to as a participatory study because the researcher has to establish a link with the respondent and for this has to immerse himself in the same setting as theirs. For being part of the organization meant the observation was made easier as I saw the employees on a regular basis as I went to work and was able to observe them. I was thus able to record my observations and take notes.

Fielding *et al* (2008) goes on to state that this method in data collection can either be:

- **Structured observation method** – referred to as a systematic observation method where data is collected in a pre-defined manner. Normally there is a specific variable being used in this method for data collection.
- **Unstructured observation method** – this is where data collected in a free and open manner without using any pre-determined objectives, schedules or variables.

My observations were mainly unstructured as I kept an open mind and wanted to observe anything related to the impact that the leadership change was having on non- managerial employees. I noted from my experience that Observation as a collection method is quite dynamic. I needed to be tactful in observing and pay particular attention to observe the research subjects which in this case were the non- managerial employees to ensure I had a clear picture of how they reacted and felt about the leadership change in the organisation.

I used this method continuously throughout the data collection process to confirm data that I gathered using the other collection techniques as well to observe the success of some of the proposed actions coming out of the focus group meetings. As an action researcher, by using this method, I was able to gain first-hand knowledge on how the non-manual employees were being impacted by the leadership change by being in and around their social setting. I was mindful to ensure that what I observed about the employees on the impact of leadership change on them was valid and reliable. By observing first-hand how the non- managerial employees adapted to the leadership changes, I was able to collect, check and record accurate data with great flexibility in terms of applying them to the study research problem. However, by using this method I could not get full data on some individual inner feelings like how they may or may not have loved the leadership change and hence I had to use other data collection methods to exactly get the correct account of personal inner feelings on the research problem. This is where the focus group meetings, interviews and questionnaires played a major role.

I took notes every time I observed something related to the leadership change among employees. In particular I observed the non-managerial employees in the sales department took notes which formed part of my raw data that I had to interpret and analyse in relation to the research problem.

3.4.2 Focus Groups

This was another method that I used to gain insights on my research problem. A focus group according to Kitzinger (1994) is a qualitative assessment technique that involves questioning a group of individuals. The aim of the focus group was to reflect on the initial information gathered through observations and informal interviews. Focus groups, as explained by Kitzinger (1994), are a qualitative research method often used in action research (see also Maxwell, 2013). Kroll et al (2007) add that focus groups are designed to facilitate group discussions to explore a specific set of issues. As a research method, this can help generate complex information at a minimum cost and time frame. It is also an efficient way for an action researcher to test and verify research findings and implement effective solutions in a research study.

I selected 15 employees who had been with the organization for more than 10 years and coming from 5 different branches. Non-managerial employees who had been with the organization longer than 10 years were most likely to be informative about the impact of the leadership change. I also felt a smaller focus group was easier to work with given the sensitive of the research study. It was also cost effective in line with the limited research budget. The organization board room was used as the physical location for the focus group discussions.

I used to discuss the research study with the focus group providing participants the questions to review. The focus group met 3 times in a space of 18 months with meetings lasting no more than 2 hours. At the first meeting the focus group discussed the following five research questions:

1. What do you feel is the overall impact of the leadership change?

2. How did the organization prepare you for the leadership change?
3. What would you like the organization to have done before implementing the leadership changes?
4. How do you see the future with the current leadership changes?
5. Could you please suggest ways to help other employees who may be struggling with these leadership changes?

The second focus group meeting which took place 6 months later reviewed the main feeling currently prevailing in the organization and whether they could provide some suggestions on how to cope with the new leadership.

The third focus group meeting was mainly focused on discussing and understanding how the proposed actions were working among the non-managerial employees. Unfortunately, at the third focus group meeting which took place 18 months into the study, 6 members of the initial team had left the organization. However, I was able to clearly see the impact that the leadership changes were having on the employees as the focus group discussed the questions and shared their observations on the research questions. The employees were able to explain where the actions proposed in the previous meeting were useful in helping them live with the impact of the leadership changes that had taken place in the organization.

From the focus group, I was able to gather critical information and feelings about the leadership change impact that put the research study into context and made me realize how critical this study was to both individuals and the organization. The discussion and outcomes from focus group helped me to structure the interview questions to the other research participants.

When conducting the focus group meetings, I divided the research participants into groups of 4 individuals with one group having 3 members. The format of the focus meeting was such that each group discussed the research questions and then presented to the whole group a summary of their ideas and solutions. I allowed each group to

discuss and present their ideas without influencing any of them. The discussions and exchange of ideas during the focus meeting helped me shape the overall research direction. It allowed me to identify trajectories that were coming out of the study.

3.4.3 Interviews

Interviews were the third method to obtain data from employees. This is a qualitative research method designed to gain information from participants in a one-on-one setting. It is a more personal form of researching to gain insights into employee perceptions.

Denzin & Lincoln (2008) noted that interviews provide a solid conduit into the way employees being studied are acting, interacting, and ultimately making sense of their behaviours. May (1993) suggests that unstructured interviews or informal interviews allow the researcher a degree of freedom to verbalize thoughts without imposing their views and wishes on the participant (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). As confirmed by Lindlof & Taylor (2017) interviews provide an opportunity to understand the social surrounding and actions of the research subjects considering their perspectives and experiences.

I found interviews a good method to provide a useful understanding of how employees are affected by the formal and informal communication practices about the change within the organization (Singh, 2013). The interviews were also helpful in examining how employees understood the change process (Rowley, 2012). This was in line with what D'Ortensio (2012) explains about interviews giving research participants an opportunity to express and explain their feelings about the change in words that gives the researcher an opportunity to comprehend from the research participants personal views and feelings about the change. Data from interviews was then triangulated with observations, Focus group and from questionnaires. As noted by D'Ortenzio (2012) the use of a qualitative research approach through action research allows for the use of interviews through 'purposeful conversations' as a means of data collection. This enables the researcher to make connections and links between what is said, observed and understood among the

research participants. Through interviews, the researcher can link together diverse pieces of information and feelings from participants and get a clear understanding of their perspective on the research matter (Rowley, 2012). I was confident this approach would bring out views and perceptions which clearly showed how the employees were impacted and how to address their personal fears and anxiety (Wisdom *et al.*, 2012). This approach was well founded in the action research methodology that I was embarking on as a research practitioner.

I started collecting data using individual semi structured interviews (Rowley, 2012). This was the primary data collection method. I used semi structured face to face open ended interviews which allowed the research participants to express themselves freely. As described in Rubin and Rubin (2012) the techniques of interviewing that I used followed the qualitative approach using mainly the tools of observation and questioning research participants. The process of data collection started immediately after my research proposal was given the ethical approval. Interviews provided me with information about how employees made sense of the leadership changes and their own experiences during the process of going through the change which could, at times, be potentially uncertain and disruptive. Therefore, by using semi-structured interviews, I was offered an opportunity to have a deep, rich, detailed understanding of the communication of messages and sense-making experiences which was being encountered by employees as they experienced the leadership changes in the organization and how they felt about everything going on.

3.4.3.1 The Interviewing Process

After receiving permission from the organization, I commenced the research study. In the first 6 months, I held 30 informal interviews with non-managerial employees out of 150 non-managerial employees based at head office. I randomly selected the participants and would chat with them during lunch times.

The interviews were conducted in two phases. The first phase immediately after the leadership changes were announced. These were largely informal and were meant to gather initial employees' perceptions on the announced leadership changes in the organization. I held a total of 30 informal interviews during the first phase of data collection. Some employees did not believe I was doing the research for school purpose given I was the out-going Managing Director of the organization. Others thought I was perhaps spying on them and getting views so that maybe the Board could be better informed on the changes. Then, at least initially, I struggled to get their confidence which I obtained in the end giving them all the assurances I was able to conduct the interviews. I took notes of all the comments expressed by employees regarding the announced leadership changes.

I then conducted a second set of interviews after 6 months in a more formal set up.

The interviews lasted between twenty to forty minutes with the longest being about one and half hour.

I audio-taped the interviews using a recorder and transcribed them. The research participants were advised that they could request to have the audio-recorder turned off at any stage during the interview if they wished so. They also had a right to request that specific sections of the interview be erased if they so wished. I was very much aware of the need to quickly transcribe the interviews immediately after the interview and keep the hard copy safely. As advised by Patton (1990) this is important for the researcher to achieve rigor and validity in a qualitative study.

On the other hand, I noted that being the out-going leader, the employees did not hesitate to respond to the questions and were quick in engaging in conversational dialogue. At the end of interviews, I offered the participants the opportunity to ask me questions.

Each of the participants was interviewed separately in the boardroom guided by the same interview questions which I had prepared. With their permission, I audio taped the

interviews to support and clarify the written documentation that I took during the interviews.

3.4.4 Qualitative Questionnaires

To further gather data, I used qualitative questionnaires as another data collection method to argument what I collected through interviews. This is a research instrument that asks respondents to reply to questions with detailed answers (Selwyn & Robson, 2003). This method I used to reach out to non-managerial employees working in the 10 provincial centres where the organization had its subsidiaries. The questions in this method are mostly open-ended, offering the research participants or the respondents the opportunity to write responses in their own words, unrestricted by tick boxes.

Distributing the questionnaires via email enabled me to extend the reach of the study to all 10 branches outside away from the Head office, attracting a more geographically dispersed population for the study. The other benefit to me of sending the questionnaires via email was the opportunity it gave me to allow the research participants to express their opinions on this difficult matter of how their felt impacted by the leadership change in the newly acquired organization. The qualitative questionnaire had something in common with structured interviews that I conducted. I noted that a key feature of both is the pre-planning of all the questions asked. The questionnaire was standardized and all research participants had to answer to the same questions. Of course, three significant differences from the structured interviews were that

- there was no face-to-face contact between the myself and the research participants,
- the responses came in written form, and
- the research participants had more time to think about the questions, and to construct their answers. This was the other reason why I used this method, to provide the research participants away from the Head office the time to 'respond when and how they [felt] comfortable' (Selwyn and Robson, 2003: 87).

According to Fielding et al (2008), qualitative questionnaires are not among the most prominent methods in qualitative research because they do not allow for any error of misinterpretation. Questions need to be clear. It is therefore important to note that I had to make further communication with participants after they had completed the questionnaire to clarify answers and to continue the dialogue. This aspect to the study is, of course, another difference to simply conducting structured interviews. As noted by Fielding et al (2008), qualitative questionnaires are also time-heavy for respondents. It is quicker to participate in an interview than to write the same narrative down on paper. However, like I noted in my study, this method was useful in collecting information from a wider sample than I was able to reach by personal interviews. I was thus able to confirm the findings with that which came out from interviews and focus group meetings.

3.4.4.1 Administering of Questionnaires

I administered 100 questionnaires to non-managerial employees covering 10 branches. I prepared the questionnaire in accordance with Walliman (2011) advice that a questionnaire must be prepared in such a way that it translates the required information into a series of clear questions for research participants (check appendix 1 for the sample of the questionnaire used). I prepared my questionnaire with the understanding in mind of the following as being the general characteristics of good questionnaires:

- i) *It should consist of a well-written list of questions.*
- ii) *The questionnaire should deal with an important or significant topic to create interest among respondents.*
- iii) *It should seek only that data which cannot be obtained from other sources.*
- iv) *It should be as short as possible but should be comprehensive.*
- v) *It should be designed to collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis.*

According to Kumar (2011) questions can be of two forms:

- *Restricted questions*, also called closed-ended, which ask the research respondent to make choices — yes or no, check items on a list, or select from multiple choice answers.
- *Unrestricted questions* which are open-ended and allow respondents to share feelings and opinions that are important to them about the matter at hand.

I opted for unrestricted questions given that the objective of my study was to reveal the depth of their feeling and emotions. From this type of questions, I was able to obtain data in line with my research objectives. Administering the questionnaires gave me the advantage of ensuring my research participants in the branches answered exactly the same questions. This was important in order to obtain desired data. The questionnaires were administered through email. Administering the questionnaires through email, assured the integrity to the process of data gathering as the respondents answered the questions in their own words.

3.4.5 The Sample Questions used in Interviews and Questionnaire

The interview questions were broadly drawn from the research questions and the literature review. Below are the key questions that I prepared and used as a guide for the interviews and were part of the questionnaires that I administered:

- How long have you been with the organization?
- What has been your initial reaction to the recent changes made to the organization's leadership?
- How much do you think you been impacted as an individual?
- Do you feel worried about the change in the leaders?
- To what extent where you prepared as employee for these changes?

- Do you think the organization considered the culture in the planning and implementation of these leadership changes?
- What are your views of the new organization's vision?
- What are your views regarding the timing of changing leaders in the organization?
- How well engaged were the employees before changing the leaders in the various departments?
- What do you think is the general mood among employees regarding these changes?
- Do you think there is a general appreciation by the new leaders "The new leaders have no understanding of how we worked as employees nor do they understand what made us achieve organizational goals"? Is this your current feeling?
- "I am not sure about our values anymore. I feel the new leaders will change everything". Do you think that as you come to work? To what extent has this been a problem for you as an employee?
- "I am feeling out of place and nervous about my future career in this organization. I am no longer feeling committed as I am not sure about my future in this organization". Do you think these sentences are currently going through your mind?
- In your opinion do you think it was necessary for the Human capital department to conduct change sessions before any leadership changes are implemented?
- Kindly explain what you would have loved to see as an employee before the leadership changes were affected.
- Kindly suggest anything that you think can assist employees in adapting to the current leadership changes given your current set up in the organization.

The questions guided the process and helped to facilitate a discussion with the employees, allowing me to note individual differences and similarities among the research participants. The employees responded willingly to the questions and I engaged them in a conversational dialogue using the research questions as guidelines for the interview.

3.4.6 Selection of Participants

To ensure there was no bias as to who participated in the research, I ensured selection of the research participants was opened to all eligible employees. Having identified the set of employees to interview as the non-managerial employees at head office, I sent out a general email to notifying them of the study and letting them know that I was going to ask them to participate in the interviews and, for the branch staff in the provincial centres that I could not reach out to interview, in filling the questionnaires. Considerable effort was taken to ensure that all participants were fully aware of what was expected of them. I understood my ethical responsibility as a practitioner researcher to ensure that all my research participants knew and agreed to what will be disclosed about them and that they understood the risks and benefits of participating in the research

3.5 Ethical Considerations in the Study

As part of the research process, I had to consider some ethical issues to my research findings. I learned from doctoral training that research ethics is a core aspect of the research work and the foundation of research design. This is to ensure research outcomes are valid within the context of the study and that the conclusions correlate with the questions posed and the results.

As D'Ortenzio (2012) points out that research is a two-way practice between researchers and participants and has to be conducted with trust and fairness among the parties. It was important that employees participated in a voluntary manner without fear consequences that might arise from not agreeing to participate. To ensure this was the case, I explained the nature of the research to participants, including the purposes and

procedures of research, making it clear how the results were used. This put them at ease and made them participate without coercion.

3.5.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Throughout the research study process, I assured the confidentiality of the research participants. This was very important, as some employees were sceptical and fearing that, perhaps, I was working with the new leadership to determine who, among them, was not accepting the changes and was not aligned with the new leadership. It was thus important assuring my independence as a researcher to all of them and guarantee anonymity of their records as research participants.

To ensure they all understood and were happy with the confidentiality issue, I thus requested all research participants to complete informed consent forms before commencing the interviews. I noted that by them signing the consent forms, they felt much more comfortable and confident to participate in the research. This was a key learning for me and made me appreciate the theory around ensuring that research participants are as comfortable as possible in participating freely in the research. Davies and Crookes, (1998) point out that providing them the consent form pushed them to participate voluntarily in the study. D'Ortenzio (2012) suggests research respondents normally accept to participate when they have understood the essential information about the research study.

When providing quotes in the text, I did not name the research participants and I used pseudonyms also in the data analysis report. I also ensured that all documentation relating to the study was securely stored (Sarantakos, 2005).

I further assured all the research participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their discussions and answers in the study. They were all assured that nothing that would identify them would find itself to any third party. I assured them that I was abiding by the University of Liverpool confidentiality guidelines which ensured maximum protection for all of them as research participants. I assured them that the data generated was not

and will not be given to any third party in a manner that could identify them as research participants. I was the only one who would have access to the recorder used to record interviews. I also promised that I would not use any personal information that could allow for identification of research participants in my thesis nor in any other work produced from the information gathered from them. I believe this put them at ease to fully participate in the research.

I further kept reminding them during the interview process that they were free to stop the interview and leave if they wished so. This was the same assurance given to the members of focus group. This made all of them to freely express themselves and give their valuable input on the research study.

3.5.2 Data Analysis Process

In order to analyse the data collected using these qualitative methods and reduce it to a meaningful story, and interpret it to derive insights, I used the following methods to process the data:

- 3.5.2.1 Content Analysis- In line with what Elo et al (2014) describe content analysis to be, I used this tool to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts from the data gathered. Using content analysis, I was able to quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of key related words, themes, or contents. In this way, I was able to relate data which I observed, to data gathered through focus group meetings and interpret it in line with the research question. I was further able to identify and analyse observed behavioural and verbal data and relate it to what was stated in focus group meetings, interviews and questionnaires.
- 3.5.2.2 Narrative Analysis- I further used narrative analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to interpret data collected through interviews and questionnaires. Through narrative analysis, I was able to understand how the research participants constructed their story and narrative from their own personal experience with

the leadership change. In this was I was able to triangulate the data and find common meanings as expressed by the research participants.

As explained under each data collection method, I was able to take notes after each observation. All interviews were transcribed. And the questionnaires were answered physically. Therefore, I was able to read through all the data collected and perform content analysis and narrative analysis several times so that I was to come up with key themes and relational data to fully interpret that data. This process happened each time I finished data collection using one method. I was thus in position to fully interpret and triangulate the data collected through these qualitative methods.

I read through the transcripts several times to allow familiarity with the data (Boyle, 1991), and immediate identification of tentative categories, themes and subthemes, and the opportunity to make notes that might assist with forthcoming interviews. As Patton (1990) noted, it was important for me to do this immediately after collecting data using a particular collection method in order that I maintain the rigour and validity of my qualitative study. I thus made every attempt to transcribe the interview as soon as possible after each interview, within twenty-four hours for the majority of interviews. I took notes after every observation and I went through the focus group presentations immediately the day following the meeting. By doing this as suggested by Grbich (1999), I was able to form preliminary analysis, and critique the data as I gathered it. I was also able to identify gaps in information and able to determine whether the data shed further light on issues relating to the research problem.

Once the data was transcribed, I organized it into manageable segments of text. These segments were sections of the text that stood by themselves and were able to be understood or still made sense when they were taken out of context (Tesch, 1990). I then coded the segments of text according to their meaning and themes. I achieved this through continual reading of the data and comparing it from the various collection methods in order to identify any categories and themes that emerged. During this process

it was my responsibility to organise verbatim quotations gained during the data collection process.

Using this data analysis process, I was able to valid the findings and identify the actionable knowledge needed to address the research problem.

3.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have covered the design and methodology used to carry out my action research. I have justified the use of qualitative method (Tracy, 2010) for the research. I have described the focus group discussions, observation method and how data was gathered through interviews. I have also described questions used to gather data with attention to procedures and methods to assure the quality and the integrity of the data collection process.

Chapter 4 Research Findings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present the findings from my research work. The presentation of the findings is divided as follows:

- i. description of the respondents during the data gathering process accompanied by the data from the focus group discussions, observations, individual informal and formal interviews, and questionnaire answers which are summarized in key themes.
- ii. Reporting of employee quotations throughout the data presentation. These have been used as a means of representing the voices of the employees in emphasizing what they describe as the impact of the leadership change on them (Liu et al., 2010). Quotations come from the transcribed interviews, questionnaire answers, focus group discussions and are presented in an anonymous format to ensure confidentiality.

The findings are presented in line with the data collection method used and grouped in themes where possible.

4.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION- KEY FINDINGS:

The focus group meetings aimed to reveal if the leadership changes in the newly acquired organization was an issue of concern among employees and, if that were the case, what actions could be taken in order to address the research problem. The focus group of 15 participants was subdivided in smaller groups of 4 each with one group having 3 members. The group was given questions to discuss and present their thoughts to the other group members.

The first focus group meeting addressed initial views of employees and what they thought about the research topic. The second focus group meeting looked at possible actions to

help them facing the change in the organization. The third focus group meeting looked at the employees' feedbacks on the proposed actions.

I was able to list the following as the key findings from the focus group meetings:

- i. Most of the ordinary employees mentioned they were worried and felt unease about the leadership changes (97% of research participants)
- ii. Most employees noted they were unprepared for this change and felt the organization caught them unaware (99% of research participants)
- iii. Most employees felt the Human Capital Department did not give them adequate support for this change (98% of research participants)
- iv. Most thought the leadership change ignited fear and concerns about their job security (95% of research participants)
- v. Most felt the leadership change ignited lack of trust between them and the new leaders (98% of research participants)
- vi. Most feared the leadership change would lead to new undesired organizational culture (97% of research participants)
- vii. A few employees had a positive feeling about the leadership changes as they thought it meant a new beginning in the organization (7% of research participants)

In terms of what actions could be taken to help employees with the change related problems that they were facing, the 2nd focus group identified the following as key actions needed in order to address the research problem:

- i. The need for the organization to consider holding various Town Hall meetings in all branches. The focus group suggested organized staff meetings to be attended by both outgoing leaders and the new leaders could help employees deal with the change related problems and doubts that they were possibly having.
- ii. the need for the Human Capital department to deliberately engage ordinary employees and offer them some form of counselling as they go through the

- process of accepting and adjusting to the new leadership. The focus group pointed out that this was lacking and was needed urgently in the organization as it goes through the leadership change.
- iii. The need for the new organization to consider coming up with an employee recognition award that would be used as way to get the new leaders to learn and understand the employees and the prevailing organizational culture.
 - iv. The meeting discussed and recognized that the change had triggered negative sentiments among non-managerial employees. There was therefore the need for the organization to consider deliberate initiatives to promote positive thinking among employees towards the leadership changes.
 - v. The meeting proposed that non-managerial employees be encouraged to engage and mingle amongst themselves and share experiences and feelings regarding the new leadership. In this way they would learn from one another and cope with the changes. There was thus the need to influence employees in this direction.

It was thus important to hold a third focus group meeting which sought to examine the progress of the proposed actions, reviewing the feedback from Human Capital on the various engagements and actions which were proposed in the 2nd Focus group meeting. The key finding was so that some of the proposed solutions were having a positive impact on employee acceptance of the leadership changes. These have been presented and discussed in detail in the next chapter which discusses findings.

The following sections explains these findings in detail:

4.1.1 Worry and Uneasiness About the Change

The focus group was unanimous in concluding that the leadership changes were the main source of concern to most ordinary employees. Worry and uneasiness among employees could become a source of major conflict within the changed organization. The focus group team emphasized this point.

Following the announcement of the leadership changes, most employees were worried about the changes, as they did not know what to expect from them.

The focus group debated the kinds of feelings and facial expressions that some staff members were seen on their faces. The organization did not prepare the employees for the change, they were experiencing this for first time.

Most employees were nervous about their own organizational positions.

Below are some of the most frequent comments from the focus group discussions:

"I fear that my new boss may not fully appreciate what I do in this company, is my job safe?"

The above comment gives the perception from the employees' point of view and giving their state of the mind as they assimilate the change.

"What do these leadership changes mean for the future of the organization",

"How much of what I do in this organization is going to be affected by the demands of my new manager",

The above quotes further emphasise their developing feelings on the leadership change. The employees' worries are further expressed in the following quotes:

"I hurt the feeling of having a new boss, it is like taking me backwards as I have now to start learning about them and what they like.... it will derail my progress in my career",

"Will all my friends remain in their jobs"

"What do I need to do to get the confidence of these new leaders"

"Why were we not warned that this was coming soon after the ownership changed?" We feel betrayed as the new owners promised that they were only

coming in to enhance the business and not make wholesome changes. We did not expect this”

These sentiments were common from the presentations and discussions of the focus group members revealing how most of the ordinary employees were feeling and reacting to the leadership changes. It was also an indication of a potential problem that needed to be addressed.

These findings were also confirmed by the data obtained through interviews and questionnaires. The expressions by the participants were similar to the answers obtained from the interviews and questionnaires.

4.1.2 Lack of Organizational Preparedness for The Change

The members of the focus group highlighted that the leadership changes were announced through an official email like an unexpected surprise.

Employees complained about the missing of an early warning from the Human Capital team so that they could anticipate the change and prepare themselves mentally.

I picked out the following sentences and phrases from focus group discussions which commonly expressed the employees’ feelings about this:

“This was too abrupt.....how come the Human Capital Team did not prepare us for this change”

The above statement reflects lack of organizational preparedness for the change. The statement below further gives context to this:

“I feel lost with these changes.....where do I start from as an employee? Feels like a new organization all together”.

The discussions were pointing more onto the frustrations that employees were feeling at the leadership change and the lack of organization preparedness comes out clearly when the following is said:

"We were recently assured by the new owners that they have come to enhance the business and not to destroy it.....but the wholesome changes of our managers we feel do not seem to speak to that.... I am worried "

"I am nervous about my position. Wil I be retained?"

This was the first-time non-managerial employees were experiencing a change management and not being prepared for that caused anxiety and stress.

4.1.3 Lack of Support from The Human Capital Department

The discussions in the focus group brought out the aspect that there was no prior support from the Human Capital Team about the leadership change. One employee lamented as follows:

"When the leadership changes were announced, I went to my Human Capital support person to understand where this was coming from, but I was surprised to find even them worried and not sure as to what was happening...does this mean they did not anticipate the change? Is it why we were not prepped before to expect such a change?"

In every organization, human capital department is the employee guidance (Massey & Campbell, 2013). The focus group discussion concluded that most non-managerial employees would have appreciated the Human Capital Team preparing them in time for the change. This finding was closely linked to the other outcomes already mentioned and was close to what was seen during the observations. I had to interview some staff members to further confirm whether this was wide spread in the organization.

4.1.4 Fear of Job Security and changes in work environment

The focus group meeting was unanimous in concluding that most non-managerial employees felt the leadership changes would impact their jobs and career progression in the organization. This was because they felt that it would take time for the new leaders to know them and appreciate their abilities. This was expressed mainly as follows:

"How will these leaders change my job profile?"

As the focus group discussion progressed, the participants became more emphatic in bringing out how they felt about the change. They discussed what really concerned them most especially what the change meant to their roles and job in the organization. Hence the following quotes describe in detail how they felt:

"Will my job profile remain the same?.....I have put in a lot and I fear my new boss will now want me to work in a different way"

"Will I cope with the new demands under these new leaders"

"I fear my job may be changed by these new leaders"

"I was due for a job promotion, but I am now worried whether this will come through under these new leaders"

Employees viewed the leadership changes as a possible hindrance to their careers and job security-related matters.

4.1.5 Organization Cultural Shift

A further finding from the focus group meeting was that the leadership change could come with a new culture in the organization (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004). They were not sure how this culture could affect them as employees and their networks. Especially, to the employees who have been longer in the organization, this was particularly worrying, as they did not know whether they could fit in the new environment. The organization under study was part of a regional group that was owner managed and now acquired by a London listed organization:

"How are we going to work going forward.... will we still address each other on a first name basis"?

The employees discussed issues relating to the organization culture and how they felt this was going to be affected by the leadership change. The sentiments surrounding culture came out strong in some of the quotes below:

"Will our working culture support our family like kind of interactions which this organization has always promoted amongst us"

The above quote highlight how the employees viewed and liked the existing culture. Hence, they discussed the possibility of it changing and the implication on them as highlighted in the following quotes:

"Does this mean there will be change in how we interact with colleagues as well"

As they discussed this, they also expressed worry about further changes that might come as result of the change in leadership and the organization culture.

"Should we prepare ourselves for more changes given the new leaders"

"We have been used to treating each other like brothers and sisters. I kind fear we will no longer view each other in that way. Will the CEO bother to know me and my family like it has been in the past? I fear we will now be like our colleagues from the other banks who say none of the interactions we have here prevail in their institution'.

The focus group meetings noted that because of the leadership changes, there was a need for the organization particularly through the Human Capital Team to help staff through this change. Most employees did not see their future within the organization especially if the culture was changed. Hence, they opted to begin to look for new employment elsewhere. By the time the focus group held a third review meeting, six members of the original group had left the organization. When I inquired the reason why

they had left, they stated that they were securing their future, as they felt uncomfortable in the organization with the new leadership. They could not trust or believe in the new leaders. They were concerned and worried about their positions. They could not feel comfortable that their jobs and careers were guaranteed with the new shareholders.

In addition, concerns were raised on the internal networks as the leadership had changed (King & Wright, 2007). Employees were concerned about how they continued to relate to the organization. Most of them wondered whether the new leaders appreciated the kind of interactions that existed given that the Zambian culture was friendship and greatly valued among employees. Friendship at work was valued largely: helping each other on work-related issues and even socially like a family.

I picked up the following statements:

“I am scared we will not still be like a family in this organization anymore going forward”.

“Will these guys not force us into a new type of culture where we will no longer look out for each other”.

“I am missing the previous leadership. I like how we interacted with each other”

4.1.6 Lack of Trust in The New Leaders

The discussions of the focus group also highlighted the fact that most non-managerial employees felt nervous and did not trust the new leadership. From the discussion of the research participants, they all seemed convinced that the new leaders were on the path of changing the organization’s way of doing things yielding mistrust among them and their leaders as they were not sure of the criteria being used to implement the change. In the discussions, it was revealed that a number of non-managerial employees were updating their Curriculum Vitae as they seemed not sure to maintain their positions. I picked out the following from the focus group discussions as express sentiments supporting this view:

"I am not sure we can trust leaders who have just come in abruptly.... We needed to be prepared or forewarned that this change would come. I fear the same way they have come in is the same way they might change us too"

Employees did not trust their new leaders. Changing the leadership of the organization had the undesired effect of bringing in mistrust among leadership and employees.

4.1.7 Willingness to Work with The New Leaders

The focus group discussions also brought out the elements that some employees while they expressed concern about the leadership changes indicated they had accepted the situation of new leaders. To them changing the leaders was the prerogative of the shareholders. Employees with this kind of feeling were in the minority and they had not been with the organization for more than 4 years. Some of these employees expressed enthusiasm in the changes and felt the leadership change would bring positive energy to the organization. Employees who seemingly did not have too much attachment to the old leaders mainly supported this.

From the focus group discussions, I was able to establish as part of my study findings that the leadership changes brought the aspect of some employees seemingly being more worried than others. They were those who seemingly had very strong networks with the old leaders and they expressed the most worry about the leadership changes.

Employees who had no strong networks and links to the old leaders viewed leadership changes as very positive for them and encouraged others to view the leadership changes in a positive sense for the organization. They expressed happiness that the new leadership had now given them an opportunity to start from the same level without any kind of advantages. Few employees who perhaps were not comfortable with the previous leadership expressed sentiments such as:

"The leadership change is good for me. I am happy cause now I know my career will be revamped. My previous boss did not like me, and I feel I would not have lasted in this organization had he stayed on"

"This move is great for me. I now have an opportunity to work hard and prove myself to a new boss...."

I needed to conduct more interviews as well as administer questionnaires in order to fully understand how widespread these views could be among the non-managerial employees.

4.2 FINDINGS FROM OBSERVATIONS

During the research period, I also took time to go around some departments and branches to observe the employee behaviours following the leadership change (Tonkin, 2013). I visited the retail department at the Head office and 3 retail branches. The visits were spaced over a one-week period. The retail team had a total combined workforce of 130 employees. I also visited the internal audit department which had a total of 7 employees. I was interested to observe any personal features or teamwork behaviours that could be related to the leadership changes. I visited at different daytimes and I observed what was taking place with caution and taking notes. In particular I noted two key findings:

- i. There was limited engagement between ordinary employees and the new leaders.
- ii. Very often, small groups of employees spoke in a low voice during lunchtime and other free time (Liu et al., 2010).

4.2.1 Limited employees' engagement with new leaders

I noted that ordinary employees were not comfortable with new leaders as they were before. Unlike the previous routine where staff walked in and out from the leaders' workstation, now employees seemed reluctant to do so. I supposed this behaviour was expected given that no real relationship had been created with the new leaders yet. Staff

members needed time to get used to them and create that relationship. The open-door culture that existed in the organization was affected by the leadership changes that took place. Staff members were unsure whether they would freely walk in and out of their new leaders' office. Ordinary retail staff were no longer going in and out of the new Retail Head's office as frequently as they used to. Now they were waiting to be called for any interactions. With regard to this, I witnessed two incidences in the retail team. The first was when a staff member was called by the new Head of retail to his office. As soon as the staff member came back, all his colleagues went to him and spoke in a low voice. The facial expressions amongst them showed they all were interested to know what the conversation with the new Leader was about. I later approached this employee informally and he confirmed that all the other staff members were interested to know why he was called by the new leader. He reported to me: *"you know we are all anxious to know what our new leader is all about. So, every time one of us is called we all gather around that person to ask what the conversation was all about"*.

The second incidence I noticed was when a client came and lodged in a complaint to one of the retail staff. The nature of the complaint needed the intervention of the Retail Head. However, before the staff member went to the Retail Head, she first consulted two colleagues. I observed that she was clearly hesitant to go and tell the Retail Head. I later asked her why she was hesitant. She told me that she was unsure about how to approach the new leader. She has had limited interactions with him and hence did not know how to bring the issue before him. She confessed to me this was common among the other ordinary staff members. They were hesitant to engage their new leader as they were not sure of his leadership style.

As a result of the leadership change, employees felt their engagement with the new leaders quite limited. Hesitation and uncertainty predominant among the employees.

4.2.2 Informal small employee groups at lunchtime and other free times speaking in low voices

Across the departments, I often observed small groups of employees gathering and talking in low voices at lunch time and other free times (Liu et al., 2010). I spoke to one of the Internal Audit Staff who I saw in one of these small meetings at lunch time. He told me that they were discussing the recent leadership changes. Most of the employees were still wondering the meaning of these changes and the implication on them and the organization. During these small gatherings employees were sharing experiences and encounters with the new leaders:

"Today one of our colleagues shared his encounter with the new boss. He mentioned to us that we should expect more changes amongst us ordinary staff as the boss mentioned he was not too pleased with some of the things that he has noted in the organization. Therefore, some changes could be on the way among staff members to realign them to the new organizational needs"

The employee mentioned to me that these words were particularly worrying to him as he wondered how he could be affected. This finding signaled to me that the ordinary staff member was using their own networks within the organization to gather information about their new leaders. And these informal small gatherings were providing staff with a platform to discuss their new leaders. This observation was critical to me to understand how ordinary employees were reacting to the new leadership changes. These networks not only provided the platform to discuss freely their feelings but was also a place or source of comfort to learn from others how they were dealing with the new leadership. The uncertainties of the leadership changes were then discussed here, and employees were learning from each other how to cope with the changes (Hayes & Allinson, 1998; Marquardt, 2002).

As I reflected on this, I noted that the new leadership change was also a disruption to the normal workflow. Instead of employees going about working normally, a lot of time was spent worrying about things that they could not control.

Some of my observations confirmed what was discussed in the focus group meetings. Both the findings from the focus group and the observation highlighted key issues regarding the research problem and provided possible routes for the actions to be taken. The internal networks and informal gatherings were later to be used as platforms to help employees engage in positive discussions on the changes that are taking place.

To further find out more about the impact that the leadership change was having on ordinary staff, I undertook some semi-structured interviews with random non-managerial employees that accepted to be interviewed on this research study.

4.3 FINDINGS FROM SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Over a period of 7 months, I interviewed a total of 75 non managerial employees both informally and formally that had been with the organization for more than 2 years. All of them were working at the Head office. I introduced them to the study that I was conducting. The interviews lasted not more than 1 hour 15 minutes.

A total of 9 interviewed employees worked between 2 - 4 years, 56 between 4 -8 years, and 10 over 8 years. I told them that participation in the interview was voluntary and they were just assisting me to complete a research study on the leadership change which was part of my doctoral studies. I conducted the interviews onsite, in the canteen area and in the board room. From these semi-structured informal and formal interviews, I noted the following key findings summarized in the following table:

Lead Research Questions	Summarized Answers	Number of employees with similar answers
What do you feel about recent leadership changes that have taken place?	Change was too abrupt. Concerned about my job security and future direction of the organization; do not understand why leadership had to be changed, do not trust the new leadership. I feel angry about the changes. Not prepared for the change.	75
What is your major concern if any?	Do not understand why leadership was changed. I do not trust the way this was implemented. Never anticipated these changes. Fear for the future of my status in the organization. Not sure the values and culture will remain the same	73
Are there any positive sentiments that you have about the changes?	<p>Gives a chance to start again with new leaders. Excited I may now be recognized for what I am worth. Gives equal opportunities for everyone to start afresh in the organization</p> <p>I feel my career is disturbed. This change is delaying my promotion. The change has disturbed how I relate with colleagues. Expecting change in my job profile and my future career</p>	<p>7</p> <p>67</p>

From these three main questions and depending on the answers provided, I was able to summarize the following key findings.

4.3.1 Job Security and The Future of The Organization.

Most of the staff members I interviewed, mentioned that they did not fully understand the reasons of the leadership changes. They further cited that missing communication on why the organization changed the leaders worried employees about their future in the organization. For some interviewees, the old leaders were just fine but given these were replaced without warning, hence, employees were worried and felt the new leadership

could disturb their existence in the organization. I picked up this sentiment from the following answers:

"I don't understand why they have changed them..... this organization will not be the same going forward"

"I don't feel the same anymore in the organization.... I do not trust the new leaders fully.... I don't know them well to be sure about my future"

The selected answers from the interviews expressed similar sentiments from those obtained from the focus group discussions. The line of thought among those interviewed was clearly similar to what came out from the focus group discussions confirming that the leadership change had given rise to worry among the employees. Similar sentiments like this one below were common among those interviewed.

"When these new shareholders were announced, we were assured they have come to enhance our business, nothing was hinted about changing the leaders abruptly.....I don't trust them..... what else will they change now"

There source of worry covered a lot about themselves and how they felt about their leaders as the below quote illustrates:

"I loved the top leadership.....They engaged with non-managerial employees.....I am not sure the new person in this role will do the same? This is worrying me...will us the low-level employees still be viewed and treated in the same way going forward"

Interviewees were most concerned about their own survival in the organization that had just been acquired. They confirmed that the leadership changes were a major concern to them. They did not know what to expect:

"I don't know what to make off this change or what to expect next" I never anticipated or expected this change so soon in the organization". "I strongly

thought the new owners would take time to understand our operations before making the leadership changes".

These concerns were very similar to what came out from the focus group meetings. The ordinary staff were concerned and worried about the leadership changes and their own positions in the organization. They worried about job security and the future direction of the organization. Having new owners and new leaders at the same time was something that affected them and their well-being in the organization. This finding clearly showed there was need for actions to be taken to put the employees in the right with the change that had taken place.

4.3.2 Lack of Trust in The Organization

Most interviewed staff expressed a lack of trust in the organization being sceptical about its future. They doubted the background of the new leaders and the new organization culture. They felt the organization was no longer the same with the leadership changes mainly because they did not know how the new leaders would run the organization and whether they would appreciate existing employees. The leadership change had the effect of losing confidence to the employees and their trust in the organization. Some of the interview answers had the following common comments:

"How do I trust the organization which makes such sudden changes? They have shown they do not care how I feel by suddenly changing our leaders. Perhaps they will lay us off in a similar manner. I don't trust them now".

They were clear that the changes were abrupt and imposed, and they were not expecting them. The lack of an announcement did not give them the time to be ready for the changes and they were emotionally discontent. To them, the organization was like their home. Some of them had started their careers in this organization. They had built such a good relationship with the previous leaders. They loved the culture that existed. It was like family. The act was enough for them to lose trust in the organization. They felt betrayed by the manner that the leadership changes were implemented. As ordinary

employees they felt they were now at the mercy of the new organization and its leadership. Some of them no longer felt part of the organization that they had joined. Worry, fear and mistrust were thus the common state of the non-managerial employees as a result of the leadership changes. This is what needed a solution to be found. As an action researcher I needed to focus on this finding and find solutions to help the organization.

4.3.3 Anger among employees

Some interviewed employees conceded they were angry with the organization about the leadership changes. In their minds, the changes had “disturbed” their status quo in the workplace and making them unsure about their future and the whole existence of the organization. This sentiment was shared especially from those who had stayed longer in the organization and had seen it grow overtime. The organization was perceived like a family where everyone helped each other. Suddenly employees did see their leaders replaced by a new team. Some employees could not hide their anger:

“I feel angry about the changes. I got along very well with my boss. But now I must adjust and start to learn this new boss. It is not fair”.

“I took the time to understand the ways that my boss liked. Hence, I was comfortable in my job. But I am angry that the organization is now making me go through the process of learning again. It is not fair”.

These examples bring out the emotions and feelings which the leadership change was impacting the non-managerial employees. This underscores the need to have interventions during change management process that would ensure employees are engaged on the likely emotional trigger that the change process may ignite in them. As can be seen further from some of the quotes below, employees are passionate about their organization

"I feel the organization does not really care about me. At least they would have considered how this leadership change would impact before embarking on it. I am angry with them for not taking the time to explain to me why the changes".

"I started my career here and admired how the leadership took time to let me grow and become part of this organization. Now I feel lost as the new leaders do not really know me and understand me. How will be appreciated?"

Employees had mixed feelings on the changes, which were causing them to be angry with the organization as they were not sure about their positions anymore. New leaders often come with new ways of doing things and certainly, they were not prepared for that. Hence, the leadership change triggered anger towards the organization in most ordinary employees. This evidence confirmed the focus group discussions and also led to the need to come up with an action or solution to bring employees and leaders together.

4.3.4 Uncertainty About Organizational Values

During the interviews, I also inquired, how the leadership change affected company values. Most of the responses pointed out a general view that the leadership changes would have led to new values in the organization.

Those interviewed expressed their worry by asking questions such as these below when responding to me:

"What values would these new leaders promote? Will they still respect the values that we have been observing? Or will they bring new ones?"

"We have been used to working in an environment where we treat each other like family...will the new leaders still promote this kind of way? "I am worried this may not be the case".

"In this organization, one of our values has been People. We have been taught to respect people and treat them with dignity as they are a key resource for the

success of the company. Will this still be respected? or will profitability now override key human capital decisions?"

Findings from the interviews revealed that the leadership change triggered employees worrying about the impact of organizational values in the workplace. It meant changing how things were done in the organization. Employees were not prepared for a deep change like this. In any organization, culture shapes its identity and therefore it is not easy to change and adapt to a new culture. It was common knowledge among employees as they expressed themselves in the interviews that there being new shareholders from America and Europe, most of the Zambian and African culture that was prevalent would probably be replaced with the new leaders' culture aligned to the new shareholders. Uncertainty about the values and culture in the organization created anxiety among employees. This triggered the need to propose for an action to the Human Capital to consider influencing employee engagement on the new culture.

4.3.5 Personal Future Career in the Organization

During the interviews, some staff members expressed concern that the leadership changes would have affected their future careers in the organization. Those who felt they worked hard, saw their careers flourishing within the organization. They were worried that the new leadership changes could affect their careers. As a result, they did not like the leadership changes. In their minds, this was going to affect their careers' progression negatively. They felt negatively impacted:

"I don't like the leadership changes. They have come at the time that I was due for a promotion. These new leaders do not know me yet. I am worried they may ask to derail my progression as they demand that they know me first. I am angry about this".

This answer showed how the employees linked the leadership change to their careers and job profile. The leadership change had a far-reaching impact on the non-managerial employees hence the expressed anxieties such as the following:

"I am due for promotion this summer. This change of leaders is not good for me. It might have a negative impact on my promotion. I am really worried about it".

Any change is associated with many other changes hence I was able to deduce from this finding that employees were aware the leadership change would trigger further changes that might even derail those employees scheduled for career promotions. It was normal for employees to wish the changes had not taken place a sign they were resisting the change that they could do nothing about.

"I think the organization should have waited until we have settled with the new shareholders before changing the leaders. This is worrying me. My personal career is now uncertain. I feel I had made too much progress in the organization which these new leaders may not fully appreciate."

"I am not excited about leadership changes. To me, they have happened at the wrong time. My job and position in the organization are at risk. Who will recommend for my promotion now that my previous boss is gone? "

Employees expressed their feelings by either being unhappy about the change or being angry and worried about it. Organizational leadership players a key role in defining an employee career. Any form of uncertainty or change in leadership would ordinarily trigger anxiety among ordinary employees who look forward to the leaders to guide them and create a career path for the in an organization.

4.3.6 A Step in The Right Direction

For a few staff members, the leadership changes were a good thing. These though were a minority, mainly coming from employees who had worked for less than 4 years in the organization. They were excited and expressed happiness about the leadership changes as they felt they were not in good relationship with the old leaders. To them it was a nice step in the right direction. They thought new leaders could carry out the vision of the new owners:

"I am excited about these changes. I am happy new leaders have been appointed so that they can instil new positive energy in us all at the same time"

"I feel the leadership changes have come at the right time. The previous boss was not exactly my favourite. He didn't like me too much and hence I see this as an opportunity for me to be recognised too".

"... such a change is brilliant. It has just come at the right time. New shareholders, new leaders, new expectations are wonderful for us. I am looking forward to working with them".

"...am happy we have new leaders. No one in the organisation will have an advantage at all. I feel we all have equal opportunities now with this change".

These employees felt the changes were timely for them. The new leaders could bring a second chance to establish themselves in the organisation and push their careers. They expressed happiness and they were full of hope. They were pleased with the changes and saw nothing wrong about it. These employees easily accepted the change as they were looking forward to working with the new leaders. This finding was in the minority. I had to administer questionnaires to see if I would get more answers similar to this.

4. 4 FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

As part of my research process, I also administered questionnaires to non-managerial employees in 10 branches across the country that I could not visit and interview.

A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to employees who had been with the organisation 2 years and above. I selected participants randomly from the list of non-managerial employees sent to me by the human capital department. I sent the questionnaires via outlook email. Using the receipt function, I was able to monitor emails that were received and read. I received 78 employees' responses and 22 were missing. I analysed the questionnaire answers and picked out the general themes that seemed to be coming out as findings of the study. I grouped the general answers together.

The following table contains the findings as extracted from the questions.

Main topics	Number of participants
Worried about implication of leadership changes, job security, career progression, work relations and networks	78
Lack of Organization preparedness for the change /caught unaware by the changes	77
Worried of organisational cultural and values shift/no Trust between leaders and employees	74
No adequate communication about the change	76
Change has created opportunities for some staff members	11
Change has prompted them to look for opportunities outside the organisation	41

I was able to summarise the follow five key findings:

- i. Staff worried about the implication of leadership changes -job security, career progression, work relations
- ii. Lack of Organisation preparedness for this change
- iii. Staff worried about organisational values and culture shift
- iv. Lack of adequate communication with employees on the change
- v. The leadership change has created opportunities for staff – some in a positive way as they thought they may be better recognised by the new leaders and some in the negative way as they were now looking for opportunities outside the organization.

4.4.1 Implications of leadership changes.

All those who answered the questionnaire were unanimous in identifying uncertainty about job security as their main fear resulting from the leadership changes. They feared the new leaders could affect their career progressions and work relationships establishing new relationships in the organization. Findings showed the relationship among leadership, job security, career progression, and work relationship. Changing leaders had a direct impact on these valuables. As respondents pointed out:

".....am concerned about my existence in this organisation. How secure is my job now that we have both new shareholders and new leaders? I did not anticipate this change and I am very much worried".

and:

".....I am not sure I have confidence in where we going as an organisation. Why have all the leaders been changed? Does it mean everything including our job profiles will now change? This does not seat well with me. I have invested a lot in my career with this organisation only to be jeopardised by such a leadership change"

Employees demonstrated through the answers in the questionnaires that changing the leaders had an implication on the networks and relationships. They expected the networks and the relationships in the organisation to be affected, as suggested by the following answers:

"...I don't trust this organisation anymore. I had such a good working relationship with my boss who has now left the organisation. I wonder whether I will have a similar good working relationship with the new boss."

"The future of this organisation is now in limbo. I am not sure we will relate the same anymore as the new leaders will certainly come with their own working style"

which may not support the way I currently relate with my colleagues. This makes me nervous about the changes that have been made."

".... I wonder what will now be of my friends.... are we going to be separated...this will definitely affect my work?"

Only few employees, however, did acknowledge that the new leaders could have a positive effect on their careers.

".....I am happy these changes have come through. I now have an opportunity to rebuild my career and prove myself to the new leaders".

".....I am looking forward to better working relationships with these new leaders. I did not get along well with the previous leaders".

The uncertainty surrounding employees' positions in the organisation following the leadership changes was a key finding of this study. Employees were worried about losing their status quo. They felt unease about the new leadership. This was a cause of concern to both employees and the whole organisation. This finding confirmed results from both the focus group and interviews.

4.4.2 Lack of Organisation preparedness

The lack of organisation preparedness for the change was the next major finding from the questionnaire responses. Almost all employees responded that they did not expect the leadership change and that the new shareholders could immediately replace the leaders. Employees complained about the abruptness of the changes as they felt not adequately prepared for it:

"..... these changes look like they have just been imposed on the organisation. Why didn't the Human Capital team prepare us that this was coming?"

"...I didn't see the changes coming. I was totally unprepared, and I feel the organisation did not prepare us for this change".

".....I was absolutely not prepared for this..... I feel a bit lost now in this organisation. I am not sure of its future direction"

Employees were nervous and stressed because it appeared the leadership change was not properly communicated to them. This finding confirmed what Laster (2008) found out in his study: the lack of preparation due to a missing communication about the change was provoking stress to employees rather than the change itself.

4.4.3 Staff worried about Organizational Values and Culture Shift

The third major finding was the staff being worried about the shift in the values and in the organisation culture. Most employees expressed concern that such a sudden change of leaders could lead to values changing. As a part of a regional group, the organisation was owner-managed and had a set of values that employees cherished. Employees feared the leadership changes could trigger new values. This view came out in the following answers:

"I don't think the company has taken into account our culture by making these changes"

"I fear our culture will be distorted now. What values are we going to maintain given these leadership changes"

"I am not sure our values and my commitment will be the same going forward. The leaderships changes have me worried about them"

Most of the employees had been with the organisation for over 4 years and therefore it was somehow expected they were worried about the culture and the values of the organisation. They identified themselves with those values.

4.4.4 Lack of Adequate Employees Communication

Another major finding was the inadequate communication with employees about the leadership changes. Almost all employees complained the fact that organisation did not

communicate properly with them. The Human Capital team did not pre-warn employees on the changes. The following sentiments depicted how employees felt and expressed a lack of communication:

"Changing Leaders is so important that the Human Capital should have dedicated more time in making us ready for this. I hurt it that I have found myself in this position where I feel I should have been told more about the changes"

"I am of the view that changing leaders is such an important thing to do and hence there should have been more communication between the organisation and us. To only announce the new leaders as they did was not fine in my view. "

Employees felt communication from organization was poor.

"The way this change has been implemented is not right. For me, I would have loved to see them talking to us more about it and telling why it was important to make these changes. For them to just abruptly make the changes has disturbed our confidence in the organisation. It makes us fear to ask them why they deemed it necessary to do so. As key stakeholders I expected them to communicate with us a lot more about this change. "

4.4.5 Opportunities created by the leadership change

The last key finding was the realisation by employees that changing the leadership had created positive opportunities for them. Some employees answered as follows:

"I am happy about the leadership changes. I feel this presents me with an opportunity to start afresh with new leaders and grow my career. I am confident I will now be afforded a better future in the organisation with these new leaders than the old ones."

Whilst others thought about negative opportunities for them. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the leadership changes, these employees thought it was time for them to look for careers or job opportunities outside the organisation:

"I am not pleased with these changes. They have unsettled me. I feel my career is threatened now. In fact, I fear about my position in the organisation. Therefore, it is time for me to apply for positions outside the organisation. I cannot trust the new leaders"

"I don't trust these changes. My job is at risk. I think I would be safer getting a job away from this organisation. "

These sentiments were in line with the findings from the focus group discussions and the interviews. Employees were not well properly prepared for the leadership change.

4.5 SUMMARY

The findings from the study as presented in this chapter have shown to a greater extent that employees were affected in various ways by the leadership change in the newly acquired organisation. The vast majority of employees have been deeply affected in a negative way and this could have consequences and implications on their well-being in the organisation. It was a problem that needed managerial solutions to ensure that also the organisation was not negatively affected. Very few employees viewed the change in a positive manner for themselves and the entire organization. In any organisation, employees are the most important asset and a key stakeholder. The feelings and reactions of employees at any time need to be well analysed and understood in any organization. Their feelings and reactions to key organizational change need to be considered carefully. Most often, employee attitudes and loyalties are key elements of organization success. As noted by Laster (2008), often a key change is followed by multiple other changes that affect employees in various ways. Any subsequent changes need to be carefully implemented and the impact that this would have on employees

must be well analysed and understood to have the desired effect. Therefore, how non-managerial employees are impacted by a leadership change, is important to be investigated and understood for the betterment of the organization. Findings from this study confirms how employees are directly affected by their leaders' opinions. The choice of leadership changes has impacted deeply on them. This was a challenge the organization could not overlook. Findings from this study could represent important lessons to bring out for the organization.

Next chapter discusses the findings and the implication for the organization and it also explains the action research activities that I undertook to help both the employees in adapting themselves to the leadership changes and the organization to deal with employee reactions.

Chapter 5 -Discussion of Research Findings

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in relation to the research question of the study (*“What was the impact of the Leadership changes on non-managerial employees in the newly acquired organization?”*).

Data were obtained from focus group meetings, observations, semi structured interviews and questionnaires. This chapter aims to relate the findings to the general objectives of the study:

- i) To understand how employees viewed the change in the leadership.
- ii) To appreciate whether and how employees, understood the change and what challenges they could be experiencing in adapting to it.
- iii) To understand how the employees were addressing the challenges and how the organization were supporting them.
- iv) To help the organisation to understand the implications of the leadership change and to deal with potential forms of resistance to the change management process.

The discussion of the research findings links the study outcomes to the study objectives and current organizational management theories. In particular, the findings are linked to the current management literature and theories identified in the literature review chapter.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

As explained in the previous chapter, I used the focus group research methodology for my study objectives. The focus group findings showed that the leadership change taking place in the newly acquired bank was a source of concern to most of the ordinary staff members. The focus group presentations provided valuable research data, useful to comprehend the research problem that was spreading in the organization and needed

managerial attention. The leadership change triggered worry and uncertainty among employees. They were worried about their future in the organization in terms of losing their jobs and their working networks. They were uncertain about the organization identity following the leadership change in terms of values and culture. They also expressed concern for the way the leadership change was announced to them. They felt they were not quite prepared for the change.

The findings had implications on both the individuals and the organization, bringing to light a lot of questions about the leadership change

A deeper analysis of the findings points firstly to the employee expressions as result of the change. Employees expressed their reactions to the leadership change through bringing out feelings about the whole process. They expressed anxiety and fear. It was more of inner personal feelings being expressed as result of the change that they were going through. The nature of the leadership change was such that employees could do nothing about it or prepare themselves for it. The change was announced to the employees, and they did not have any opportunity to either agree or object to it. They were expected to adapt to it and cooperate with the new leaders and work with them.

This is an organizational change found in a recent theory in the change management literature. According to Cummings and Worley (2014) this type of change can be described as "controlled and planned" where key stakeholders are expected to accept and adapt to it. Shareholder and leadership changes were planned ex ante, outside the internal environment of the employees meaning that the organization needed to take care of the employees expected reactions. The vast majority of the literature focuses on how to plan an organizational change together with the key stakeholders, but this was not the case. However, the findings, showed that the organization followed a change model that was strictly rational, predictable, and implementable in a rigid sequential manner (D'Ortenzio 2012). The organization implemented a type of change defined as a "top-down approach" (Laster, 2008) where employees were only given the change to

accept it or leave the organization, with no opportunity to participate in the change planning.

Recent research work on change management process has described the lack of employee participation as one of the reasons why some forms of reactions may occur (Wagner, 1994; Murphy, 2005). Lewis (2000) argued that employees want beforehand information about change that is accurate, timely, credible, and delivered appropriately. In this case employees did not have prior information about the leadership change. They were not mentally prepared. It was announced and communicated through the official channel of communication in the organisation much later and without the involvement of any non-managerial employee or someone who represented them. It was rational for the employees to be worried and feel uncertain about the leadership change. These findings confirm what most literature on change has identified as possible reaction to change when employees are not part of the change creation and implementation process. Whilst it is important to involve all the key stakeholders (Laster, 2008), I argue that not all changes can involve ordinary employees. The leadership change, in this case, was too sensitive to be disclosed to the employees in advance. This is a preserve of the top management being shareholders and the Board of an organization. Of course, ordinary employees cannot participate in such a decision but an organization, in a situation like this, in order to avoid unintended negative reactions should implement some effective actions. As a practitioner I played a key role in suggesting actionable knowledge to help the organization to manage the employees' behaviours.

It is my view that because of the strategic nature that leadership plays in an organization, its leadership is often chosen on merit based on the criteria that the shareholders have put across and mandated the Board to do so. The leadership is expected to provide the vision and the mission of the organisation. For this reason, I support that such a change cannot be disclosed to the employees in advance.

However, the lack of employee involvement could trigger reactions. Thus, organization needs to put in place measures to ensure the reaction does not derail the organisation

from benefiting from the leadership change. As noted from the findings, uncertainty among employees affected their work production that was not in the best interest of the newly acquired organization. The findings underscored the importance of organization preparedness for change especially ensuring that ordinary employees were sensitized about change and what was expected to come.

From the findings of the study, I was also able to confirm the Kanter (2003) idea of change: the organization was changing form and content within its work environment. Employee's relations were affected. The culture was changing form. The employees could feel the new wave of change in the organization. They could no longer see their old leaders but new ones. This affected them and thus ultimately affected the form of the organization. Although it was largely the same organization, the form had now changed by having new shareholders and leaders. The demands of the new leaders called for new behaviours from employees hence changing the form of the organization.

As a result of the leadership change, they were forced to think about their careers, work environment, and employee relations. The leadership change forced them to re-examine their presence in the organization. It also forced the ordinary employees to rethink the type of relationships that they held in the organization. Consequently, this changed the form of the organization.

A further look at the findings indicate that the organization, when implementing the leadership change, viewed ordinary employees as rational individuals (Jumbe and Proches, 2016) capable to accept the change and adapt to it easily within the organization nature. The organization considered employees rational who could accept the change and learn how to adapt to it. This is in accordance with the control theory which both Jumbe and Proches (2016) and Karp and Helgo (2009) refer to as the basis for conducting such a type of change. It is assumed the leaders have the ability to control and manage employees and remove uncertainties and resistance from them. Employees were expected to accept the change. However as suggested from the literature review, not all

human beings are rational. They have individual feelings which organizations may not predict, and these feelings are not the same all the time.

As individuals, ordinary employees form relationships and are bound by the culture prevailing in the organization. It is likely that the bond that ordinary employees create with their leaderships is formed based on the relationship and culture that is within the organization. Therefore, when a change takes place at leadership level, the employees react hoping that the culture and the relationships will be the same. The findings of the study support this view as most of the research participants reacted by doubting the future of the organization culture triggering mistrust between them and the new leaders. This finding confirms the complexity of managing any form of change in an organization and foresee any employee reactions. The organization was now faced with a challenge to manage employees fears and uncertainty created by the leadership change. This was not an easy task given that the leadership was new, and the employees had not yet created a relationship with them. The weak change management process seemingly in place did not help matters either. The organization was thus faced with a typical organization change problem created by the leadership change (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

The findings from the focus group meetings were similar to the findings noted from the observations that I made among ordinary staff members in the bank. As part of the study, I took time to observe employees immediately after the leadership changes were made. I particularly paid attention to their behaviours in the natural settings of their work environment. From the recent literature on change management (Jumbe and Proches, 2016; Steve, 2017), I knew that this kind of change normally affected employee behaviours as they were going to adapt to the new leadership demands (Tonkin, 2013). I was able to observe the uneasiness among them immediately after the leadership change announcements. Most of the staff members were nervous and uncertain about their work environment. Only few of them were freely engaging with their new supervisors. I noticed by how seldom they visited their managers office, generally only if

called there. While the other employees were immediately going to them for asking what the meeting was about. From this perspective, the change of leadership had triggered information anxiety. Employees were eager to learn and understand about their new leaders from whatever source such information could be obtained from. They were looking for information about their status in the new organization. The anxiety triggered the need to obtain information about what was going on in the organization. Therefore, small groups of employees were often at lunch time together speaking in low voices (Liu et al., 2010). This was a clear sign there was a problem in the organization arising directly from the leadership changes made. Each ordinary staff member was using their own networks within the organisation to gather information about their new leaders. It was clear to me that staff were concerned more about their own status in the organisation and were worried whether the new leadership could find them valuable for the organisation.

The findings from the semi structured interviews and the questionnaires confirmed most of the observations noted during the focus group meetings. They were worried about their own status in the organisation (Smith, 2005) and were not sure whether the new leadership retained them in the organisation. They were concerned about the way the leadership change was implemented and this triggered mistrust (Smith, 2005) of their new leaders. A dissatisfied employee workforce has implications of delaying organisation progress (Laster, 2008). There was nothing that the new leadership could achieve in the organisation without the support of the ordinary staff. Hence, the organisation needed to find out some solutions to cope with the employees' reactions and the mistrust created by the leadership change had to be addressed.

The findings brought to light the real issues that recent research on change has brought out about how ordinary staff members react to a leadership change that is not expected (Smith, 2005).

As Cameron & Green (2019) note, this can be described as a transitioning change that involves transformation on the part of employees involving a personal inner process where individuals come to deal with the change and accept it (Dealy & Thomas, 2006; Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007). They just need to accept it and adapt to it. The change had been implemented by the organization and as ordinary employees they needed to live with it. From the findings, I noted that the ordinary employees reacted with inner emotions some expressing anger at the change. They felt the uncertainty brought about by the leadership change. The leadership change affected them individually and collectively. Bridges (2003) suggested that organizations frequently ignore the transitional aspect related to change when undergoing some type of transformation. However, as the findings have revealed, the leadership change had the effect of triggering personal reactions that needed to be managed for the transformation to be successful (Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007; Tasnim et al., 2014). Madsen et al. (2006) purported that organizational change cannot survive unless leaders provide the proper interventions to ensure individuals are ready for change. It was on this basis that, as a practitioner, I focused on suggesting key changes and actionable knowledge to help the organization to survive through this change process.

I used Bridges (2003) three stage model to comprehend this leadership change and help employees through the transition process. Employees needed to accept and adjust individually to the new beginning of the new leadership in the organization. As part of my action research, my efforts were targeted at suggesting appropriate actions to help employees through this transition process. Whilst doing this, I recognized the point which Cameron & Green (2019) emphasized that employees could not all adjust at the same time.

As far back as 1980s, researchers have noted important reactions to change management process by employees. Milliken (1987) found out that stakeholder uncertainty (which was defined as individual inability to predict something accurately) was a psychological state reported by individuals experiencing change within their organization. Faced with uncertainty, employees were likely to be stressed and worried. Further, the discomfort

they were experiencing emanating from the leadership change, had brought out the aspect of personal or individual dissatisfaction. Change management literature (Wagner, 1994) has shown that lack of personal dissatisfaction triggers uncertainty, job insecurity, anger and worry about the future as clearly pointed out in the findings of this study. This literature has also established that to manage this kind of reactions, the implementers need to ensure a proper communication to employees to prepare them for the change. Miller and Monge (1985) argue that well-constructed and communicated messages are the precursor to support a successful process of change. Jumbe and Proches (2016) emphasise that implementers of change initiatives play a critical role in ensuring the success of change efforts. While Cunningham et al., (2002) have identified organisational members' readiness for change as a necessary and critical precursor to the change implementation process

The finding of the study points out employees complaining that they were not well prepared for the change. This could mean the organization did not invest much in preparing employees about the change. As Smith (2005) argues the lack of employee readiness for change leads to undesired change management results.

Whilst the reactions to the leadership change were in some cases more personal, overall, the findings revealed that the way the organization implemented the change did not help employees to deal with it. Employees felt the change was abrupt. Hence, I focused part of my action research to help employees out of their reaction emotions and come to terms with the leadership change. I recognized that the change was already made and hence any remedy action had to focus on how ordinary employees were helped to adapt to this change. As Jumbe and Proches (2016) observed in their work, the key factor to me was to get all organisation members to share the meaning of the change and make sense of reality, events, experiences, and situations that were prevailing as a result of the leadership change. This approach provided a better chance at success getting at least the majority of the ordinary staff members to engage the hearts and minds of their fellow

employees (Stern & Deimler, 2006) and ensure they were aligned with the new organizational strategy and the wishes of the new leadership (Kaplan & Norton, 2006).

The following action research activities, which I undertook as part of the study, helped the organization and employees to fully comprehend and deal with the problems that emanated from the leadership changes.

5.2.1 Engagement with the Human Capital Team

The first action I undertook was to engage the Human Resource team and understand from them what had been done in order to prepare the staff for the leadership changes taking place in the organisation. This action was important for me, as I wanted to assess the level of preparation of employees for the upcoming change. As noted from Jumbe and Proches (2016), for any successful change implementation, there must be adequate preparation to the recipients of change to avoid management resistance. I noted from my literature review that previous research in change management process pointed out that unprepared staff could develop negative attitude to the whole change process. I therefore engaged the Human Capital Team to find out what had been in place to prepare the staff for change. This was an important action point from my side as it laid a foundation for my research activities. Understanding how well-prepared staff were prior to the leadership changes would help explain the impact of the change on them.

I noted that very little information was released to employees by the Head of Human Capital, prior to the change taking place. It was assumed the organisation did not want to disclose in advance any information on the leadership changes. Hence, employees were not prepared. When the acquisition was announced, staff were assured that there would be very little disruption in the current operations. This was one of the main problems that the Human capital team was faced with when it was time for them to engage staff and help them through the change process. The lack of prior knowledge about the leadership changes made it difficult for them to prepare employees for the leadership change that the organisation was going through. The leadership changes came

as a surprise also to them. I reflected on this, and I identified it as a critical point that the organisation lapsed in implementing this change. There was clearly a lack of employee readiness for this change. This is why most ordinary members thought there was no adequate preparations or a proper communication about the change, as revealed in the findings.

I thus suggested to the human capital team an action point: they should engage the Group Management Team and alert them that in future changes it would be helpful if they alerted the Country Human Capital team. In this way, deliberate change action programs are put in place and employees are well prepared for the changes to take place in the organisation. This would help in managing change related uncertainties among employees and help the organisation manage future change better and lessen the disruption to organisational activities. As Jumbe and Proches (2016) further explain, a change success comes from top managers engaging the hearts and minds of key workers to ensure they are aligned with the new organizational thinking (Gardner, 2006). There is no better way to achieving this than to have a proper change management program in place. Staff needed to be prepared that this change was coming and that they needed to have a positive mind about this change. It was thus important that this was considered for all future change processes. The Human Capital Head took this on board, and he did communicate with the Group Head of Human Capital who acknowledged that this would be followed for any future change initiative emanating from the Group. However, they were also cautioned that sometimes not all the changes could be communicated in advance. In such cases, employees had to be required to just accept and adapt to it. In such cases, however, the organization should be equipped to deal with the change shock that this would bring on the employees. The organization would need to put in place measures to help the employees adapt to the change as quickly as possible to avoid it having a negative impact on the organization activities.

Following on the leadership changes, the in-country Human Capital Team nevertheless did not just seat idle but went ahead and prepared change management programs after the leadership changes were announced aimed at explaining the changes to staff

members and helping both the new leadership and the staff members to engage and understand what these changes were all about. The programs were meant to help ordinary staff members settle in the change. As for me, I wanted to understand clearly how this would impact and help ordinary employees. I had an opportunity to go through these change management plans. I noted that the plans were being put in place and implemented after the new leadership changes were already taking place and staff had already become nervous about the changes. Then, I reflected on what actions could be taken to improve the change management process.

Firstly, I suggested that in managing future changes, the Human Capital team had to run deliberate change management programs making staff aware of the current change in the organisation ownership. In this way, they would help to manage properly the impact of any future change on employees. I particularly advised that these deliberate change programs should focus on educating staff members on how to handle change and why they should always be prepared to go through different kinds of change. Literature review suggests that change takes place all the time and that it is important be prepared on how to handle and accept changes constantly. The Human Capital Head took note of my suggestion and immediately engaged a new figure in the organization, a change management consultant, to help in running these programs. As I observed later in my research, there was positive feedback from the staff members and the Human capital team. I further noted from the plans done to help staff with the leadership changes, that Town Hall meeting were to be used across the country to help explain the changes and allow employees to ask questions about the changes taking place. The first town Hall was to be addressed by the Group CEO who was relatively new to the organisation. It was at these town hall meetings that the new leadership would be introduced to staff members and staff would be given a first opportunity to engage the leaders and have some initial understanding of what the change was all about. I further reflected on this and then suggested to the Human Capital that they also considered organising separate meetings with ordinary staff members to be addressed by both the old leadership and the new leadership. I noted that in some cases the old leaders or senior departmental managers

were still in the organisation saving their notices. But, where the old Head of Department had already left, it was not possible to have joint meetings. The action I was suggesting here it would help the staff to quickly adjust and accept the new leadership in a more natural setting than a town hall meeting. I asked the Human Capital to act and organise these smaller meetings for ordinary staff and their leaders to have an opportunity to engage and get an appreciation of each other. This it would help to ease the nervousness that ordinary employees were going through. This was one of the most important action points from my side: the action proposed of holding these meetings once implemented subsequently helped some ordinary employees to come to terms with the changes and quickly adjust to the new organisation leadership. There was positive feedback from ordinary staff members that the engagements in the meetings helped them to demystify any negative thoughts or uncertainties about the leadership change. Whilst for others, it was still a little late and they were already in the state of uncertainty about the leadership changes and doubted their status in the organisation.

5.2.2 Town Hall Meetings

The town hall meetings were held across the Country with the aim of introducing the new leaders to the staff members. Almost all the employees attended these meetings and some of these participated in the meetings asking questions. Those that were unsure were just observing and expressing their feelings by way of acclamation in support of their fellow employees who spoke. I participated in the first town Hall meeting as an outgoing Leader. This gave me an opportunity to be an action researcher. I experienced first-hand the difficulty of being both an action researcher and an insider. I was able to observe and take note of the questions that were coming from the ordinary staff members. Common questions that the ordinary staff members asked about the leadership change were mainly concerning their welfare as staff members. They related closely to feelings and reactions noted as findings of my study. Mostly staff members asked whether they would be further changes in organisational strategy, whether their job profiles would be affected and how soon would these be implemented. Most of them expressed concern about their own future in the organisation and whether they were assured of job security.

I also observed that it was difficult for the new leaders to answer the questions to the satisfaction of the employees in some instances. I observed during and after the town hall meeting that some ordinary employees were worried about their future and were concerned about the leadership changes. Some of them came to me as the outgoing leader asking questions about the future of the organisation. It was difficult for me to give them reassuring answers as I was no longer part of the organization. It was equally difficult for the new leaders to offer any form of guarantee of Job security which seemed to be the major worry that most employees expressed emanating from the leadership change. They were not satisfied with the answers given to their questions. On my part I encouraged employees to keep engaging their new leaders as way to come to terms with this new change and possibly get answers to their questions. I noted from these meetings the need for the new leaders to be well prepared for the town hall meetings. It was important that their discussions inspired confidence in staff members. Some ordinary staff expressed uneasiness about the leaders' answers, and this did not give them confidence. I suggested as an action point to the Human Capital team that they should consider preparing the new Leaders for the town hall meetings by anticipating some questions and give answers that inspired confidence among ordinary staff members. One way would be for the Human Capital team to obtain pressing questions from ordinary staff in advance and ensure the new leaders researched on the answers and gave appropriate answers that would inspire more confidence.

The questions and answers given in the town hall meeting made me clearly understand the type of concerns arising as result of the Leadership Change among ordinary employees: they were nervous and worried about the whole leadership change. As an action researcher, I wondered what could be done to help staff accept the leadership changes and remain confident in the future of the organisation. I proposed to the Human Capital Team that they need to take keen interest to understand the impact that this change was having on employees and quickly come up with measures that should help them settle in the new organisation. I engaged them to act and start engaging employees and ask them what their concerns were. I proposed that the Human Capital Management

consider engaging a service of a counsellor who could be available to the ordinary staff members at all times. Staff should be encouraged to meet the counsellor and share their fears and concerns about the leadership. This I thought would help with employees struggling to accept the new leadership. At the same time, it would offer the organisation an opportunity to address any concerns or fears that employees were having. The Human Capital Head later thanked me for this suggestion as it helped in managing employees through this change, as the findings of the research would show later. Employees were able to trust the counsellor more than the insiders. The Counsellor helped more ordinary staff to deal with the negative impact that the leadership change was having on them. It also eased the work of the Human Capital team.

5.2.3 Interactions with Non-Managerial employees

As I interacted with some of the research participants, I proposed the following actions to deal with the identified problems emanating from the leadership change:

- (i) employees needed to be proactive and engage their new leaders at every opportunity available as way of them trying to get to understand who they were and what their working culture was like. Some of those employees that followed my advice were able to ease their fears about the new leaders and looked more settled in their work. They found that engaging their new leaders at any available opportunity eased their fears and, in some cases, they were even able to positively influence their colleagues.

Unfortunately, I also noted that for some non-managerial employees taking this route of being proactive and engaging their new leaders even made them become more nervous after learning some of the demands that the new leaders were putting forward in the organisation (Hayes & Allinson, 1998; Marquardt, 2002). Simply learning about their new leaders and coming close to them even increased their fears further about their position into the organisation. Few employees opted to start looking for employment elsewhere. By the time I was

concluding my data gathering, some of these staff members had already left the organisation on their own accord. This point affirmed my earlier suggestion given to the Human Capital team to fully embrace regular engagement of employees during the crucial moment of leadership change. It became even more important when the leadership of the Human Capital team was also changed. Therefore, regular staff engagement was crucial to maintain stability among employees.

- (ii) Employees needed to engage amongst themselves and discuss their fears. I proposed and encouraged employees to consider at every opportunity to engage fellow employees and discuss their fears and challenges about the leadership changes. This, I thought, it would help them to learn from their colleagues on how they were coping with the changes. Networking among employees was an everyday activity. Having reflected on the issue at hand, I proposed that employees considered deliberately engaging each other and interact more. In this way they would perhaps learn from each other on how they were impacted by the change and how they were coping with it. Later, on I could see that this action indeed helped employees to learn about the change. Some employees would later confess that by engaging their fellow staff members, they were able to learn how they were doing in terms of understanding the changes brought about by the leadership changes and were comforted to learn that they were not alone experiencing the change in that way. Those who felt comfortable with the leadership changes were able to share with others and positively influenced them. Networking, as Stacey (2011) argues, is an important element in modern organisations and helps employees to engage and feel to be part of the organization.

5.2.4 Promoting Active Thinking among employees:

Bersin (2017) points out that when a leadership change takes place in an organization, employees often make false assumptions. They manifest the tendency to focus on the worst aspects or ignore the positives ones that the change is supposed to drive. Bersin

(2017) proposes that a more appropriate response to help employees in such a situation is to slow them down on negative feelings on change and actively challenge those automatic thoughts with active thinking. By exercising active thinking, people flex their logical brain to counteract the emotional brain and are able to move forward in a positive way.

Learning from Bersin (2017), I proposed that the organization considered promoting active thinking among employees as way to slow down resilience toward the leadership change. In order to achieve this, I invited the Human capital team to propose to the new leadership team to come up with a non-managerial employee staff award that would be given to 5 employees that would come up with an innovative product that would be chosen as needed for the organization during the transition period. This idea was welcomed, and it was implemented within the organization. The Human Capital team later gave me feedback that this was a good idea as it indeed helped some of the non-managerial employees to settle down and accept, although slowly, the new leadership. The result was positive as most employees considered this to be a good signal coming from the new leadership.

As part of the Zambian culture, like in most parts of the Africa continent, recognition is a valued activity among employees. There is joy when employees are particularly recognized for contribution towards organizational goals. Hence, this was one of the best tools to promote active thinking among employees. Once employees were promised to be recognized, they were more likely to focus on an activity with a positive mind. The findings and action points from this study supported to this view.

5.2.5 The need for the new leadership to understand how change affected employees

From the study findings and looking at how the non-managerial employees felt impacted by the leadership change, it was clear that there was the need for the new leadership to understand how the change affected the employees. The findings showed how stressed employees were about the thought that their role, position, and internal network may

suddenly disappear overnight as the new leadership takes hold and starts making changes. From the study findings, it was apparent that employees needed to gain the trust from the new leadership. Only increasing this kind of confidence, they could feel safe enough as employees and become comfortable with new dispensation in the organization and go-to-market strategies, and relationships they have built before may have to be rebuilt. These were some of the critical issues cited in the focus group discussions and that the organization was faced with after that many employees were considering leaving as the new leadership regime change took place.

There was thus the need for deliberate actions on the part of the organization to influence the non-managerial employees to understand what had just taken place in the organization so that they begin to think positively about the leadership change. As Carnall (2007) points out, modern change related literature and debates is focused on generating knowledge on what would work well in order to achieve this. As part of actionable knowledge, I centred my proposals to the organization around the following key areas:

5.2.5.1 Deliberate actions to change the way employees felt about the leadership change.

As I reflected on the findings, I realized that it was not the leadership change that the employees hated: the feeling they had about the leadership change was completely natural. Many recent scholars have noted that people faced with change have been conditioned to fear change over thousands of years of evolution. As human beings, there is a natural fear response that is triggered as a survival instinct when faced with a new situation. While the threats of today's workplace are different, people still have an automatic and negative response to anything that is out of their comfort zone.

I proposed deliberate actions such as staff workshops and the new leadership going around meeting non-managerial employees and explaining the new organization as ways that would help slowly translate into change acceptance among employees. This therefore

gave an opportunity for the organization to address the issues through influencing how employees thought about the change.

5.2.5.2 Organization to focus on helping employees to recognize and overcome negative change biases.

As I evaluated the findings further, I also saw a clear correlation between what modern brain science explains as to why people naturally respond negatively to change and what had taken place in the organization under study (Kaplan et al., 2016). The human brain has both logical and emotional systems. As the focus group discussions revealed, some of the non-managerial employees sought to add logic to the leadership changes whilst others their emotional part seemed to be more pronounced as they looked at the likely impact of the leadership change on them. Carnall (2007) points that in the face of change, the emotional part of an employee takes over and sends alerts that cause stress. Adrenaline and other stress hormones would be released, and negative emotions dominate their thinking. The study findings clearly showed this to be the case in the organization. The leadership change caused anxiety among the employees and led them to begin imagining the worst for them about the leadership change. They saw threats everywhere and interpreted the leadership change in a negative manner which was self-limiting.

Modern scholars and research (Dess, 2020) have however noted that while the emotional brain is powerful and can respond quickly to undermine thinking, the logical brain is more powerful when people have developed resilience skills (Galbraith, 2018). This is what would help people to be rational and solve problems. The logical brain could be used to exert control over the emotional brain; to identify the triggers of stress and rein in the natural, emotional response. As I thought critically about this, it was clear that part of the solution to the problem in the organization lay in ensuring that the organization focuses on building resilience skills among the lower-level employees so that they could beat the negativity bias. This meant implementing a deliberate program to ensure that employees become resilient to negative bias. As (Galbraith, 2018) narrates, such skills as

influencing how employees took in and filtered information about the leadership; how they acted in response to challenges; and how they interacted with others were important to address so that the change related issues could be turned into positives for the organization.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This discussion on the findings of the study, described the correlation existing between the leadership change and the negative impact that this had on the ordinary employees that created problems for the organization. The findings have revealed how human feelings and reactions are triggered by a planned change activity which the ordinary employees could not influence in anyway. The leadership change was prompted by the change in the shareholders. And this impacted ordinary employees, triggering personal feelings in various forms which had implication on the employees themselves and the organisation as a whole. The impact that this leadership change had on the non-managerial employees created an organizational problem.

The findings further highlighted how complex any leadership change could be in an organization. From the findings, it has been observed that ordinary employees reacted to the leadership change in various ways bringing out a key aspect about any change implementation process: a complex process with too many unknown and unexpected reactions. This confirms what Cameron & Green (2019) explain change to be. Change is dynamic, frequently viewed as a complex procedure with the possibility to interrupt reality as it stands and impacts the various stakeholders in the whole change process. The employees were impacted by the reality of the leadership change and reacted in several ways as the findings have shown.

Burnes (2004a) declared that change represents a range of situations, which can be categorized as small, large, incremental, hardly noticed, or dramatic. In this study, based on the findings the change was classified as major and it had a wide implication on employees and the organization. Although change is ever present in organizational life,

the degree of change and its impact on the organization's key stakeholders such as employees can vary substantially as the findings of the study have shown. While many scholars agree on the complex nature of change, there are many thoughts and opinions about how to effectively manage change management initiatives. Study findings revealed some shortcomings on the part of the organization in implementing this leadership change according to the views obtained from the research participants. They felt they were not adequately prepared for the change, and they did not anticipate it. It was abrupt and hence created uncertainties among employees as revealed in the findings.

Literature has emphasized the preparedness of employees and other members of the organisation for change activity as being the critical and essential forerunner to the actual implementation of change. Jumbe and Proches (2016) emphasise that receivers and initiators of change play a crucial part in guaranteeing the positive outcome of change efforts. In the same vein, Latta (2009) identified leadership successfully performing a cultural analysis before implementing change as a necessary tool to assess how prepared the organisation was for change. The worry expressed by ordinary employees in the organization under study that organizational values and the culture will change underscore this point. It was the first time that a Zambian Bank was going through such type of acquisition and wholesome leadership change. It was a "cultural shock" to most employees and needed to be well planned and implemented. To get a clearer picture on the change implementation from the group management side, a follow up study on understanding how the Group Management planned and executed the leadership change at country level would shed more light on the thinking behind conducting the change and implementing it in such an abrupt manner as was done. It is suffice based on the findings discussed to conclude the organization was not prepared for the leadership change.

The findings of this research as discussed have clearly shown the need for the leadership change process to be managed well as far as it concerns ordinary employees. The impact that the findings indicate to be on employees needed a well thought out plan to manage the employees and help them adapt to the change. This is because as Laster (2008) points out, a single action of change, such as leadership change, leads to so many

unanticipated reactions, as the findings have shown. The organization did put up some post change support strategies which helped the employees to adapt to the change. Most depended on how employees appreciated the change and convinced themselves that this change was in the interest of the organization.

As it is generally noted among scholars, feelings differed from individual to individual. Whilst I was able to group similar feelings based on the answers, the study could not go deep enough as to thoroughly examine how rooted and negative the feelings were for all the employees of the organizations. However, findings suggest that, once the change has been initiated, it must be managed to ensure that it is successful. The actionable knowledge that I proposed to the organization confirms this fact.

The actions I proposed to help employees get by with the change seemed positive in some cases. However, the study did not however go into details in analysing how successful each action point was in resolving the problems created by the leadership change.

According to the literature reviewed, change management is understood to be a general procedure that oscillates in accordance with organizational requirements whilst upholding the vision of the change. This is the view advanced by Beckhard & Pritchard (1992). Change management is most effective in an organization when combined with learning processes. The positive interaction between the two will result in an effective change management process (Marquardt, 2002). The positive effect will apply when both leadership and individual employees appreciate that change is a learning process and learning is a change process (Hayes & Allinson, 1998). Clearly, the individual employees as noted in the findings need to learn to understand and accept the new leaders whilst the new leadership is equally also in the driving seat to ensure they manage employees and make them accept them and work together. Change is inevitable because is a continue process. Resilience can change the way people and organizations deal with it. With learning executives caught in the middle, they can benefit personally from resilience

skills and help their people become more resilient. The result is an organization that can change for the better, as suggested by Marquardt (2002).

It is generally complex to deal with human feelings especially when this triggers uncertainty and anger. The effect on the organisation is felt on how the employees go about their daily chores. Their productivity is likely to be affected during the time that they are reacting to the change and evaluating their status in the organization (D'Ortenzio, 2012). This is the main reason why it was important for me to suggest action points based on the research findings that the organisation needed to follow to try and address the problem identified.

The findings support the view put forward by Martin et al. (2006) which revealed that some groups of employees show a more positive adjustment to change than others. It is possible for individual employees to have different experiences of the change initiatives as the findings have showed. Few employees saw the change as being positive whilst the majority connoted it as negative. Therefore, as concluded by Bridges (2003), and supported by Madsen et al. (2006), organizational change cannot endure without the appropriate interventions that guarantee that individual employees are well prepared for change taking place. The discussion of the findings of the study have thus given a clear picture that this is a typical organizational change management problem and needed to be solved using change management practices (Wanberg & Banas, 2000).

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.0 INTRODUCTION

My action research study sought to advance understanding of the impact of leadership change on non-managerial employees in a newly acquired organization. In addition, the study aimed to understand how the non-managerial employees could be helped to accept the change and move in line with the transformation taking place in the new organization. Based on the study findings, and the literature on change management (Hoyte & Greenwood, 2007), it was possible to provide some useful actions to implement the leadership change more effectively.

6.1 CHANGE THEORIES NOTED FROM THE STUDY

6.1.1 The nature of Change

The research work confirmed that this was a typical change management study with the findings supporting existing organizational change management theories (Caldwell, 2003). The study outcomes underscore some topical issues on change management which practitioner scholars are deeply engaged into (De Jager, 2001).

By changing the leadership, the organization was engaged in a typical change process, replacing old leaders with the new leaders. Just like D'Ortenzio (2012) describes it, the organization was travelling from the old to the new, leaving yesterday leaders behind in exchange for the new tomorrow leaders. It required change management skills in order for the organization to see a successful change process where both ordinary employees and all key stakeholders appreciate and embrace the change (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

6.1.2 Transformation Change element of the study

Through the leadership change process, the organization was going through a transformation, which impacted key stakeholders including the ordinary employees.

Transformational change means alterations in certain areas of the organization which creates a need for new employee behaviours, (Hunt, 1999; Liu et al., 2010). According to Galbraith (2018), a transformation is referred to as organizational reorientation. By being acquired the organization clearly changed its form and structure (Dealy & Thomas, 2006).

The change signaled a paradigm shift both at the individual and organizational level. The non-managerial employees were expected to adapt to the new leadership and work closely with them. The old leadership promoted an organization culture and values that employees were used to. Hence, changing the leadership created a problem for them and this became an organizational change management problem. If the new organization was to be successful with its transition agenda, some urgent solutions were needed.

6.1.3 The elements of the Top-down change approach in the leadership change

Based on the research findings, I further make an assertion that, as noted in the literature review, employees normally do not influence the leadership changes in an organization transformation arising out of a Merger and acquisition (Appelbaum et al, 2017). Such was the case in this newly acquired organization. The organization hierarchy (Shareholders through the Board of Directors) decided the new leadership in line with its transformation agenda. This change type is normally referred to as a top-down change process (D'Ortenzio, 2012). Typically, a top-down change is imposed, and employees need to accept and embrace. The new shareholders decided on who the new leadership of the acquired organization.

As the study findings have highlighted, non-managerial employees had limited options surrounding this change. They did not participate in making the change. They were expected to adapt and accept the new leadership and work with them. This is a typical change process where the decision to change is made and the issues or outcomes that come out of it are then addressed as part of the change management process.

It gave an opportunity for new owners in an organization to signal a new vision, and key strategic direction based on their desires and aspirations through the changing of the leadership.

This type of change process gave rise to after change issues like was the case identified in this organization study. The leadership change triggered employee reactions that needed to be addressed and managed as part of the change management problem. At the time that the leadership change was made, it was not possible to fully anticipate or imagine what problems would arise from the various stakeholders such as the non-managerial employees. However, the findings have shown the importance to ensure the organization leadership is ready to address critical issues. The actions that I proposed during the study indicate that, in a top-down change approach, the leadership needs to be equipped to drive the change process and be ready to influence the attitude of non-managerial employees. No doubt, this is a major task but a necessary one for organization transformation to be successful (Dealy & Thomas, 2006).

The findings of the study demonstrate typical issues or problems that normally arise because of a top-down change initiative. It calls for the organization leadership working with the employees to find solutions that are positive to the new organization and allow for the whole process to be successful and in the best interest of the organization. The change was made and employees together with the new leadership were now expected to learn to co-exist and drive the new organization forward. The problems identified needed to be addressed as part of the organization change management process.

6.1.4 The forces surrounding the leadership change decision

Findings confirm the view explained by Huber & Glick (1993) and Higgs and Rowland (2005) that changes are the outcome of the two stimulating powers in entities: the atmosphere (environment surrounding the organisation) and the top leadership (management at the helm of the organisation). These can be viewed as two stimulating powers all playing a major role in the organization activities. The leadership change was

initiated by the Board of Directors and affected the environment of the organization. For it to be successful it needed employees to adapt to it and work with the new leaders for the new organization agenda set by the new shareholders. It was important to understand the environment surrounding the new organization in which the non-managerial employees were now required to operate in so that effective solutions to manage their concerns would be found and make the change successful.

6.1.5 The effects of leadership change being both controllable and uncontrollable

The findings of the study also confirmed further that this type of leadership change could be described as both controllable and uncontrollable giving credence to what Lewis (2000) states to be a typical characteristic of change. On the part of the organization the change was controllable as they were the ones that planned and implemented it. They planned to recruit and hire new leaders. They controlled the timing and when the leadership change would be made.

From the side of non-managerial employees, this was unplanned or uncontrollable as they were takers of the change as given. As employees, they did not influence the choice of leaders, nor did they influence when the change would take place. They had no control when and how it happened. This is a typical top-down change initiative as described by Lewis (2000). As already noted in the literature review, such a change brings out certain reactions from the recipients of the change as they are often not well prepared for it. Problems, such as those witnessed from the ordinary employees of this organization require good management skills.

6.1.6 The implication of the leadership change leading to several other changes

Given that this was a typical organization change described in the literature (Cummings & Worley, 2014; Cameron & Green, 2019), the results of the study suggest following some change management framework to help all the key stakeholders to deal with any

change identified. Employees did not just see only one change taking place but rather the overlapping of several changes (Laster, 2008). The staff members did see a change in the leadership and a concern that their jobs may change; the organization culture may change which might lead to further changes in how they interact and conduct themselves in the organization. Staff members were also concerned about their job profiles and skills and whether these would need to change to align themselves to the new leadership.

The findings gave credence to Laster (2008): often one action of change leads to several other changes. Therefore, the study outcomes support the call for a strong consideration to investigate and explore how the change overlays are interpreted and perceived by key stakeholders such as employees. Whilst the employees as found out in the study were worried about their status in the organisation following the leadership change, the research support the need to fully comprehend them and relate their reactions to the whole change management process. Without a clear comprehension of how the employees reacted to the leadership change, it would be very difficult to fully manage the change. This is fundamental, as argued by Lowendahl and Revange (1998) in developing a wider comprehension of the change, the change procedure and the change atmosphere.

6.1.7 The need to understand leadership change implication on employees

Despite the employees not playing a vital role in the change initiation, the findings clearly show that they have a significant role as key stakeholders in ensuring that the change is successful and does not end up having adverse effects on the organization. The outcome of the study supports the need to make sure the organization with all its key stakeholders comprehends the nature of the change just like what Kuipers et al (2016) argue in their research. Comprehension of the change type and nature would help in ensuring that the change is successful. However, sometimes it is no possible to disclose the full details as to why the changes were made in order to preserve the firm competitive advantage (Barney, 1995).

To effectively manage the impact the leadership change had on non-managerial employees, the results of this study explained why it was important for the organization to have a clear comprehension of what the employees were faced with and what their major worries and fears were. Having a better knowledge of this gave the organization a starting point to resolve some critical issues that the employees had regarding the leadership change. It helped management to fully comprehend the issues and worries that the ordinary employees were expressing regarding the new leadership.

For this study, the outcomes as they have been reported, were important to the organization as they were offered an opportunity to have a full appreciation of the culture that existed in the organization. The organization was transforming from being part of a regional African Group to a London listed group. Hence, a lot came with the leadership change which employees were seemingly worried about. A full comprehension of these issues as highlighted in the findings chapter, helped the organization to deal with the problem at hand and helped everyone to move forward in line with the new organization agenda.

6.2 CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

I conclude, based on the findings of this study and the literature reviewed, that for an organization going through transformation such as a newly acquired one, it is important that the following three critical elements of change process management are upheld all the time:

- I. Plan and prepare all stakeholders for change.
- II. Choose appropriate communication methods with all key stakeholders throughout the change process.
- III. Deploy and maintain deliberate non-managerial employee engagement methods throughout the change transformation process.

As noted from the literature review, there are several change models that the organization can choose to follow when implementing change. These models have been developed over time by different scholars. The organization can choose to follow any of the various change models which they think best addresses the change they are undertaking. The aim is to ensure the change process is properly managed and implemented.

But based on the outcomes from this study these three points represent the main points which I feel given the circumstance that the organization is in (being a newly acquired) would help in ensuring that any change initiation process is successful. The three points directly assist both the organization and the non-managerial employees in focusing on the change. It is important and very critical that the organization follows a change process that would minimize employee resistance and make it easy for them to be prepared and accept the leadership change.

The study findings reviewed that because the organization did not fully follow these three elements as the leadership change was being implemented, the reactions from the staff members especially the non-managerial employees was varied with some expressing deep feelings of anger at the organization.

The organization was clearly going through transformation and change was inevitable. The change of shareholders was the beginning of the transformation. Changing leadership was just another major change. It was likely that a lot more changes would take place. Hence, the organization needed to have in place a good change management process to ensure employees were better prepared for the changes. My suggested three points would help the organization to be ready for subsequent changes.

It must, however, be known that just like any change model that has been developed, applying these three critical change points, which I have suggested would not completely remove employee negativity to change towards the new leaders, but it would help to ensure the reactions do not derail the whole change process.

Human beings though rational do not always react in the same way. One cannot ultimately determine how a human being will behave or react at any one given point. A human being despite being prepared may still behave negatively towards a change. But it is my belief that the suggested points if well implemented would help both the organization and the ordinary employees to be prepared for any change in the organization that would come as the transformation goes on. It will help them comprehend the change and adapt to it in the process in line with the new transformation agenda.

6.2.1 Plan and Prepare Stakeholders for Change

In my proposed change process, the newly acquired organization need to be fully prepared for change. This includes all stakeholders being prepped for possible organizational changes. And this responsibility falls squarely on the leadership. The leadership, as pointed out through the literature review and the outcomes of this study, is the pillar of organization existence. When Leadership is changed, this signals a major shift in the organization being. Staff members or simply organizational employees play a major role as key stakeholders in helping new organization leaders to settle in their roles. The findings of this study show clearly that the reactions of the employees may affect the success of a leadership change in a newly acquired organization. How employees feel the impact of the leadership change and react to it will affect the success of the leadership change. To curb any negatives and allow for a smooth transformation, the change management process needs to be well planned and executed. Appelbaum et al. (2017) observe that when an organization is going through a major change, such as a leadership change, there is a redistribution of resources, which Bernerth et al. (2007) sustain to provide an opportunity to focus on employee fairness perceptions. By deliberately planning for change and prepare all stakeholders for it, as Bernerth et al. (2007) argue, the organisation is given an opportunity to intentionally focus on procedural, distributive, and interactional justice expected through the change process. By expressing their worries, employees clearly showed how frustrated they were with the change. This could

have been avoided had the organization just paid more attention to the change preparation process.

Employees as rational beings are likely to cooperate when they think that there is fairness and justice in the organisation (Greenberg, 1987). A perception that this is not present may lead to them resisting the changes. Therefore, an organization that adopts a deliberate strategy to prepare employees for the change helps them to view the change management process as being fair and just. In the findings of this study, it was clear to see that employees were frustrated by the leadership change. They felt some of form of organizational injustice as the organisation changed leaders without prior warning.

Cobb et al. (1995) highlight that when employees perceive that they are being treated fairly they are likely to develop attitudes and behaviours conducive to successful implementation of change. Georgalis et al.'s (2015) findings state that "employees may be less likely to resist change if they experience high-quality leader-member exchange relationships". The findings of the study show that there was lack of appropriate leader-member exchange in the initial change implementation process of this organisation. By deliberately preparing employees for the change the organisation would be in a better position to help leader-employee relationships which would ultimately help in getting leadership change accepted. The circumstances surrounding this organization called for change preparedness to be taken seriously as the change also involved cultural issues that needed to be well understood and managed (Caldwell, 2003).

Failure to plan and prepare key stakeholders such as employees reinforces cynical attitudes, which further inhibit efforts during change initiatives. This agrees with the findings of this research study, where employees expressed emotional anger at the change. Folger and Skarlicki (1999) make the following suppositions:

- i)-employees resist change because they feel threatened, mainly when they see the change as imposing hardship or loss.

ii)-as the change unfolds, actual results of change on the employees can compare unfavorably with the effects of change described by the manager.

Thus, an implementation plan and a mental model for change are a necessary but not sufficient condition for an effective organizational change. The research findings point to the fact that this organization did not prepare its ordinary staff members for change. Neither was there a well-documented change management plan in place. This was further confirmed by the Human Capital Team who said they were equally caught unaware. The findings of the study support the assessment that the organization did not plan well for the change.

However, I could not conclusively state that the organization leadership did not prepare well. The study did not interview or engage the implementers of the leadership change to getting their side of the story. The focus was on solely on the impact that the leadership change had on the non-managerial employees.

6.2.2 Communicate the Change effectively to all

This study has proven that if a change is implemented without being well planned for and in an open manner, it is not likely to result in an effective outcome on the part of non-managerial employees. The other important aspect in a leadership change implementation process is an effective communication strategy (Stern & Deimler, 2006). Communication must be well planned and executed in the manner that it instils a sense of understanding among employees. There should be no ambiguity about. All employees must understand that the leadership changes are made in order to signal a new agenda for the organization in line with the aspirations of the new shareholders.

From the findings of the study, it appeared employees were not clear as to why the leadership change was made. Their reactions suggested that perhaps the manner in which the leadership changes were communicated to them did not fully explain why the new shareholders had opted to change the leadership. This contributed to the uneasiness and uncertainty amongst them. Based on the study findings, employees would have

preferred a situation where the new shareholders would have made it clear from the beginning that as they have taken over the organization, they would also be making leadership changes as part of the new agenda for the organization. According to ordinary employees, this would have made them prepare themselves for what would be coming.

However, it is very difficult though for the organization to get this right ultimately. What could be the best opportunity for the organization to inform employees may not necessarily be the best time for them. If employees were informed earlier, this perhaps would have triggered other organizational issues and problems which the organization would have had to contend with even before implementing the leadership changes. Despite this, it is still important though to plan and prepare for the communication strategy as it plays a key role in the change management process.

In this study, I found that communication was done through the organization email. This meant everyone in the organization received the news of the leadership changes at the same time. This is very important to ensure that all employees get the news at the same time so that there is no rumour mongering among ordinary staff. This argument conforms to what Carow et al. (2004) found to be key factors relating to an acquisition. Where an acquisition has taken place, employees and all key stakeholders must be communicated to in a manner that is well organized and planned. It must be well detailed as to how information would be disseminated and received among employees. This is because as Appelbaum et al. (2017) noted, when an acquisition takes place, organization transformation follows which then makes ordinary employees very uncomfortable. Once the changes in a transformation begin to take place, there is often stress among staff members as they worry about their future in the new organization.

A good communication strategy would take care of all this and help in ensuring that there are no ambiguities. The organization needs to have in place a frequent communication, debriefing, and counseling strategy. Failure to put this in place would raise issues of trust between the employees and the organization leadership. As Lundqvist (2011) notes in their study, where trust between employees and their managers exists during an

organizational change, the employees are likely to feel welcome to participate in the process and are more likely to accept the changes. There is no better way to build trust than through better communication.

Oreg (2006) in his study points out that employees need to have trust in management. It is argued that supervisors who are able to inspire employees and instil in them a sense of trust appear to be most effective in circumventing resistance to change. Oreg (2006) defines this trust as an atmosphere of trust and the feeling that employees can count on their supervisors to make a wise choice. Therefore, trust is earned when employees are communicated to frequently during the change process.

Schweiger and Denisi (1991) gave credence to the importance of communication as a mitigating measure to resistance to change at the time of acquisition. Based on my study findings, trust was an issue in this organisation. The reactions of the employees suggested the lack of trust. Therefore, when implementing a leadership change in a newly acquired organisation, the change is likely to succeed if employees gain trust. And this trust is achieved through continuous communication to employees through the official organisation communication channels. This is even more important where there is likely to be a culture shift like was these case in the organization under study. The actionable knowledge that I proposed during the study supports this view.

Several studies have reinforced the concept of communication being a key factor in employees' perception and resistance to change. Appelbaum et al. (2017) point out that maintaining a steady and accurate flow of information is important to reducing resistance to the change in an organisation. Employees are likely to adjust to the new organisation dispensation in a newly acquired organisation if they feel that the details of the acquisition and all changes taking place had been communicated clearly to them. This argument supports what Amiot et al. (2012) found out in their study supporting the view that employees are likely to adjust to the new leadership once trust is built. My research findings gave credence to this view and further reinforced the view that in a leadership change, it is quite important that the communication between the organisation and the

employees is viewed as delivering the right message by employees. Employees must feel they are being communicated to in the right manner and that the message is carrying the necessary details. A contrary view may lead to them not being in line with the intentions of the change.

In addition to official company email, the organisation can use town hall meetings like I proposed as part of my action research recommendations to communicate and engage staff at the same time. This would allow staff to have an opportunity to engage and ask questions, hence, lessening doubts about the change being implemented.

Modern scholars still maintain communication as being very important in leadership change implementation. My study has proven that in the absence of a proper communication plan, the entire leadership change process may turn into a fiasco.

The following communication continuum which is based on the research findings and review of literature shows how effective communication influences the key stakeholders such as employees in building commitment towards the leadership change.



The communication plan must therefore always be an integral part of any change plan addressing the questions of how, what, when and why of change from the employee's perspective. The communication plan should be documented and be subjected to periodic reviews so that all aspects of employees' views and perceptions about the leadership change are addressed in the process.

A good communication strategy in a leadership change must have the following factors:

- *Clearly communicating the vision behind the leadership change and doing it early.* This is the most important stage as it involves communicating the vision behind the leadership change and what the organization would achieve at the end. It is

important that the vision is described in a clear simple form and must be able to influence employees

- *Highlighting the benefits and the impacts of the Leadership change.*

An effective communication plan would help in controlling the fears that employees may have due to the leadership change taking place by explaining how the leadership change would affect all employees and why it is being implemented.

- *Ensuring that the Leaders of the Organization actively communicate in the entire process of the leadership change.*

The top leaders (that is the Board, and the Group Executives) of the organization must convey how important the leadership change is and it must reflect their personal and visible commitment towards the entire process of change (Lee & Kamarul, 2011). This would be sending a powerful message to the non-managerial employees about how seriously the organization is committed towards the implementation of the leadership change (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). It would also help minimize the cultural conflict noted in the process.

- *Using various channels or mediums for communicating the message of change.*

Care should be taken in understanding how employees learn about the leadership change from different media of communication. It is important that these are presented to staff at various forums so that they see the new leaders and interact with them from the beginning.

- *Providing opportunities for exchange of Dialogue or Conversation with the new leadership.*

Providing opportunities for discussion and facilitating a two-way communication with the employees would create a sense of belonging and foster a sense of responsibility among the employees. It is important that the communication strategy provides for this so that employees can exchange conversation with the new leadership right at the commencement of the change.

- *Repeating the Messages of the leadership Change Periodically.*

Regular communication of the leadership change message would facilitate a greater understanding of the objective behind the leadership change and there

would be a much greater probability that employees would act in accordance with the requirements of the changing situation and extend their cooperation accordingly.

In any leadership change management program, it is the organizational employees as key stakeholders who are fundamentally being affected by the leadership change. And it is them who need to extend their cooperation and support to make the leadership change effective in the organization. Therefore, without the involvement and motivation of the employees as the key stakeholders, it is improbable to expect success from any leadership change program.

6.2.3 Maintain Employee Engagement

Maintaining the employee engagement is the last point which I recommend should be part of change implementation process in a newly acquired organization. Appelbaum et al. (2017) sustain that successful acquisition outcomes are linked closely to the extent to which management is able to integrate the ordinary employees of the organizations and their cultures, and sensitively address and minimize individuals' concerns.

The problem of concern in my study was that the leadership change created uneasiness among ordinary staff. They were feeling concerned about the transformation especially the leadership change, and as noted in the study by Appelbaum et al. (2017), the employees needed to be helped to feel a sense of belonging to the newly acquired organisation. The abrupt change of leadership ignited a sense of fear and not feeling a sense of belonging to the new organisation. Some of the employees feared the organisation had just changed ownership hence their worry and concerns about the new leadership. It was thus important that the change process should have taken care of this in order to array the fears of employees. For an organisation that was mainly run like a family and the culture based on open-door policy, ordinary employees sharing friendship with the Leadership, having new leaders triggered fear and worry. They did not trust whether this culture would continue. In simple terms the ordinary employees no longer

felt like they belonged to this new organisation. They needed reassurance. And this was the primary task that the organisation needed to embark on.

From the findings, I have thus agreed with the observations made by Rubin et al. (2013) who contend that by maintaining employee engagement this becomes a key element of the success of the change initiative as an engaged employee will provide significantly more effort to complete tasks. I proposed action research activities suggesting to the Human Capital team to engage a counsellor for continuous assistance to employees, helping them with concerns resulting of the leadership change. Results showed that some of the ordinary employees were greatly helped. It was clear that non-managerial employees needed to be engaged on a frequent basis, communicated to frequently about the ongoing in the organisation so that they understand the essence of the leadership changes and hence get to start appreciating the new leadership. This is my key argument in this study, ordinary employees need to be engaged all the time so that they learn and accept the new leadership and begin to appreciate the new organisation having changed shareholders and its leadership. This argument is in line with what other scholars have also found and highlighted to be a key principle in change management process.

There must be deliberate actions from the part of the organization to engage ordinary staff and give them as much information as they need on the change that has taken place. As Rubin et al (2013) clearly elaborate, an engaged employee is likely to cooperate with the new leadership and easily accept it. The leadership change signaled a new culture for the organisation. As the findings showed, employees were worried too about the likely change in culture. Most scholars agree that trust between employees and leaders is one of the key elements to a successful change management process (Hofstede et al., 2010). McKay et al. (2013), showed the sense of belonging to the organization as being a key driver of the ultimate outcome of the acquisition. Therefore, as part of continuous employee engagement, employees need to be engaged often and deliberate programs put in place so that they align with the new culture being implemented by the new leaders (Kaplan & Norton, 2006). Therefore, I conclude that maintaining a clear

engagement with employees as the leadership is changed would make the whole transformation successful and lessen employee concerns.

6.3 CONCLUSION

This research study sought to understand the impact that a leadership change was having on non-managerial employees in a newly acquired organisation. The study was undertaken with ordinary employees as key research participants. It was meant to help the organisation to understand what the employees were feeling about the leadership change, how they were impacted and then to develop strategies to help them deal with change-related concerns. Overall, the research findings gave a perspective of how employees were impacted by the change. This impact ranged from expressing anxiety for the change, fearing for the uncertainties surrounding their jobs and wondering about the future to losing their identity in the social setting of the organisation (Thornton & Byrd, 2013). Employees developed personal feelings about the leadership change and a sense of uncertainty about their positions in the organisation.

Through the action research, I was able to understand the change related concerns that normally arise from employees, which also helped the organisation to have a clear sense of the human factors arising as result of the leadership change. Further, I was able to come up with suggestions and action points aimed at helping the organisation to deal with the change concerns. One of key suggestion is that when effecting a leadership change in a newly acquired organisation, it is important that the change is ***well planned***, and all the key stakeholders are prepared for it. This should avoid employees feeling on the organisation not preparing them well for the upcoming changes and, hence jeopardizing the whole process.

Secondly, the change should also be well ***communicated*** to all the key stakeholders. A well-communicated change is likely to lessen resistance concerns from them and minimise major issues such as stress related to the change.

Thirdly, the organization should endeavour to maintain ***employee engagement*** throughout the change process with ordinary employees. The engagement should include management support throughout the transformation. This measure will help in seeing to it that employee concerns are addressed as they arise and that the whole change is well understood by everyone all the time.

The study outcomes clearly showed that a leadership change in a newly acquired organisation affects ordinary staff members in various ways. However, if the organization invest time to understand and anticipate employees' reactions, is likely to be in a better space to manage the outcomes from the leadership change. The study outcomes confirm findings from other scholars and supports some organization management theories (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

The findings confirm that leadership change in whatever form takes place, is complex. Employees being human beings are rational and sometimes unpredictable. Therefore, for a newly acquired organisation to have a successful leadership change process, the organisation should prepare itself, its employees adequately for the change and adopt change actions that I have suggested in this research study. Change is a continuous process as I observed from the literature review. The organisation should continuously be prepared for it and should engage all the stakeholders appropriately (Tasnim et al., 2014).

Chapter 7 – Reflections Limitations and Future Research

7.0 Reflections

In this section, I present my reflections on this journey as a researcher who conducted an action research project. The study looked at employees' problems associated with a leadership change in an organisation. This journey exposed me to the realities of conducting action research as a scholar practitioner. I was excited that I was putting newly acquired research skills into action. I chose this research problem because, firstly, as a scholar practitioner who had been in top management team for a considerable period, I had found in the past managing organization change quite problematic in most cases (Nadler, 1997). I could not fully understand why, at the time, employees just found it difficult to adapt. Therefore, I knew I would benefit as a scholar practitioner in conducting this research, as the outcome would cement my knowledge about change management process. It would further help me to use knowledge gained from non-managerial employees' experience on leadership change to better manage and implement future change projects.

The key learnings for me from this study was more around how I handled the aspects of being an action researcher and top manager who at the same time was exiting the organization as part of the leadership change. Being a top manager meant I was very much part of the change itself. It sometimes felt awkward for me to ask the non-managerial employees how they felt about the leadership change. It felt like I was asking them to assess me and how they felt about me being changed. This made the study at times feel like too personal. It was like I was assessing myself and seeking to obtain data about how non-managerial employees felt about me being changed and leaving the organization. Even as I gathered data, it was like they were referring to me. This inner conflict was real. I had to learn to manage it and not allow my personal feelings about the research problem influence how I obtained and analysed the data from the non-managerial employees. Whilst it was difficult to remain neutral throughout, the use of the

various qualitative data collection tools helped me to ensure that the data and analysis I made was free from my personal bias and influence.

It was also obvious to see that some of the employees that I informally interviewed also struggled with giving out their feelings about the leadership change to me. They wondered how I would take the feedback from them given that by them expressing their views on the leadership change, they were essentially talking about me. This created awkward moments at times but being a trained action researcher, I quickly explained what I was doing and this then allowed them to be free to express their views. I wonder however if this study was being conducted by someone else not in leadership whether some of the responses that I obtained would still be the same.

I was able to fully appreciate the issues behind leadership change hence making me fully utilize the action research methodology. I am now in a better space to manage leadership change related problems and help the organization to deal with related issues. Through this action research, I have learned what to do as a practitioner, before the change is started, during and after its implementation process. I have learnt how to consider both positive and negative outcomes from a leadership change.

Modern change literature had identified leadership of change as a crucial key factor to any change management process (Kuipers et al., 2016). As Higgs & Rowland (2005) argue, the way the change management process is led will determine the success of the change being implemented.

Organizations are continuously changing in the quest to gain competitive advantage in the market (Barney, 1995; Pfeffer, 1994). As a scholar practitioner this study has given me knowledge that I need to ensure change management is done properly. There are various valuables that one need to be aware of when managing change. As I look back at the study, knowing how employees reacted to the leadership change and what made them be in that position has put me in a better position than before to manage change projects and lead change activities in an organisation. The study has helped me to gain

significant knowledge on change management and I appreciated the role played by all key stakeholders in ensuring the change activity was successful.

I used the qualitative research methods to conduct my study (Bryman, 2008; Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative method helps the researcher to understand the human side of research participants (Delyser et al., 2013) interacting with them. This approach has made me aware about the importance to get unique data from research participants. Making research participants comfortable as you interview them makes the researcher gather information that ordinarily they may not be willing to share as it affects their being as a person (Ezzy, 2002; Maxwell, 2013). I was fortunate that being the top manager in the organisation and having had a wonderful relationship with the majority of the employees, gathering data from them was not very difficult. I only needed to make them comfortable that the information was for my doctoral studies. This made me realize the importance of being a researcher practitioner and making sure that the participants appreciate the reason for engaging them and gathering data. As an action researcher you need to develop special skills to manage people relations as this would come in hand in data collection. You may face challenges if the research participants are not willing to cooperate with you as the researcher.

I noted too the importance of making the research participants appreciate the fact that I was not spying on behalf of management something I think an action researcher will always struggle with. Do the research participants distinguish them from the organization hierarchy? Do they think they are not a spy of the management team? In my case I was able to manage this despite some non-managerial employees initially thinking I could be conniving with the new leadership.

As I undertook the study, I also reflected on whether most of the research participants really understood what the leadership change meant. All of them knew about the change but were they all aware of its implication on them? Lack of fully understanding the change is perhaps what triggered the perceptions mostly negative ones that the ordinary

employees developed. As I reflected on this, I developed keen interest in Change Management as a practitioner. I did understand and appreciate the value of change management as being the process of getting all stakeholders aware of the change and understand the implication on them. This would involve change managers helping everyone to assess what new tasks they will be engaged in and what work will remain the same as a result of the change.

I feel very positive from having undertaken this study: every organization should have *change management* as part of its key organization set up or departments. Given that change is inevitable in every organization, there is need that change management should be a key setup of the organization life as part of the Human Capital Management team or part of the organization Strategy function. This is to ensure that the organization is better equipped. As the change is always taking place in the organization in order to succeed and remain competitive.

The research exposed me to some of the real issues surrounding one being an action researcher. Firstly, I struggled to remain neutral on the research problem. I found myself most of the time trying to influence the research outcome because of being the top manager as well as being one of the managers that was exiting the company. This was a real challenge in data collection and analysis. I felt at times I had my own opinion and perhaps that is what I wanted to see coming out the research participants that I observed, interviewed and focus group discussions. I had to restrain myself from joining discussions and giving my own opinions especially during focus group meetings. I constantly had to fight with myself to remain neutral and allow for the participants feelings to be expressed as they viewed and experienced things. I was helped to remain neutral by constantly reminding myself that I was a doctoral student and therefore need to remain unbiased all the time. This was a real challenge though and I had to fight it constantly within my inner self. I had to ensure that my personal values and beliefs did not influence how I analysed that data coming from the employees.

At the end of it all, I enjoyed the fact that being an action researcher helped me assess my own managerial skills and ability to influence action in a positive way. I was able to stimulate actions although I am only sad that being a top manager who was changed, I was not able to fully monitor and see to the end the success of the proposed action solutions. I would have loved to continue being part of an insider researcher so that I fully participate in implementing and influencing the outcome of some of the proposed actions to manage the impact of the leadership change on non-managerial employees.

7.1 Limitations

This research, as any other research, has its own limitations. Firstly, as an out-going leader of the organization, I could not be trusted freely with all organizational change management plans and documents. This affected my ability to fully understand the state of change preparedness after my departure from the organization. Once I left the organization, I could not have any more unlimited access to the research participants to assess the impact of the proposed action points. This is one of the main limitations of this action research study: to fully assess the effectiveness of my proposed action points. I could not fully observe whether the actions indeed had the desired effect.

Another limitation of this project involves the selection of the research participants. This selection process was also limited to those who were willing to be part of the research participants and opinions of those that refused to answer the questionnaires remain unknown. As to whether their views would influence the findings and conclusion remains unknown. A 100% coverage would be ideal.

Finally, this study was limited to views and opinions obtained from non-managerial employees who have been with the organization for more than two years. To fully appreciate the impact of the leadership change, it would be necessary to get views from all categories of employees and from the other key stakeholders so that the change is understood from other points of views.

7.2 Future Research

The study focused on the impact the leadership change had on non-managerial employees in a newly acquired organization. Whilst I analysed fully the employee perceptions and their reactions, to fully appreciate the impact that the leadership change had on the entire organization, it would be important also to conduct another study focusing on why the new shareholders thought it was wise to change the previous leadership. Such a study would complement the outcomes from this study and deepen the understanding of the advantages of initiating and implementing such a change in the manner done in this organization.

Further, to fully appreciate the feelings coming out of the employees, it would be better to conduct another study of the cultural differences emanating from the leadership change and the impact on the organization. Such a follow up study would help put into perspective the overall impact of the leadership change on the organization further deepening organization change management knowledge (Nadler, 1997). Culture defines an organization. Hence, a study on the impact that cultural difference had on employees as the new leaders took charge would further help practitioners to understand the role that culture plays in change management process (Higgins & McAllaster, 2004).

A further follow up study that would be useful is to focus on is 'how to help key stakeholders in a newly acquired organization adapt to abrupt leadership changes. Such a further study would help cement the knowledge gained from the study and help practitioner researchers to be better managers of change in newly acquired entities.

In today's world, the world is fast being a global village and hence most change activities are similar. Any future research in line with what I have proposed will contribute to change management theories and help practitioners to comprehend change management process and implement it better.

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APPENDIX 1

Research Questions – Formal interviews and Questionnaires

1. How long have you been with the organisation?
2. What has been your initial reaction to the recent changes made to the organisation's leadership?
3. How have you been impacted as an individual? Do you feel worried about the change in the leaders?
4. To what extent were you prepared as an employee for these changes?
5. Do you think the organisation considered the culture in the planning and implementation of these leadership changes?
6. Do you think the organisation's new vision to have new leaders in most of the departments was well articulated disseminated and understood by all employees in your department and branch? Please explain
7. Given the recent changes in shareholding, do you think the timing for changing leaders in the organisation was right? Kindly explain your answer
8. Do you think there should have been a bit more engagement between the leadership and employees before changing the leaders in the various departments?
9. "The leaders are just being imposed on us and we have no choice but to accept and try and work with them". Do you perceive this to be the general mood among employees?
10. "The new leaders have no understanding of how we worked as employees nor do they understand what made us achieve organizational goals". Is this your current feeling? Kindly explain

11. "I am not sure about our values anymore. I feel the new leaders will change everything". Do this preoccupy your mind as you come to work? to what extent has this been troubling you as an employee?
12. what are your views and feelings about your future career in this organization?
13. In your opinion do you think it was necessary for the Human capital department to conduct change sessions before any leadership changes are implemented?
14. Kindly explain what you would have loved to see as an employee before the leadership changes were affected. Be as specific as you can.
15. Kindly suggest anything that you think can assist employees in adapting to the current leadership changes given your current set up in the organisation.