ABSTRACT

Implementing Change in Higher Education: Resolving Change Management Deficiencies
and its Effects on Process and Employee Efficiency

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This Problem of Practice study explored and synthesized the lived experiences of specialized project managers as they grappled with the challenges of aligning technical and people-centric change. For these individuals within a fast-growing organization in a complex and rapidly evolving higher-education marketplace change is mandatory and relentless. With constant change and the resulting challenges, effective project managers must understand organizational change, change theory, and change management to best capitalize on cost avoidance, risk mitigation, employee efficacy, and human capital. Despite the complexity, risks, and potential rewards, these project managers must take action even when not fully prepared.

This qualitative phenomenology study scrutinized the change management process of a higher education project management team. Study and team participants included 25 project managers with varying experience, change management familiarity, and formal project management education. The researcher used multiple data sources, including a review of formal policy documents, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-

structured interviews to better understand the team's collective and individual challenges and current change management process. This study utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics to gain insight into how individuals' each with their own thoughts, working knowledge, and challenges, combined to define their team's identity. Data analysis occurred to identify common themes to understand the project managers' current change management process deficits. As a result of gaining an understanding of the individuals who make up the larger cohesive project management group, the researcher acquired insight and knowledge concerning how improving key areas could make the team more effective and efficient.

The personal and systemic challenges, desired industry disruption, personal and corporate innovations, concerns, and adopted solutions in the fields of project management, business process reengineering, and change management culminated in five key pervasive themes; culture, urgency, safety, openness, and transparency. These themes are all supporting principles for effective teamwork. Members of management were concerned with utilizing these themes to leverage and empower employees by fostering relationships, building skills, and developing leaders in a cohesive, effective, and collaborative team. Individual participant's perspectives regarding these themes were primarily targeted towards fostering friendships, enhancing their personal effectiveness, and awareness of any perceived effect on their social standing.

Implementing Change in Higher Education: Resolving Change Management Deficiencies
and its Effects on Process and Employee Efficiency

by

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of

Doctor of Education

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December 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Not enough good can be said about my best friend and wife, the amazing Dayna. I would never have made it this far in school, life, or all-around happiness if it wasn't for your unrelenting support, love, humor, encouragement, and totally unwarranted optimism on my behalf. Your constant love during the challenges of completing our doctoral degrees simultaneously and life in general has been awe-inspiring. I will spend the rest of my life showing you the respect and honor a gift from heaven deserves. Our degrees may be completed, but our path is just beginning. I love life with you. I love you, Dr. Dayna! We did it, my love!

Next, I have to thank and apologize to my awesome kids, Lauren, Drake, Zach, and my lovable stepson Nolan. We have been through so much these last few years, and I am proud of how we've stuck together. Each of you has been beyond patient during these previous years. There were far too many nights where I was fixated on my laptop, busily working on this paper and doctoral degree when I should've been entertaining (annoying) you with my endless supply of top-shelf dad jokes. …come to think of it; maybe you are glad I was distracted all this time? Well, get ready to be annoyed and/or laugh now that I am finished! I am so very proud of each of you. I love you in a way that you will not fully understand until you have kids of your own. (Which had better not be for a very long time.)

I have to publicly recognize my amazing mom, Julie, and my step-dad, Steve. I love you guys; thank you for believing in me. Thank you for taking care of all of us. Even

though he is no longer with us, I want to show respect and love to my dad, Bert. I am sure he is watching from heaven, embracing my adorable grandparents, and shouting at my little brother, Benjamin, to hold the flashlight right. My dad was the single hardest worker that I have ever met. Day-in and day-out, no one worked harder than my dad. If it wasn't for the work ethic my dad instilled in me (not by my choice, mind you), I never would have made it through this gauntlet of a degree. My mom and dad's unwavering loving and patient encouragement to persistently work hard, take on difficult challenges without fear and go as far as possible in whatever direction I chose laid the foundation for my every accomplishment, this research paper and degree especially.

Also, here is to my two sisters, Alison and Madison, that won't read this but would be upset that I left them out regardless.

I have to publicly thank and acknowledge my exceptional and ever-patient advisor, Dr. Sandi Cooper. I cannot sing the praises of Dr. C loudly enough. I am beyond grateful you drew the short straw and got stuck with me on this journey of countless baby-steps, my self-induced traumas, tears, and inappropriate jokes (you're welcome classmates). I would not have made it without you, Dr. Cooper. I hope you find some solace in no longer having to slap your forehead and roll your eyes quite as often. In time, your persistent forehead bruises may fade, but my grateful adoration for your persistent guidance will not! Thank you!

And finally, to every bored kid in the back of the classroom, like I was, fighting to pay attention and stay awake. Keep your head up (dad joke). Even though it feels like it, school won't last forever. Between us, far too much has been written about great men and

not enough about misfits like us, and we need to fix that. You are not alone. There are

more of us than you think. Find your passion, press on, and make your mark.

DEDICATION

To the person or persons that invented the concept of "passive voice," may karma take mercy upon them because, given the opportunity, I will not.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Problem of Practice

*Introduction*

Twenty-five people sit in a somber room. The weight of the meeting's topic affects each of them differently. In this higher education organization, unexpected executive-led meetings scheduled for late Friday afternoons are never a cause for excitement. None of the project managers appear to feel optimistic. Back in their cubicles on the third floor, they experience the weight of the incoming message. Just like their physical spaces at the corporate headquarters, they are in this together. At the same time, they are separate and alone. Nervousness is typical of these types of meetings, but this one generates more than normal levels of unease. The seminar, entitled "FY20 Organizational Plan: Join us for a discussion of our organizational structure—past, present, and future!" is a feeble attempt to put a positive spin on the unknown changes they would ultimately implement. These project managers carry the weight of imposing change.

Project management, as a practice, has evolved to incorporate more interpersonal strategies. Until recently, project management roles were largely task-oriented and objective-focused. Specifically, it has become increasingly common for project managers to act as agents of change. As agents of change, project managers lead change efforts even when unsure of what changes are coming. Implementing change can be stressful, and individuals process and manage change in different ways. University leaders must understand how and why project managers act as the primary agents of change within

their departments and how these project managers' interpersonal qualities affect how they serve in this role. This understanding is necessary for leaders to make the change management process efficient and effective and ensure the results stick. Leveraging unique project manager skills and talents not only makes change more palatable but makes it more permanent. Project managers' roles are gaining importance in this environment because of their growing influence, impact, and prevalence. Even though leaders recognize that implementing change is constant and crucial, "little is known about the specific challenges front-line managers face in this role" (Rønningstad, 2018, p.1). As education leaders continue to grapple with meeting the changing needs of the 21st-century learner, they need to understand how the members of the Project Management Office feel as they are implementing change with and without a change management system and what project managers and organizations can do to improve this process. By gaining insight into their project managers' perspectives, leaders can better enable employees to introduce change successfully.

This study drew parallels between the project managers' challenges at one online university and the current high-stakes competitive climate within the broader higher-education marketplace. The study paid attention to the project manager's role, acting as an active, crucial, and frequently underutilized agent of change in this ongoing industry-wide evolution. The lived experiences of those dealing with universal challenges associated with this 21st-century learner revolution provided the data for this study. The disruptive climate brought about by increased nationwide competition for students has emphasized and has relevance to these ongoing challenges. While this study focuses on one online university, relevant findings benefit educational leaders seeking to disrupt

their old way of doing business and move to a more modern self-serviced online pedagogical approach and methodology.

*Statement of the Problem*

Like many rapidly growing organizations, this United States intermountain headquartered non-traditional Competency-Based University (CBU) has experienced a start-up period of rapid growth. During that time, CBU's senior leaders' primary focus was twofold: to provide and expand quality services and technologies as quickly as possible to meet the growing number of students and to rapidly evolve to meet the needs and expectations of new students. This twofold approach resulted in sustained years of excellent products, growth, and success. Moreover, CBU's sustained growth proved that the leadership and the focus were exemplary for that period.

This growth period came with multiple challenges: an increasingly larger workforce, growing silos of operations, uncoordinated communications, and disjointed efforts, among others. In response to this multitude of challenges, university leaders continually deployed various changes across the organization. The pervasive changes provided an ideal environment for ambiguity, confusion, and frustration to flourish. In addition, the evolution of the emerging online education industry has required redefining and creating new roles in the production of cutting-edge scholastic content. With the implementation of the new instructional design process, the Project Management Office (PMO), with its approximately 25 specialized project managers, has continually served as a resource for many entities on campus struggling to define a successful path forward.

Challenges like ambiguity, confusion, and frustration are not unique to CBU. However, these commonplace struggles are increasing in frequency and have broad

implications across all of higher education. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) discuss the in-progress digital revolution in higher education, drawing parallels that give credence to the challenges faced at CBU. Hiltz and Turoff's study examined the evolution of education and its shifting role in society. These researchers predicted that "50 years from the time of their writing … this period of time will be seen as revolutionary" (p. 60). Thus, higher education's very nature is in an exciting period of growth, forcing university leaders to address large-scale sweeping change at the institutional level.

Higher education's past could be called objectivist, reliant upon a face-to-face teacher-centric pedagogy. Higher education was only available through local and regional universities, with a few institutions relishing in their nationwide prominence. These institutions required students to habitually frequent their campuses to take advantage of what the university had to offer. That old-fashioned approach has been slowly transitioning to a 21$^{st}$-century self-service methodology. The advent of technologies aimed at expanding access beyond the printed materials, recorded lectures, and physical mail of yesteryears' original forms of distance learning and correspondence courses to a web-based, real-time collaborative learning environment culminating in what has become known as online education. The proliferation of the online educational environment originally served as a substitute for older distance learning forums. Today, online education frequently serves to supplement or even replace the traditional face-to-face classroom experience. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) explain that "online learning is the latest in a long list of social technologies that have been introduced to improve distance learning by adding various augmentations, substitutions, or blending of new pedagogical approaches and technologies" (p. 59). The growing acceptance of online education as an

equitable substitute for a traditional classroom has changed what consumers consider when contemplating what constitutes a typical college course.

Even when not wholly replacing older in-person methodologies, educators have been seeking ways to capitalize on the best of both worlds. This evolution has resulted in hybrid courses becoming more prevalent in the classroom. According to Hiltz and Turoff (2005), courses "with online learning technologies and methodologies are generally rated by students as significant improvements over older traditional face-to-face classes" (p. 60). Students want this delivery system. As a result of student preferences, the phenomenon of hybrid or blended courses where educators use asynchronous methods to provide students with technology-based delivery of traditional materials has become increasingly common.

The emergence of new technologies can be incredibly disruptive in areas where a university has heavily invested in the "old" way of doing business. Even where online education options have not outright replaced the physical classroom, online options' advent and prevalence have still been disruptive to the old way of doing business. In response to this disruption, institutions have had a requisite significant investment placed upon them. Hiltz and Turoff (2005) state,

> The term disruptive does not represent any new process but merely a negative characterization of technological progress and change, in making way for the new. Those who have invested heavily in the "old" technology may be damaged or destroyed if they do not adapt. (p. 60)

This technological disruption has continued to decentralize the old higher education power systems piecemeal. As hybrid and online courses continue to gain popularity amongst students, "geographic monopolies and barriers that have sustained thousands of different colleges and universities in the U.S. and around the world will weaken" (Hiltz &

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Turoff, 2005, p. 62). The increasing incorporation of various technology forms removes geographical barriers and accelerates competition for students and resources. This increased competition has added an incentive to jettison older, less-effective methodologies.

The persistent proliferation of new online universities and colleges will hasten the relentless push to diversify products and drive competition to recruit qualified students. The diverse goals of various institutions will further advance technology and provide individualized choices for students. Social and regulatory factors will continue to influence the pace of changes for all higher education institutions. The results of this widespread churn will continue to reshape the educational landscape for the foreseeable future. Many universities will find success with this transition but not all will.

College Tuition Compare (n.d.) noted that CBU is 100% online and has benefited from this transition more than any other college, as it is the nation's largest online higher education provider. Formed only about 20 years ago, CBU, never having had a physical campus, as of 2018 boasted more than 121,000 active students and a sustained 20% annual growth (CBU Annual Report, 2018). In that same period, three other universities have similar large enrolments: Liberty University (110,000 active students), Southern New Hampshire University (104,000 enrolled students), and the University of Phoenix (103,000 total students enrolled). None of these are traditional brick-and-mortar universities reliant upon people coming to a physical campus. Nevertheless, they add more students per month than the total enrollments of many respected and well-established universities.

The focus of these large online-only institutions is different from that of traditional brick-and-mortar schools, and that emphasis is proving successful and disruptive. A few of those differences are how professors communicate and work with students, student schedule flexibility, and the heavy reliance upon their self-discipline and time management skills, among other delineations. Speaking of this ongoing evolution in higher education, Hiltz and Turoff (2005) paraphrased Charles Darwin's 1859 masterpiece, *Origin of Species*, borrowing on similar themes. They stated, "It's not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change" (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005, p. 64). Contemporary living higher education entities could have the same line of thinking applied to them. Of course, not every university has or will survive this already-in-progress transition, but the most adaptable higher education institutions will thrive, creating new and better options for the higher education student consumer.

For long-standing higher education institutions to make this transition and thrive, they need to embrace change. The survival of universities warrants a mandatory minimum level of evolutionary adaptation to remain competitive in the marketplace. Higher education organizations need to better understand project managers' role as agents of change because of the growing importance, impact, and prevalence of higher education change. No university is immune to the changing demands and expectations of potential students.

Change in this environment is a continuous process, and appropriate regulation allows an organization to modify any part of its structure to cope more effectively in an ever-changing competitive climate (Rønningstad, 2018). For project managers overseeing

change, the challenges and demands are non-stop. Implementing change presents a need for a change management system to help manage challenges and requirements. Change management includes activities "designed to provide support, acceptance, and approval for the necessary and agreed changes" (Besliu, 2018, p. 3). Change managers do not just worry about getting things done; they also have to be concerned with how change happens and what people think about the transition before, during, and after the change. Change managers frequently have to maintain working relationships after implementing change and keep people receptive to the changes that will inevitably occur in the future. Maintaining a positive working environment increases the likelihood that the change will stick. For project managers, "the goal is to control change while maintaining the integrity and quality of services in the production environment" (Weiner, 2009, p. 2). Since it is not possible to bulldoze a change into existence, project managers must learn how to decrease the resistance to change and manage change implementation.

*Purpose of the Study*

This study explored how project managers inspired and implemented change in higher education while they focused on implementing a change management system in a massive online university. The research examined the individuals' viewpoints involved to ensure a complete understanding of current, pending, and possible forms of change management resistance and the challenges that the project managers have encountered as they worked to accomplish their objectives. The researcher explored the current program and course development process to understand their formal corporate processes. This foundational knowledge enabled the researcher to comprehend and document the experiences of those tasked with implementing organizational, strategy, policy, and

procedural changes. The researcher also sought to understand and utilize the reported sources and factors of resistance to this organizational change to inform future steps in this university's continued evolution.

This phenomenological case study design focused on the shared and lived experiences of project managers as change agents. The study participants were project managers from a singular department of a non-traditional competency-based online university, CBU. As a whole, the university has a 20% sustained annual growth (CBU Annual Report, 2018). This institutional growth rate within this rapidly expanding market makes CBU an ideal research site for studying change, the personal impacts of implementing a change management system, and change resistance.

This study investigated the following primary research question: Within a non-traditional university, what are project managers' experiences responding to required organizational change? To assist with this, the researcher explored the following secondary questions: What identifiable lessons can help project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders? Are there commonalities within the types of resistance project managers encounter, and how do project managers adjust their approach based on those types of resistance?

*Theoretical Framework*

This study utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics that contributed directly to the success surrounding the realization of pending transformations. The researcher acquired a foundational understanding of how individuals with different lived experiences and viewpoints, thinking and acting differently, come together on a larger scale to form the department's identity. Maarit Arvaja (2011) showed that "prior work

and discipline-related knowledge and experiences provided people with resources for understanding … texts by applying, conceptualizing, or critically evaluating" as they have new opportunities and challenges presented to them (p. 85). The knowledge that individuals bring to their workplace, along with the knowledge provided by various leaders within their teams, all provide opportunity to gain understanding but do not guarantee that the employee can use it to their advantage. These lessons learned and lived experiences culminate in a construct of departmental knowledge, culture, and capability. Through understanding the lessons learned, by uncovering action-oriented objectives, and utilizing collective philosophical hermeneutics, this study "shed light on current abstraction and determine[d] possible future change management action sequences regarding how to better anticipate and address the needs of stakeholders" to increase organizational change readiness (Batatas, 2014, p. 126). By understanding individual team member's capabilities and challenges, teams can strengthen the group's capacity to meet future challenging changes. Through the strengthening of each unique team member, the team as a whole will find itself better positioned to find future success, bolster the team's perception among their peers, and positively alters the team's perception of themselves as individuals and as a group.

The researcher targeted this Problem of Practice to better understand the project management team culture within the Program Development Department at CBU as they struggled to implement change. This study documented the department's culture by examining individual contributors' views, including how they perceived their surrounding environment and how that interpretation plays out in their everyday lives. The researcher examined personal and shared experiences as resources for uncovering a

rich source of data and the collective experience of the project managers. As more knowledge unfolded at the individual level, the researcher gained further understanding of how stakeholders understand and interpret changes based on what they already knew and believed. As a result of understanding the individuals who make up the larger cohesive group, the researcher gained insight and knowledge concerning how improving communication can make the team more effective and efficient.

*Research Design*

This study utilized a phenomenological case study design to explore how a team of project managers, as agents of change, inspired and implemented change in a higher education institution. This research explored the project management experience through the lens of collective philosophical hermeneutics. The researcher gained insight into how project managers experience change and implement a change management system in a massive online university.

In this phenomenological case study, the participants were project managers who participated in developing courses and programs in the Project Management Office at an online university. The researcher completed the collection of three sources of data: policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews following a set schedule (see Appendix B). Based upon the information collected from the questions contained within the questionnaires (see Appendix D), the researcher utilized stratified purposeful sampling to identify the most helpful and knowledgeable individuals for continued study participation. Next, the researcher conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews with those individuals. The interviews consisted of planned probing questions (see Appendix E) with participants regarding their parts in change management, their accounts of things

done well, and a review of their encountered challenges. The researcher conducted interviews designed to provide opportunities for individual participants to express their thoughts and concerns. Interviews were one-on-one and hosted online as dictated by participant availability. The researcher chose this format to "elicit the informant's stories of practice and allow for the researcher's contextual observations" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 363). These policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews serve as the foundation for the shared knowledge underpinning the study. The researcher coded and performed a thematic analysis on the policy documents, questionnaires, and interview transcriptions, and then wrote a descriptive paragraph that provided the overall shared experience of the project managers as they serve as agents of change.

*Definition of Key Terms*

*ADKAR:* The Prosci ADKAR® Model is a widely used goal-oriented change management model that enables organizational change through empowering individuals. Created by Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt, ADKAR is an acronym that represents the five tangible and concrete outcomes that lead to lasting change: *awareness*, *desire*, *knowledge*, *ability*, and *reinforcement* (Prosci, n.d.).

*CBU:* Competency-Based University's (CBU) is an online only, non-profit university known for its competency-based education model. Serving mostly adult learners, CBU is "focused on breaking down financial, distance, learning, and all other barriers to ensure" access to high-quality, affordable, and industry-relevant bachelor's and master's degree programs. (CBU, 2021, para. 2).

*Change Management:* "Change management is the discipline that guides how we

    prepare, equip and support individuals to successfully adopt change in order to drive

    organizational success and outcomes" (Nexum, 2021, para. 1).

*Development Process:* "System of defined steps and tasks such as strategy, organization,

    concept generation, marketing plan creation, evaluation, and commercialization of a

    new product. It is a cycle through which a firm routinely converts ideas into viable

    goods or services" (Development Process, n.d., para. 1).

*Planning:* "Promotes problem definition and solution. The delineation of objectives and

    the subsequent breakdown into goals and objectives help to identify problems and aid

    in the formulation and analysis of alternate strategies to meet objectives" (Martin &

    Miller, 1982, p. 33).

*PMO:* The Project Management Office (PMO) is "a management structure that

    standardizes the project-related governance processes and facilitates the sharing of

    resources, methodologies, tools, and techniques" (PMI, 2013, p. 10).

*PMP*: "The Project Management Professional (PMP)® is the world's leading project

    management certification. Now including predictive, agile and hybrid approaches, the

    PMP® proves project leadership experience and expertise in any way of working. It

    supercharges careers for project leaders across industries and helps organizations find

    the people they need to work smarter and perform better" (PMI, n.d., para. 1).

*Program Development Department*: The department at CBU is charged with designing

    and creating the products offered by the university to its students and customers.

*Ten-Phase Process:* Within CBU's Program development Department, the Ten-Phase

    process is the newly created new product development process designed and

implemented by this study's author. The Ten-Phase process covers aspects of product portfolio management and new product creation. The phases include; 1) Program Portfolio Management, 2) Academic Project Intake, Prioritization, and Management 3) Skills Map Review, 4) Design Products, 5) Platform and Learning Resource Recommendations, 6) Create Charter and Roadmap, 7) Develop Products, 8) Test and Publish Products, 9) Preparation and Product Launch, 10) Data-Driven Performance Improvement.

*Conclusion*

CBU's principal mission is to improve quality and expand access to post-secondary education opportunities. To fulfill their ambitious aim to affect change in the higher education space, CBU must continue to evolve. The people in charge of change management are not seeking to turn the university upside down but rather make incremental changes directed by senior leaders. Change management is seldom easy in any industry. In higher education, where multiple internal and external stakeholders have varying degrees of power and influence, the task becomes far more complex. Those areas of resistance are a source of why higher education has traditionally favored a slow evolutionary rate of change rather than a series of rapid innovations.

The following chapter reviews current relevant research on project managers and change management. The material covered provides background information for examining project managers' individual and shared experiences as they facilitate change within their fast-growing, changing organizations. To understand these project managers, one must first have a general knowledge of the current evolving higher-educational environment, the students that make up the customer base, and implications for change

and project management in this context. The subsequent review of this research supports

the reasoning and need for this phenomenological study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

*Introduction*

As higher education institutions evolve and expand, current and potential student's shifting preferences have resulted in an ongoing need for high-level organizational changes. Senior executives make decisions in response to different variables, including institutional growth, shifts in regulation, a continually changing marketplace, evolving student demands, and internal shifts in focus, strategy, and policy. Project managers have found themselves left to plan and mitigate desired executive implementations. Project Managers frequently find unplanned multiple mandate changes and stakeholder demands challenging or even detrimental to their efforts. These negatively impactful modifications arise for a variety of reasons. With constant change and the resulting challenges, effective project managers must understand organizational change, change theory, and change management.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on organizational change, change theory, and change management in four ways. First, this chapter provides a general understanding of the unique, evolving environment of online higher education. The researcher provides specific information on the non-traditional student. Second, the researcher examines project management's current practice in the higher education environment in this study. Third, the researcher reviews change management in context, including a literature overview of organizational change, change management within higher education, and relevant commonplace change management models. Fourth, in

conclusion of this chapter, the literature review provides the implications of intertwining project management and change management in higher education.

*The Unique Environment of Online Higher Education*

Many colleges and universities have embraced online education. In doing so, these institutions have created unique learning environments that provide educational opportunities for a broader range of students in multiple ways. Some ways in which online education is appealing, as compared to traditional higher education options, are that online alternatives are frequently less expensive, commonly require a smaller time commitment, and typically are more flexible in schedule accessibility (Hanney & Newvine, 2006). While online higher education colleges and universities work to provide an analogous educational product comparable to traditional educational institutions, it is essential to understand the inherent differences.

The following section argues that there are foundational differences between online higher education and other higher education and business forms in general. While the differences between these organizations are broad and varied, three areas briefly illustrate the fundamental differences that make this environment unique. While this section does not provide a lengthy and comprehensive list of dissimilarities, it does explain three relevant topics related to this argument, including the characteristics and impact of non-traditional students, the development and implementation of courses, and the fast-paced evolution of online education.

*Non-traditional Students*

Non-traditional students comprise the majority of the student population in online higher education institutions. Originally, non-traditional students were "...defined as

persons over age 25" (Whisnant, Sullivan, & Slayton, 1992, p. 7). However, with the introduction of more distance learning opportunities, the classification of a non-traditional student evolved. Charp (2000) expanded non-traditional learners to include students "who do not have access to programs, employees who work during scheduled class hours, homebound individuals, self-motivated individuals who want to take courses for self-knowledge or advancement or those who are unable or unwilling to attend class" (p. 10). Crosling, Thomas, and Heagney (2009) defined non-traditional students as students from low-income or economic groups, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, students of mature age, and students from minority groups. Non-traditional students may also be commuters and live off-campus, study from a distance, be part-time students, and have families and careers (Crosling et al., 2009). Since these students do not reside on campus and are possibly not close to the campus, they often do not become involved in everyday campus life. More often than not, these students do not engage in extracurricular activities, attend sporting events, or socialize with their peers outside of class (Crosling et al., 2009). Overall, non-traditional students are underrepresented in traditional higher education colleges and universities (Crosling et al., 2009). Since non-traditional students are underrepresented in traditional higher education, institutions are still learning the impact these students have on their institution.

The influx of non-traditional students has benefited and challenged the rapidly growing online higher education industry. This growing customer profile has motivated senior university leaders to comprehensively understand how this student population's needs impact their higher education institutions. There are many ways non-traditional students influence colleges and universities. Research has shown that non-traditional

students frequently need more support than traditional students. Renee Smit (2012) explains that these students are often "lacking the academic, cultural, and moral resources necessary to succeed in what is presumed to be a fair and open society" (p. 369). Smit (2012) elaborates that these students fail because of internal or external deficits they may have, including cognitive ability, motivation, and family support. The potential deficiencies of non-traditional students are of the utmost importance to the universities and colleges they attend, especially if these institutions aim to keep low attrition rates and better serve their student populations.

There are several advantages and disadvantages to the influx of non-traditional students. The first advantage is the influx itself. The National Center for Education (NCES), as cited in Chen (2013), report data that indicates that "from 2000 to 2009, the percentage of enrolled students under the age of 25 increased by 27% while the percentage of enrolled students aged 25 and over increased by 43% during the same time period" (p. 406). Noted in this projection report is that "there will be a 9% rise for students under the age of 25 compared to a 23% rise for students aged 25 and over" (Chen, 2013, p. 406). Both the rapid growth and the projection of rapid growth demonstrate that this population is increasing. The growth contributes to higher education institutions' financial gain, specifically those offering online courses and degrees. Another advantage of having non-traditional students is how these students add to the diversity of the student population. Non-traditional students expand diversity in many ways. In addition to age diversity, non-traditional students offer socioeconomic and geographic diversity. Many higher education institutions have continued to look to increase diversity in both faculty and student population. This diversity is widely viewed

by many as beneficial to the learning environment. Incorporating non-traditional students within higher education positively impacts institutions by encouraging new perspectives, sharing life experiences, and awareness of various ways of thinking. In an interview with Laura Knefelkamp, Donnely-Smith (2011) explains that non-traditional learners "bring a rich array of life learning and life experiences to the classroom" (p. 8). These life experiences add to class discussions and connections to learning. While higher education organizations benefit from non-traditional learners, these learners also can negatively impact these institutions.

University leaders have long held concerns regarding the scholastic success of non-traditional students. The academic preparedness of non-traditional students is frequently an area of heightened apprehension compared to their traditional peers. Kazis (2007) explains that many non-traditional students have "...weak academic preparation" (p. 15). The lack of developed essential academic skills can be a disadvantage for these students. The challenges frequently go beyond the basic classroom knowledge. Stress management and the ability to play to one's strengths and compensate for known inadequacies are also limiting factors. Since non-traditional students are often balancing many responsibilities, "these multiple roles present challenges in students' allocation of time for both academic study and participation in campus-based organizations and activities" (Ross-Gordon, 2011, p. 26). Time management can often be a challenge for non-traditional students. Challenges like academic weakness and time management issues create problems for online higher education institutions. The colleges and universities that primarily serve these non-traditional students are aware adult learners "... have much lower persistence and completion rates than more traditional and younger students"

(Kazis, 2007, p. 15). Lower course completion rates create higher attrition rates. Kearney, Stanley, and Blackberry (2018) explain that "an institution's failure to retain students has personal and financial implications for the students themselves, in addition to reputational and financial consequences for the university" (p. 14). Non-traditional students and underprepared students have lower rates of retention than traditional students (Barbatis, 2010). With retention being a concern, colleges and universities must work to understand this student population better. One specific way to do this is by developing and offering courses specifically with non-traditional students in mind.

*Development and Implementation of Courses*

Online course development occurs differently than the development of courses taught within a traditional classroom. Developing courses and instruction for non-traditional students presents unique challenges and opportunities. There can be disadvantages to online learning. Online courses can decrease the number of interactions students have with their peers. This lack of interaction can reduce engagement and eliminate peer relationships. That lack of cooperation can reduce course satisfaction and effectiveness, negatively impacting the student experience. Students who are not engaged might be more likely to drop out of the course; therefore, "understanding the learning needs of students aged 25 and over is imperative," and proper development and implementation of online courses are essential (Chen, 2015, p. 406).

In consideration of the social and cultural model undergirding online education, instructional designers of online courses would be wise to reference the work of John Dewey. Donnelly-Smith (2011) reminds course designers that "one of the great notions of John Dewey is that learning is meaningful to the degree that we can connect it to the

concrete experiences of our student's lives" (p. 8). This connection that Dewey mentions is also beneficial for online classes. Social constructivism is a framework that allows educators to use student experiences to build relationships. Duelen (2013) defines social constructivism as "...both a social and cultural model of learning (p. 91). Non-traditional students benefit from becoming "co-learners" with their peers and instructors. Wilson and Stacey (2004) explain that "... effective social constructivist learning ... requires an interactive online discussion" (p. 33). This social and cultural model allows non-traditional students to interact with their peers and draw from their different backgrounds through online discussion. In addition, non-traditional learners benefit from teaching that will enable them to assess who they are and connect new material to their past experiences by drawing from their life lessons' rich archives. This social and cultural model and type of classroom design allow non-traditional students to interact with their peers and draw from their different backgrounds.

Teaching in an online setting requires different skills than those needed to teach in a traditional classroom. Instructor training must address the requirements of conventional in-classroom and online delivery methods. Higher education's evolution has motivated university leaders to increase the speed of "the conversion or development of on-ground course material to an online format, and the unique needs of the non-traditional learning" (Gibbons & Wentworth, 2001, p. 34). The instructors' ability to succeed in this new and growing teaching format is increasingly paramount to effective instruction.

*Project Management in Context*

Project management is the technical side of change. Project management creates and implements a detailed plan in its purest form, allowing stakeholders to turn an idea

into a reality. Plainly speaking, project management is a temporary process that has a defined beginning and end, and therefore a defined scope and resources assigned to it. A project contains tasks typically segmented into the following five phases: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Project management is a career path with its own set of challenges and opportunities. A successful project manager's ability to utilize project management skills is frequently considered more of an art form than a prescriptive science. Because of the need for hands-on experience, technical proficiency, industry, and corporate-specific knowledge, project managers frequently find themselves lacking the support and resources needed to ensure project success. "Not enough time or money is often spent by management on implementing formal [project management] structures in organizations. As a result, projects often fail and lack direction" (Austin, Browne, Haas, Kenyatta, & Zulueta, 2013, p. 75). This section will examine the use of project management in higher education and the project manager's role as an agent of change.

*Project Management in Higher Education*

  Historically, project management has not been central to the higher education environment. Austin et al. (2013) inform that "formal project management concepts are more prevalent in well-established industries such as construction and healthcare but seem to be lacking in higher education" (p. 75). The lack of project management in higher education institutions is partly because evolution within colleges and universities has been largely static for many years. Throughout the past few decades, higher education has begun to seek out ways to become more dynamic. Historically the competition amongst higher education institutions has primarily been based on "...

offering essentially the same products to national and international markets, externally, and by controlling costs, internally" (Gibbons, 2005, p. 8). Davies, Hides, and Casey (2001) report that "the percentage of students entering higher education establishments has risen 25% for the period 1994–2000, i.e., there has been a move towards a `mass' market for taught programmes" (p. 1025). As higher education institutions began to offer varied online educational options and experience the population growth associated with these options, there has been a shift to change how these institutions operate. Gibbons (2005) explains, "... if universities are to prosper, they have little choice but to engage with others in developing and introducing new modes and models of teaching and research" (p. 1). These dynamic changes have led to more and more universities embracing project management techniques and offices. Many universities have to decide if they "...have the courage of their convictions and intend to move beyond discovery-based to innovation-based collaborations and actually implement change…" (Gibbons, 2005, p. 10). With the rapid growth and changes that online higher education institutions face, there is a growing need for effective project management.

In 2009, David Bryde and Diana Leighton completed a benchmarking case study to assess project management's current use in higher education. This research study surveyed 110 employees involved in higher education projects to understand the competence with which these universities manage projects. Bryde and Leighton (2009) found that even though it is apparent that colleges and universities are completing projects, they are not employing project management techniques or project management offices. The researchers did contemplate that the universities that are employing "...business management techniques…" may be "...using project management more

extensively" (p. 706). Eve (2007) explains that project management is essential, and higher education institutions can "improve their efficiency and competitiveness" (p. 85). Another important finding from this benchmark study is that a general lack of senior management enthusiasm and understanding of project management may be a root cause of why project management has not been widely supported and effectively implemented in many colleges and universities (Bryde & Leighton, 2009). The individuals and offices who manage projects in higher education institutions must implement proper project management techniques to realize the potential benefits. Often, the individuals charged with being agents of change are both project managers and senior-level management.

*Project Managers: Agents of Change*

Successful change efforts require influential leaders. When organizations need to change quickly and effectively, selecting the right person to lead the change is essential. Project managers frequently act as change agents because they are commonly spearheading the effort that implements the change. In general, "project managers know how to manage and control change" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 111). Typically, project managers plan, organize and staff, direct and lead, control, and report (Eve, 2007). While managing change is challenging on its own, it is far more complicated in practice. Project managers often must take senior executives' vision and decide if the difference that the management team wants to see is even attainable (Kerzner, 2014). These leaders must know how to develop plans that are "based upon complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and volatile knowledge" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 116). As leaders, project managers must "...successfully manage the dysfunctional separation between planning and execution" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 111). Due to the complexity of the position, organizations must choose

project managers skilled in dealing with the job's challenges, including working with senior management and other executives.

The work project managers do to instill change in an organization is essential and best achieved with higher-level management support. Senior executives should ensure that project managers influence business decisions similarly to how they are part of project management decisions (Kerzner, 2014). Top executives must learn to work directly with their project managers. Organizations must realize that "project management [requires] upper-level managers to relinquish some of their authority through delegation to middle managers" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 6). Senior management professionals should "clearly define the empowerment of the project manager with regard to responsibilities and decision-making authority" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 114). In addition to Senior management supporting the project managers, the project managers must know their place in the organization. The organization must insist that "project managers must understand that managing these projects requires consequential decisions that must involve the managers who have ultimate control of the resources for executing these decisions" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 116). Overall, upper-level management needs to understand how best to work with their project managers (Kerzner, 2014). Since project managers typically feel the nuances associated with change implementation more than senior management, a strong working relationship is essential. When adequately supported, project managers can help move organizations effectively toward desired goals.

The leaders who achieve the best results do more than organize people and projects. These leaders align people to a common cause. Since any employee who affects the successful implementation of a vision is relevant, aligning individuals to a unifying

purpose is essential to developing a more effective organization. In a 2008 study, Furst and Cable stated that "employee resistance reflects both the type of influence a manager uses and the strength of leader-member exchange" (p. 453). To decrease resistance, the project manager likely benefits from shifting his or her strategy. Ideally, the project manager can influence management from being "focused heavily on situational leadership oriented towards the project team…" to leadership that impacts "...organizational change across the entire company" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 116). These leaders have to be able to think flexibly and frequently adjust because as a "...a manager of organizational change…," project managers "...have to build prepared minds on a large scale.... to get people across the entire organization to agree on a common sense of purpose" (Kerzner, 2014, p. 116). The managing and leading of change directly benefit from having project managers act as empowered agents of change in organizations.

*Change Management in Context*

As previously mentioned, project managers frequently find themselves acting as an agent of change within their organizations. Expectations have changed, resulting in an understanding that it is no longer enough for project managers to just be well-versed in the technical aspects of project management. Project managers must also be knowledgeable about meeting stakeholders' social requirements through change management and its practices. This section provides an explanation of organizational change, including the implications of change readiness and resistance. Additionally, the section highlights the basic tenets of change management and examines the current use of change management in higher education.

*Organizational Change*

Organizations are not static. In fact, "organizations are continually changing, routinely, and responsively, but change within them cannot ordinarily be arbitrarily controlled" (March, 1981, p. 563). Organizational change is "a process in which a large company or organization changes its working methods or aims, for example, in order to develop and deal with new situations or markets…" ("Organizational change," 2020, para. 1). In organizations, "organizational change is a central issue within organization theory, leadership, and management" (Quattrone, 2001, p. 404). Organizations can make simple changes, and they can approach change on a larger scale. The type and size of the change, as well as the surrounding environment, can significantly affect the likelihood of success. Quattrone (2001) explains that "as the object of change passes from state 'A' to state 'B,' it is modified; i.e., it gains and loses identifiable features" (p. 408). March also describes this loss of identity, stating that organizations "…are frequently transformed into forms remarkably different from the original" (March, 1981, p. 563). These modifications can mean the organization's product, or the organization itself can look different at the transformation outcome.

Organizational change is inevitable, and it is not predictable. In a synthesis of research, Armenakis, Harris, Field, Greiner, and Kotter, as cited in March (1981), note that "some experts portray the change process as a linear progression through successive stages..." (p. 631). In some situations, change can follow a pattern; however, this is not always the case. Some change does not follow a linear pattern (March, 1981). Overall, change is not predictable and does not commonly follow a set pattern. Due to its unpredictable nature, change can be challenging to manage at the organizational level.

One primary consideration of why the unpredictable nature of change is constant is that not all employees are ready for change. In these organizations, "...readiness for change refers to organizational members' shared resolve to implement a change (change commitment) and shared belief in their collective capability to do so (change efficacy)" (Weiner, 2009, p.1). Weiner (2009) explains that "when organizational readiness for change is high, organizational members are more likely to initiate change, exert more considerable effort, exhibit greater persistence, and display more cooperative behavior" (p. 1). Having more employees poised and ready for change will allow the implementation to proceed more smoothly than having resistant employees. The employees who play a primary role in implementing change are not the only ones who need to be aware of the modifications. Weiner (2009) explains that organizations are complex and that "organizational readiness for change is a multi-level, multi-faceted construct" (p. 1). Organizational change is complicated and needs leaders and employees who understand it and embrace the change. For example, "how well an organization can cope with how fast it is changing can predict how competitive an organization is and how well it will stand the test of time" (Finkelstein & D'Aveni, 1994, p.1079). Remaining competitive in the marketplace dictates an essential need for organizations to "[establish] organizational readiness for change and [recommend] various strategies for creating it" (Weiner, 2009). Being ready for change can impact the speed of change occurring, and the rate of transformation can influence the result's quality (Beer, 2005). More importantly, organizations need personnel who know how to manage the change process strategically.

*Change Management and Change Management in Higher Education*

As change is inevitable at any company or university, organizations and institutions must understand change management. Change management is a diverse field as it "... is the application of many different ideas from the fields of business, organizational development, and psychology" (Hiatt & Creasey, 2012, p.13). Change management is the techniques and processes used to administer the people-side of change to accomplish business outcomes. Managing change is strategic; it involves the systematic management of everyone's engagement and implementation when administration alters how employees will accomplish work (Hill, 2009). Corporations use many different models to manage change. These models' focus is always to encourage employees to accept, adopt, and utilize a proposed change in their daily work. When change managers operate effectively, organizations and teams are better empowered to reach their goals or implement their plans effectively and efficiently.

Many organizations spend a significant amount of time studying change and implementing change management. The willingness of corporations to engage in change management is primarily due to the complexities of how organizations change, why they need to change, and the seriousness of impact when an organization cannot manage change. In fact, "the complexity of political, regulatory, and technological changes confronting most organizations has made organizational change and adaptation a central research issue" (Greenwood, 1996, p. 1022). As a result, senior leaders continually seek out information that facilitates a better understanding of this challenging and necessary topic.

Organizational change studies in higher education have been relatively scarce in comparison to other fields. Huisman and Meek (1999) found that how universities view

organizational change varies from institution to institution. In a study by Se'verine

Louvel (2013), the researcher examined the role that academics play as a change agent.

Harver and Hooder (2015) examined the role of organizational change in higher

education for sustainability. No previous study examines the benefits of using change

management models in higher education institutions by project management

professionals engaged in creating new academic content. Overall, researchers have an

opportunity to examine the use of change management models in higher education.

*Change Management Models*

Change management is the framework for optimizing the effectiveness and

competency of proficient outcome delivery. From the simplicity of Kurt Lewin's legacy

model to the more robust developed strategies of Prosci's ADKAR Model of change

management, there are various options for numerous structures, and within those, there

are multiple methodologies and theories that exist for how to introduce successful change

best (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016; Hiatt, 2006). This section briefly examines

three different change management models used in higher education institutions to

provide a general sample and understanding of relevant change management models. The

three highlighted models include Lewin's Change Management Model, the McKinsey 7-

S Model, and Prosci's ADKAR Model.

One foundational change management model is Kurt Lewin's change theory.

Having developed one of the first models of change management in the 1950s, social

psychologist Kurt Lewin is the founding father of change management. Lewin's concept

is a "three-step model developed as a guide for managerial interventions" (Cummings,

Bridgman, & Brown, 2016, p. 38). The stages in his model include Unfreeze, Change,

and Refreeze. While some have criticized the simplicity of this system, many offer support for its use, agreeing that while it is simplistic in its steps, the model is "versatile, practical, simple to use, and easy to understand" and "most effective when used in a top-down approach to change" (Shirey, 2013, p. 70). The success of this basic methodology resulted in the demand for other more detailed approaches. These different methodologies gained acceptance because they offered change management practitioners more guidance and frequently yielded better results in their workspaces.

Another popular change management model is the 7-S McKinsey Model. Developed in the late 1970s by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman while working at the McKinsey consulting company, the 7-S McKinsey Model proposes seven factors that work together to influence change (Kaplan, 2005). The model proposes that "…organizations are successful when they achieve an integrated harmony…" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 41). The Seven S's that the model gets its name for are strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff, and skills. The model seeks to have those elements balance and support each other so an organization can effectively change. The methodology has withstood the test of time, and companies today frequently use this model to instill change in their organizations with great success because it can be beneficial in a wide variety of situations.

The ADKAR model, created by Jeff Hiatt, links individual performance, organizational change management, and business results (Hiatt, 2006). ADKAR is an acronym that stands for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement (Hiatt, 2006). Hiatt (2006) formulated the ADKAR model based upon his experiences leading projects. Hiatt understood the role that people play in change and project

management. In 2006 Hiatt joked about the successes and failures of his projects, explaining that "all of [his] change initiatives would have gone great if it were not for all the people involved" (p. 1). Hiatt's methods ultimately evolved to become the ADKAR model of change management. Having studied and used several of the many different available approaches, Hiatt (2006) decided to try to make something superior that utilized his lessons learned, those of other scholars, and other experts' related field experiences. Hiatt started to work on his new model "because the myriad of change management approaches proposed by management consultants and authors failed to produce results" (Hiatt, 2006). Since its creation, ADKAR has grown in popularity to be a prolific tool used by fortune 500 companies, government entities, and top universities.

*Intertwining Project and Change Management in Context*

Combining project management and change management is a necessary organizational objective. Hornstein (2015) strongly suggests that "change is an inevitable consequence of project implementations, and how the change is 'managed' impacts how successful the project will be" (p. 295). Unfortunately, there is sometimes a disconnect between the two disciplines. Despite their differences, there are several similarities between the two management disciplines. Jarocki (2011) argues that there is not much difference between project and change initiatives. Both change management and project management theories implement a proposed beneficial change. Both disciplines function best around an organized plan. Both project management and change management use a similar implementation method (Jarocki, 2011). While there are similarities between the two disciplines, their differences can create issues and conflicts in driving change within an organization.

Despite these similarities and having analogous objectives, there are several differences between the two disciplines. Organizations frequently procure and manage project management and change management separately. Project and change management plans are often implementing disjointed goals managed by independent groups. The isolation of the two groups can often result in operational problems and a lack of alignment (Jarocki, 2011). Traditionally, change management has primarily been a collection of abstract ideas that focus on the "people side of change" (Hiatt, 2006). In contrast, project management focuses on a set, detailed technical plan (Jarocki, 2011). Since these two disciplines have different focuses and work in isolation, there is often a disconnect between them. Project management and change management should be aligned and ideally intertwined to create change in an organization effectively.

A growing plethora of literary research exists that emphasizes the alignment and intertwining of project and change management. Hornstein (2015) emphasizes the "necessity of viewing projects as organizational change initiatives" (p. 291). Using projects to drive progress will not happen by chance. Organizations must be strategic in their approach to blending the two disciplines. Hornstein (2015) "...suggests that aspiring and current project managers should be explicitly trained in applying organizational change methodologies and processes..." (p. 291). There is much to gain when organizations utilize project and change management in support of each other. Specifically, Parker, Charlton, Ribeiro, and Pathak (2013) emphasize that organizations can use project management to drive change, ideally having the modification itself managed as a project. There are observable benefits for management and employees when these two disciplines support each other.

Intertwining change management and project management is beneficial to organizations for a multitude of reasons. Reduced financial and human costs can result from properly run projects. Successful change management is a cost avoidance and risk mitigation tactic (Kotter, 2001). A poorly run project's potential costs include budget overruns, rework, loss of work, project delays, and other expenditures (Kotter, 2001). Risks of poor change management include active and passive resistance, unavailable resources, unexpected issues, failing projects, impacts on suppliers, employee stress, confusion, and fatigue, and in this context, worst of all, a poor student experience (Kotter, 2001). Human capital concerns, while difficult to quantify, lead to current and future lost productivity. A poorly implemented change can shorten the duration and effectiveness of the sought-after results and outcomes.

*Project Management and Change Management in Higher Education*

Like other organizations, higher education institutions also benefit from using project and change management to support and drive change. When project managers, acting as agents of change, inspire and implement change in higher education, they prevent costs, mitigate risks, and impact how employees adopt and utilize a change. Higher education project managers need to have a solid knowledge base of project management, change management, and an awareness of their environment's nuances. This knowledge base should include the tenants of the most common organizational change methodologies and include how organizational change manifests itself in higher education institutions. In this instance, that knowledge consists of a requirement to understand what online education is and how it varies from other teaching methodologies and understanding non-traditional students.

*Conclusion*

Organizational change in online higher education occurs in a unique and sophisticated environment because of the number of stakeholders and contributing decision-makers and powers in the process. The online education marketplace is continuing to expand rapidly. Several factors contribute to the complexity of change management in this context. Those factors include the online higher-education industry's growth rate, geographically dispersed remote stakeholders, diverse and non-traditional remote students, evolving online education standards and expectations, and the multiple individuals and entities having authority over creating and using the educational content. All of the individuals that make up all of the involved organizations will each have their own thoughts, priorities, and issues. The effort to herd a collection of unique individuals towards a common objective must be planned for and faced. Influential leaders collaborate to work through change resistance. The best and most successful leaders identify and work to overcome concerns that could lead to resistance before opposition to change even occurs.

Multiple options and methodologies for various change management structures exist. Numerous methods and theories for effectively and successfully introducing change continue to endure due to change management's prevalence and complexity. Change management has been a highly researched area due to its impactful nature, and it will most certainly continue to progress as new thoughts and theories evolve. Competency-Based University (CBU) leadership selected the model created by Jeff Hiatt to address the needs they identified. This methodology, ADKAR, seeks to strengthen the link between individual performance, organizational change management, and business

results (Lowery, 2010). ADKAR, a product of Prosci, stands for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement.

Project managers are more and more called upon to act as an agent of change. Using the ADKAR methodology as a basis, the CBU project manager has been working to instill change management characteristics into their daily work. These project managers design, monitor, and control processes through to completion. Organizational change is complex and needs leaders and employees to not only understand it and embrace change (Hoover & Harder, 2015). Project managers play a principal role in convincing others to get on board with changes. Ideally, these same project managers also play a crucial role in developing a culture poised and ready for a change that will allow current and inevitable future implementations to proceed more smoothly.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

*Introduction*

Challenges like ambiguity, confusion, and frustration stemming from changes have broad implications across all higher education. These common complications are not unique to Competency-Based University (CBU). To make this transition and thrive, long-standing higher education institutions need to embrace these challenges proactively. As indicated in the previous chapters, institutional survival warrants a mandatory minimum level of evolution to remain competitive in the marketplace. No university is immune to the changing demands and expectations of current and potential students. At this university, project managers are at the center of driving the changes that will benefit tomorrow's students. In light of how these evolutionary challenges are becoming more commonplace, this Problem of Practice examined how this singular higher education organization sought to better understand the project manager's role as agents of change because of the growing importance, impact, and prevalence of change in higher education.

This research examined the teams and individuals involved to ensure a complete understanding of current, pending, and possible forms of change management resistance and the challenges that the project managers have encountered as they worked to accomplish their objectives. This study investigated the following primary research question: Within a nontraditional university, what were project managers' experiences responding to required organizational change? To assist with this, the researcher explored

the following secondary questions: What identifiable lessons helped project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders? Were there commonalities within the types of resistance project managers encountered, and how did project managers adjust their approach based on those types of resistance?

*Researcher Perspective and Positionality*

The researcher's belief that higher education requires disruption attracted him to CBU. What he witnessed in his years as a student led him to believe that many universities seemed to exist to serve their self-interests. It appeared to him that many universities focus on bolstering their standing in educational (or athletic) communities, increasing the reputation of the departments and colleges within the university, for the professors to serve their personal agendas and interests through research and advancing their career ambitions, and too frequently, to a lesser degree, to do what is best for students.

During the researcher's years as a university student, he realized that a course in a subject he loved could be unpleasant if the instructor was ineffective, inferior, or disengaged. Contrary to that, a course in a subject he disliked could be enjoyable and exceedingly educational if the instructor was excellent and enthusiastic. That observation coincided with a discussion with a friend who had taken the same course as the researcher had, but at a far more expensive and prestigious university from a Nobel Laureate. This difference in cost, access, and quality of education made the researcher wonder why, if so many students study the same topics, everyone could not learn from the best people in their fields. As a student, he reasoned that if the course expenses remained mostly fixed, inviting more students to participate in online courses potentially

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drives down fixed costs, making first-rate university education more accessible and financially attainable.

Inviting industry and subject leaders in designing courses and programs to increase access and quality and decrease cost is partially part of what sets CBU apart from many other higher-education providers. One way how that thinking is manifest happens behind the scenes, unbeknown to students. At many universities, an instructor, feasibly with guidance from senior educators, possibly consulting a few peers, and maybe some instructional design assistance, will design and implement courses mainly of their own making or assembling off-the-shelf course components provided by others. Those development efforts result in everything from the syllabus to course content to even assessments. Building courses this way is not ideal because it is slow and utterly dependent upon the individual instructor's skills, knowledge, willingness, and ability to include others within their immediate professional circle.

CBU brings in leaders in their respective fields to work together with instructors to build courses and programs that provide students with a better and more relevant educational experience. This course development process is a proprietary projectized development run like a business endeavor with multiple minute deadlines, goals, and a slew of measurable metrics that gauge every part of each course's effectiveness and engagement. Created principally by this study's researcher with external consultants' help, the Ten-Phase Process is CBU's product development and existing product redevelopment process. The Ten-Phase process covers aspects of product portfolio management and new product creation. The phases include; 1) Program Portfolio Management, 2) Academic Project Intake, Prioritization, and Management 3) Skills Map

Review, 4) Design Products, 5) Platform and Learning Resource Recommendations, 6) Create Charter and Roadmap, 7) Develop Products, 8) Test and Publish Products, 9) Preparation and Product Launch, 10) Data-Driven Performance Improvement (CBU, 2019). When done correctly, this method increases access, decreases cost, and improves student satisfaction and retention rates. These improvements are evident in CBU's sustained rapid growth rate, lower tuition costs, and higher student satisfaction and retention rates that far outpace education entities reliant upon older methods of providing higher education. Using this content creation method, as CBU grew, their leaders realized that they needed help guiding the disjointed and siloed projects that developed all student-facing content.

The researcher is a seasoned project manager seeking to better incorporate interpersonal relationship skills building (change management) into project management. Having founded multiple PMOs in the private and higher-educational sectors, the researcher noticed a disconnect between standard practices in typical for-profit businesses and the evolving higher-education industry. A few of those discrepancies central to this study are the need to use project management in conjunction with change management principles that have habitually played a much smaller role in traditional higher education program and course development. Near the onset of this project, the researcher constructed a PMO within the Program Development Department at CBU. In his time employed by CBU, beginning in 2017 and ending in 2020, he grew the project management team from the original three general project management employees to the twenty-five specialized project managers.

While working at CBU, despite university leaders' notable ambitions to streamline development, a persistent divide existed within the university that created barriers to effective program and course development. These shortcomings were highly evident within the researcher's role supervising the project management team that was central to developing student-facing content. A core issue not facing most universities regarding the development of new programs and courses is how two distinct camps predominantly comprise CBU employees. Those with traditional higher education backgrounds, such as the instructors and instructional designers, and those with for-profit business and information technology backgrounds make up most of the information technology, operations, and other non-student facing departments. The consensus for program and course development within the old guard of higher education professionals took a slower evolutionary rate of change centered around discussion and group consensus. The existing slow evolutionary product development methodology stood in direct contrast with the rapid development methodology of technology professionals. Those individuals with a tech background were used to an evolve-or-die marketplace driving a rapid rate of change. These different group's outlooks on the proper way to do business regularly led to conflicts and misunderstandings.

The researcher's goal was to understand project managers lived experiences as they grapple with merging the separate disciplines of project and change management effectively within higher education. These project managers systematically sought to modernize higher educational content development—merging technology product development principles and traditional higher-education development expertise into a seamless process that positively impacted project implementations' speed and quality.

New delivery and development methods can lower education costs and make for a better and more effective student experience. The researcher sought to improve the current program and course development process by documenting the experiences of those tasked with implementing organizational, strategy, and procedural changes. The researcher further sought to understand the source and factors of resistance to encountered organizational changes to inform future steps in higher education's continued evolution.

Despite not working at CBU throughout this study's finalization, the researcher remained dedicated to the research completion. The researcher believes that university leaders can better empower project managers within higher education to make superior products that have a more significant positive impact on students' lives. By incorporating enhanced interpersonal skills into technical development projects, managers can be more effective and empower employees. The researcher believes that the more effectively people are involved and engaged in the work at hand, the more they will effectively support their current projects. By utilizing appropriate change management techniques, project participants will be more likely to buy into the selected course of action, leading to increased employee job performance and overall project success. The researcher further believes that this increase will enhance employee satisfaction rates and student outcomes by providing students with even better educational products.

*Theoretical Framework*

This study utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics that contributed directly to the success surrounding the realization of pending transformations. The study gained a foundational understanding of how the individuals in this team, each with different lived

experiences and viewpoints, who think and act differently, come together on a larger scale to form the department's identity. Maarit Arvaja (2011) showed that "prior work and discipline-related knowledge and experiences provided people with resources for understanding … texts by applying, conceptualizing, or critically evaluating … knowledge" they have had presented to them (p. 85). Using that rationalization for selecting the theoretical framework, this research provided insight into how individuals' thoughts, working knowledge, and challenges combined to define the team.

This framework shaped the study's research questions. The primary research question central to this effort is the following: Within a nontraditional university, what are the project manager's experiences responding to required organizational change? This question illuminates the importance of understanding the lessons learned by individuals and the group. By uncovering action-oriented objectives and utilizing collective philosophical hermeneutics, the researcher "shed light on current abstraction and determine[d] possible future change management action sequences regarding how to anticipate better and address stakeholders' needs" to increase organizational change readiness (Batatas, 2014, p.126). The research process for this Problem of Practice relied heavily upon the participants' discovered opinions and thoughts. Thus, the questions that comprised the questionnaires and interviews in this qualitative phenomenological case study were vital to the research. The knowledge that individuals bring to their workplace, and the knowledge provided by various leaders within their teams, provide opportunities to allow others to understand new viewpoints and concepts. These growth opportunities stem from past lessons learned and lived experiences that culminate in team knowledge and culture.

The theoretical framework informed data collection by justifying the research site and the methods selected. Because the researcher sought to understand the Program Development Department's culture at CBU, the logic followed that the research would be most effective if that is where the study took place. The researcher documented that culture by examining individual contributors' views, including how they perceive their surrounding environment and how that interpretation plays out in their everyday lives. The researcher examined personal and shared experiences as resources for uncovering a rich source of data. As more knowledge unfolded at the individual level, the researcher gained further understanding of how stakeholders understood and interpreted changes based on what they already knew and believed. As a result of understanding the individuals who make up the larger cohesive group, the researcher gained insight and understanding concerning how improving communication within the group can make the team more effective and efficient.

*Research Design and Rationale*

The researcher selected a qualitative phenomenological case study design to examine the impacts of organizational change and procedural changes on project managers at CBU. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence..." (p. 75). The researcher initially explored the current program and course development process to document the experiences of those tasked with implementing organizational, strategy, and procedural changes using the rationale of this theory of design.

The researcher considered site, participant access, permissions, and other ethical considerations before research involvement. The researcher consulted with departmental leadership, participants' direct managers, and participants before the research's genesis or study participation in adherence to ethical standards. The researcher used consent forms (Appendix A), confidentiality, document security, and inscription protocols throughout the study to ensure participants' safety to eliminate any potential risk to their careers, personal, or financial well-being that may have stemmed from their participation. All participating individuals required various forms of permission to ensure protection from any negative implications. These requirements also protected the researcher, those directly associated with the study, and the researcher's enrolled university.

The following table illustrates high-level project milestones for this research. Table 3.1 diagrams sequenced activities for this study that follow the standard project management five phases of project implementation.

Table 3.1

*Project Phases Broken Down by Stages, Activities, and Objectives*

| Phase | Stage | Activity | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| One: Initiate | Getting started | Definition of research questions | Topic selection |
| | Crafting protocols | Designing the research process | Focusing efforts |
| | Ethical considerations | Obtain appropriate permissions | Ensure alignment to standards |
| Two: Plan | Incorporating current research and literature | Review of relevant literature | Comparison of similar and conflicting knowledge |

Table 3.1, continued

| Phase | Stage | Activity | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| Two: Plan | Site selection | Selecting CBU | Gaining access to the site |
| | Participant selection | Selection of project managers | Increases study effectiveness by focusing on the most beneficial people |
| Three: Execute | Formal Documentation Review | Iterative data collection and analysis | Strengthen theory by providing opportunities to adjust focus |
| | Questionnaires | Open-ended online | Documentation of work and challenges |
| | Interviews | One-on-one semi-structured | Focus on most beneficial individuals |
| Four: Monitor & Control | Data gathering | Iterative data gathering | Gain familiarity with initial impressions |
| | Shaping hypothesis | Iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct | Replication of logic across participants |
| | Data analysis | Looking beyond initial impressions | Search for the cause of the team and individual perceptions |
| Five: Close | Enfolding literature | Comparison with literature | Improve validity and generalizability |
| | Research closure | Theoretical saturation | Final fine-tuning of research |
| | Dissemination of findings | Finalization of paper | Research conclusion |

As illustrated in Table 3.1, the researcher broke the study into smaller phases and then

deconstructed the phases into multiple stages. These smaller phases each consisted of

activities that each had a specific purpose. By dividing the sizeable research project into

multiple smaller and more manageable tasks, the researcher was better able to track progress at a granular level and ensure that multiple objectives were accomplished in pursuit of project completion. In addition to providing an additional layer of quality control by reducing the possibility of any missteps, these numerous smaller activities and objectives allowed the researcher to have more visibility into research progress.

The researcher sourced data from three primary sources; formal process documents, open ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Formal process documents helped the researcher shape the questionnaire and gain a foundational understanding of the study participant's environment and management expectations. Questionnaires and one-on-one interviews focused on documenting individual contributor level employees' challenges to understand the impact of management decisions, communications, involvement, or lack thereof. The resulting data from questionnaires and interviews provided opportunities to compare current literature with observed trends and gain insight into the posed research questions. The researcher bound those understandings in new constructs that answered the proposed research questions.

*Site Selection and Participant Sampling*

This study site is a singular department of a nontraditional competency-based online university that offers associates, bachelor's, and master's degrees, employs 6,000 people, two-thirds of whom are faculty members, and boasts 120,000 active students. In addition, 71% of students are from underserved populations, including first-generation college students, ethnic minorities, low-income, and rural residents. The university has a sustained 20% annual growth rate (CBU Annual Report, 2017). This growth rate made

CBU an ideal research site for studying change, implementing a change management system, and change resistance within higher education.

CBU prides itself on being on the cutting edge of the transitioning higher-education landscape. That desire for change in the industry has created an internal environment where change, both evolutionary and revolutionary, is not just tolerated but is celebrated as a core competency of proficient employees. CBU's Leadership Principles states that:

> We value continuous growth and development. Self-enhancement is never complete; it is constantly being enhanced. We expect fresh thinking and look for new ideas everywhere. We are willing to slough of the past in favor of advancing the future. We are comfortable being first and taking calculated risks to overcome great challenges. (CBU Leadership Principles, n.d.)

CBU prides itself at the corporate and individual on being masters of change. Senior leadership expects each employee to strive for excellence and find new opportunities for improvement continually. Therefore, change management has become a critical part of advancing the university to better serve its future students.

In early 2018, CBU's executive leaders recognized the need to increase the presence of change management as an organizational capability. In January 2019, a group of 15 university vice presidents and directors representing the Academic Development department and Learning and Talent Department (what CBU calls their Human Resources department) met with Scott McAllister, the president of Prosci, in a two-day workshop. Those thought leaders sought to create the future for change management in their respective organizations. The result of that strategic alignment workshop was a vision and roadmap for implementing change management as a critical competency in their organizations. Upon their return to CBU headquarters, the Academic VPs, each

representing their college's commitment to understand better and utilize change management, released this statement:

In a letter to the Program Development Department (Appendix F), the Deans and Academic Vice Presidents of CBU wrote of their commitment to change management, explicitly explaining how change is growing, pervasive, and an essential part of the university's future, saying,

> We are committed to the people side of change with the same tenacity that we, as an organization, committed to the disruption we cause through innovation. We will make change management an inherent part of our organization by preparing, equipping, and supplying our people with the tools needed to flourish through change. (CBU, 2019)

As a result of that commitment, ADKAR began to spread throughout CBU. According to Prosci's website (n.d., para. 1–2), the ADKAR Model, created by Prosci founder Jeff Hiatt, is a goal-oriented change management model that guides individual and organizational change." ADKAR, according to Prosci, "is an acronym for the five outcomes an individual needs to achieve for a change to be successful: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement." Prosci further clarifies that "by outlining the goals and outcomes of successful change, the ADKAR Model is an effective tool for planning change management activities, equipping your leaders facilitating change, and supporting your employees throughout the change" (Prosci, n.d., para. 3). These objectives aligned with CBU's need to institutionalize change management. As a result, University executives have sought to communicate their vision, get employees excited about their shared future, and empower individuals to enact change that will ultimately bring about the promotion and implementation of the desired changes.

Successful change does not result from merely checking off change management activities. CBU change managers' goals and subsequently measure the outcomes of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. The ADKAR process does not exist for its own benefit, but to bring about desired and lasting results in individuals and corporations that heed its tenets. **"Changing the environment of higher education will be an arduous and complicated task. Those who champion that transition will likely find it a thankless job fraught with Philistine defiance"** (Pew, 2007, p. 18). That industry-wide shift to a more modern self-serviced online pedagogical approach and methodology has proven to be disruptive to the old way of doing business.

The study participants are project managers who make up the Project Management Office that participate in developing courses and programs and are at the center of implementing their newly adopted change management process. Members of the CBU PMO include the following three specializations. The first specialized group are College Project Managers. These are the project managers who make up the bulk of the PMO. These project managers work within each of the university's five distinct colleges. They are responsible for the projects that result in their college's programs, the courses that make up those programs, and the courses' content. The second group, Release Managers, are specialized project managers tasked primarily with coordinating external departmental efforts (i.e., Marketing, Enrollment, and other support teams) as new products prepare for launch into the market. The third and final group, the Special Project Managers, are senior project managers who support executives by carrying out unique high visibility projects assigned by senior university leaders.

*Data Collection*

To help keep the study focused on examining the phenomenon, the researcher created a set plan to collect and analyze data. This plan consisted of ten phases with corresponding objectives. Details and the objectives of these ten phases are shared in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

*Data Collection and Analysis Procedures*

| Phase | Objective | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The researcher obtained documents detailing current processes from participants and CBU leadership. | The researcher reviewed and stored formal policy documents, written instructions on individual job expectations, formal job descriptions, employee performance review forms, product development flow charts, previous project plans, relevant team, personal emails, and formal communications. |
| 2 | Initial data compilation took place as documents detailing current processes were acquired. | The documents acquired guided future steps and provided a base level of shared knowledge among the researcher and participants. In addition, the researcher stored these documents that were used as a recall device to discuss specific topics with participants to pinpoint particular areas as needed. |
| 3 | The researcher selected a questionnaire platform. | The researcher used an online form to create questionnaires using the stated questions. The researcher completed and provided a sharable link giving participants access to the questionnaire. |
| 4 | The researcher selected a data storage platform. | The researcher used an online storage platform to compile and store data. When the researcher had received questionnaire results and interviews were conducted, he imported the data into a database where data was stored and further analyzed. |
| 5 | The researcher solicited questionnaire responses. | The researcher shared the link to the questionnaire by email with each study participant. When needed, the researcher sent follow-up emails to encourage participation. |

Table 3.2, Continued

| Phase | Objective | Details |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | The researcher engaged in data compilation. | This compilation took place in the selected secure cloud-based data storage system. The researcher loaded questionnaire responses into the data storage system, where they were analyzed and categorized by the respondent, questions asked and answered, and other relevant topics. |
| 7 | The researcher conducted interviews. | The researcher utilized a text analyzer to find common language used by multiple respondent's verbose interviews. The researcher also sorted answers manually. |
| 8 | The researcher engaged in the identification of theme categories. | The researcher sorted responses alphabetically by keywords in an attempt to start to uncover emerging patterns. Grouping data into categories helped consolidate responses that used varied vocabulary to describe similar phenomena. |
| 9 | The researcher engaged in the visualization of data. | The researcher sorted data by most to least prevalent and impactful topics and themes. The researcher placed this data in chart format to easily visualize the most prevailing issues and trends. |
| 10 | The researcher confirmed the validity and reliability of the participants. | The researcher shared compiled data with respondents in an attempt to validify the findings. The extent to which results are consistent over time and across participants served to paint an accurate representation of the total study population. In addition, the researcher sought to strengthen the study by finding consistencies that could generalize to other areas. |

As indicated in Table 3.2, the researcher sourced the data underpinning the study from three primary categories. The first category were documents, including artifacts, detailing current processes at the team level. The researcher examined formal policy documents, written instructions, and process flow charts. Second, the researcher administered twenty-

five online questionnaires comprised of twenty open-ended questions. Those online questionnaires established themes and categories in need of further examination. And third, the researcher conducted five semi-structured, one-hour-long interviews comprised of planned probing open-ended questions with selected participants regarding their parts in change management, their accounts of things done well, and their encountered challenges. Appendix B, Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation Schedule, explains this process and the interconnected nature of these three data sources in further detail.

The first source of data was a review of existing relevant CBU documentation. This documentation included written employee instructions, applicable formal policies, and process flow charts. These materials helped guide the next step in the data collection process, questionnaires. These process flowcharts helped the researcher identify significant inputs and outputs in their current processes. In addition, these documents helped the researcher understand the expectations placed upon each person regarding their role and level of formal responsibility.

The second source of data was online questionnaires (Appendix D). The researcher generated a questionnaire containing twenty open-ended questions that laid the groundwork for the more in-depth interviews that were to come. The researcher distributed the questionnaire via email, results were compiled in a database and analyzed for prevalent themes and keywords. These questionnaires served to find commonalities in results across all participants. The questionnaires also functioned as a launching point for the researcher to hone in on prevailing and fruitful issues worthy of discussion in the following interviews.

For this study's third data source, the researcher performed five semi-structured one-on-one hour-long interviews comprised of planned probing questions (Appendix E). The researcher utilized a stratified purposeful sampling strategy to select participants to continue this third phase of the study. The researcher utilized this sampling strategy as some study participants understood their processes better than others, and those people were better equipped to communicate their concerns and their processes. This strategy allowed the researcher to facilitate comparisons at the team and college level more effectively. The researcher used online conversations in place of in-person face-to-face communication. The researcher selected this format to "elicit the informant's stories of practice and allow for the researcher's contextual observations" (Creswell & Poth, 2019, p. 363). Participants selected to participate were formal team leaders designated by the departmental organization chart and informal leaders, as identified by their managers and peers. This data source utilized open-ended questions where respondents expounded upon areas identified in the earlier questionnaire results. Questions in the interviews were similar in nature to the initial online questionnaires but designed to be more specific and probing.

*Data Analysis Procedures*

To properly analyze the collected data, the researcher continued with steps 8 through 10 in the aforementioned ten-step plan (see Table 3.2). The plan allowed the researcher to organize and analyze the data systematically to answer the research questions. As referenced in Appendix B, the researcher completed an ongoing analysis of the collected data. After each point of data collection, the researcher organized and analyzed the collected data. This ongoing analysis allowed the researcher to synthesize

the experiences of the individual project managers into a collective, representative experience (Creswell et al., 2018). The researcher took notes while reading through the compiled data, during the review of questionnaire responses, during and after the interview responses, examining case notes, and throughout the memoing process. The researcher reviewed the policy documents, written employee instructions, and process flow charts noting process and organizational structures. The researcher then completed interviews and transcribed the resulting data, and coded for themes. The researcher coded the policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher then used Nvivo computer programming software to analyze the data, code the data, and create themes. Once the researcher had completed coding data and creating themes, the researcher began developing and accessing interpretations to verify validity and reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

During the data analysis coding, the researcher sorted the initial data into three categories: Planning and Resourcing, Execution, and Future State Realization. To analyze the data even further, the researcher organized and segmented the responses into two subcategories. The first subcategory was for responses representing first-hand information as seen and identified by project managers (i.e., what are you seeing?). The second subcategory was second-hand information told to project managers from other change management process stakeholders (i.e., what are you hearing?). The researcher selected these categories because they represented probable sources of rich and deep information. These selected categories held the potential for providing insight into issues with the current change management process, and shed light on stakeholder engagement risks, issues, and problems. In addition, these categories provided the researcher with an

opportunity to review stakeholder assets of change. By analyzing the data into these categories, the researcher was able to identify common issues shared by projects managers as they served as agents of change within the CBU organization.

*Research Trustworthiness*

The researcher used multiple strategies to ensure study trustworthiness. The author argues that this research contributes to the knowledge base of higher-education change management practices. Numerous data supported findings strengthened research credibility and helped validate the selected research methodology.

Findings were supported by data through the use of creative and credible approaches to help underpin change management practices' evidence base. The strategies and criteria utilized by the researcher to ensure study trustworthiness are displayed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

*Study Trustworthiness*

| Strategy | Criteria | Application |
|---|---|---|
| Credibility | Prolonged Engagement | Prolonged engagement within the study environment |
| | | Rapport established with study stakeholders/participants |
| | | In-depth semi-structured interviews |
| | | Direct review of all relevant process documentation |
| | | In-depth open-ended questionnaires |

| Strategy | Criteria | Application |
|---|---|---|
| Credibility (continued) | Member Checking | Accurate description of project manager experiences |
| | | Data verification with study participants |
| | | Use of field notes and interview recordings |
| | Peer Review | Research process reviewed and approved by program mentors |
| | | Researcher trained in qualitative data collection methodologies and supervised by mentor |
| | Purposeful Sampling | Study participants were selected based on their skills and knowledge |
| Confirmability | Reflexivity | Field notes kept throughout, frequent review of researcher's thoughts and methods |
| | | Bracketing and reflexive thinking throughout data collection and analysis to remove researcher bias |
| | | Chain of evidence custody existed throughout the research process |
| Dependability | Thick, rich descriptions of methodology | Research methods as described |
| | | Detailed coding and thematic review of data |
| | | Methodology reviewed and approved by experts |
| Replicability | Participant Validation | Participants were asked to confirm their responses and, if possible, review and confirm research findings |
| Transferability | Thick, rich descriptions of participants | Thick and rich description of the environment, participant information, research context, and methods used for selection of participants, location, and subject matter |

The rigorous review and thematic deconstruction of research participant's comments lent itself to ensuring the existence of additional layers of trustworthiness and confidence to this research. The researcher selected a qualitative phenomenology format to "elicit the informant's stories of practice and allow for the researcher's contextual observations" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 363). Multiple policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews served as the foundation for the shared body of knowledge underpinning this research study. The researcher coded and performed a thematic analysis on the policy documents, questionnaires, and interview transcriptions, and then wrote and reviewed descriptive interpretations that provided the overall shared experience of the project managers as they served as agents of change. The researcher used low interference descriptors to maintain interpretive validity throughout the researcher's prolonged engagement. The researcher utilized peer and participant reviews to ensure the selected research methodology was appropriate. The use of purposeful sampling aided in selecting research participants that empowered the researcher to capture complete thick and rich descriptions of the participants' lived experiences and their subject matter. The data, findings, and review and discussion of this research have been reviewed and shared with project management experts, selected research participants, and other subject matter specialists to provided additional validation. The researcher and study participants uniformly conveyed their confidence in the data's accuracy, the researcher's interpretive validity of the data, and resulting research findings that are shown to be relevant and transferable to similar industries and professionals.

*Ethical Considerations*

The researcher ensured ethical reliability throughout this phenomenological case study for a variety of reasons. This research's design sought to ensure a state of trustworthiness in the mind of all participants. The researcher's ethical conduct has been vital to its success and the validity of the study's findings. Seale (1999) states that the "trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability" (p. 266). The lessons learned from the research throughout this study required multiple viewpoints to maintain validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003). The researcher obtained feedback from the university participants' various management members impacted by the current change management process to maintain validity, reliability, and ethical standards. The participant's feedback helped confirm and realign the researcher on the patterns identified.

The researcher is a licensed Project Management Professional (PMP) bound by a certifying body code of ethics. The Project Management Institute's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct is an eight-page contract vital to maintaining member certification. While quite lengthy in its entirety, the Project Management Institute summarizes it, saying, "ethics is about making the best possible decisions concerning people, resources and the environment. Ethical choices diminish risk, advance positive results, increase trust, determine long-term success, and build reputations" (PMI, 2020, para. 1–2). In addition to being subject to the researcher's governing professional conduct body, the researcher is also subject to organizational requirements, legal statutes, and institutional review board approval.

The researcher has an ongoing ethical duty to preserve and protect the study's participants' well-being and privacy. The participants expected anonymity, privacy, and

security for the information they have shared. This enhanced level of protection was for the benefit of the participants, the researcher, the research site, the researcher's university, and other stakeholders. As part of the efforts to preserve the participant's well-being, the researcher ensured that participants benefited in their daily lives from their study participation. The participants' realized benefits largely resulted from actioning the dialogue that discussed opportunities to streamline their daily responsibilities and reduce their felt pain points. The researcher examined answers and interpretations through different lenses, such as the project manager's lens, the various process participants, and departmental leadership to gain a more cohesive and accurate picture.

*Limitations and Delimitations*

The study has potential limitations because the research and the data are observational and, therefore, subject to bias. The participants may have under or overstated problems due to the participants' stake in the process or other internal political factors. The study does not assume to interpret individuals' motives beyond those stated in the study or the effects of office politics or other issues that may have impacted participant's employee job satisfaction.

At the onset of this study, the researcher worked in a role central to developing CBU's new programs and courses and the content that made up those courses. While the research topic remained constant, the researcher's employment, legal obligations, and access to proprietary information at CBU ended mid-research when his employment at CBU came to an end. The researcher's opinion is that this change in employment has ethical implications due to the impact of unforeseen participant access limitations, the

ability to discuss potentially proprietary information with various stakeholders openly, and ease of access to other relevant stakeholders. Due to the researcher's change in employment mid-research, CBU employees may be more likely to be honest, dishonest, or evasive, which may have impacted the data. Previously, the researcher could quickly and easily obtain permission to research the site and openly discuss proprietary topics. After the researcher's change in employment, the researcher utilized a more formal path to involve CBU employees.

*Conclusion*

This phenomenological case study examined the teams and individuals involved in developing new student-facing content at CBU to ensure a complete understanding of current, pending, and possible forms of change management resistance and the challenges the project managers encounter. This study's results have sweeping implications for overcoming challenges like ambiguity, confusion, and frustration stemming from changes. These common challenges are increasing in frequency and have broad implications across all of higher education. To that end, the following chapter examines the results and discusses the implications of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Implications

*Introduction*

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study is to explore the lived experiences of a team of project managers, acting as agents of change, inspire and implement change in higher education. This study synthesizes the experiences of specialized project managers as they grapple with the challenges of being change agents within a fast-growing higher education organization. The results of this study provided an in-depth view of participants' perceptions regarding the change management process within their organization. The phenomenological research methodology was selected to compile comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena and to allow the emergence of relevant themes of participants' lived experiences. Moustakas (1994) described the phenomenological methodology as ideal for understanding and clarifying the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experiences. The analysis of the themes revealed the deep and rich nature of shared experiences from multiple stakeholder perspectives. The resulting data from various cycles captured and incorporated each participant's lived experiences. The data presentation and subsequent analysis in this chapter offer justification for the methods used to discover common themes and capture the essence of the participants' experiences.

Chapter Four presents an examination of the resulting data and discusses the implications of the research findings for the following primary research question: Within a nontraditional university, what were project managers' experiences responding to

required organizational change? To assist with this, the researcher explored the two following secondary questions: What identifiable lessons helped project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders? Were there commonalities within the types of resistance project managers encountered, and how did project managers adjust their approach based on those types of resistance? The researcher identified perception and experience commonalities of project managers related to the stated research questions by identifying and coding emerging themes. This chapter includes a review of data resulting from survey and interview question responses and a discussion of results, research implications, and trustworthiness.

<p align="center">*Participant Organization*</p>

The recruiting process for the study involved contacting individuals who are project managers from a singular department of a nontraditional competency-based online university. In this phenomenological case study, the participants were project managers who participated in the development of courses and programs as members of the Project Management Office at a large and rapidly growing competency-based online-only university. The site of the study is undergoing an important and significant step in its maturity. Competency-Based University (CBU) has been transforming from a "start-up" mentality to a sustainable, scalable, thriving organization that can continue to provide exceptional educational value for students, blaze new trails as the leader of online adult education, and disrupt traditional higher-ed learning models. This setting provided a unique opportunity to study the individuals at the center of change management evolution within a large higher education institution.

To learn about these individual's experiences, the researcher collected data from three sources; policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews. First, the researcher reviewed existing relevant departmental and university documentation. Second, based on the information contained in the documentation, the researcher created questionnaires. Those questionnaires provided the basis for the researcher to utilize stratified purposeful sampling to identify the most beneficial individuals for continued study participation. In line with expectations for qualitative phenomenological studies sample sizes, the small group of participants selected for continued study participation were chosen based on their questionnaire responses within the research context and explored in-depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher selected these five individuals because they demonstrated in-depth knowledge regarding their organization's evolving change management process, their accounts of things done well, and their ability to recall and relay information relating to encountered challenges. Third, the researcher conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews comprised of planned probing questions with these five selected individuals.

In this environment, a phenomenological approach was requisite for deep and rich data analysis. The individual responses provided data to explore, describe, and understand how project managers enacted changes and how leadership and self-efficacy influenced the skill sets of project managers in addressing the problems and needs of the stakeholders trying to adapt to required changes. The selected methodology was ideal as it allowed the researcher to synthesize multiple personal experiences into a communal, representative experience (Creswell et al., 2018).

The following table (Table 4.1) details research participant roles, project management certifications, and time spent in their chosen careers. (Additional participant details are in Appendix C.) The researcher delivered this information to provide insight into how each participant's project management experience, level of expertise, and role responsibilities may have impacted the lens through which they viewed their organization's current and future states.

Table 4.1

*Participant Project Management Experience by Role (condensed)*

| Role | Count | Project Management Certifications (Total) | Project Management Experience (Average) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Director | 1 | PMP, CSM | 18 yr 2 mo |
| Sr Manager | 1 | PMP, CSM | 14 yr 10 mo |
| Manager | 1 | PMP | 16 yr 5 mo |
| Special Project PM | 4 | PMP (4), CSM (1), CAPM (1) | 16 yr 9.5 mo |
| Sr PM | 3 | PMP (3), CSM (1) | 13 yr 2.6 mo |
| PM | 6 | PMP (1), CSM (2), CAPM (2) | 6 yr 9 mo |
| Associate PM | 4 | CAPM (2) | 2 yr 11.5 mo |
| Release Manager | 5 | CSM (1), CAPM (1) | 2 yr 11 mo |

These three factors; level of formal responsibility, formal education, and total career experience, as shown in Table 4.1, resulted in measurable delineation among participant perspectives. These factors are discussed in more depth later on.

*Results*

Throughout the questionnaire and interview processes, the participants shared accounts of their recollections of lived experiences of the phenomenon, which painted a cohesive and shared representation of the group's members. The researcher pursued answers to the aforementioned research questions by using a phased approach detailed in the following subsections. That phased approach began by seeking to gain foundational understanding through digesting existing artifacts.

*Phase One: Analysis of Artifacts*

The researcher collected data from three sources; policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews. The researcher reviewed existing relevant departmental and university documentation (detailed in Table 4.2). Formal policy documents did not provide a rich source of information regarding employee expectations for when, how, and why to engage in change management practices.

Table 4.2

*Formal Documentation & Change Management Relevance*

| Documentation | Count | Information on Change Management |
|---|---|---|
| Formal Policy Documents | 24 | None |
| Formal Job Descriptions | 8 | Mentioned as a responsibility but not explained |
| Role Training Materials | 22 | Mentioned as a responsibility but not explained |
| Process Flow Charts | 16 | Ten-Phase Process and the ADKAR change management program |

Due to the prevailing need stated by university stakeholders, this misalignment between known deficiency and formal direction proved to be a frustrating gap for team members and an informative place to start the research data collection process. In addition, the lack of formal policy informally incentivized employees to turn to each other and find their own individual solutions to the known process gap.

*Phase Two: Analysis of Questionnaires*

The researcher organized questionnaires that included twenty open-ended questions based upon the limited relevant change management information contained within formal process documentation (see Appendix E). The researcher disseminated the questionnaire via email, compiled responses within a database, and analyzed responses for prevalent themes and keywords. The researcher sorted data by most to least prevalent and impactful topics and themes.

The researcher placed this data in the following table (Table 4.3) to visualize the most prevailing and relevant issues as represented by the questionnaire's twenty-five participant responses. The researcher sorted the initial data into three broad categories: Planning and Resourcing, Execution, and Future State Realization. The researcher selected these categories as they broadly focused on the participant's perception of individual and team success and support in the past, present, and future state of change management with their organization. These categories enabled the researcher to examine participant's perspectives of their department's past performance, current culture, and future visions. These questionnaires served to find commonalities and discrepancies among responses and functioned as a launching point for the researcher to hone in on prevailing and fruitful issues worthy of further discussion. In addition, the questionnaire

responses laid the groundwork for the more in-depth interviews that were to come and

provided the researcher the ability to identify the most beneficial individuals for

continued study participation.

Table 4.3

*Planning and Resourcing, Execution, and Future State Realization*

| Themes and Topics | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Planning and Resourcing* | | | |
| Have access to resources for effective change management support and guidance | 5 | 11 | 9 |
| Individually successful motivating stakeholders to embrace change | 14 | 5 | 6 |
| Success driving change is due primarily to individual knowledge and skills | 13 | 7 | 5 |
| Training on change management takes place and is effective | 6 | 8 | 11 |
| Planning for managing risks and issues is constant, and plans are effective when needed | 6 | 9 | 10 |
| *Execution* | | | |
| Individually have needed resources available for effective change management | 7 | 8 | 10 |
| The team regularly has success motivating stakeholders to embrace change | 8 | 7 | 10 |
| Formal change management processes are improving and expanding | 21 | 4 | 0 |
| Management and leadership play a vital role in today's change management success | 12 | 8 | 5 |
| Individually have constant success managing risks and issues | 13 | 7 | 5 |
| *Future State Realization* | | | |
| Leadership support/guidance on change management is improving | 22 | 3 | 0 |

Table 4.3, Continued

| Themes and Topics | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Future State Realization (continued)* | | | |
| Personal change management skills are improving | 19 | 4 | 2 |
| Lessons learned from change initiatives are used to improve the future state | 17 | 5 | 3 |
| Personal outlook on change management is improving | 20 | 4 | 1 |
| Stakeholder resistance to change is decreasing | 13 | 10 | 2 |

Survey responses showed a general trend of participant's improving positive outlooks on change management. Respondents shared that senior university management made two large-scale changes to embrace change management and prepare for future growth. First, they introduced a proprietary Ten-Phase process to break down silos that previously existed between university entities. The Ten-Phase process covers aspects of product portfolio management and new product creation. Second, they adopted the ADKAR change management philosophy. These changes have signified a firm management commitment to ensuring the university is committed to positioning itself as a continued and future online higher-education leader. These corporate moves have positively impacted change management practitioner's future outlook. As represented in survey results, personal outlooks on change management are continually improving and beginning to shift from being primarily dependent on individual knowledge and skills to a larger systematically supported corporate initiative.

These evolving perspectives have altered the department's culture by shaping how individual team members perceive their surrounding environment and how that

interpretation plays out in their everyday lives. According to survey participants, members of management were primarily viewed as agnostic to capturing lessons learned across business units. With a framework in place for new product development and change management, lessons learned from change initiatives are now reportedly used to improve the future state across separate university colleges, departments, and teams. Previous to these large-scale corporate efforts, individuals felt as though they were accountable only to themselves and the stakeholders directly impacted by their individual job performances. As project managers have perceived that formal change management processes have been a continued focus, management and leadership are becoming more vital in improving and expanding change management process success. This continued leadership focus is empowering and motivating individuals to stay focused and learn new skills, further aiding the expanding snowball of departmental change management cultural evolution.

*Phase Three: Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews*

The researcher selected five individuals and conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews comprised of planned probing questions (see Appendix E). These individuals were selected to represent their peers in this phase as they demonstrated a deep and broad understanding of their organization's evolving change management process in the previous phase. The five participants semi-structured interviews resulted in thick and rich data that painted a cohesive picture of the lived experiences of the study's participant population. The intent of the interview questions designed by the researcher was to capture the respondent's outlook on the current and future states of change management

within their organization. These experiences ultimately culminated in the researcher being able to provide evidence for the stated research questions.

To analyze the responses, the researcher organized and segmented the responses into two additional categories. The first category was for responses representing first-hand information as seen and identified by project managers (i.e., what are you seeing?). The second category was second-hand information told to project managers from other change management process stakeholders (i.e., what are you hearing?). Table 4.4 displays the differences between first- and second-hand perceptions on organizational change management. The researcher separated qualitative responses by first- and second-hand accounts to employ a mechanism to capture participant lived events while still providing an opportunity for participants to share additional information that was not experienced first-hand by interviewees. As captured in Table 4.4, this separation between first- and second-hand information allowed the researcher to record what is known with certainty while still allowing participants to share beliefs, tales, and thoughts that may have impacted the team's morale and perception.

By assessing reality through first-hand experiences and comparing it against their perception of their peer's ideology through events they may have heard of second hand, the researcher could further disseminate the current state from perceptions reliant upon hearsay. The more formal and informal leadership a respondent had, the more likely they were to see change initiatives as effective, accepted, and followed. Leaders tended to receive more positive feedback from others, indicating that newly introduced topics were well received. The more a person was responsible for implementing a change, the more likely they were to be told by others that things were positive. Individuals whose power

dynamic was on par with one another tended to discuss issues more openly and share more negative thoughts. As a result, mid or lower seniority level employees reported that their peers were less enthusiastic about the current state.

Table 4.4

*First and Second-Hand Outlook on Change Management*

| Topic | Personal Outlook is Positive | Personal Outlook is Improving | Peer Outlook is Positive | Peer Outlook is Improving |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior management's support and commitment | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Open and transparent communication | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Effective employee training | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Having a detailed change management plan | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Having and using contingency plans | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Reliance on subject matter experts | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Attitudes on change management | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 |

Regardless of seniority, respondents typically thought they were doing better than their peers at adapting to change and learning the skills needed to adapt to their changing workplace. Combined with the overall upward trend of the team, study participants

generally see both themselves and their peers as making progress and feeling optimistic about the future of themselves, their team, and the university.

*Cross-Phase Analysis*

Across the three phases of the research study, commonalities and differences became manifest. The researcher collected data from three sources; policy documents, questionnaires, and interviews. The first phase examined team training materials and other forms of formal documentation. Unfortunately, these formal policy documents did not provide a rich source of information regarding employee expectations for when, how, and why to engage in change management practices. With the recent selection of a formal change management process members of CBU management report that this missed opportunity is likely to change in the near future. However, policy documents did play a foundational role in the researcher's understanding of the past corporate culture, and they provided an overview of the team's two primary tools, the Ten-Phase Process and ADKAR. Those two formal processes proved to be fundamental for the researcher's ability to understand the team's thoughts on change management and what the end-state would likely be once their change management process was fully implemented. This initial material informed the subsequent two research phases. The following two phases further explored this team of project managers, as agents of change, inspired and implemented change in a higher education institution utilizing the provided tools and processes.

Commonalities across the second and third research phases included how study participants felt optimistic about the university's drive for an effective change management process implementation. Respondents reported their appreciation for, and

desire to gain further understanding of a concrete and widely known and used central change management methodology. Study participants universally spoke positively regarding the need for defined processes, leadership and peer support, management modeling new behaviors, and their support of new change initiatives. Research contributors also saw significant value in keeping stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the project and change management processes. Central to their new emerging change management process was how highly all respondents valued effective and timely communication. When not utilized efficiently, communication was viewed collectively by the team as a source of frustration, blind spots, risks, and issues. While speaking broadly of commonplace change management tenants, like communication, respondents were uniformly and unfailingly optimistic.

As research participants discussed their ideal vision for change management, differences among expectations and ideal end-states came to light. As the topics the researcher and participants discussed became more nuanced, participant differences became commonplace. For example, while every study participant spoke highly of the need for and importance of effective communication, when the researcher asked probing questions about how to enact communication policies and procedures best, divisions in the team's solidarity began to emerge. Some study participants wanted an endless stream of communication. Others saw that deluge as noise, a waste of time, and counterproductive. Some participants wanted management to communicate every idea they were working on. Other individuals felt this level of communication made the team feel unstable. As one responded put it, "the earth was constantly moving because multiple messages were being communicated, and a clear and concise message was never

available. We never knew what was really happening because they [management] were always changing their minds." In reality, what this particular study participant had witnessed was an attempt by management to improve communication. The frequently messy process of leaders discussing and working through issues and proposed solutions that customarily had transpired behind closed doors, and in an attempt to increase awareness, those doors were cracked open, and discussion topics were shared. Management hoped that by sharing those conversations with the team, impacted individuals would appreciate the increased awareness and feel as though they had more of a say in their team's future direction. Management sharing those discussions more openly brought joy to some team members and dismay of others. Some respondents loved knowing what was being discussed and learning what went into their leader's decision-making process. Other respondents did not want to be bothered until a decision had been reached, a message had been prepared and polished, and then they only wanted to know how management's latest decision would impact them. Ultimately the senior leader's doors were closed because, as a senior leader reported, "the mix messaging was not helpful, it was confusing, and worst of all, it made us look incompetent …like we were just making things up as we went along." The same senior leader reported that eventually, "a balancing act had to take place where messaging was crafted to instill confidence, reduce noise and unwanted emails, and instill confidence in the leadership team's decisions. Ultimately, we went back to making our sausage in private." This singular instance illustrates a common challenge that is representative of so many of the respondent responses in regards to change management. Like this study in its entirety, this singular instance documented how an individual contributors' interpretation of an

ideal solution frequently does not align with their peer's thoughts or desires. These discrepancies regarding how individuals perceive their surrounding environment and how that interpretation plays out in their everyday lives frequently resulted in a compromise. While an ideal solution for some, those resulting compromises create an environment that is only tolerable for others.

Discrepancies also commonly appeared based on respondent's seniority. The more senior and experienced a respondent was, the more likely they were to think that the opinions and atmosphere of the team were positive. Lower-level employees reported lower levels of commitment to new leadership initiatives despite seeing value in change management processes. An understanding of the need for a change management methodology has been mounting. Leaders have been talking about what to do, but that information is only beginning to translate into tangible changes. For more junior project managers that stated their overall attitude was traditionally one of "I will believe it when I see it," they are now sensing that the team's level of buy-in and enthusiasm for implementing a universal change management methodology is beginning to snowball as their peers continue to get on-board.

These differing viewpoints around the ideal state of change management readiness at corporate and individual levels complicate defining clear uniform keys to success across all team members. The researcher organized their responses across all research phases around three core themes (see Figure 4.1). First, ownership and commitment; leaders and individual contributors alike regularly demonstrate full ownership and commitment to ensuring implemented changes occur, and they stick. Second, effective prioritization; the team has an effective process for prioritizing change

initiatives. And third, transparent tracking; the team effectively communicates expectations associated with change initiatives.

| Ownership & Commitment | Effective Prioritization | Transparent Tracking |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Leaders regularly demonstrate full ownership and commitment to ensuring implemented changes occur and stick* | *The team has an effective process for prioritizing change initiatives* | *The team has an effective process for tracking change initiatives* |
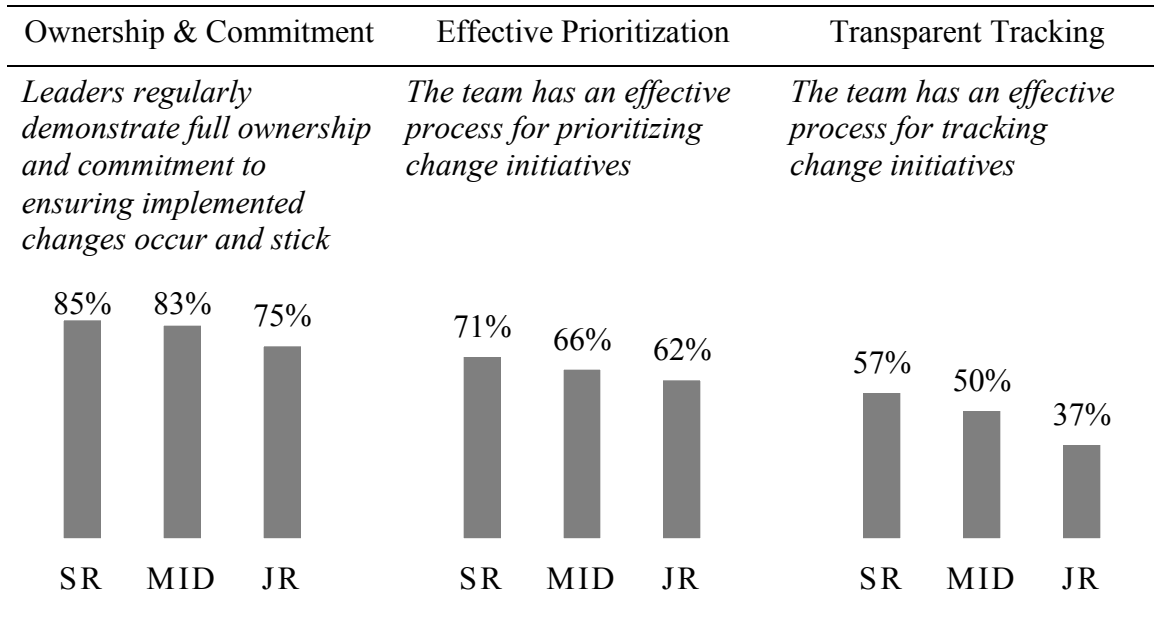


*Senior roles include Special PM and Senior PM roles. Mid-level roles include the PM position. Jr roles include Associate PM and Release Manager roles.

*Figure 4.1.* Participants that view the current state positively by seniority/role.

Overall, the more senior a respondent was, the more likely they would see the current state more positively than their more junior peers. Perhaps that could be explained by the availability or responsibility for creating and disseminating information regarding what changes were in store for the organization. Having a say in the team's direction tended to make employees feel more empowered, in control and correlated with the change buy-in. Conversely, junior employees that did not have opportunities to participate in those future state discussions regularly were more likely to feel removed from the decision-making process and feel as though management had made decisions on their behalf with no input from them. In a sense they the more a respondent felt acted upon instead of playing a role

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in determining the future state and the action sequences to reach the goal state, the more they felt disengaged and in control.

Senior leaders regularly underestimated the discrepancy between their viewpoints and the collective viewpoints of their junior peers. These discrepancies between junior and senior perspectives became more evident over the multiple phases of rdata gathering. These differences were least apparent in the initial phases that focused more on the status of the collective group. However, as the research progressed, the differences between what was perceived to be working with the current state and what needed project managers identified as needing to be refined and strengthened became more apparent.

*Overall Thematic Analysis*

This phenomenological case study design focused on the shared and lived experiences of project managers as change agents. The research study utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics that contributed directly to the success surrounding the realization of pending transformations. Throughout this research process the researcher acquired evidence amounting to a foundational understanding of how individuals with different lived experiences and viewpoints, thinking and acting differently, come together on a larger scale to form their team's identity.

As a result of understanding the individual's reported needs, the researcher gained insight and knowledge regarding how making improvements at the individual level can make the collective team more effective and efficient. By understanding individual team members' capabilities and challenges, management and individual team members can successfully strengthen the group's capacity to meet future challenging changes successfully. In addition, by strengthening each unique team member, the entire

team is better positioned to find future success, bolster the team's perception among their peers, and positively alter the team's perception of themselves as individuals and as a group. As reported by study participants, the strengthening of individual team members should be centered around the following five pervasive themes to prepare their organization to be change-ready.

*Culture.* Study participants reported culture to be an essential part of change groundwork. As one project manager put it, "we have to constantly ensure people know and feel that is not only ok, but it is encouraged to discuss issues and opportunities." That has required a mind shift from all levels of the organization. This cultural transformation is not an overnight shift that can be implemented by a single well-wishing leader or even a team. In its ideal and most effective form, this line of thinking has to permeate the culture at all levels. As Kotter (2014) attested, the aim for leaders is to foster a culture that demonstrates its value of innovation, efficiency, and ambition as motivating factors to drive change, increase employee independence, and optimizing processes to deliver better results. Over eighty percent of all respondents agreed that the organization's preparations to handle change implementation initiatives are more important than the actual outcomes of significant change efforts. In other words, to these project managers, the culture being ready to pivot was viewed as more important than the change itself. That is primarily due to the pervasive perception that laying the foundation is an essential part of successful change management. One project manager said, "if I do everything right as a project manager, but fail at getting people ready and willing to change, I can't be successful. I need to communicate the "why" behind the work I am asking them to do." As that participant recognized, having a culture that embraces potential change as a

positive opportunity and is already prepared and motivated to adapt is a foundational component of successful change management.

*Urgency.* It was commonplace for the leaders surveyed to believe that it was much easier to resolve challenges if they caught them early. Employees also had an easier time discussing risks and issues early on if they felt the culture valued urgency, safety, openness, and teamwork over placing blame. Without this cultural foundation firmly in place, individuals spoke of their increased likelihood to exhibit and witness behaviors that could be called self-preservationist at the expense of the greater good. As one respondent put it, "when people feel there was something that could reflect negatively on them, or the people they care about, to want to sweep it under the rug, so no one gets in trouble or gets thrown under the bus." The general perception among respondents was that the corporate culture has been following the corporate messaging that indicated a shift from an environment of self-preservation to a culture that, as one respondent put it, "encourages acting quickly and seeking a resolution over placing blame. It has helped people feel safe. Being effective and a team player has been becoming more important than being right." John Kotter, an industry-leading author and Harvard professor, has written extensively on the importance of urgency in the workplace. In support of this cultural shift, in a 2014 Harvard Business Review interview, Kotter emphasized a sense of urgency growing relevance and importance, saying, "the fundamental reason we need urgency is because the rate of change is going up. Without a true sense of urgency, any change effort is doomed." While senior leaders may be more focused on the marketplace advantages, a culture of urgency provides, the aim for these individual employees was to love their work and feel effective. One employee said, "I want to be able to make a

difference. I care about improving things and want to make things better for me and those around me." This employee regularly demonstrated values esteemed by management through their natural sense of urgency and engagement. In addition to management, this person's colleagues had high regard for this individual's constant willingness to publicly demonstrate personal responsibility and urgent ownership for their results and the results of their peers. The viewpoints expressed by management and this individual contributor illustrate that while the principle of urgency can take on different meanings for roles with varying levels of responsibility, its importance and relevance are pervasive, vast, and impact all levels of an organization.

*Safety.* According to study participants, leaders, from the top down, must strive to commit to creating an environment of safety. Speaking on feeling safe in their role, a junior team member said, "ideally, if you raise your hand and say, hey, there is a problem here, even if you're responsible, you won't get in trouble. Especially if you bring it up early instead of trying to hide or ignore it." That type of environment that priorities feelings of safety over assigning blame has required a shift in mentality. As noted by one of that employee's peers, "it seems like things have changed to where management desires to make it not just heard, but known and believed, that people do not get in trouble for raising a concern." Encouraging and valuing honest, open communication is an integral part of establishing a sense of teamwork and collaboration. One member of the team's management structure emphasized this corporate stance by saying, "I am focused on our end goal. I'm not interested in pointing fingers. I want people who raise their hand and feel like they will be rewarded instead of criticized or worse, punished." Helbrecht, 2018, emphasizes the importance of employee's safety, as it relates to feelings

of confidence that they know their leaders and peers will have their backs. Helbrecht writings stress how when employees feel safe within their team, they will expend their energy positively. When employees feel safe, they do not have to worry about themselves, get caught up in politics, or think about where they stand. That shift frees employees to do what is in the best interest of their team and the organization. A safe environment empowers employees to look out for their co-workers and clients, own up to their mistakes, and share credit and recognition with others. This atmosphere shifts an individual's energy and attention from self-protection and promotion and seeking out political gains to one of inclusivity and transparency for the benefit and the strengthening of their team.

*Openness and Transparency.* The goal at all levels within the organization was to encourage and embrace all forms of constructive communication. As reported by members of management, the thinking was that being open and transparent, when done to be constructive and supportive, can help eliminate problems that could otherwise grow in the dark. On effective communication, a team manager said, "the objective is to increase effective communication, lower stressors, increase employee engagement, and boost performance." One survey response posed a noteworthy rhetorical question on the subject, "if good communication is so valuable, and it costs nothing, why are we not better at it? Talk about an amazing ROI!" Study participants consistently supported the idea of a free flow of information, but how to enact that idea effectively was a struggle— too much free-flowing information created feelings of noise and message inconsistency. One employee called the problem out by saying, "I feel like my house is made on sand. We're told to focus on one thing then another. Things are always moving. It's like the

exec team is just making things up on the fly. It is never consistent." The issues pointed out by the individual contributor brought about the need for structure around openness and transparency. Oversharing can create inconsistent messaging, harm confidence, reduce management's ability to emphasize what messages are important, and have other unintended negative consequences. Based on participant responses, finding and enacting that ideal balance seemed to be a far more slippery concept in practice than in theory.

*Teamwork.* Urgency, safety, openness, and transparency are all supporting principles for effective teamwork. From a management perspective, they were concerned with leveraging and empowering their best and most capable employees by fostering relationships, building skills, and developing leaders in a cohesive, effective, and collaborative team. From an individual's perspective, the focus was more on individual friendships and their personal effectiveness in their role. Senior management's objectives and metrics played a far less significant role than the importance of socialization and peer relationships. The importance of teamwork in the business place has been well documented in scholarly literature. According to Hoegel and Gemuenden (2001, p. 435), "An extensive body of literature indicates the importance of teamwork to the success of innovative projects." The awareness that "good teamwork" increases success by building upon facets of "communication, coordination, the balance of member contributions, mutual support and cohesion" is not new but its importance cannot be understated. While "good" teamwork, like the rest of the themes discussed in this list, is not a simplistic concept that can ever be fully mastered, it is still one that has been unswervingly proven to be worthwhile to strive for at all levels of the organization. Teamwork is vital for this

team's success because it increases accountability and motivation and fosters a sense of belonging and care that would otherwise not exist (Dourish & Bellotti, 1992).

While this study focused on one university, relevant findings from these five central thematic elements will benefit educational leaders seeking to prepare a cultural foundation more adapt to disrupt their old way of doing business. The multiple challenges faced by this team are not unique to them or their institution. Grappling with an increasingly larger workforce, growing silos of operations, uncoordinated communications, and disjointed efforts among peers, teams, and departments are universal concerns and spreading as more institutions struggle to keep pace in a rapidly evolving marketplace. In response to these and similar never-ending multitude of challenges, leaders will continually develop and deploy various changes across their organizations. The required non-stop pervasive evolutionary marketplace will continue to provide an ideal environment for ambiguity, confusion, and frustration to flourish, further justifying the need for leaders and individual contributors to capitalize on these five stated themes and corresponding lessons learned. For university leaders and business leaders in general who seek to move their teams to a more modern self-serviced online pedagogical approach and methodology, the impacts of these five themes must be embraced, thought-out, and implemented at the individual, team, and enterprise levels.

*Discussion*

This study's theoretical framework utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics to gain insight into how individuals' each with their own thoughts, working knowledge, and challenges combined to define their team's identity. Using that rationalization for selecting the theoretical framework, this study investigated the team and individuals

involved in implementing a new change management process to ensure a complete understanding of current, pending, and possible forms of change management resistance and the challenges that the project managers have encountered as they worked to accomplish their objectives. This framework and study objectives shaped the study's primary and supporting secondary research questions, which are recalled and discussed in this section.

*Primary Research Question: Within a nontraditional university, what are the project manager's experiences responding to required organizational change?*

Among the project manager's experiences responding to required organizational change, the team collectively recognized that change is inevitable and, therefore, will happen with or without formal management guidance. Change will happen regardless of the tools and techniques used, or lack thereof. This insight aligns with the work of March (1981) who found that change does not follow a set pattern. Ideally, the team felt the implementation and use of any formal change management process would be better than nothing. Despite acknowledging that change is going to happen regardless of whether or not management does anything to prepare for it, there was a consensus that there was a need for leadership or guidance. This need for leadership or guidance is similar to previous research that has found that managing change is strategic and involves the systematic management of everyone's engagement and implementation (Hill, 2009). Without leadership's continued involvement and guidance, emotions frequently run the gambit from feelings of positive and relief to fear and apprehension, and more often than not, end up on the undesirable end of the emotional spectrum. With little to no formal change management involvement, adverse reactions were the most common response, followed by feelings of ambivalence. This lack of enthusiasm was also noted in a study

by Bryde and Leighton (2009). This research found that a general lack of senior management enthusiasm and understanding of project management may be a root cause of why project management has not been widely supported (Bryde & Leighton, 2009). Respondents, when they felt unsupported by management with any change initiative, rarely exhibited positive outlooks.

Feelings of anger and frustration were the most common study participant's initial reactions to change. As the university continually grew, the project management team followed suit. Roles became more specialized and segmented into smaller and smaller areas. A long-tenured project manager recalled these days, "at one point the project management team was made up of only three people, all project managers had the same title, and for the most part, did the same things. In many ways, things were simpler then." As expectations and obligations matured, it was no longer possible to have one person accountable for many diverse responsibilities. Growth led to roles segmenting and becoming more specialized. This expanding and splitting of responsibilities made longer-tenured employees feel like they were losing control, losing visibility and importance, and having things taken away from them. As one tenured university employee said,

> My world keeps getting smaller, and I hate it. I do a great job. I used to meet with our senior leaders. Our old CEO knew me by name. Now there are ten layers of management in between us. I went from someone important, someone whose opinions mattered, to just another cog in the wheel.

This loss of control and responsibility frequently created feelings of anger, loss, and unappreciation. "I feel like the world is passing me by. I slowly have things I am responsible for peeled off of me like an onion." This line of thinking centered around loss is more prevalent among well-seasoned project managers that have been around for

several years and had repeated changes forced on them with little or no formal change management processes.

Project managers reported the general fear of losing one's job as lower than feelings of the frustration associated with losing importance and visibility. Respondents reported that was primarily due to how the senior leadership team has continually emphasized how the company's growth provided ample opportunity to do new and exciting things. This constant level of development felt like a safety net to most study participants. As one project manager put it, "if it looks like my job here is changing in a direction I don't like, I will just transfer somewhere else." Thus, the university's growth provided ample opportunities that felt like a safety net and a sense of options beyond dealing with whatever was happening with the team or their specific role.

While feelings of ambivalence exist at all levels, mid-level and more entry-level project managers were more likely to shrug their shoulders at proposed changes. It was commonplace for project managers to take on a by-stander role remaining passive to proposed changes as a group. Project managers largely viewed change management as "something senior leaders owned and acted upon project managers rather than something enacted or owned by us project managers." These initially unresponsive individuals were typically open-minded and willing to change despite their passiveness. "I'm just going to keep going with the flow. Our leaders are always coming up with their latest and greatest ideas. They almost never follow through. They just throw stuff against the wall and see what sticks." Responses like this illustrate how project managers view change as something that typically comes from the top down. As described by this project manager, they frequently have a wait-and-see attitude,

Maybe we make the change, and maybe we don't. Despite our best efforts, there are still a lot of silos on our organization. Our leaders don't always talk. Just because an idea comes our way doesn't mean it is something worth acting on. So, I will typically wait and see if someone higher up pushes it or see if it just goes away. Waiting to hear the same message a few times and not reacting right away has saved me a lot of headaches over the years.

These project managers have learned through experience that when new initiatives are assigned to the team, taking a moment to pause and wait and see if the new topic sticks around is an excellent yardstick to measure how important something is and just how much attention and time to dedicate to it. Several team members adopted this attitude because they had been repeatedly frustrated by dedicating time to working on a new change initiative to never hear about it ever again.

Not all reactions to change or change management were negative. Far from it, project managers uniformly displayed a positive future outlook despite the majority sharing adverse reactions recalled from their change management rear-view mirrors. Participants were constant in their perception that the past may have been challenging, but the future for change management within the team seemed bright. Depending on the current initiative discussed and, on the employee, people frequently reacted with positivity. If people understood the big picture and felt safe, heard, and respected, they were more likely to move from negativity to neutrality and neutrality to positivity.

Over eighty percent of all research respondents agree that the organization's capabilities to handle change implementation are more important than the actual outcomes of significant change efforts. That shift in the team's focus regarding change management, from personal preparedness, reliance, and introspection to a larger systematic focus centered around team preparedness and change management fundamentals, was attributed by project managers to the adoption of a new formal change

management system. Before this system's adoption, the team was cripplingly reliant upon each project manager's personal knowledge, skill, and social abilities. One project manager defined it as a change management system that was "a make-it-up-as-you-go ad hoc system based on whom you get along with and whom you are connected to, so you can find stuff out and talk the right people into doing what you want." The same project manager said the following about the team's future change management plans, "it's about time we finally replace what little we've had with something engaging and unifying. We've needed a single process that set expectations instead of people running around doing whatever they want." That system that has created hope for a better change management future within the university is Prosci's ADKAR. Chapter Two provides more in-depth information on the ADKAR process.

*Secondary Research Questions: What identifiable lessons can help project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders?*

The research study's participating project managers shared similar best practice factors that, when combined, provided insight into their lived experiences as they struggled to engage their stakeholders effectively. As identified by study participants, these best practices are most effective when implemented by a change management practitioner with the support of senior leadership. Previous research by Hornstein (2015) "...suggests that aspiring and current project managers should be explicitly trained in applying organizational change methodologies and processes..." (p. 291). According to study participants, these identified lessons can help project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging their stakeholders.

Successful change efforts require influential leaders. When organizations need to change quickly and effectively, selecting the right person to lead the change is essential.

Study results specify that the need for robust leadership is magnified when there are multiple internal and external stakeholders with varying degrees of power and influence, successful change management becomes far more complicated. Those complications are partially responsible for why higher education has customarily favored a slow evolutionary rate of change rather than a series of rapid innovations.

Empowered project managers, acting as change leaders, can inspire others and rapidly increase the rate of successful change within their higher-educational organizations. Senior management must empower these professionals to their fullest abilities for the benefit of their organizations. Eve (2007) explains that project management is essential, and higher education institutions can "improve their efficiency and competitiveness" (p. 85) when employing their tenants. However, a general lack of senior management enthusiasm and understanding of project management may be a root cause of why project management has not been more widely supported and effectively implemented in many colleges and universities (Bryde & Leighton, 2009). A lack of senior management buy-in can undercut the effectiveness of any large-scale change management process implementation.

Change management strategies should always include detailed plans on how, when, and why the change is communicated. Study participants repeatedly emphasized the need for effective two-way communication throughout every step of the change management process. "Communication is the silver bullet that can knock out fear and stop negativity dead in its tracks," said one respondent. "Open communication helps me have a mutual understanding. It gives a chance to talk about different viewpoints. It gives the change a sense of openness, honesty, and integrity. It is about collaboration.

Collaboration instead of just getting steamrolled." Communication for change managers plays a vital role in individuals and teams feeling motivated, connected, and committed.

Thought and care should be taken to decide what steps should be taken to implement change that will result in the least amount of opposition and resistance. Preparations needed to be taken by the project manager who owns the change management process as early as possible whenever implementing change to anticipate opposition and resistance. Planning what steps should be taken to implement change will result in the least possible opposition and resistance. Prosci (n.d, para. 23) summed up what was reported by this project management team, saying that while the "change management team …can do much of the leg work in understanding and addressing resistance, …the face of resistance management to the organization is ultimately senior leaders, managers, and supervisors." Thus, proactively managing resistance in a collaborative effort and one that takes planning, awareness, and consistent top-down messaging.

There should be milestones and metrics to hold people accountable and encourage people to continue moving forward, tracking progress towards and after completion, and celebrating when appropriate. Study participants reported that there is a known need for milestones and metrics that serve to bring accountability and visibility to change efforts. Ideally, the project management team felt that these metrics would hold people accountable and encourage people to continue to move forward, track progress towards and after completion, and when is it appropriate to recognize wins at the individual and team levels. Research participants had multiple ideas on how to identify and celebrate success by making the good news public. Study participants had several thoughts around

how management could do a better job providing recognition publicly and privately for a job well done. The participants shared a few options for people to be recognized in larger department meetings, having good news reflected on annual performance reviews, rewarded with extra days off, bonuses, certificates, plaques, which were just a few of the many ideas shared with the researcher. Visibly Celebrating these wins based on known metrics was a way that the team felt could increase morale and build support for future change initiatives among the team members who need it the most.

*Secondary Research Questions: Are there commonalities within the types of resistance project managers encounter, and how do project managers adjust their approach based on those types of resistance?*

Commonalities among negative behaviors the team regularly encountered were individuals nitpicking their leadership, verbal criticisms, gossip, questioning with hostile intent, and snide and sarcastic comments. According to Procsi (n.d.), encountering forms of resistance like those reported by this study's participants are typical and should be expected by members of management and change management practitioners. Prosci's (n.d. para. 2) philosophy is that "resistance to change can be avoided if effective change management is applied on the project from the very beginning. While resistance is a normal human reaction in times of change, good change management can mitigate much of [it]." Good change management will reduce these instances and impacts of negative feelings and behaviors, but it will never eliminate them. Prosci (n.d., para. 5) emphasizes this point,

> Even if the solution a project presents is a wonderful improvement to a problem that has been plaguing employees, there will still be resistance to change. Comfort with the status quo is extraordinarily powerful. Fear of moving into an unknown future state creates anxiety and stress, even if the current state is painful.

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Despite knowing that stakeholder change resistance will never be eliminated, the project managers, their managers, and CBU university leadership have been working diligently to reduce the impacts and commonality of inevitable stakeholder frustrations.

To gain further understanding of these common and negative phenomena, the researcher organized the types of encountered resistance into the following five themes; the impact on current job role, a lack of awareness as to why the change was needed, the team's past poor performance with change management, the lack of visible support and commitment from managers, and the perceived potential for job loss. The following figure illustrates the breakdown of stakeholder frustrations into those five categories
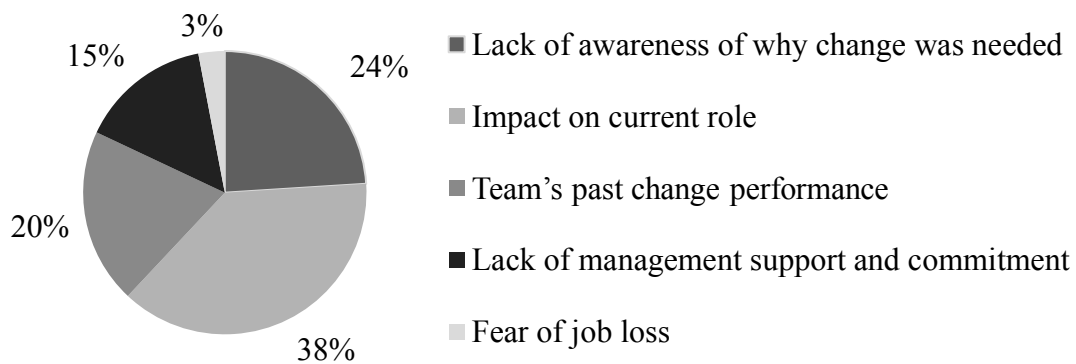


*Figure 4.2.* Categories of encountered change resistance by frequency

Capturing an individual's passion, emotions, and creativity early in initiating a project, rather than only when problems arise, change practitioners can be better prepared to deal with issues as they arise effectively. Thinking ahead, identifying root causes of resistance, and anticipating points of frustration will enable change managers to be better prepared with tactics and plans to address concerns. Focusing on the observable and overt symptoms of resistance will likely not yield long-term results. As one senior project

manager put it, "you have to get to the root cause. You want to know why they are

resisting, not just why they are not responding to emails or coming to meetings. Those

are symptoms, not the actual illness." Having a defined change management process is

the starting point for understanding those types of resistance and predicting when and

where they will occur.

*Implications*

CBU's operating methodology contrasts what many people envision when they

think of higher education. There are no quad, cafeteria, dorms, or lecture halls. There are

not even conventional classes in a traditional classroom. There is no physical campus at

all. Instead, CBU students pursue an area of study through online learning resources, such

as courses, e-textbooks, library services, and web-based tutorials. The courses are not

lectures or videotapes. Many of the course contents were previously acquired from third-

party vendors and arranged in an order that sought to put a CBU spin on the acquired

material. "We are learning management system agnostic," VP of Program Development

notes, "so we can leverage different content and platforms to bring the best to our

students." If CBU wants to offer a new course, they scan the market and bring in

whichever resource will be best for their students and student outcomes. If the existing

courses have gaps, they will work with vendors or develop something in-house to fill

them.

> Adapting to changing goals and demands has been a timeless challenge for
> organizations, but the task seems to have become even more crucial in the past
> decade. In the for-profit sector, global population growth and political shifts have
> opened new markets for products and services at a dizzying pace. To respond to
> the pace of change, organizations are adopting flatter, more agile structures, and
> more empowering, team-oriented cultures. As status differences erode, some
> employees are coming to expect involvement in decisions about organizational
> change. Successful organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating

employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes, rather than merely overcoming resistance. (Piderit, 2000, p.783)

The successful organizational adaption that Pidrit speaks of follows the same line of thinking habitually demonstrated by CBU senior leadership. In a May 2019 university-wide address, the CBU University President spoke of the genesis of the need to change within CBU, saying to his employees,

> We know we have a very fast-growing organization because our employees are doing their jobs so well. You are delivering high-quality programs and offerings to our students that we serve. You are trying to make sure that experience is personalized for every single individual that is enrolled here. We are increasing our retention and graduation rates. When you are as successful as we have been, we will continue to generate demand. Because of that increasing demand, there is one thing we can absolutely count on; we are always going to be going through change. One thing we are learning as an organization is change management is a critical process. We are learning as an organization how to manage that change better. We can count on that in the future; we will be doing things differently than we are doing them today. We have to be really good at managing our evolution and learning as we go from where we are to where we are going to be.

With the knowledge gained from working with numerous digital learning resources, a sustained high rate of growth in a changing marketplace, CBU has sought to develop a seamless student experience, allowing the university to scale further continually. The current state of evolution includes changes, such as stackable credentials and skills-based transcripts that shift the higher education landscape to provide higher quality and more relevant products to their students. The researcher believes that understanding the change process from the project managers' viewpoints has culminated in a construct of lessons learned by uncovering action-oriented objectives. By sharing these findings with the PMO, other participants, and CBU leadership, stakeholders have an opportunity to refine the development process and improve employee buy-in to required and inevitable

changes within higher education so they can effectively continue thriving in contrast to a standard higher education methodology.

When discussing the core of the mission within CBU, the University Provost discussed how CBU is prototyping as its innovative model suggests. The University Provost explained that universities should analyze the student population data, identify populations they would like to support, and propose support plans for those populations (Stein, 2019, 206-218). The University Provost suggested this is the first step for those looking to make changes within their university. Focusing on data, identifying the learner, and then utilizing success metrics have allowed university leaders to assess current and desired future states and decide how to best pivot their institution. Orienting around student needs is their first insider tip for a successful transition. The second is defining a comprehensive business model. After the administrative team of CBU identified their target population, the metrics they wanted to drive, and developed a hypothesis, they created a business model. CBU's University Provost noted this is an often-skipped but critical step, saying, "How you create a business model and implement it is such an important learning piece of this process that helps define what you want to do" (Stein, 2019, p. 219). While she spoke to those who desired to implement Competency-Based Education programs, the University Provost noted that the team needed to know why it would be changing focus, stating,

> It is very hard for many faculty [members] to get used to. You have to make sure that you have faculty who could execute the design and take the prototype to market, establish it, and who are committed to it long term. At the end of the day, you might have perfect student targets, but if you don't have the front line, you can't get them totally on board and excited about it. (Stein, 2019, p. 214)

From the top-down, all CBU employees frequently make it known that they seek

employees who pride themselves on being disruptive within the higher-education

industry. At the center of this study, the project management team is also at the epicenter

of developing all of CBU's products. These project managers are the people that are in

charge of the obligatory cat-herding required to develop and deploy university

administration selected changes to remain competitive in the higher education space. The

project management team is responsible for getting every stakeholder to march in unison

towards the same unknown destination. The PMO's principal focus is developing new

and redevelopment of existing degree programs to improve the reach, relevance, and

quality of competency-based learning. Their work includes facilitating all of the courses,

curriculum content, and assessments that make up those programs.

Formal change management is a cultural change for CBU that promotes

individual ownership of student outcomes and seeks positively impact students, their

families, university staff, and the success of organizational outcomes. "We are 100%

student-focused," the University Provost continued, "CBU is committed to measurably

increasing social and economic mobility for every one of our students and their families.

There is no other part of our business, no other part of our mission—that is it" (Stein,

2019, p. 211). Change management is the framework for optimizing the effectiveness and

competency of proficient outcome delivery. Implementation strategies will focus on

developing and implementing Prosci's ADKAR model of change management at the

department and team levels. The realization will include the instruction of the modality at

the senior university, college, department-level leadership teams, and other leaders and

individual stakeholders as assigned by their managers. Educating employees at all levels

of responsibility on shared expectations, roles, processes, and procedures is part of implementing a change management culture. Project managers play a critical role in leadership support, team engagement, and process development. Their levels of engagement and effectiveness are vital components to the continued competitive evolution of their university.

As a future corporate performance indicator, it is crucial to know how accustomed an organization is to change. The success and permanence of future change largely depend on how an organization views change. Organizational readiness is a crucial precursor for successful implementation. Leaders, not just managers, must build and foster a sense of urgency around a pending change. Leadership is needed to develop and guide a coalition to create and then communicate the vision. The right environment empowers others to act on the vision laid out before them. Those same leaders then need to plan for and even create opportunities for short-term quick wins with the end goal of institutionalizing the connections between words, actions, and patterns of behavior at the team and individual levels.

CBU has sought to encourage and reward those who would expand their vision of the future of higher education. By recognizing employees who are willing to take risks and share new non-proven ideas, employees feel as though they, as a single individual, can make a difference in the future of the entire university. Cultivating that perception further adds to a sense of ownership the employees demonstrate over their respective domains

As part of their daily responsibilities, project managers often juggle multiple objectives of numerous stakeholders. Project managers work in a matrixed environment

of professionals. For these project managers, their stakeholders broadly fall into two groups. The first group comprises those with a traditional higher education background, and the second group has a tech-industry background. With employees belonging to different corporate sub-cultures holding various motivating factors, there are often misunderstandings and clashes. The individual project managers' interpersonal skills often determine how they handle their positions' stressors and how they support those they manage. While not specialists in their stakeholders' areas, the project managers own the content's development process.

*Implications for Other Higher Education and Government Entities.*

Traditional education is a complex environment that has habitually followed a slower model of evolutionary change management. Having been tightly bound to various government and regulatory bodies, higher education has had to take an evolutionary standard for change rather than a revolutionary path to give time to laws, regulations, and numerous groups to allow time to respond and adjust to the proposed changes. With the advent of other increasingly popular options, education institutions have evolved faster than the customarily unhurried pace perceived to exist in most political or heavily regulated environments. Ambiguity and ambivalence are not unique to government agencies. However, those environments' conflicting goals add confusion, uncertainty, and confusion among employees at levels not found in less complicated areas. The complexity of educational change management more closely resembles the challenges found within governmental change management than that of the other for-profit entities, especially privately held ones. That is primarily due to the number of individual stakeholders and groups, each with their interests, challenges, and viewpoints that can

influence outcomes and the course of action. The number of groups involved increases the complexity and corresponding decreased likelihood for rapid and successful change. Most companies that are the size of an average school do not typically have to contend with the multiple challenges and regulatory bodies and entities encountered within a school.

Being primarily funded by various taxpayer sources imposes further regulations and resistance opportunities that many companies do not commonly contend with. Sources of resistance can include numerous influential groups. A few of those groups include various employee unions, political forces, multiple credentialing bodies, external regulatory bodies, groups with control and oversight, parent and citizen groups, local state and federal government agencies, and many laws and regulations that change region to region. In addition, there are many other concerns that a project manager must consider with every single potential change. Large and minor issues that involve change management, ranging from giant initiatives like implementing a new degree program to the smaller, less noticeable issues like the proper installation of a new water fountain, can lead to financial loss, reduced customer satisfaction, even litigation from numerous fronts. In government and educational environments, all of those efforts run through an agent of change charged with overcoming resistance.

*Future Research Opportunities at CBU*

This research took place within a multifaceted environment within a complex industry. The countless daily interactions between these specialized professionals and the multitude of dependencies provide a wealth of future research opportunities. As noted by the researcher, a few of those research prospects are as follows; Within a nontraditional

university, what are project managers' experiences supporting individuals who refuse to buy into required organizational change? Do the size or type of the request project managers make impact their success? Are there differences in project management experiences that impact the project manager's success? For example, are smaller changes or larger ones more likely to succeed? What is it like for project managers to inspire and enact the changes that others dreamt up? How do project managers go about supporting and selling ideas they find disagreeable? Do new employee attitudes and level of experience make them more or less likely to be successful in implementing change?

*Conclusions and Summary*

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study has been to explore the lived experiences of a team of project managers acting as agents of change as they have worked to inspire and implement change within higher education. This study synthesized the experiences of specialized project managers. The results of this study provided an in-depth view of participants' perceptions of their challenges and opportunities regarding their organization's emerging change management process (Bridges 2003). Throughout the research process, data was compiled, which provided comprehensive descriptions of the lived experiences of the study's participants—capturing, compiling, and dissecting these multiple viewpoints of complex phenomena allowed for the emergence of relevant themes.

The analysis of the themes revealed the deep and rich nature of shared experiences from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Not only did the data presentation and subsequent analysis in this chapter offer justification for the methods used to discover common themes, but it also enabled the researcher to capture the essence of the

group and the individual participants' experiences. Within this chapter, the researcher reviewed the information provided by project managers as they discussed their current and past challenges. These multiple shared experiences and viewpoints identified perception and experience commonalities shared by the project managers.

Identifying and coding emerging themes related to the stated research questions allowed the researcher to examine and discuss data to answer the posed primary and secondary research questions. Compiling and reviewing these multiple thick and rich descriptions provided identifiable lessons to help project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders. There are multiple commonalities among the types of resistance project managers regularly encounter. These collective challenges share many underlying root causes and frequently similarly manifest themselves. The project management team has further opportunities to adjust their collective and individual approaches further to better anticipate and address stakeholder concerns and frustrations as their newly selected change management system is fully implemented.

Challenges like ambiguity, confusion, and frustration are not unique to CBU. These common challenges are increasing in frequency and have broad implications across all of higher education. Commonalities among negative behaviors the team regularly encountered were individuals nitpicking their leadership, verbal criticisms, gossip, questioning with hostile intent, and snide and sarcastic comments. According to Procsi (n.d., para. 4), encountering forms of resistance like those reported by this study's participants are typical and should be expected by members of management and change management practitioners. Prosci's (n.d., para. 3) philosophy is that "resistance to change

can be avoided if effective change management is applied on the project from the very beginning." The encountered negative behaviors were categorized into following five themes; the impact on current job role, a lack of awareness as to why the change was needed, the team's past poor performance with change management, the lack of visible support and commitment from managers, and the perceived potential for job loss.

As a result of gaining an understanding of the challenges encountered by individuals, the obstacles facing the group became clear. From better understanding these challenges the researcher gained insight and knowledge concerning how improving key areas could make the team more effective and efficient. When it came to areas that project managers expressed were necessary for them to be effective in their roles five pervasive positive themes became clear; urgency, safety, openness, and transparency which were supporting principles for the fifth key theme, effective teamwork. Members of management were concerned with utilizing these themes to leverage and empower their best and most capable employees by fostering relationships, building skills, and developing leaders in a cohesive, effective, and collaborative team. Individual's perspectives regarding these five principles were more centered on impacts on individual friendships and their personal effectiveness in their role. Management's focus on adopting and implanting formal change management resulted in a broad shift from ad-hoc self-reliant change management to a system and culture where people understood the big picture, felt safe, heard, respected.

CHAPTER FIVE

Executive Summary

*Introduction*

Headquartered in the intermountain west area of the United States, Competency-Based University (CBU) is a 100% online, non-profit university is known for its innovative competency-based education model. CBU is in the midst of rapid annual growth, an increase in underserved and non-traditional students, and is enveloped within and seeking to lead a rapidly advancing higher-education marketplace. Formed only about 20 years ago, CBU, never having had a physical campus, now boasts more than 121,000 active students and a sustained 20% annual growth (CBU Annual Report, 2018). Mainly serving adult learners, CBU provides access to high-quality, affordable, and industry-relevant bachelor's and master's degree programs. CBU leaders aim to embrace change more effectively to be abundantly prepared for the learners of tomorrow.

Many higher education leaders are aware that education is in the midst of an exciting transformation. This higher-education industry comprehensive transformation is full of ambiguity, changing constraints, and evolving student challenges. CBU University Provost optimistically affirmed, "a considerable opportunity collectively inspires us: if we address contemporary needs and design new approaches, higher education can be truly transformational" (Uncharted Territory, 2019, p. 5). Hiltz and Turoff (2005) further discuss the in-progress revolution in higher education and its shifting role in society, forecasting that "50 years from the time of their writing … this period of time will be seen as revolutionary" (p. 60). Higher education's very nature is in an exciting period of

growth, forcing university leaders to address large-scale sweeping change at the institutional level.

This Problem of Practice Study explored how a team of project managers, acting as agents of change, inspired and implemented change within a fast-growing higher education institution within this rapidly evolving environment. This qualitative phenomenology study examined details of the university-selected change management process and synthesized the lived experiences of specialized project managers as they grappled with multiple challenges, including; an increasingly larger workforce, growing silos of operations, uncoordinated communications, and disjointed change efforts, among other struggles. The researcher accomplished these objectives by asking and answering the following primary and secondary research questions:

*Primary Research Question*

> Within a non-traditional university, what are the project manager's experiences responding to required organizational change?

*Secondary Research Questions*

> What identifiable lessons can help project managers lead future organizational change efforts by more effectively engaging stakeholders?

> Are there commonalities within the types of resistance project managers encounter, and how do project managers adjust their approach based on those types of resistance?

These questions enabled the researcher to documented the department's change management culture by examining individual contributors' views, including how they perceived their surrounding environment and how that interpretation played out in their everyday lives. As knowledge unfolded at the individual level, the researcher gained

further understanding of how stakeholders understand and interpret changes based on what they already knew and believed, which ultimately created a construct of lessons learned the researcher shared with the study participants and university leadership for their benefit and the benefit of their current and future students.

*Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures*

Study participants included 25 project managers with varying years of experience, change management familiarity, and formal project management education. The researcher used multiple data sources, including a review of formal policy documents, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to better understand the team's collective and individual challenges. This study utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics to gain insight into how individuals' each with their own thoughts, working knowledge, and challenges, combined to define their team's identity. Data analysis occurred to identify common themes to understand the project managers' current change management process details. The researcher used formal process documents as a basis to create questionnaires. Then the researcher created, distributed, and studied questionnaires and their open-ended responses. The researcher utilized stratified purposeful sampling to identify the most helpful and knowledgeable individuals for continued study participation based upon questionnaire responses. The researcher then conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews comprised of planned probing questions with those selected individuals. The researcher conducted interviews designed to provide opportunities for individual participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and concerns openly. Participants shared multiple meaningful experiences regarding change management, their accounts of things done well, and a review of their encountered challenges at CBU. The

researcher then coded and sorted the resulting data into themes that captured participant's perceived individual and team successes and evaluated participant's perceptions regarding the past, present, and future of the state of change management with their organization.

*Summary of Key Findings*

As a result of gaining an understanding of the individuals who make up the larger cohesive project management group, the researcher gained insight and knowledge concerning how improving key areas could make the team more effective and efficient. Five pervasive themes became clear; urgency, safety, openness, and transparency are all key supporting principles for effective teamwork. Members of management were concerned with utilizing these themes to leverage and empower their best and most capable employees by fostering relationships, building skills, and developing leaders in a cohesive, effective, and collaborative team. Individual's perspectives regarding these five principles were more centered on impacts on individual friendships and their personal effectiveness in their role.

As research participants discussed their ideal vision for change management, differences among expectations and ideal end-states came to light. As general topics became more nuanced, differences in individual's responses became commonplace. For example, some study participants wanted an endless stream of communication. Others saw that deluge as noise, a waste of time, and counterproductive. This singular instance documented how one individual contributor's interpretation of an ideal solution frequently does not align with their peers' thoughts or desires. These discrepancies regarding how individuals perceive their surrounding environment and how that

interpretation plays out in their everyday lives frequently resulted in a compromise. While an ideal solution for some, those resulting compromises created an environment that was only tolerable for others.

Project managers uniformly displayed a positive future outlook regarding implementing a formal change management process despite the majority sharing adverse reactions recalled from their change management rear-view mirrors. Participants were constant in their perception that the past may have been challenging, but the future for change management within the team seemed bright. The positive outlook expressed by study participants was primarily due to a clear path forward being defined by senior management's selection and implementation of a single university-wide change management process. Adopting and implanting a formal change management process had resulted in a broad shift from ad-hoc self-reliant change management to a system where people understood the big picture, felt safe, heard, respected, and were more likely to move from feelings of pessimism to impartiality and them move from impartiality to positive vitality.

*Informed Recommendations*

Challenges like ambiguity, confusion, and frustration are not unique to CBU. These common challenges are increasing in frequency and have broad implications across all of higher education. After analyzing the data, answering the research questions, engaging in peer discussions, and finding validation, the researcher firmly recommends adopting a formal change management process. There are multiple formal change management processes, and identifying the best fit for your organization is an effort well worth undertaking.

University leadership should unequivocally utilize project management expertise more extensively. Eve (2007) explains that project management is essential, and higher education institutions can "improve their efficiency and competitiveness" (p. 85). A general lack of senior management enthusiasm and understanding of project management may be a root cause of why project management has not been as widely supported and effectively implemented in many colleges and universities as it has been in other sectors (Bryde & Leighton, 2009). Having a centrally located project management team with overarching cross-departmental reach is a key component for providing the consistency and uniformity needed to break down existing silos and prevent more silos from forming. At this university, the Project Management Office (PMO), with its approximately 25 specialized project managers, has continually served as a resource for many entities on campus struggling to define a successful path forward. The evolution of the emerging online education industry has required redefining and creating new roles in producing cutting-edge scholastic content. This broad and sweeping industry change has provided university leadership with a rare opportunity to adapt by incorporating and utilizing business methodologies that are already widespread in many other sectors.

By taking the time to understand individual team members' capabilities and challenges, managers, and leaders can cohesively strengthen the group's capacity to meet future challenging changes successfully. By strengthening each unique team member, the team is better positioned to find future success, bolster the team's perception among their peers, and positively alter the team's perception of themselves as individuals and as a group. As reported by study participants, the strengthening of individual team members should be centered around the following five pervasive premises to prepare their

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organizations to be change ready; urgency, safety, openness, transparency, and teamwork.

*Findings Distribution Proposal*

The distribution of this research is important to help empower individuals in similar circumstances where they are largely left on their own to implement changes dictated by other members of their organizations. Competition among universities to acquire new students is becoming even more widespread. The disruptive climate brought about by increased nationwide competition for students has emphasized and has relevance to the review of the ongoing challenges within this qualitative research study. While this study focuses on one online university, relevant findings benefit educational leaders seeking to disrupt their old way of doing business and move to a more modern self-serviced online pedagogical approach and methodology.

*Target Audience*

This research design provided relatable and actionable change management material to the members of CBU university leadership. Project Management Office members, other participants, stakeholders, and university leaders received the study's findings and analysis to refine their development process and improve employee buy-in regarding required and inevitable changes within higher education. Gaps exist between senior leadership perception of the current state of change readiness, and their team's actual state of change management preparedness. The 25 individuals that participated in this study have provided ample actionable material that senior university leaders must utilize to better prepare their organization for future change action sequences. CBU leadership will need to continue to dissect and disseminate the findings contained within

this research if they wish their institution to continue enjoying their positioning as an innovative higher education leader. In support of that aim, the researcher has and will continue to share and discuss lessons learned with senior CBU leadership for the benefit of the university, team and individual performance, and ultimately for the benefit of the CBU student.

While this study focused on a specific team in a singular university, this research provides opportunities for other higher-education leaders to draw relevant conclusions from this instance. The researcher positioned this study to be a source of relevant information for those who have been, who are currently interested in, or who may be considering becoming engaged in the pursuit of continuous evolution within the higher education landscape. Individuals with similar backgrounds or interests may also find this research of interest. Members of management who struggle with change implementation, change resistance, task ambiguity, growing pains, stakeholder confusion, resistant employees, or frustration related to change management, in general, will also find this study of use.

*Proposed Distribution Method and Venue*

The materials covered within this study would be best disseminated through project management, change management, and university leadership circles. Each group has a stake in the materials covered herein and will have varying viewpoints, thoughts, concerns, and ideas for the following action steps. The researcher proposes that an ideal distribution method and venue that could reach those circles for this distribution would be an hour-long presentation at the International Conference on Business Process Reengineering and Change Management, or ICBPRCM. This conference, hosted by the

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, brings together a large and diverse number of international academic leaders in an event where leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars can "exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Business Process Reengineering and Change Management" (ICBPRCM, n.d., para. 2). Held in New York City these gatherings offer participants a "premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Business Process Reengineering and Change Management" (ICBPRCM, n.d., para. 2). The research contained within this study is would be of prime interest to the World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology due to its unique educational and business implications. Higher learning institutions that are actively trying to better serve non-traditional students through enacting new ways to shift to a more modern self-serviced online pedagogical approach and methodology will find this research of the utmost importance and relevance. The personal and systemic challenges, industry disruption, personal and corporate innovations, concerns, and adopted solutions in the fields of project management, business process reengineering and change management make this research a prime candidate for presentation and publication.

*Distribution Materials*

The distribution of materials covered within this study would best be shared through the preparation and distribution of presentation slides in support of the hour-long presentation at the professional conference mentioned in the previous section. The researcher would use the prepared slides in review of the study's purpose statement,

research questions, participants, methodology, findings, and recommendations. These slides would include tables and figures from this study, as well as a series of bullet points in support of the need for the research, the research process, research findings, and proposed next steps. The presentation will include a review of these slides, breakout sessions for attendees, and a question-and-answer opportunity.

During the presentation, the attendees will learn the content of this study and consider ways to apply findings to their organization. The presentation slides will include a review of the primary and supporting secondary research questions, a description of the unique environment where the study took place, and a review of the participant selection process. For conference attendees to understand study results, a brief overview of the research methodology would be prudent. Answering the research questions would culminate in sharing lessons learned. These lessons would be generalized and applied to other groups and industries in an attempt to make the study more relevant and applicable to those in attendance. The breakout session will allow attendees to generalize and apply the lessons learned to their own organizations. The question-and-answer opportunity will allow time for reflection and clarification.

The researcher hopes to use the presentation to inspire university leaders, educators, business leaders, students, and change management and project management practitioners. By sharing the challenges these change managers endured and overcame, the researcher will encourage attendees to think about how they can take the lessons learned back to their places of business and education to make improvements within their spheres of influence. The goal of this presentation and the research as a whole is to be for

the future benefit of all of those who have been impacted by or have had to struggle through poorly implemented change.

*Conclusion*

This chapter briefly reviewed the location and environment where the research study took place, who participated in the research, how the research was conducted, the findings that resulted, and suggested possibilities for who would likely benefit from this qualitative phenomenology study. The study examined details of the university selected change management process and synthesized the lived experiences of specialized project managers as they grappled with multiple challenges. The researcher utilized collective philosophical hermeneutics to gain insight into how individuals' each with their own thoughts, working knowledge, and challenges, combined to define their team's identity and how they collectively thought they could best chart a productive path forward in the hopes that the lived experiences of a few would be for the benefit of many.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Agreement and Release Form


Thank you for agreeing to consider taking part in this study. This form provides a brief description of this study, a description of your involvement, and an overview of your rights and expectations as a participant.

*The Research*
This study, entitled Implementing Change in Higher Education: Resolving Change Management Deficiencies and its Effects on Process and Employee Efficiency, explores how a team of project managers, as agents of change, inspire and implement change in higher education. Also, it synthesizes the lived experiences of specialized project managers as they grapple with the challenges of being agents of change within a fast-growing organization.

*The Purpose*
The study's findings will provide opportunities for university leaders to draw personally relevant conclusions from your example. This research design provides relatable and actionable change management material to university leadership. This study is positioned to be a source of information for those who have been, who are currently interested in, or who may be considering becoming engaged in the pursuit of continuous evolution within the higher education landscape.

*Your Participation*
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be asked to take part in a twenty-question online questionnaire. You may also be asked about specific relevant documents detailing current processes at the individual contributor and team levels. The artifacts that may be discussed include formal policy documents, written instructions, and process flow charts. You may also be asked to participate in an in-person or online interview. The researcher will conduct an approximately hour-long interview, where he will take notes of your responses. This interview will be comprised of planned probing questions regarding your thoughts, activities, and experiences, your accounts of things done well, and the challenges you encounter as related to change management and project management within your current role. You are not required to answer any of the questions. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you have provided during your participation will be omitted from the study, and at your request, destroyed.

*Benefits and Risks*
A benefit of your participation is that university leadership will hear your thoughts and concerns. Your participation will assist your university leaders and other leaders in other

capacities, structure their teams and processes to benefit their employees' lives and increase their teams' effectiveness. Care has been taken to ensure that there are no risks for your participation in this study. There are no risks or consequences for participating in this study, for opting not to participate in this study, or deciding to opt-out of the study at any time during your involvement.

*Confidentiality*
All of your personal information and question responses will be kept confidential. Your identifying information and answers will be held securely in an encrypted online database. The researcher will not share your personal information or individual responses with anyone without your prior approval. Your name, personal information, specific questionnaire and interview responses, and any other identifying information will not be contained within the study.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns now or at any time during the study, you are encouraged to contact the researcher immediately.

By signing this consent form, I certify that I _____ *(print name here)* have read, understand, and agree to the terms of this agreement.


_____
Signature of Participant


_____
Date

APPENDIX B

Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation Schedule


Table B.1

Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation Schedule

| Phase *(Schedule)* | Step *(Days allocated)* | Task |
|---|---|---|
| One – Artifacts *(week #1)* | One – Collection *(3.5 days)* | Obtain relevant formal policy documents: written employee instructions and process flow charts |
| | Two – Analysis *(3.5 days)* | Review of the current process and organizational structures |
| Two - questionnaires *(week #2-3)* | One - Collection | Contact and notify the population to be studied |
| | *(7 days)* | Review questionnaire questions <br> Design and build a questionnaire <br> Distribute questionnaire access link and follow up <br> Collect and store questionnaire results |
| | Two - Analysis *(7 days)* | Analyze questionnaire results <br> Code results for themes <br> Document results |
| Three – Interviews *(week #4-5)* | One – Collection *(7 days)* | Contact and notify the population to be studied <br> Schedule interviews <br> Design semi-structured interview <br> Conduct interviews |
| | Two – Analysis *(7 days)* | Collect interview notes and store results <br> Analyze interview results |
| Four – Interpretation *(week #6)* | One – Current State Evaluation *(3.5 days)* | Discussion of questionnaire and interview results <br> Comparison and interpretation of questionnaire and interview results |
| | Two – Future State Evaluation *(3.5 days)* | Discussion of possible future action sequences <br> Discussion of study limitations |

APPENDIX C

Participant Project Management Experience by Role (detailed)

Table C.1

*Participant Project Management Experience by Role (detailed)*

| Project Manager (PM) | Current Role | Project Management Certifications | Project Management Experience (Time) |
|---|---|---|---|
| PM 1 | Senior PM | PMP | 9 yr 4 mo |
| PM 2 | Department Director | PMP, CSM | 18 yr 2 mo |
| PM 3 | Senior PM | PMP | 11 yr 7 mo |
| PM 4 | Department Manager | PMP | 16 yr 5 mo |
| PM 5 | Release Manager | CAPM | 3 yr 1 mo |
| PM 6 | PM | CSM | 4 yr 0 mo |
| PM 7 | Associate PM | None | 2 yr 6 mo |
| PM 8 | Senior PM | PMP, CSM | 15 yr 9 mo |
| PM 9 | PM | None | 7 yr 7 mo |
| PM 10 | PM | CAPM | 6 yr 3 mo |
| PM 11 | Release Manager | None | 1 yr 3 mo |
| PM 12 | PM | None | 8 yr 11 mo |
| PM 13 | Associate PM | CAPM | 3 yr 10 mo |
| PM 14 | Special Project PM | PMP, CSM | 22 yr 4 mo |
| PM 15 | Special Project PM | PMP | 17 yr 1 mo |
| PM 16 | Release Manager | None | 3 yr 3 mo |
| PM 17 | Senior PM | PMP | 12 yr 4 mo |

| Project Manager (PM) | Current Role | Project Management Certifications | Project Management Experience (Time) |
|---|---|---|---|
| PM 18 | Special Project PM | PMP, CAPM | 14 yr 8 mo |
| PM 19 | Release Manager | CSM | 4 yr 1 mo |
| PM 20 | PM | CAPM, CSM | 7 yr 5 mo |
| PM 21 | PM | PMP | 5 yr 8 mo |
| PM 22 | Associate PM | None | 0 yr 9 mo |
| PM 23 | Depart. Sr Manager | PMP, CSM | 14 yr 10 mo |
| PM 24 | Associate PM | CAPM | 4 yr 9 mo |
| PM 25 | Special Project PM | PMP | 13 yr 3 mo |

APPENDIX D

Open-Ended Email Questionnaire Questions

1.  Tell me about your current change management process.
2.  How do you currently set the stage for a change?
3.  How do you track employee perceptions regarding the change?
4.  Do you explain what is in it for them? How?
5.  How does your team divide the tasks it has to complete?
6.  How does the team track the quality and timeliness of your work in this process?
7.  What are your perceived opportunities for how the change management process could be better?
8.  What are the strengths of how your team deals with change?
9.  What negative impact(s) have the current change management process had on how your team operates?
10. What are the ways your team's work is impacted positively or negatively by the change management process?
11. What about the current change management process would you modify, add, or subtract, if possible?
12. What tools and systems do you use to track in-progress changes?
    a.  What do you like and dislike about them?
    b.  Do other people use them?
    c.  Why did you, or your team, select them?
13. What challenges do you think would arise if a standard change management process were implemented?
14. How can the change management process be more visible within the project management team? And to external teams?
15. When you encounter a person resistant to change, how do you deal with them?
16. Are there any consequences for individuals actively resisting change?
17. When people resist change, is there a reason why they are hesitant?
18. How are people incentivized to get on-board with the changes?
19. What kind of reinforcement or support does senior leadership provide?
20. What role does positive reinforcement play in encouraging others to adopt changes?

Semi-Structured Interview Question Pool

Planning & Resourcing

1. What is the best way to identify if a change is being delivered successfully?
2. What resources do you need to implement and monitor change?
3. Do you always use a communications plan? Why or why not?
4. How do you know if a change is needed?
5. How do you align the team's and individual's goals?
6. How do you ensure your projects are linked to higher strategic goals?
7. How do you effectively articulate the need for a change in a way stakeholder understand?
8. How do you identify key stakeholders in your projects?
9. Do you have any strategies to influence people? What are they?
10. How do you mobilize and inspire people to get on board with a change?
11. What do we need to do as a group to bring key stakeholders on board with a proposed change?
12. How do you get buy-in from the team before you implement a change?
13. How do you explain the scope, benefits, and need for a proposed change?
14. How do you turn "their" vision into "our" vision with your team?
15. Are you ever asked to implement a change to understand? What do you do in that situation?
16. What additional resources could you use to implement change better?
17. How do you go about understanding the risks associated with a change?
18. What methods do you use about a pending change? How are those methods different than what you do when a change is in progress?
19. How do you calculate risks when implementing a change?
20. How do you calm people who are uneasy with change, disruption, or conflict?

*Execution*

1. What truly drives your stakeholder's engagement?
2. How do we recognize and celebrate success? How can we do that better?
3. How do you know if messages the team receives are being received and understood as intended?
4. How do you share accountability for the successful implementation of a change?
5. How do you share leadership duties, including shared vision and purpose, with others?
6. How do you act as a champion for a change?
7. How do you effectively use large scale communication to engage stakeholders?

8. How do you monitor the progress of an in-progress change implementation?
9. How do you eliminate barriers for your team that stand in the way of implementing a change?
10. What barriers have you encountered when you are implementing a change? How can management support you with those barriers?
11. How do you give honest answers to tough questions from your stakeholders?
12. When you encounter resistance to a change, what is it usually in reference to?
13. How do you encourage others to remain positive when they are struggling with a change?
14. How do you handle stakeholders who are resisting change?
15. How do you motivate others to support your goals or the team's goals on an ongoing basis?
16. How do you see and diagnose problems from the perspectives of the people affected by change?
17. When you are in the middle of a project, do you ever need additional resources for a change? What resources might you need?
18. How do you successfully communicate change management plan adjustments to your stakeholders?
19. When your team is already working towards the requested change, how does management make things harder for them?
20. What complaints have you heard about change management in your projects?

*Future State Realization*

1. How would you like to see the team change to support change management?
2. What do we need to stop doing, and how can we stop it?
3. What messages are management delivering on change management?
4. How do, or do not, management's messages on change management address the concerns you hear from your team?
5. How do you paint a picture of the post-change future?
6. How does management support your change efforts? What could they do better?
7. What is the long-range strategy for the team's change management? What should it be?
8. How do you know your team members see you as trustworthy? Why would that be important?
9. How do you know the difference between what needs to be preserved and what needs to change?
10. Tell me about a difficult change you have been asked to implement. How did it turn out?
11. Tell me about a time a change effort was not as successful as it could have been. What happened? What could have made it better?
12. Tell me about a time you resisted change. What happened, and why did you accept it later?
13. Tell me about a time you improved a process. How was it received, and how did you make sure it worked as you wanted?

14. In regards to change management, what kind of help does your team want or need?
15. How are we as a team struggling to lead change?
16. What do your stakeholders think about how we handle change?
17. How do you track stakeholders' perceptions throughout your projects?
18. How are you emotionally literate?
19. How could management better set the stage for coming changes?
20. How do you encourage active listening in your stakeholders?

APPENDIX F

Letter from CBU Deans to the Program Development Department.


         "To support student success outcomes and meet our obligation to provide access to higher education, we recognize that change is essential to the future of CBU. And change applies to all of us, from our most senior leaders to the newest members of our organization.
         With that in mind, we are committed to the people side of change with the same tenacity that we, as an organization, committed to the disruption we cause through innovation. We will make change management an inherent part of our organization by preparing, equipping, and supplying our people with the tools needed to flourish through change. This includes utilizing standardized tools and processes to plan, organize, communicate, and execute our processes on our most important initiatives. We will anchor this in our culture of student obsession, people focus, and organizational learning."

-Academic VPs, January 2019

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