"Change and Modernisation in a Public Sector Organisation – A Study on Employee Commitment to Change"

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for a B.A. (Hons.) in Human Resource Management

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July 2005

Authorship Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of B.A. (Hons.) in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been citied and acknowledged within the text of my work

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the various approaches to change management and the individual and organisational issues that arise in the implementation of change initiatives. The aim is to examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change. In particular, the research explores two styles of change management; a top-down approach that is directive and does not consult with or involve staff, and a bottom-up approach that adopts a participative style. In addition, the research examines employees' perceptions of change and the significance attributed by staff to their involvement in the change process. The research was conducted in a Vocational Education Committee.

The literature review presents the main writings on change management and is drawn from a range of sources. An industry context outlines the particular drivers of change that impact on the organisation. A qualitative research approach entailed a questionnaire, and was designed to explore employees' attitudes and perceptions of the way in which change is implemented in the organisation.

The research indicates that employees are more committed to change if consulted about change and involved in the design and implementation of change. The findings support the literature review and are in-line with expected outcomes.

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Introduction

Introduction Aims & Objectives

The research was conducted in a Vocational Education Committee (VEC). At the request of respondents to the questionnaire, to assure their confidentiality and honest engagement, the location of the VEC will not be identified and shall be referred to as the XVEC throughout the thesis.

There has been much reform in the Irish public sector since the introduction of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994. The Change and Modernisation Agenda has set requirements on the XVEC for the production of strategy statements and business plans, the implementation of performance management development systems, and the introduction of a quality customer service initiative.

Research has indicated that change in the public sector tends to be imposed from the top-down and that this approach to change is not successful or does not result in meaningful change. The literature has also indicated that there is a need for fundamental shift in the public sector from traditional command-and-control styles of management to models based on autonomy and trust to effect change.

Aims

The main aim of this thesis is to explore how change is implemented in the XVEC and explore the individual and organisational issues that arise in implementing

change and their implications for the success or failure of a planned change initiative. The research will examine approaches to change management that best engage employees, overcome resistance to change and increase the effectiveness of the implementation process.

Objectives

- To Identify the model of change adopted in the VEC

- To examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change by employees'

- To determine the significance attributed by staff to their involvement in the change process

- To determine employees' attitudes and perception of change initiatives in the XVEC

Outline of Thesis

Chapter One

The purpose of this chapter is to present the reader with a literature review of the theories and concepts of change management and to critically evaluate that

literature. It outlines the nature of change, the drivers of change and the various models and approaches to change management. The individual and organisational barriers to change are identified. The objective of this chapter is to explore the link between the way in which change is managed and employee commitment to and acceptance of change.

Chapter Two

Chapter two describes the history, role, and functions of the XVEC. The public sector Change and Modernisation Agenda is set out along with the implications for the XVEC. In addition, it outlines the general strategies adopted by the XVEC to managing change.

Chapter Three

Provides the rationale for this thesis; the main objectives of the research; and sets out the methodologies employed in the study.

Chapter Four

This chapter will report the findings of the questionnaire and an analysis of the
results in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter Five

Discuses the significance of the findings in terms of the overall research
objectives.   Conclusions are drawn and implications for the XVEC are outlined.
Recommendations are also made.

1. Literature Review

1. Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

This section will set out the nature of change and will explore the various forces that drive change. The various models of change and factors that prevent or block change will be discussed. The main objective of this chapter is to review the literature on change management; and to examine the relationship between how change is managed and the impact on employee commitment to and acceptance of change. It is also hoped to identify how best to engage staff in the change process that will overcome individual and organisational barriers to change.

1.2 Definitions of Change and the Nature of Change

According to Morley et al (2004), change becomes necessary when a performance gap arises, which is a discrepancy between what the organisation is trying to achieve and what it is actually accomplishing or intends to accomplish. Change management, as defined by Hayes (2002, p. 1), is concerned with "modifying or transforming organisations in order to maintain or improve their effectiveness". The main aim of organisational change is an adaptation to the environment or an improvement in performance (Pardo Del Val & Fuentes, 2003).

Change can generally be characterised as being either radical or incremental. Radical change, often referred to as transformational or discontinuous change (Hayes, 2002), refers to large-scale and organisation-wide transformation where the old ways and old ideas of doing things are overturned and replaced by new ideas and ways. This type of change requires a break from the past.

Incremental change often referred to as continuous or evolutionary change, on the other hand, relates to small changes that are specific to a particular part of the organisation and are designed to solve a particular problem or enhance performance (Morley et al., 2004). This type of change is said to be slow and as a result of adaptation to predictable environments and does not challenge existing routines and structures etc (Regan, 2005).

Hayes (2002) points out that change can also be reactive or anticipatory. Reactive change is a response to a current requirement for change and anticipatory change is initiated without a current need for change and is in preparation for some future event. Various authors point to the time frame for change as a determinant of the appropriate change strategy. Nadler and Tushman (Cited in Hayes, 2002, p.8) for example proposed the following typology of change which relates the degree of continuity or discontinuity with a dimension of time pressure.

	Incremental	Discontinuous
Anticipatory	Tuning	Re-orientation
Reactive	Adaptation	Re-creation

Figure 1.1 Types of organisational change

Source: Hayes (2002, p.8)

Tuning for example is change where there is no immediate requirement to change. Adaptation is an incremental and reactive response to a current external demand for change such as a competitor's marketing strategy. Re-orientation is a transformational change, such as re-aligning the business to be competitive in the future. Re-creation is a reactive change that involves radical change of all the basic elements of the organisation (Hayes, 2002).

1.3 Forces for Change

The above illustrates that the need for change or forces for change can emerge from a number of sources both external and internal to the organisation. Regan (2005) outlines the external forces as: economic or market conditions; product or manufacturing technologies; legal or political situation; and availability of resources. The internal drivers of change include; composition of employees;

needs of employees; technology; structure; corporate culture; and organisational goals.

Moorhead and Griffin(2004) note that there are many potential forces for change and identify four broad categories, namely people; technology; information processing and communication; and competition. The following table gives examples of the pressures for change under these headings;

Category	Examples	Type of Pressure for Change
People	Generation X Baby boomers Senior Citizens Workforce diversity	Demands for different training, benefits, workplace arrangements, and compensations systems
Technology	Internet Artificial intelligence	More education and training for workers at all levels, more new products, products move faster to market
Information Processing & Communication	Computer, satellite communications	Faster reaction times, immediate responses to questions, new products, different office arrangements, telecommuting
Competition	Worldwide markets International trade agreements Emerging nations	Global competition, more competing products with more features and options, lower costs, higher quality

Table 1.1 Pressures for organisation change

Source: Moorhead and Griffin (2004, p.523)

Change is now recognised as a constant element of organisational life and the need to manage change is increasingly seen as essential for organisational survival. The next section outlines the various models of and approaches to managing change.

1.4 Models and Approaches of Change Management

A number of approaches to change and models of change have been put forward to bring about change in organisations. In general, the literature identifies the Planned Approach, and the Emergent Approach to organisational change management (Wilson 1992; Burnes, 1996). These approaches, along with Beer et. al.'s model of change and the Organisational Development (OD) approach will be considered below.

1.4.1 Planned Approaches to Organisational Change

The planned model of change which has is roots Kurt Lewin's work on action research and his three-step model (Burnes, 1996). Planned change strategies, as defined by Wilson (1992, p.27), are

"Those processes in which there was a smooth transition from some previously articulated strategic vision towards a future desired state."

Wilson proposes that this view underpins a large amount of change theory. Some of the main models are now discussed.

1.4.2 Action Research Model

This model, first coined by Lewin, is based on the principle that "an effective approach to solving organisational problems must involve a rational, systematic analysis of the issues in question" (Burnes, 1996, p.12). French and Bell (Cited in Morley et al. 2004, p.459) describe action research as:

"Programs and interventions designed to solve a problem or improve a condition... the process of systematically collecting research data about an ongoing system relative to some objective, goal, or need of that system; feeding these data back into that system; taking action by altering selected variables with the system, based both on the data and on hypotheses; and evaluating the results of action by collecting more data"

Morley et al. (2004) noted that this model promotes a consultative approach to managing change where managers, workers and a change agent agree a course of action.

1.4.3 Lewin's Three-Step Model

Lewin suggested that successful change in organisations required a multi-stage process approach. His model comprises three steps – unfreezing, change and refreezing (Moorhead & Griffin, 2004).

Unfreezing: Is concerned with raising awareness of the need for change and reducing the forces that are maintaining the status quo.

Change: This stage involves developing new behaviours and movement from the old way of doing things to the new way

Refreezing: Focuses on making permanent the new way of doing things and reinforcing the desired behaviour

The main criticism of this model is that it is very broad, later theorists have therefore expanded on Lewin's model to enhance its practical application.

1.4.4 Planned Change Models

Burnes (1996) identified a number of writers that have expanded on Lewin's model; these include Lippitt et al., 1958, Bullock and Batten, 1985, and Cummings and Huse, 1998. According to Morley et al. (2004), and Burnes (1996), these

models are based on a planned set of successive steps that should be followed so as to effect organisational change. According to Morley et al. (2004, p.460) planned change suggests that "organisations exist in different states at different times" and can therefore "follow pre-designed plans to move from one state to the other". Morley et al. (2004) therefore argue that, in addition to the process of change, organisations must also appreciate the sequential stages that must be gone through to ensure this change.

For example, Lippitt et al.'s model (cited in Morley et. al., 2004 p.460) comprises four main steps: firstly, the change agent establishes the current situation in terms of collecting the required information; secondly, the change agent develops a systematic plan of the required behaviour change; the third stage involves implementing the change; and the final stage is concerned with integration and evaluation of the change.

Hayes (2002), also referring to the work of Lippitt et. al. and others, suggests that these planned approaches to change highlight the importance of:

- Diagnosis – where the organisation is now and where it needs to be
- Strategies and plans – to move towards the desired state
- Implementation - translating plans into change efforts

However, Burnes (1996) notes a number of criticisms that can be applied to the planned change models which include:

- It assumes that organisations operate under stable conditions and can move from one stable state to another following a pre-determined plan. Such an assumption is unrealistic in a turbulent world and organisational change is more continuous and open-ended than a set of self-contained events

- It is more applicable to incremental change rather than to radical transformational change

- It ignores situations where more directive approaches may be needed, such as in a crisis, and does not allow scope for widespread involvement or consultation

- It presumes that common agreement can be reached, and that all parties involved in a change project have a willingness and interest in implementing the change. Organisational conflict and politics would therefore appear to be ignored.

1.4.5 Emergent Change Models

In response to criticism of the planned approach the emergent approach came about. Writers such as Wilson (1992, 41), argued that change is more open-ended and continuous and is influenced by wider forces outside the organisation and outside the scope of strategic choice of individual managers.

According to Burnes (1996, p.13), the emergent model can be described as

"A process that unfolds through the interplay of multiple variables (context, political processes and consultation) within an organization".

The Emergent Approach represents a move towards a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" approach (such as the planned models) to initiating and implementing change. Burnes (1996, p. 14) identified the main principles of Emergent Change as follows:

- "Organisational change is a continuous process of experiment and adaptation with the goal of matching an organisation's capabilities to the needs and dictates of a dynamic and uncertain environment"

- Although made up of many small and incremental changes, over time the change process can involve major organisational transformation and re-configuration

- The role of managers is "to foster an organisational structure and climate which encourages and sustains experimentation and risk-taking, and to develop a workforce that will take responsibility for identifying the need for change and implementing it"

- Managers have responsibility for developing a common vision of the direction of the company against which proposed change can be judged

- Information gathering, communication and learning are the key organisational activities needed to ensure these elements operate successfully

The literature reports that the Emergent Approach to change is based on the assumption that all organisations operate in a turbulent, dynamic and unpredictable environment. (Wilson, 1992; Burnes, 1996; Morley et. al., 2004). It is suggested that if this view is accepted, then the Emergent Model is suitable for all organisation, in all situations at all times. Dunphy and Stace (Cited in Morley et.al. 2004, p. 462) disagree with this view and argue that a situational or contingency approach to change is needed; as organisations operate under different circumstance, there must be more than one approach or best way to manage change. However, Burnes (1996) argues that the call for a contingency approach has been criticised as simply replacing a "one best way for all" to manage change to a "one best way for each organisation".

1.4.6 The Organisational Development (OD) Approach

This approach to change represents "a planned, organisation-wide effort, managed from the top". The aim is to "increase organisational effectiveness through planned interventions in the organisation's processes, drawing on knowledge from the behavioural sciences" (Reegan, 2005).

This approach is concerned with improving organisational problem-solving and renewal processes; stresses collaborative management whereby all affected parties are included in the change efforts; and attempts to change the organisation culture and work climate (Regan, 2005; Morley et.al 2004). Central to the

principles of OD is that people are key to successful change in organisations, and empowerment, open communications, learning and ownership of change are the espoused values (O'Brien, 2002).

Morley et. al.(2004) suggest that OD is more compatible with organic structures and proposes that those organisations that could best benefit from OD are the ones which are most likely to resist it, that is , bureaucratic, mechanistic, highly formalised organisations.

1.4.7 Beer's Model

Beer et. al (1990) advocate a model of change that is based on 'task alignment', and argue that starting at the periphery and moving steadily toward the corporate core is the most effective way to achieve lasting organisational change. Effective change is brought about by putting people into a new organisational context, whereby the target for renewal should be at the level of employee roles, responsibilities and relationships. Beer et. al.'s (1990, p.161) approach identifies a critical path of six overlapping steps:

1. "Mobilize commitment to change through joint diagnosis of business problems
2. Develop a shared vision of how to organize and manage for competitiveness

3. Foster consensus for the new vision, competence to enact it, and cohesion to move it along

4. Spread revitalization to all departments without pushing it from the top

5. Institutionalise revitalisation through formal policies, systems, and structures

6. Monitor and adjust strategies in response to problems in the revitalisation process"

Beer et al. (1990, p.164) argue that this approach "provides a way to elicit renewal without imposing it and, when stakeholders become committed to a vision, they are willing to accept a new pattern of management." Beer et al. (1990) argue that the role of top management in enabling "bottom up" change is to specify the general direction for change without insisting on specific solutions, to create a climate for change, to identify and spread models of success and to develop strong leaders.

1.5 Style of Change Management

The literature suggests that the way in which change is implemented will shape the reaction to change and the success of change. According to O'Brien (2002) much of the literature suggests that developing and promoting change initiatives from the lower levels can be an effective process of change. This view is supported by Mullins et. al. (2001) who contend that empowering front-line staff to

deal with and respond to new uncertainties results in successful outcomes in an era of rapid change.

The literature argues for a move away from top-down approaches to change to bottom-up models of change, based on autonomy and trust to effect change (Caulkin, 2003; Mullins et. al, 2001; O'Brien (2001). Research conducted by Karp (2004) for example found that top-down change initiatives are not successful. O'Brien (2002), based on a study of a public sector organisation, also argues that top-down approaches to change management do not work.

Handy (cited in Burnes 1996, pp 16) is of the view that there is a strong link between culture and managerial practices. He states that "organisations that have a role culture tend to promote a top-down, bureaucratic managerial style that emphasizes means over ends." He suggests that a Planned Approach to change suits this type of organisation. Task cultures, on the other hand according to Handy, "tend to promote ends over means and are associated with a flexible more decentralised style of management." Task cultures, are more suited to Emergent Models of change. Handy argues that it would be difficult for an organisation with a role culture to successfully adopt a participative, bottom-up approach to change.

The benefits of a bottom-up approach to change, according to Hayes (2002), include a recognition of problems long before they are obvious to top management. A bottom-up strategy also encourages the commitment of

employees' to change. However, on the negative side, where rapid adjustment is needed, bottom-up change may not be able to react fast enough. In addition, coordination may be difficult if a number of separate and incompatible change initiatives start to emerge across the organisation. A top-down approach coordinated by senior management may therefore be an essential ingredient of an effective change strategy (Hayes, 2002).

The debate about how best to implement change, top-down or bottom-up, is further explored by Beer and Nohria (2000). Based on 40 years of studying the nature of organisational change they point to two main archetypes or theories of change: Theory E and Theory O. Theory E is the old-fashioned way of managing change from the top down. It is the "hard" approach; goals are set with little involvement from their management teams, lower levels or unions. Theory O, a "soft" approach is based on the goal of developing corporate culture and human capability. Central to this approach is participation and involvement where a bottom-up approach to change is encouraged. Through their research, Beer and Nohria found that companies that effectively combine hard and soft, or theory E and theory O, approaches to change are rewarded with profitability and productivity. The strategies to successfully combine the two approaches include:

- Confront the tension between E and O goals – e.g. explain the need for the change and what has to happen but that employees' views and ideas will be listened to

- Set direction from the top and engage people below – set the strategy but encourage dialogue and consult with employees and customers

- Focus simultaneously on the hard and soft sides of the organisation - e.g. on the E side, remove layers of hierarchy at the top and the O side a more equal and transparent place to work

- Plan for spontaneity - encourage experimentation and evolution

- Let incentives reinforce change, not drive it – e.g. employees' high involvement is encouraged to develop their commitment to change, and variable pay is used to reward that commitment

Much of the literature reports that managing change is a difficult task and that 70% of all change initiatives fail (Beer and Nohria, 2000). The next section will look at the factors that hinder change and strategies that can be use to overcome resistance.

1.6 Reactions to Change

The literature identifies resistance to change as one of the main problems or reasons for failure of the change process. Resistance to change originates from two main sources, the individual and the organisation. Both of these will now be explored.

1.6.1 Individual Resistance to change

It is generally accepted that resistance to change is inevitable. Examples of resistant behaviour can range from becoming anxious about the future, to protesting about change, to outright refusal, and to co-operation (Smyth et. al, 2000). Baron and Greenberg (1992) (Cited in Morley et.al, 2004 p.464) propose that reactions to change can be categorised along a continuum as per Figure 1.2

Quitting	Active Resistance	Opposition	Acquiescence	Reserved Acceptance	Acceptance	Active Support
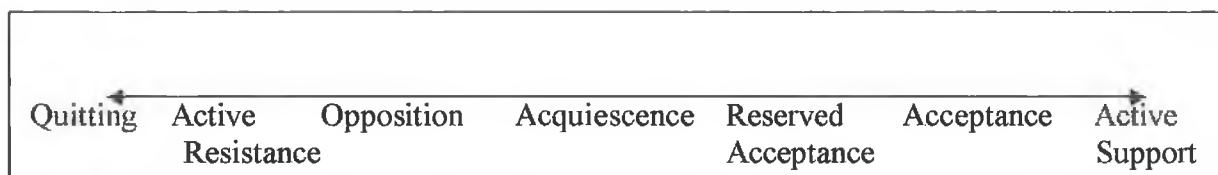
Figure 1.2 Reactions to change

Source: Morley et. Al. (2004, p. 464)

The scale shows the various reactions to change from the extreme of leaving the job, as the change is perceived to be intolerable, to acquiescence, where individuals are unhappy about the change but feel powerless to prevent it; through to an active support situation where change is welcomed and individuals actively engage in the process.

According to Moorhead and Griffin (2004, p.541) individual sources of resistance to change are "rooted in basic human characteristics such as perceptions and

needs." Many authors have identified reasons why change is resisted, for example Kotter and Schlesinger (Cited in Hayes, 2002 p. 130) identify four main reasons why people resist change: parochial self-interest; misunderstanding and lack of trust; different assessments; and low tolerance for change. Tiernan et. al. (2001) in a review of the literature identify the following six main sources of resistance to change associated with the individual:

Habit – It becomes easier to do a job the same way every day. An established habit allows an individual to cope with the work environment and provides comfort. Resistance occurs because it is easier to stay with the status quo than to learn new ways.

Selective Perception - Individuals tend to view their environment through the filters of their values, attitudes and beliefs. As individuals develop an understanding of reality through their values and attitudes, they are reluctant to alter this understanding. Consequently, change is resisted.

Economic Factors - Where a change initiative threatens an individual's income, change is generally resisted.

Security - Individuals can feel comfortable and secure in completing things the same old way, this provides security. When change occurs to the normal way of doing things, individuals feel their security is at risk, and consequently they resist such change.

Social Factors – The group can be a powerful motivator of behaviour especially if acceptance by the group is important to the individual. People may resist change for fear of what others will think of them, or to preserve group norms that dictate what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable.

Lack of Understanding - Resistance to change often arises due to a lack of understanding of the rationale for the change. Individuals will not agree to changes which they do not fully understand and will often resist the change rather than clarify why the change is needed.

Other reported factors that cause resistance to change according to Hussey (Cited in Morley et.al, 2004 p.466) include fear of personal failure or inability to cope with the new way; imposed change where individuals have no voice or say in the matter; and lack of faith in those making the change. Hussey argues that individuals lose faith in those making the change based on how previous change was managed; unsuccessful or uncomfortable change can result in individuals feeling 'hard done by' and more likely to resist future changes.

Furthermore, research by Nikolaou and Vakola (2005) found that negative attitudes to change have negative consequences for the organisation, such as lower job satisfaction and intention to quit. Their research also indicated that organisational commitment will result in willingness to accept organisational change.

1.6.2 Organisational Resistance

Organisational barriers to change reported in the literature include: lack of coherent change plans; insufficient relevant training; poor leadership skills; and poor communication (CIPD, 2004). Katz and Kahn (Cited in Moorhead and Griffin, 2004 p.539) identified six major organisational sources of resistance as follows:

Overdetermination – or structural inertia, where the structure of the organisation produces resistance to change due to the fact that it is designed to maintain stability. Bureaucratic structures, tall hierarchies and narrowly defined jobs, for example, become rigid as they develop and generally resist change.

Narrow focus of change - change efforts often ignore the interdependencies among organisational elements such as people, structure, and systems. For example, a structural change to introduce team working but reward that remains based on individual performance is likely to fail.

Group Inertia - occurs when the group refuses to change its behaviour patterns, resulting in group norms acting as a barrier to change. This is especially true if individual attempts at change are dependent on corresponding change by the group.

Threatened Expertise - if the specialised expertise of an individual is threatened, for example though introducing a job redesign, their natural reaction is to resist such change.

Threatened Power – change often results in a redistribution of decision-making authority and power. Where this is likely to occur it will be resisted, because individuals or groups are reluctant to have their power and influence diminished.

Resource Allocation – Change will be resisted where changes to resource allocation is less favourable.

According to Del Val and Fuentes (2003) organisational resistance can be seen in both the formulation stage and the implementation stage of change initiatives. Based on a review of the literature, they argue that resistance starts with *a wrong perception of the need for change.* This occurs as a result of many factors such as the inability of the company to look into the future with clarity; communication barriers that lead to information misinterpretation; or organisational decisions without all the necessary information. A second source of resistance at the formulation stage is *a low motivation for change.* They suggest, for example, that this results from a lack of motivation of employees who value change results less than mangers value them. *A lack of creative response* is also identified. This refers to resistance to change due to a reactive mind-set, resignation, or belief that

obstacles are inevitable and inadequate strategic vision or lack of commitment to change by top management.

Sources of resistance at the implementation stage relate to *political and cultural deadlocks* to change. This is seen in:

- Departmental politics, or resistance from those departments that will be affected by the change implementation.
- Disagreement among groups about the nature of the problem and its solutions
- Deep rooted values and emotional loyalty
- Forgetfulness of the social dimension of change

Other blocks at the implementation stage reported by Del Val and Fuentes (2003) include leadership inaction, embedded routines, and the lack of the necessary capabilities to implement change.

1.6.3 Overcoming Resistance to Change

It is clear from the issues raised above that change is complex and many authors suggest that the management of resistance is the key to the success or failure of a change initiative (Del Val and Fuentes, 2003; Moorhead & Griffin, 2004). Strategies for overcoming resistance to change suggested include at least three

major processes: participation and involvement; communication; and training and education (Schalk et. al. (1998); Morley et. al., 2004).

Participation and Involvement relates to the 'ownership' of change. It is widely held that allowing people to participate in the diagnosis of problems, the design of solutions, and in the implementation of solutions, is likely to lead to a better understanding of the rationale for change and overcome any resistance (Burnes, 1996 b; Schalk et. al, 1998; Smyth et. al.,2000).

Effective Communication, according to Burnes (1996 b), that informs those who will be affected by the change, how the change will affect them and taking on board responses to the information, can help overcome fears and encourage those concerned to assist, rather than resist change.

Training and Education, is seen as essential to successful change and can be put in place before change is introduced.

Kotter and Schlesinger (cited in Smyth et.al. 2000 p.339) identified six main methods of dealing with resistance to change. Their table is reproduced below.

	Commonly used in situations -	Advantages	Drawbacks
Education & Communication	Where there is lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis	Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of the change	Can be very time consuming if lots of people are involved
Participation & Involvement	Where the initiators do not have all the information they need to design the change, and where others have considerable power to resist	People who participate will be committed to implementing change, and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the change plan.	Can be very time consuming if participants design an inappropriate change.
Facilitation & Support	Where people are resisting because of adjustment problems	No other approach works as well with adjustment problems.	Can be time consuming and expensive, and still fail.
Negotiation & agreement	Where someone or some group will clearly lose out in a change, and where that group has considerable power to resist.	Sometimes it is a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance	Can be too expensive in many cases if it alerts others to negotiate for compliance.
Manipulation & Co-optation	Where other tactics will not work, or are too expensive.	It can be a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems.	Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated
Explicit & implicit coercion	Where speed is essential and the change initiators possess considerable power.	It is speedy, and can overcome any kind of resistance	Can be risky if it leaves people angry at the initiators.

Table 1.2 Methods of dealing with resistance to change

Source: Kotter and Schlesinger (Cited in Smyth et. al., 2000 p 339)

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the nature of change and forces that drive change. Two main approaches to change were discussed, the Planned Approach and the Emergent Approach. The complexity of managing change is evident in the various individual and organisational blocks and barriers that can arise. Furthermore, this chapter has explored how the way in which change is implemented impacts on the success of the change initiative. This involved an analysis of top-down and bottom-up approaches to change.

In the next chapter, the Industry context of the XVEC will be described along with the nature of change in the public sector; this will explain the rationale for the research and inform the methodology approach taken to answer the research questions that emerged from the literature review.

2. Industry Context

2. Industry Context

2.1 The X Vocational Education Committee (XVEC): An Introduction

The XVEC, a public sector organisation, is part of the Department of Education and Science. VECs were constituted under the Vocational Education Act passed into law by Dáil and Seanad Eireann in 1930. The VEC Act provided a structure whereby statutory committees formed in local Authority areas were enabled to develop technical and continuing education, including the provision of schools and colleges and curriculum development. Lifelong learning, often perceived to be a new idea, was provided for in this forward-looking Act by the inclusion of the concept of continuing education (City of Dublin VEC, 2004).

The XVEC is one of thirty three VECs' which are responsible for delivering second level, adult and further education and other services to young people and adults in Ireland.

The XVEC provides services to a diverse population which encompasses mainstream second level education and further and second chance education in the context of lifelong learning. In addition, youth services, as well as a variety of support services, are also delivered by XVEC.

The organisation is led by a CEO who is responsible for its day-to-day management and is accountable to a committee which oversees the running of the

XVEC. The structure of the XVEC is that of a machine bureaucracy with a number of levels in the hierarchy 248 people (full-time and part-time) are employed by the XVEC.

Traditionally, the public sector has been characterised by clearly defined roles and responsibilities, job security, stability and predictability. The predominant culture of the public sector, according to Mullins et. al (2001), is one which often measures people's worth according to their hierarchical rank and their adherence to rules. In addition, risk-taking and innovation were not actively encouraged and strategic planning, management and change were alien concepts (McHugh et. al., 1999).

However the XVEC, like all public sector organisations, is experiencing unprecedented levels of pressure for reform and change in order to provide better services and to ensure effective management of public services. Consequently, this pressure for reform is challenging the traditional command-and-control styles of management. It has been suggested that the public sector needs to adopt models based on autonomy and trust so as to effect the necessary changes and to re-think top-down approaches to change (Caulkin, 2003).

2.2 The Public Sector Change and Modernisation Agenda

The Irish public sector change agenda can be traced to the *Strategic Management Initiative* (SMI) of 1994. The main aims of SMI include: the provision of excellent service to the public; more effective and efficient use of resources; and better policy co-ordination between departments (Boyle and Humphreys, 2001).

Delivering Better Government (DBG) 1996 set out further requirements to enhance service quality; delegate authority and accountability; reduce red tape; provide transparency and freedom of information; introduce a new approach to human resource management; and ensure value for money (Boyle and Humphreys,2001).

Sustaining Progress, the public service pay agreement, provides that payment of the final two phases of the benchmarking increases are dependent on a number of factors. Each organisation has to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of the provisions on co-operation with flexibility and on-going change; satisfactory implementation of the modernisation agenda; and the maintenance of stable industrial relations (CDVEC, 2004).

In addition, Government development strategies will often include VECs in terms of their planning and implementation. For example, strategies that focus on overall socio-economic development have an indirect impact on the VEC due to the education components of those strategies. A number of development strategies

undertaken by the Government in recent times have had an influence on VECs .

For example, the National Development Pan (2000-2006)

Furthermore, A number of reviews of education administration in Ireland, e.g. the Rochford Report (1998) and the Cromien Report (2000) have had, and will continue to have, direct implications for VECs. For example the Rochford report required a restructuring of administrative structures and staffing levels and the Cromien Report (2000) In respect of VECs, recommended changes which would reduce the need for recourse to the department of Education and Science on a range of issues relating to staff appointments and financial matters.

These are the primary forces for change in the XVEC, along with legislative or regulatory drivers of change, such as the Education Act (1998); The Vocational Education Amendment Act (2001); and the various employment acts.

2.3 XVEC Implications and Change Programmes

The change agenda has set requirements for the production of strategy statements and business plans, education plans, the implementation of performance management and development systems, the introduction of quality customer service initiatives, such as customer action plans, and the implementation of management information frameworks. As a consequence of

these initiatives, the XVEC has been forced to embark on new ways of working and to introduce a series of change initiatives.

Much of the literature makes reference to "New Public Management" and suggests that this is an international trend in public administration that has necessitated new ways of working. For example, White (2000, p. 164), writing on UK public sector reform, suggests that public sector organisations are now expected to:

- "Enact new relationships and partnerships

- Think and act strategically

- Network with other agencies

- Manage resources effectively

- Redefine boundaries of systems and

- Govern for accountability and transparency"

These expectations typify the requirements placed on the XVEC to meet the demands being placed on them, from both legislative reform and the various other drivers of change outlined above. In recent years, the change initiatives that have been introduced in the XVEC include: Implementing a quality customer framework and the introduction of a performance management and development system. Currently, the XVEC is in the process of developing an Education Plan for the organisation.

2.4 Public Sector Change Strategies

Research by Green (1998) found that change in the Irish public sector generally takes a rationalist, and incremental approach, rather than a transformational approach to change. In addition, the literature reports that the over-riding approach to change in the public sector tends to be top-down (Caulkin, 2003; Mullins et. al. (2001). McHugh et.al. (1999, p. 558) suggest that many change initiatives in the public sector are "formulated by a group of knowledgeable senior managers" and the programme for implementation of these strategies, structures and processes are "presented more or less as a *fait accompli* to organisational members who are expected to adapt instantaneously to the new way of working." McHugh et. al argue that such top-down approaches to change and lack of participation and communication does not bode well for the success of any organisational change effort.

Boyle and Humphreys (2001) argued that successful change requires taking into consideration the perspectives of front line staff and that bottom-up drivers of change must be included in the change process. O'Brien (2002) pointed out that Delivering Better Government expressly stated that employee involvement in and ownership of the change process is essential if SMI is to be successful.

The literature argues that (see O'Brien (2002), if public sector organisations are to achieve the objectives of the modernisation agenda as set out above, a

participative, bottom-up approach to change such, as Beer's model outlined in the literature review, is needed.

The literature, does however, report a number of difficulties that a public sector organisation may encounter in adopting a bottom-up approach to change. For example, O'Brien (2002, p. 445) points out that a bottom-up approach requires "a willingness by managers to share decision making with lower level workers" some managers are reluctant to give up control and power. A second issue, reported by Bennett (Cited in O'Brien, 2002, p. 445), is the lack of management understanding and knowledge of the concepts of teamwork, empowerment and participation. Managers must have the capability to manager the processes involved in managing change. Furthermore, according to O'Brien (2002, p. 445), along with management commitment, participation will not work unless those involved "want to be involved and to participate."

2.5 XVEC Change Strategies

The implementation of change in the XVEC has traditionally been top-down, reactionary, incremental, and with little consultation with staff. This mirrors the findings in the general public sector as discussed above. The most recent initiative, the development of an education plan, has however involved a consultative process with staff, and stakeholders. An external consultant was employed to facilitate this process, following recognition by the XVEC that expert

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assistance was needed. Two employees from each service of the XVEC were invited to take part in the process; this usually did not include front-line staff. A number of meetings have taken place over the past six months with the remit of developing a strategic vision, goals and actions for the XVEC.

2.6 Conclusion

The XVEC has undoubtedly had major pressure for change in the last decade. A number of the requirements of the change and modernisation process have been implemented. How these changes were implemented and the impact on staff are the main questions to be answered. The research is necessary to understand the significance of employee involvement in the change process in achieving real change. The findings of the research, if applied, could be used to inform a model of change that better engages employees and recommendations formulated from the findings could be implemented by the organisation to achieve the requirements of the modernisation agenda.

The next section will outline the methodology adopted to answer these questions.

3. Methodology

3. Methodology

In this section, the research question will be outlined along with the main objectives of the investigation. This will be followed by a description of the methodology and an explanation of the rationale behind it.

3.1 Research Definition and Research Objectives

How is change implemented in the XVEC? Top-down or bottom-up? What are the implications for staff and the level of acceptance of change?

The overall aim of the research is to explore the impact of how change is managed in the XVEC and the subsequent impact on employee commitment to and acceptance of change.

The inferences that can be drawn from the literature review and the study of the industry context include:

- How change is implemented will impact on the success of the change initiative

- Employees are more committed to change if consulted with about change and involved in the design and implementation of change

As a result, the main objectives of the research are:

- To examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change by employees'

- To determine the significance attributed by staff to their involvement in the change process

- To determine employees' attitudes and perception of change initiatives in the XVEC

It is expected that my findings will support the findings of the literature review and industry context. It is hoped that recommendations resulting from these findings will have practical implications that will enable the organisation to implement the requirements of the modernisation agenda more effectively.

3.2 Approach to Research

Quantitative research, according to Marchington and Wilkinson (2001, p.119), "involves the measurement and quantification of data to answer research questions" whereas qualitative research "puts emphasis on individuals' interpretation of behaviour and their environment". It was decided that research of

both a quantitative and qualitative nature would be required for this study for the following reasons:

1) Qualitative research would present the opportunity to explore employee attitudes and perceptions

2) Quantitative research conducted through questionnaires would allow the researcher to ascertain the overall attitudes and opinions of staff and would allow for comparison between different levels in the organisation.

Because the focus was to be on one aspect of one organisation a case study approach was chosen. The main advantage of this approach according to Bell (1987, p. 6) is that "it allows the researcher to concentrate on a specific situation and to identify the various interactive processes at work." This approach uses a variety of methods and involves the researcher identifying an "instance", (such as the implementation of change in the organisation), the researcher then attempts to study the impact of that instance on the organisation.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The data collection method used for this study was a questionnaire and is outlined below.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questions for the questionnaire were reached by breaking down the research objectives into key research questions, see appendix i. It was decided to use a mixture of open and structured questions. The structured questions were used to establish facts and quantifiable data, the open questions were used to explore employees' opinions and perceptions in relation to the research question.

The questionnaire was piloted with two junior staff members and one senior staff member, who reflected the composition of the main sample group. The aim of the pilot was to establish how long it took to complete the questions, if the instructions and questions were clear, and if anything needed to be added or removed. At this stage it became clear that staff would not part-take in the research, or give their honest opinions, unless a guarantee was given that they could not be identified in any way. It was therefore decided not to name the organisation. Also, as a result of the pilot, the questionnaire was modified as initially the questionnaire contained some overlapping questions which were deemed to be repetitive.

Questionnaires were distributed via post to employees home addresses, along with a covering letter describing the purpose of the research. A guarantee of anonymity and assurance of confidentiality was given. Anonymity meant that participants' could not be identified, and confidentiality assured that the report would not identify the exact location of the VEC. Questionnaires were returned by post in the supplied stamped addressed envelopes. Codes were assigned to

forms as they were returned, e.g. 1/F/MT relates to respondent number 1, who is a female manager. Open questions were also coded so that common answers could be aggregated.

3.3.2 Sample

The sample included all staff within the adult education section of the XVEC and included junior, senior and management levels. A random sample, arrived at by selecting every third name on a staff list, resulted in forty two questionnaires being sent out, and twenty eight being returned. This was a very high response rate, the normal response rate for a postal questionnaire is about 20%, and could be attributed to the personal contact and relevance and currency of the topic.

The questionnaire formed the main component of the research. The principle advantage of this data collection method is it allowed for anonymous responses which was important when perceptions and opinions were being sought. In addition, the offer of anonymity and confidentiality meant that people could give their opinions openly and freely.

3.4 Limitations

The original plan for data collection was too ambitious taking time constraints into consideration. The amount of analysis required for the questionnaire also entailed

a lot more than originally envisaged; this was possibly as a result of the number of open questions used, and the difficulty of collating the information.

It was intended to follow-up the questionnaire and conduct interviews with three managers and three front-line staff. However, due to work commitments and leave arrangements, only two of the original six staff members were available for interview. As this does not constitute a representative sample of all staff, it was decided not to go ahead with the semi-structured interviews, but to hold informal discussions with the two staff members instead. The aim of the informal discussions was to validate the responses of the questionnaire.

One of the main limitations of the research was the small sample size and the problems of generalising from it.

A second limitation would be the personal bias of the researcher. Being an employee of the organisation, and having personal experiences of the dynamics in the XVEC, may have influenced the interpretation of the questionnaire. In an attempt to check the validity of the questionnaire and the interpretation of the results, informal discussions (as mentioned above) were held with the two staff members who had agreed to be interviewed. These discussions generally supported the findings.

The following section presents the findings of the research and an analysis of the results.

4. Research Findings & Analysis

4. Research Findings & Analysis

This section will report the findings of the questionnaire and an analysis of the results in relation to the research objectives as outlined in the methodology and which are:

- To examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change by employees'

- To determine the significance attributed by staff to their involvement in the change process

- To determine employees' attitudes and perception of change initiatives in the XVEC

4.1 Response Rate and Profile of Respondents

Of the 42 questionnaires distributed, 28 were returned. As mentioned in the methodology, this is a high response rate of 67%, the normal rate being around 20%. The profile of the respondents is made up of five management staff; nine senior staff and fourteen junior staff.

4.2 Awareness of Change

The overall awareness of the Change and Modernisation Agenda in the XVEC is high with 50% saying, yes they are aware of the Change and Modernisation programme, 32% stating that they know something about it and only 18% are unaware of the Change Agenda.
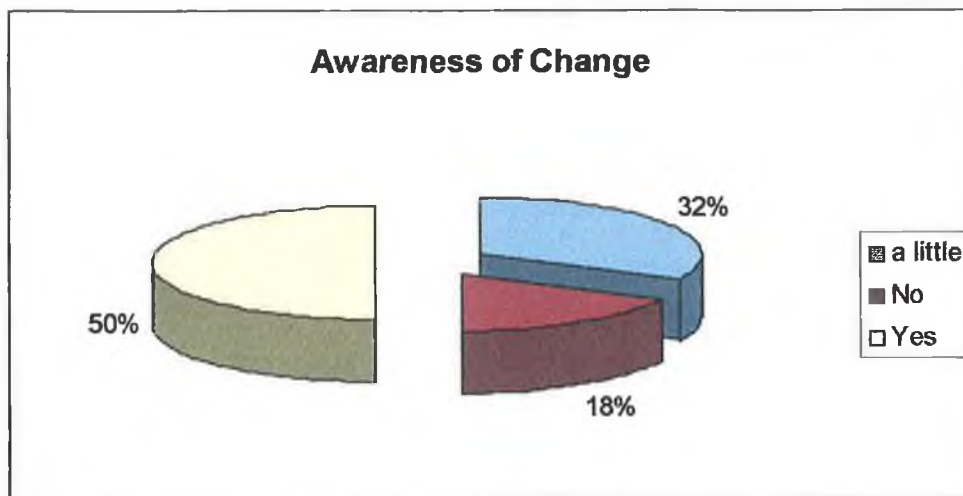
Figure 4.1 Awareness of change

The following table outlines staff awareness of change according to grade:

	Yes	No	A Little	Total
Management	6	0	0	6
Senior	6	0	3	9
Junior	2	5	6	13
				28

Table 4.1 Awareness of change by staff grade

The above table shows that all staff at management level and senior level have some level of awareness of the change programme. However, of the thirteen junior staff, only two said that they were aware of change and six knew a little about it.
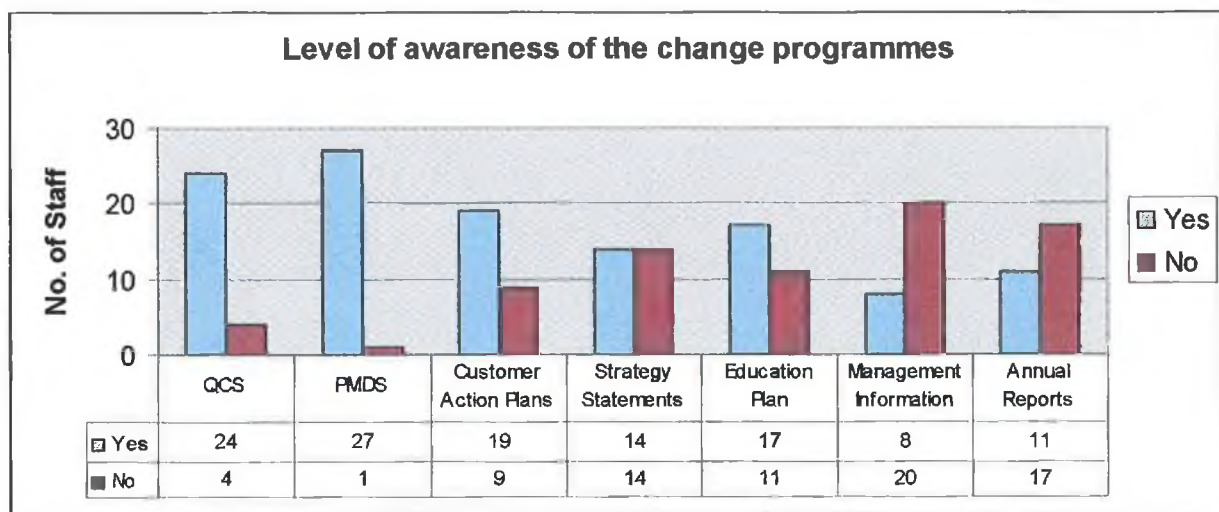
Figure 4.2 Level of awareness of the change programme

The above chart shows the level of awareness of the various change programmes which impact on the XVEC. However, junior staff were mostly aware of the Quality Customer Service (QCS) and Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and knew little or nothing about the other change programmes as the following chart shows.
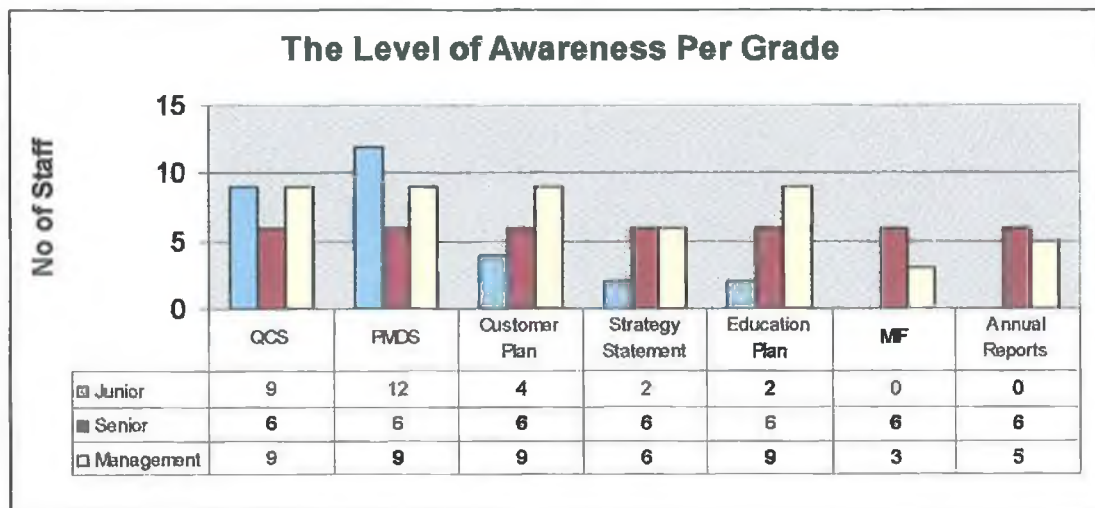
Figure 4.3 Level of awareness per grade

It is clear from these responses that awareness of change is dependant on the level or grade within the organisation.

4.3 Communication of Change

Respondents were asked the following question to establish how change is communicated in the organisation:

How do you find out about change in the organisation?

Overall, there appeared to be a lack of a formal system for communicating change. The answers to this question can be broadly categorised into six ways of finding out about change:

- 25% reported that they found out about change from a boss or superior on an ad-hoc basis

- 18% said that a circular letter from the Department of Education and Science or other such document was how they found out about change.

- 14% said it was by chance or by accident that they found out about change and new initiatives. For example one respondent said "When I've done something wrong or a new procedure exists that I didn't know about".

- As a reaction to legislation or an instruction was the response of 22%. An example of one respondents answer is "When asked to devise a procedure in order to comply with legislation".

- Through work colleagues. One person mentioned this.

- Don't know or no response. Three people.

Whether the reason for change is explained or not

Yes 39%

No 61%
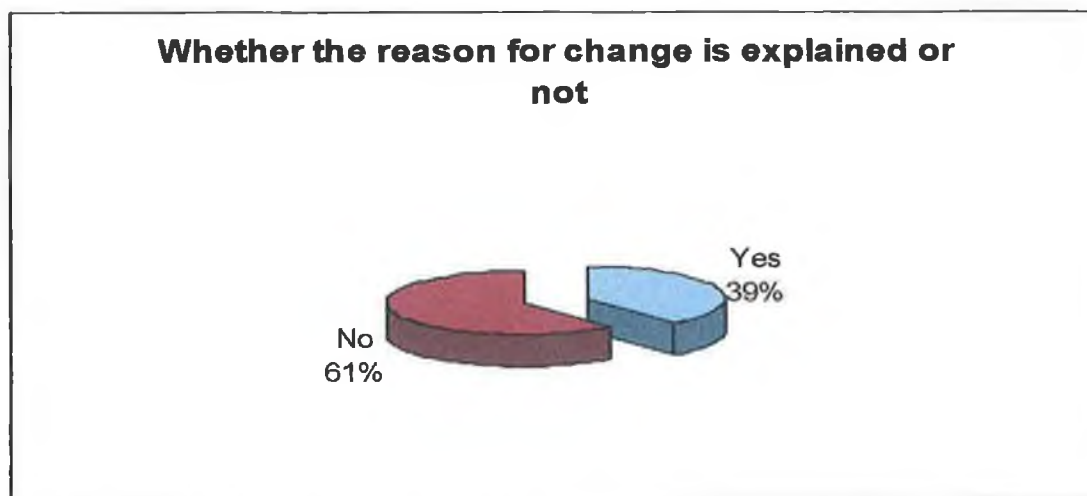
Figure 4.4 Is the reason for change explained?

Figure 4.4 shows that more than half of respondents reported that the reasons for change are not explained to them.

4.4 Consultation and Involvement in the Change Programme

Respondents were asked to specify their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements in order to ascertain the level of involvement and consultation of staff in the change process.

I am consulted with about changes that directly affect my work

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
▣ All Staff	0	5	4	9	10
▣ Junior	0	1	0	5	7
☐ Senior	0	0	3	3	3
☐ Management	0	4	1	1	0
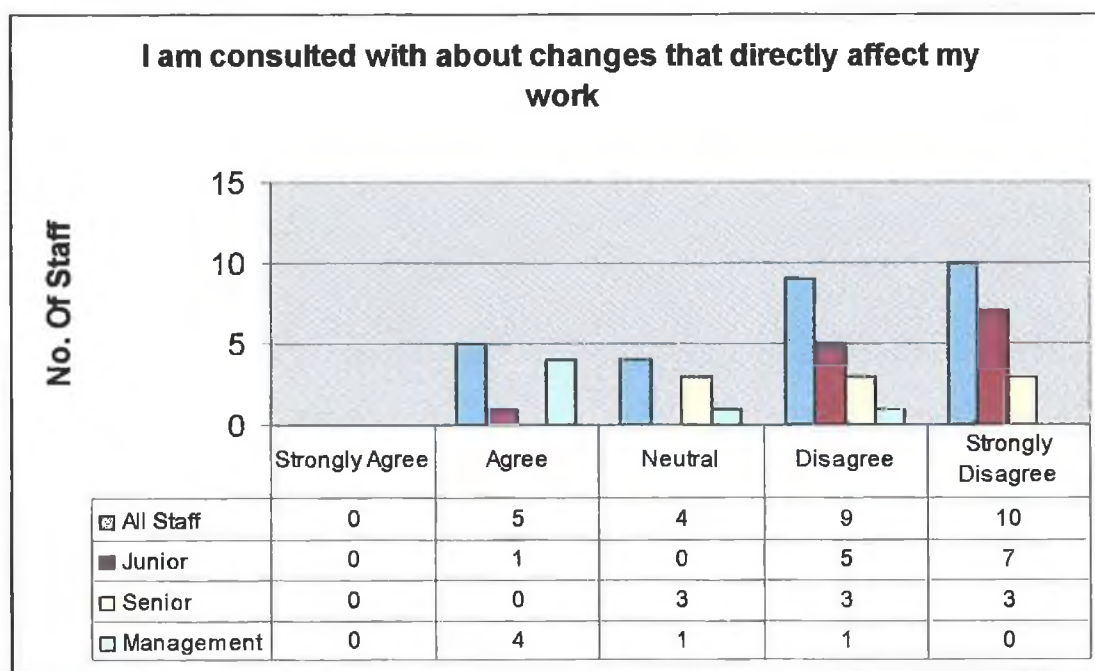
Figure 4.5 Consulted with about change

When asked to comment on the statement "I am consulted with about changes that directly affect my work" 68% of staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, when the response is broken down by grade, none of the

senior staff, and only one out of thirteen junior staff stated that they are consulted with about changes that affect their work. This indicates that in some instances, a junior staff member may be consulted with about change where a senior staff member may not be.

I am involved in the planning of the change

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All Staff	0	9	2	13	6
Junior	0	1	1	6	6
Senior	0	3	0	6	0
Management	0	4	0	1	0
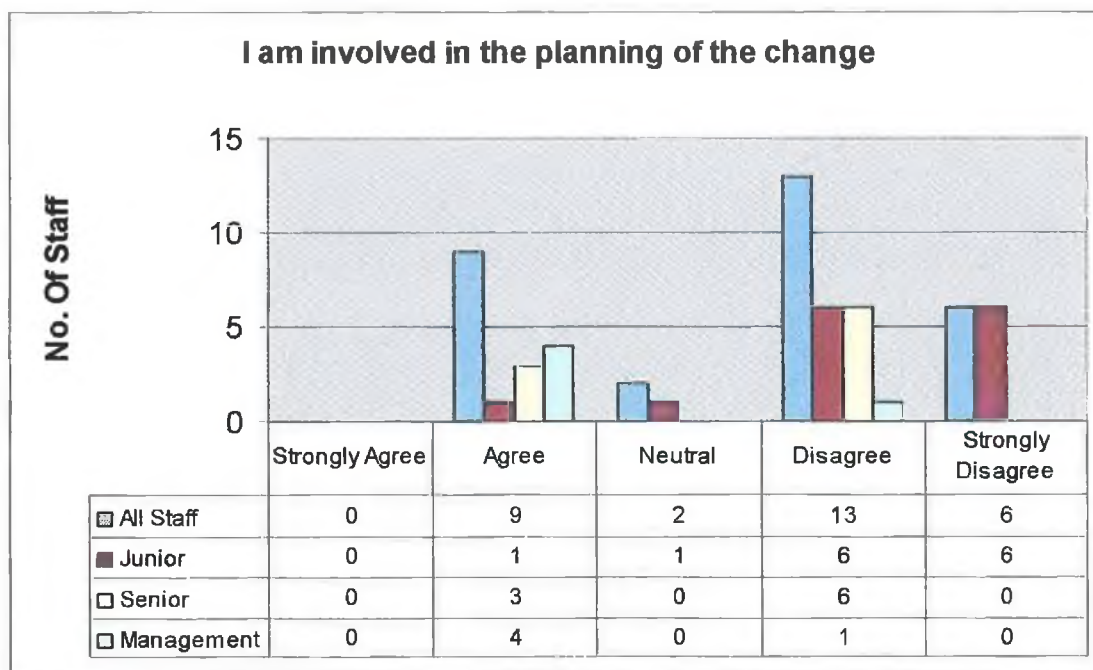
Figure 4.6 Involved in the planning of change

The majority of staff, 68%, report that they are not involved in the planning of change. Only one out of fourteen junior staff said that they are involved in the planning of change. Similarly, most senior staff are not involved in the planning of change. Whereas, four out of five management staff reported an involvement in the planning stage.

I am encouraged to make suggestions to my superior about how to implement changes

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All Staff	0	10	5	10	3
Junior	0	2	3	5	3
Senior	0	4	1	4	0
Management	0	4	1	1	0
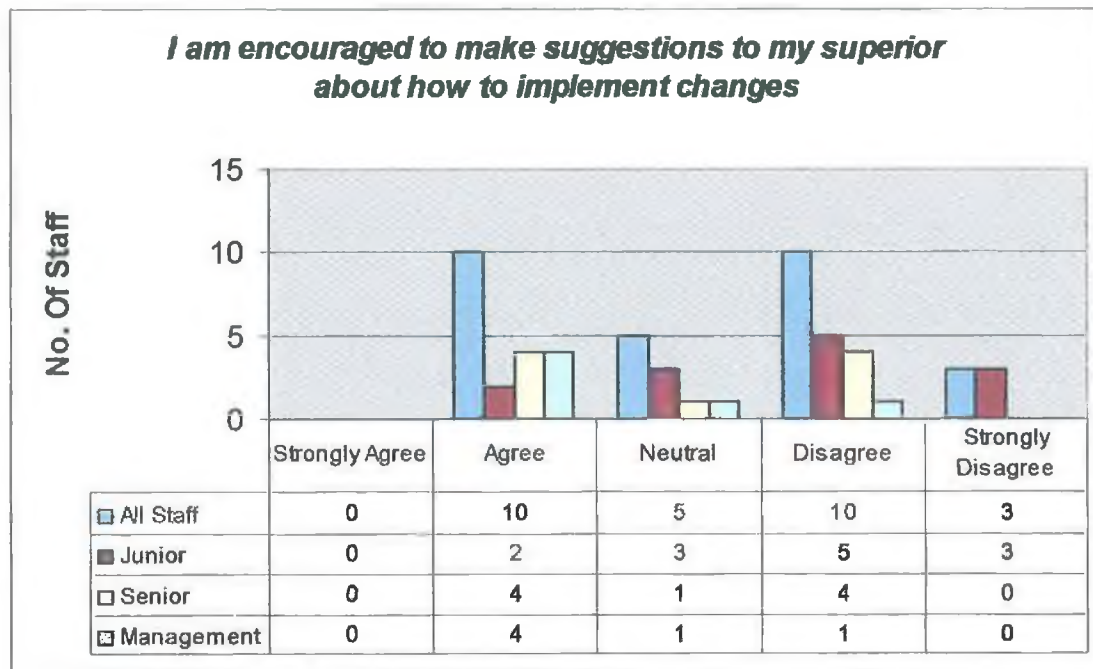
Figure 4.7 Encouraged to make suggestions about changes

Almost half of the respondents reported that they are encouraged to make suggestions. However, the same number of people did not believe that their views are taken seriously.

My views are taken seriously and make a difference to the outcome

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All Staff	0	6	6	13	3
Junior	0	1	1	8	3
Senior	0	4	3	2	0
Management	0	1	2	3	0
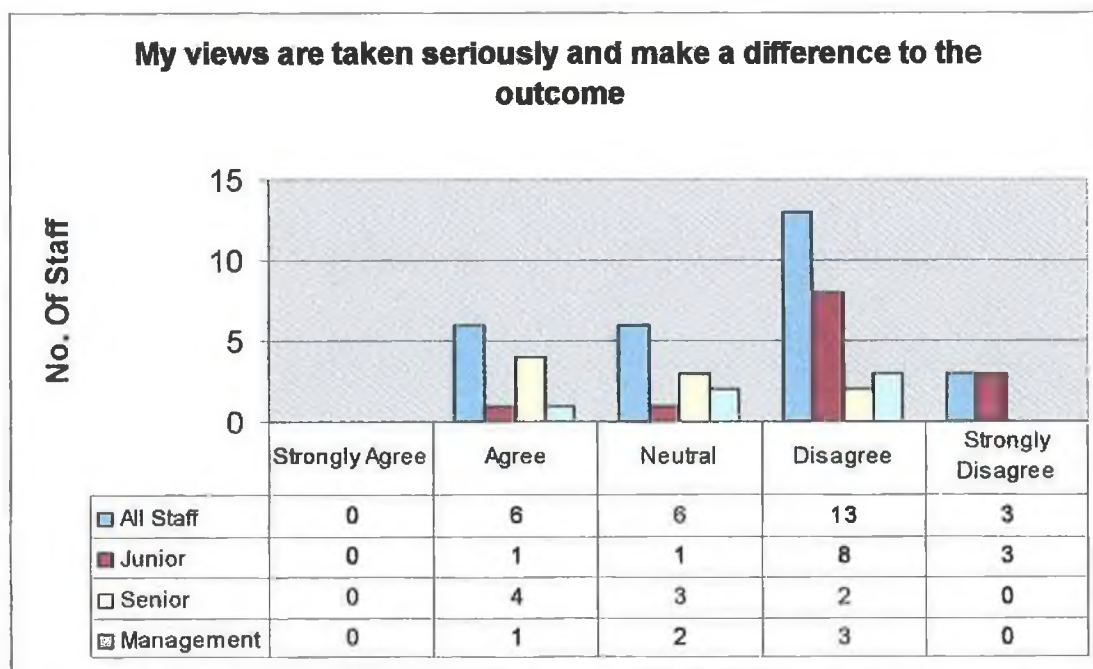
Figure 4.8 Whether staff views are taken seriously or not

Respondents were asked:

Would you like to be involved in the planning of the change process? What difference would your involvement in the planning and implementation of change make to you?

Significantly all junior staff reported that they would like to be involved in the change process. Junior staff felt that :

- They could make a difference to the quality of the service
- Had they been asked about a lot of the changes implemented, things would have been a lot more efficient
- It would mean less paperwork

One respondent said "less of a feeling of being an idiot that needs to be told to pick up the phone after 3 rings" and another said "I would feel more important "

Senior staff also reported that:

"it would make a difference to my ability to carry out my job better as I miight be more aware of what's going on."

and

"May increase morale if people feel they have a say in how to do their work which would make it easier to implement changes."

4.5 Perception of Change

64% of respondents feel that change is poorly or very poorly managed in the XVEC.
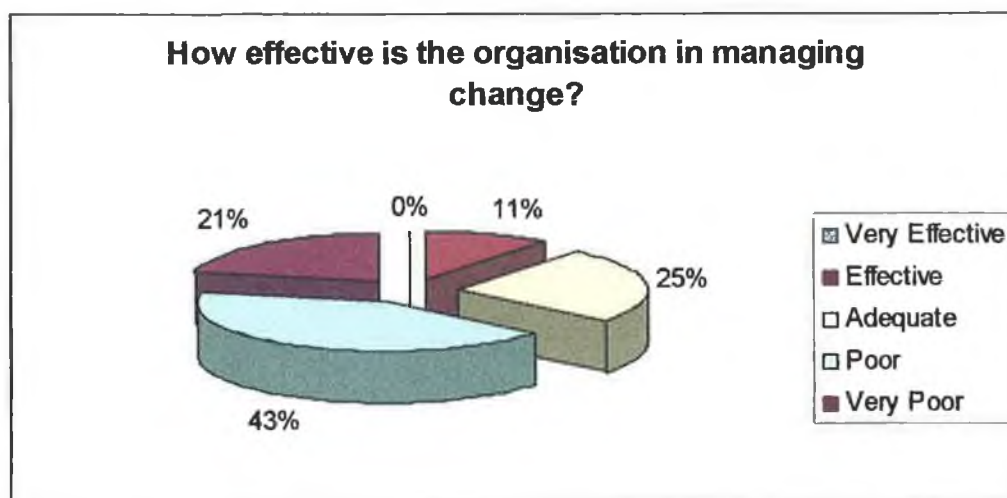
Figure 4.9 The effectiveness of the organisation in managing change

This finding is consistent with respondents' views on the barriers to change in the organisation with many reporting "bad management"; "a lack of management capability and knowledge" and "lack of Leadership" as the main reasons change does not happen in the XVEC.

Other responses to the question:

What prevents or blocks change from happening in the organisation?

Include:

"Change isn't taken seriously, it's often a paper exercise"

"I think it comes down to control – as a manager, I am given responsibilities for coming up with the goods but not the authority. This creates problems especially when you can't follow through with promises or control how you manage staff"

"Decision-making authority is the preserve of top management. There is no trust."

There is also a strong sense of unwillingness to let go of power by certain people, no communication, lack of action and disjointed change initiatives coming through in the answers to this question.

When respondents were asked:

What can be done to overcome these blocks or make change happen?

There was some evidence of disillusionment with 7% stating that "nothing" could be done to overcome these blocks or a "miracle" was needed.

Communication (21%) and training (25%) were reported most often as methods to overcome barriers to change in XVEC. And, 18% stated involvement as a means to make change happen. For example, a junior staff member stated:

"Give us a say in how we do our work, or at least ask us for our opinion on changes that we have to implement"

A senior staff member agreed with this statement and said:

"Less management levels, more authority for people at the coal-face."

Other ways in which blocks to change could be overcome reported by respondents include: culture change,7%, and devolution of authority, 11%.

4.6 The Overall Impact of Change on Individuals and the Organisation

In an attempt to ascertain the overall impact and the level of acceptance of the various change initiatives on employees, and to establish if any real change was evident the following questions were asked:

What Difference has any of the change programmes made to your work?

What difference will any of the change programmes make to the organisation?

In relation to the impact on individuals' work, over 40% of respondents, the majority of which were junior staff, reported a negative impact or that it made no difference except for an increase in paperwork. For example, one respondent said:

"it takes me ten times longer to do things now as a result of all the forms. QCS is a joke. There is nothing quality about it!"

In reporting the difference change had made to their work, 18%, all of whom were senior staff or management, said they were encountering difficulties such as "finding it hard to keep up with the changes"; "more stressful"; and being "snowed under".

On the positive side, 18% of respondents reported an improvement in their work situation. One respondent said that "the performance management system has clarified my job" and another said that "my work is more demanding and rewarding".

In responding to the question:

What difference will any of the change programmes make to the organisation?

32% of respondents were hopeful that it would lead to a better, more efficient organisation. However, a similar number, 35%, felt that the change programmes won't make a difference to the organisation or that there would be an appearance of change but a different reality. For example one respondent said " Not sure,

sometimes it appears that change happens because it has to, but nothing really changes" and another states "its all talk. Nothing happens."

4.7 Analysis of Findings

The research set out to explore how change is implemented in the XVEC. Top-down or bottom-up? And to identify the implications for staff and the level of acceptance of change.

The overall aim of the research was to explore the impact of how change is managed in the XVEC and the subsequent impact on employee commitment to and acceptance of change.

The research was expected to concur with the inferences that were drawn from the literature review and the study of the industry context which were:

- How change is implemented will impact on the success of the change initiative

- Employees are more committed to change if consulted with about change and involved in the design and implementation of change

The findings will now be discussed in relation to the research objectives.

The first objective was to examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change.

The Industry context outlined that change in the XVEC is generally top-down with little consultation or involvement of staff. The change literature argued that top-down approaches do not result in meaningful change and that participation and involvement of front-line staff is needed to effect real change. The research findings support the literature review and indicate that the top-down model of change in the XVEC is not effective. In addition, the findings indicate that employees are generally not engaged with, or committed to, the Change Agenda in the XVEC.

For example, the findings show that the top-down approach to change in the XVEC has resulted in an overall negative view of change with 64% of staff stating that change is poorly of very poorly managed. There is also evidence of a certain degree of cynicism among staff as to how meaningful the change programmes actually are. Such cynicism is evident in responses such as: "sometimes it appears that change happens because it has to, but nothing really changes"; "Change isn't taken seriously, it's often a paper exercise"
and "it's all talk. Nothing happens."

A second indicator that the model of change in the XVEC is not effective is the variation between the level of awareness of the various change initiatives between management/senior staff and junior staff. Junior staff are not aware of change

because the reason for change is not being communicated to them. The change literature pointed to the lack of understanding of the rationale for change as one of the main barriers to effective change. The findings suggest that change is mostly found out about in a very reactive way, and as McHugh et. al (1999, p.558) pointed out "lack of participation and communication does not bode well for the success of any organisational change effort."

Thirdly, there is an indication from the research findings that change in the XVEC is pre-designed at management and senior level and then rolled out to junior staff in the form of new procedure which they are expected to follow. The implication of this approach is a deterioration of productivity and staff morale. This is evident in one respondent's reply; "it takes me ten times longer to do things now as a result of all the forms. QCS is a joke. There is nothing quality about it!" This finding is consistent with the views of many authors, such as Caulkin (2003) and Mullins et. al. (2001), of the general approach taken by the public sector to implementing change as outlined in the industry context.

The findings therefore, would support the view that top-down approaches to change are not effective and an approach to change that involves front-line staff is needed to effect real change.

The second research objective was to determine the significance attributed by staff to their involvement in the change process

The literature review presented the various models and approaches to change. One of the main arguments to emerge was the need to involve staff and adopt a bottom-up approach to change. Hayes (2002) held that a bottom-up approach to change fosters commitment to change. However, a number of difficulties with a bottom-up approach for a highly formalised, bureaucratic, role culture like that of the XVEC were also highlighted. These included: the unwillingness of some to give up their power and status; the lack of understanding of some managers of the concepts of participation and involvement; and the requirement of a desire to be involved by those affected by the change.

The research shows that some of the above difficulties are present in the XVEC. There is an issue around managers having authority to make decisions. This may explain why managers, all of whom said they were involved in planning change, generally felt that their views were not taken seriously or did not have an impact on the outcome.

Also, the responses to questions on what blocks or prevents change suggest a lack of capability and knowledge about how to manage a change process. This is confirmed by 25% of respondents', many of whom were senior and management staff, suggesting training as a method to make change happen.

The research indicates that staff want to be involved in change, all junior staff said, "yes, I would like to be involved in the change process". Furthermore, staff believe that their involvement could improve the effectiveness of change programmes.

Senior staff felt that involving staff would make their jobs easier as it would lead to buy in and greater acceptance of change.

Junior staff felt strongly about being consulted with regarding changes that ultimately they had to implement. It can also be deduced that, currently, lack of involvement causes feelings of frustration, worthlessness and lack of intelligence. For example, in answer to the question, what difference would your involvement in the planning and implementation of change make to you?, one respondent said "less of a feeling of being an idiot that needs to be told to pick up the phone after 3 rings" .

The research confirms that employees are more committed to change if consulted about change and involved in the design and implementation of change.

5. Conclusion
&
Recommendations

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

At the outset, this study noted the unprecedented levels of pressure for reform and change occurring in the Irish public sector and in the XVEC. In particular, this pressure for reform has necessitated new ways of working and has placed new expectations on staff of the XVEC. The research sought to establish the model of change adopted by the XVEC, and whether staff were committed to and engaged in the Change and Modernisation Agenda.

The literature review outlined the various approaches to and models of change. In particular, the arguments for adopting a bottom-up approach to change rather than a top-down approach were presented.

The literature suggested that a planned, top-down approach to change, is usually effective when operating in a stable, bureaucratic, role type culture. The findings of the research clearly indicated that a top-down approach is not effective in the XVEC and a number of themes and issues were identified that are impacting on the XVEC's ability to deliver on the Change Agenda. These included, lack of understanding for the rationale for change; threatened expertise; threatened power; and also a lack of the required knowledge and capability to manage change. These blocks are consistent with the barriers to change identified in the literature review.

The Emergent Approach to change represents a bottom-up approach and sees organisational change as a continuous process. With this approach, the role of the manager is to promote an organisational structure and climate which encourages experimentation and risk-taking, and develops a workforce that will take responsibility for identifying the need for change and implementing change. The research supports the need to adopt such an approach to change, especially in relation to allowing managers to manage and giving those with the responsibility of implementing change, the authority to do so.

To deliver on the Change and Modernisation Agenda, the findings of the study clearly indicate that staff at all levels need to be consulted and involved in the change process in order for meaningful change to happen. The findings reveal a strong desire by staff to be involved in the planning and implementation of change and suggest that, given the chance to participate and be involved in the change, there is a likelihood of increased acceptance of the change. This is in agreement with the findings of the literature review.

The research findings demonstrate the importance for the XVEC of adopting a bottom-up approach to change, of involving staff and communicating the need for change. Such an approach may result in a sense of ownership of the change process which in turn would lead to a greater commitment to change and real engagement in the change process.

It is clear from the results that the added demands being placed on management is highlighting weaknesses in the organisational structure. Such weaknesses are

apparent in the lack of a clear system for communicating change initiatives; the lack of decision-making authority by line mangers; and the lack of training and support for managers in the skills of implementing change. These issues need to be addressed if the XVEC is to be successful in implementing the requirements of the Change Agenda.

The industry context highlighted the difficulties that may arise for a public sector organisation in adopting a bottom-up approach to change, such as the unwillingness to give up control and the desire to maintain power and status. The research found that, the need to control and to have power and status is evident in the XVEC. These needs can be equated to the "Theory E" style of management identified by Beer and Nohria (2000) as the "traditional" "hard" approach to managing change that does not include or involve staff from the lower levels. The model of change proposed by Beer and Nohria (2000) that combines the "hard" "traditional" approach with the "soft" participative approach has a lot to offer the XVEC as an approach to change that will engender the commitment to change that is needed.

Overall, the findings are in-line with expected outcomes and support the viewpoint of the change literature. Also, the findings have implications for practice that, if adopted, the XVEC can improve the way in which change is planned and implemented, enabling the organisation to deliver on the requirements of the Change and Modernisation Agenda.

5.2 Recommendations

Change will not be successful in the XVEC unless there is a re-think about the way in which the organisation approaches the management of change and their people. Based on the analysis of the research and the literature review, the main recommendation is to adopt a bottom-up approach that combines the "hard" old fashioned, top-down way and, the "soft" participative way to change based on the model proposed by Beer and Nohria (2000) which will require the XVEC to

- Strike a balance between the hard and soft goals by explaining the rationale for change and what has to happen but, by also eliciting employees' views and ideas and ensuring that they will be listened to

- Set direction from the top and engage people below. This is achieved by setting the strategy but, on the "soft" side, also encouraging dialogue and consulting with employees and other stakeholders

- Encourage experimentation and evolution

- Spread revitalisation to all departments without pushing it from the top

In addition, the XVEC needs to address the issues that have arisen in relation to weaknesses in the structure of the organisation, as outlined above. It is therefore recommended to: set up a mechanism to ensure effective communication throughout the organisation; devolve responsibility and authority to both line

managers and front-line staff; and develop and train managers in the skills needed

deal with and manage change.

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Appendix i

Appendix i - Research Questions

Objective

> ▪ To Identify the model of change adopted in the VEC

Key Research Questions

- Who decides what change needs to be implemented?
- How is change driven? Reactionary? Proactively?
- Is change incremental or radical?
- Is change top-down? Or bottom-up?

Objective

> ▪ To determine the significance of staff involvement in the change process

Key research questions

- What is the current involvement of staff in the change process?
- How effective is current involvement in creating real change?
- What does involvement mean to employees?
- How would being involved in the change process improve the success of the change process?
- If not involved in the change process, would staff like to be?

Objective

> • To examine the link between how change is implemented and the level of acceptance of change

Key Research Questions

- How is change implemented?

- What are the barriers/blocks to change?
- Are the reasons for change explained?
- What difference does change make to staff

Objective

| To determine employees attitudes and perception of change initiatives |

Key Research Questions

- How effective is change managed in the organisation?
- How is change communicated?
- Is the reason for change explained?
- Are employees involved in the planning of the change?
- Is training provided to cope with change?
- Opportunity for upward feedback?
- Are employees aware of the change agenda?
- How has change impacted on employees work?

Appendix ii

Female ☐

| | **Staff Level** | |
| Junior ☐ | Senior ☐ | Management ☐ |
Male ☐

(Grade 3-4)   (Grade 5)   Grade 6 +

Q.1 I am aware of the change and modernisation process in the VEC?

Yes ☐   No ☐   A Little ☐

Q.2 What is your level of awareness of the following change programmes

	AWARE OF		
	Yes	No	
A. Quality Customer Service (QCS)			
B. Performance Management & Development (PMDS)			
C. Customer Action Plans			
D. Strategy Statements			
E. Education Plan			
F. Management Information Framework (MIF)			
G. Annual Reports			

Q.3 How do you find out about changes in the organisation?

_____

_____

_____

Q.4 Is the reason for change explained to you? Yes ☐ No ☐

Q. 5 What difference has any of the change programmes made to your work?

_____

_____

_____

Q.6. What difference will any of the change programmes make to the organisation?

_____

_____

_____

Please state whether you strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

Q.7 I am consulted with about changes that directly affect my work

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.8 I am involved in the planning of the change

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.9 I believe that my views are taken seriously and make a difference to the outcome

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.10 I am encouraged to make suggestions to my superior about how to implement changes

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.11 How effective do you think the organisation is in managing change?

Very Effective	Effective	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.12 Would you like to be involved in the planning of the change process?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Q.13 What difference would your involvement in the planning and implementation of change make to you?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.14 What prevents or blocks change from happening in the VEC?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.15 What can be done to overcome these blocks or make change happen?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

3/06/05

Dear _____,

I am currently in my final year of the BA (Hons.) in Human Resource Management with the National College of Ireland. As part of my course work, I am required to submit a thesis. I have decided to base mine on change in the public sector.

The attached questionnaire has fifteen questions and takes no more than twenty minutes to complete. The aim of the questionnaire is to get your views on how change has been implemented in the organisation. Please be assured that the questionnaire is completely confidential and anonymous. This means that your responses will not be linked to you in any way. Also, the organization will be referred to as "XVEC" in my thesis, in order to assure confidentiality. I would therefore urge you to answer the questions as honestly as possible.

Please return the completed questionnaire to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. Thanking you for your co-operation.

Best regards,

Siobhan Fahy

Questionnaire Scoring Sheet

	Q 1				Q2a		2b		2c		2d		2e		2f		2g		Q4		7					8				9					10					11					12	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2
1 F MT	1				1		1		1		1		1			1	1		1		1					1							1		1								1		0	
2 F SR	1				1		1		1			1	1			1	1		1					1		1							1		1								1		1	
3 F JR		1			1		1			1	1			1	1		1		1						1		1						1			1								1	1	
4 F JR			1		1			1		1	1			1	1		1		1						1		1					1			1								1		1	
5 F SR	1				1		1		1			1	1		1			1	1						1		1				1				1								1		1	
6 M JR		1				1	1			1	1			1	1		1		1						1			1					1			1								1	1	
7 F MT	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1							1		1								1		0	
8 M JR		1				1	1			1	1		1		1		1		1						1		1							1		1								1	1	
9 M SR	1				1		1		1		1		1			1	1		1				1			1						1			1					1					1	
10 M JR	1				1		1		1		1			1	1		1		1		1					1					1				1								1		1	
11 M MT	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1		1							1		1								1		0	
12 F JR		1			1		1		1			1		1	1			1	1					1				1				1			1								1		1	
13 M SR		1			1		1		1			1	1			1	1		1						1	1				1						1							1			1
14 F JR		1			1		1			1		1	1		1		1		1						1			1					1				1							1	1	
15 M MT	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1				1			1							1		1								1		1	
16 F JR	1				1		1		1		1			1	1		1		1					1				1					1		1								1		1	
17 M MT	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1							1		1					1					0	
18 F SR	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1		1				1				1								1		0	
19 F SR		1			1		1		1		1		1			1	1		1						1	1							1		1								1		1	
20 F JR		1			1		1			1	1		1		1			1	1						1	1				1				1								1		1	
21 M JR		1			1		1			1	1		1		1		1		1						1	1				1				1								1		1	
22 F SR	1				1		1		1		1		1		1			1	1				1			1				1				1								1			1
23 M JR		1				1	1			1	1		1		1			1	1					1		1							1		1								1	1	
24 M MT	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1				1				1					1					0	
25 F SR		1			1		1		1		1		1			1	1		1					1		1				1				1					1				1		1
26 F SR	1				1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1					1				1				1				1				1		1	
27 F JR		1			1		1		1			1		1	1		1		1					1				1				1			1				1			1		1	
28 F JR	1					1	1			1	1		1		1		1		1					1			1				1			1			1			1			1		1
	14	5	9	0	24	4	27	1	19	9	14	14	17	11	8	20	11	17	11	17	0	5	4	9	10	0	9	13	6	0	6	6	13	3	0	10	5	10	3	0	3	7	12	6	20	2

Q.3. How do you find out about changes in the organisation?

1	F	MT	As part of the management team, we are made aware of policies such as SMI or regulations affecting the organisation through both the IVEA, the DES and the CEO
2	F	SR	I often find out by accident.
3	F	JR	We are just told that this new procedure or that new procedure needs to be implemented. The reason why or what we think about it is not considered.
4	F	JR	From my boss, when I am told to implement a new procedure
5	F	SR	My Manager
6	M	JR	Often when I've done something wrong. A new procedure exists that I didn't know about
7	F	MT	Circular letters from the DES, Colleagues
8	M	JR	I had a performance review this year, I didn't know that it was part of a modernisation process
9	M	SR	Circular letters
10	M	JR	My Manager keeps us informed of changes
11	M	MT	Through the CEO or a regulatory requirement
12	F	JR	I don't
13	M	SR	No Response
14	F	JR	Through work colleagues
15	M	MT	Responsible for implementing them
16	F	JR	When a new procedure is needed
17	M	MT	Through policy requirements
18	F	SR	When asked to devise a procedure in order to comply with legislation
19	F	SR	From Senior Management
20	F	JR	By asking questions
21	M	JR	No Response
22	F	SR	Generally, if there are changes to regulations that affect my department I am asked to look in to it.
23	M	JR	When I have to fill out yet another form
24	M	MT	As a senior manager, I instigate change
25	F	SR	Policy changes
26	F	SR	Senior Management
27	F	JR	When a new procedure is needed to comply with government
28	F	JR	Don't know

Q 5 What difference has any of the change programmes made to your work?

1	F	MT	There is a new focus on strategic issues, more is being demanded of me, work is more stressful
2	F	SR	More meetings and accounting for my work
3	F	JR	IT takes me ten times longer to do things now as a result of all the forms. QCS is a joke. There is nothing quality about it!
4	F	JR	None
5	F	SR	My work has changed for the better, getting more involved in different projects that have significance.
6	M	JR	no response
7	F	MT	More meetings, planning, strategies but at the end of the day everything stays the same!
8	M	JR	none what so ever
9	M	SR	Hard to keep up with all the changes
10	M	JR	Systems are more complex but work can now be easily accounted for
11	M	MT	Finding it hard to get my staff to take on board all the new changes, they go to the union with everything. It's a constant headache.
12	F	JR	more forms, takes more time. This doesn't make sense.
13	M	SR	no response
14	F	JR	I have a better Idea of my role because of the new performance system. But QCS doesn't make any sense, a lot more processes for what?
15	M	MT	On paper - loads. In Reality - nothing
16	F	JR	No difference. I did a performance appraisal, but nothing has been done about providing me with the training that was identified as a requirement to meet the objectives of my role.
17	M	MT	A lot more planning and strategy development - which is good
18	F	SR	Frustration and headache.
19	F	SR	A noticeable increase in paperwork
20	F	JR	The big difference is more systems and reports
21	M	JR	none
22	F	SR	There has been a lot of change in legislation. I'm snowed under
23	M	JR	The performance management system has clarified my job.
24	M	MT	My work is a lot more demanding and rewarding.
25	F	SR	no response
26	F	SR	I'm responsible for a completely new section. My role is a direct result of the change programme
27	F	JR	not much.. More paperwork usually
28	F	JR	I'm not really sure what the change programmes are

Q 6 What difference will any of teh change programmes make to the organisation?

1 F MT	Hopefully it will give the organisation a renewed sense of purpose, however i feel that the overall approach to change is too piecemeal to have a significant impact on the organisation.
2 F SR	Not sure, sometimes it appears that change happens because it has to, but nothing really changes.
3 F JR	no difference
4 F JR	less efficient
5 F SR	A better place to work,
6 M JR	Not a bit of a difference, people will do what they always did
7 F MT	It is forcing the organisation to plan and be more strategic, hopefully a better place to work
8 M JR	no difference
9 M SR	A more efficient, transparent organisation (hopefully)
10 M JR	A more efficient organisation
11 M MT	no difference. Staff wont take on the changes
12 F JR	Think it will stay the same.
13 M SR	The organisation will benefit from having to be accountable and transparent. Inefficiencies will be found out
14 F JR	Not much, everything seems stuck in the same ol' same ol' systems and processes
15 M MT	A lot of whets going on is paying lip service to forced and generally unwelcome change
16 F JR	its all talk Nothing happens.
17 M MT	The organisation is more forward looking as a result of the modernisation process. The changes will result in a better managed organisation
18 F SR	Actually, not much. Change is only happening on the surface
19 F SR	don't know
20 F JR	none really That's all that has changed. More reports.
21 M JR	don't know
22 F SR	The organisation has to react faster to the changes
23 M JR	don't know
24 M MT	A clearer direction and vision for the company and employees
25 F SR	no response
26 F SR	A fairer and more transparent organisation
27 F JR	hopefully, staff will be seen for their abilities and not just the level of their grade.
28 F JR	don't know

Q 13 What difference would your involvement in the planning and implementation of change make to you?

1	F	MT	Currently involved in planning
2	F	SR	It would make a difference to my ability to carry out my job better as I might be more aware of what's going on.
3	F	JR	Less of a feeling of being an idiot that needs to be told to pick up the phone after 3 rings
4	F	JR	More efficient processes
5	F	SR	may increase morale if people feel they have a say in how to do heir work which would make it easier to implement changes
6	M	JR	Less paperwork
7	F	MT	no response
8	M	JR	Its important to have a say in how my work should be carried out
9	M	SR	A sense of actually being an important member of the organisation rather than just a number
10	M	JR	It would lead to changes that are actually necessary
11	M	MT	Not applicable to me
12	F	JR	I'd feel more important
13	M	SR	no response
14	F	JR	Being involved in the planning of change would make my life much easier. for one the systems and process would be much more efficient
15	M	MT	I am involved in planning change
16	F	JR	I'd have a better idea of what's going on in the organisation
17	M	MT	N/A
18	F	SR	Currently plan and implement change
19	F	SR	N/A
20	F	JR	A real difference
21	M	JR	If I could influence how changes are applied to my work - it would mean a lot.
22	F	SR	no response
23	M	JR	I would make sure that there is less paperwork
24	M	MT	N/A
25	F	SR	no response
26	F	SR	Its very important for staff involvement in changes that may affect their work
27	F	JR	A chance to show how my skills and knowledge can be used
28	F	JR	I would understand what all the change programmes are

Q 14 What prevents or blocks change from happening in the XVEC?

1	F	MT	I think it comes down to control - as a manager, I am given responsibilities for coming up with the goods but not the authority This creates problems especially when you can't follow through with promises or control how you manage staff
2	F	SR	Change isn't taken seriously, its often a paper exercise
3	F	JR	Bad management
4	F	JR	people are afraid to make decisions
5	F	SR	the hierarchy, it can take too long for certain things to happen
6	M	JR	No one takes responsibility for it
7	F	MT	Systems and procedures are the only things that change, nothing is ever done to try and change the mindset or attitudes This means that nothing ever changes.
8	M	JR	Junior staff are never told what is going on
9	M	SR	Its very hard to get staff to change, they just seem reluctant to follow new procedures
10	M	JR	don't know
11	M	MT	staff are reluctant, the union also blocks change
12	F	JR	I don't think the managers know how to change the organisation.
13	M	SR	Decision making authority is the preserve of top management. There is no trust.
14	F	JR	I think senior staff don't want more junior staff to have responsibilities, they want to hold on to the power.
15	M	MT	Lack of capability, individuals have been promoted into positions without relevant training They spend their time covering their lack of competence.
16	F	JR	No action is taken Things get put in files.
17	M	MT	Power, this new change agenda requires giving more authority to staff. Some people don't want to let go of their power.
18	F	SR	Leadership. There is none.
19	F	SR	Politics and a very compliant culture
20	F	JR	lack of communication. Often have to ask for information on new procedures
21	M	JR	Managers don't know what they're doing
22	F	SR	Too slow
23	M	JR	I'm not aware of all the changes that are happening
24	M	MT	Employees don't seem to understand the modernisation agenda
25	F	SR	We are not trusted to make decisions
26	F	SR	Some view change as a threat to their position and power
27	F	JR	A lack of trust A lack of understanding in how to manage people Lack of leadership
28	F	JR	Lack of knowledge

Q.15 What can be done to overcome these blocks or make change happen?

1	F	MT	Don't think anything can be done. Decisions are made at the top of the organisation and that's it. No questions asked
2	F	SR	Give people authority to make decisions and be responsible for their own work
3	F	JR	Less paperwork
4	F	JR	We are the ones that do the work that these changes are asking. Why can't we decide how the change should be implemented?
5	F	SR	less management levels, more authority for people at the coal-face
6	M	JR	No Response
7	F	MT	the culture of the organisation needs to be changed as well
8	M	JR	Communicate with us. I don't know what all these changes are or mean
9	M	SR	Training, managers need support to make all this change happen.
10	M	JR	Have regular briefing sessions with staff on what's going on
11	M	MT	Training in how to get staff to change
12	F	JR	Train the managers how to change.
13	M	SR	The culture needs to change. Give people the power to make decisions and trust them
14	F	JR	Give us a say in how we do our work or at least ask us for our opinion on changes that we have to implement.
15	M	MT	Training, developing competencies, and devolution of responsibility.
16	F	JR	Managers need to follow up and do what they said they would do.
17	M	MT	I feel it is very important to inform staff of the origin of the change requirement. To communicate with them.
18	F	SR	That's a hard one - a miracle!!
19	F	SR	Better management
20	F	JR	Involve junior staff more and explain what is going on
21	M	JR	More training on what's going on
22	F	SR	The flow of information is really bad. This needs to be addressed
23	M	JR	More communication
24	M	MT	No Response
25	F	SR	Loosen the control at the top
26	F	SR	Communicate, communicate. communicate...
27	F	JR	Training, especially at management level on how to manage people
28	F	JR	Involve in change programmes