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Organizational Innovations That Stick: Best Practices In Sustainable Organizational Change

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Organizational Innovations That Stick: Best Practices in Sustainable Organizational Change

by

Abdoulie Jammeh

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration
Muma College of Business
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Keywords: innovation, organizational change, appreciative inquiry, Critical Incident Technique, change management, leadership

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DEDICATION

For my Dad and Mother, two of the greatest hard-working people I know. I could not have asked for better parents and role models

For my wife, Ida, my brothers and sisters, and the wonder of their unconditional love.
To those from whom I have learned:

Dean Eric Eisenberg, Ph.D., for recognizing the significance of my dissertation project and introducing me to the USC – World Bank Program to conduct my Critical Incident Technique (CTI) study.

Dr. James Stikeleather for focusing my literature reviews

And the giants in the field of organizational studies on whose shoulders I stand.
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ABSTRACT

Organizational change is an essential ingredient of organizational growth/life and can be difficult to accomplish. Many researchers and practitioners have studied the challenges and opportunities surrounding effectuating change and innovation in organizations. However, there has been little practical analysis of the theoretical relationships among the key apparatuses that make change stick, institutionalizing innovation in big bureaucratic organizations. In order to develop practical insights that can inform best practices, this paper aims to provide a collection of successful organizational innovation examples based on responses to a critical incident analysis survey of 12 participants from a 2018 World Bank – USC Annenberg Summer Institute program on reform communication.
CHAPTER ONE:
WHAT BEST PRACTICES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATIONS TO BE SUSTAINABLE IN BIG BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS?

Tagline
To be highly successful in today’s fast-paced and unpredictable business environment, organizations have to regularly reflect on how they perform their work practices and adopt strategic change initiatives for improvement. Adoption of best practices will facilitate the success and sustainability of innovation diffusion in bureaucratic organizations.

Executive Summary
In order to reach a common understanding of shared goals and objectives in large government organizations, participants use various communication strategies to generate and diffuse innovations. Innovation, as defined by Rogers, is a practice, service, good, or idea that people in the organization perceive as new (Rogers, 1983, 2003). An idea may be regarded by an organization as new from the moment they adopt the idea to solve organizational problems. Newness does not depend on when the idea was first generated or by whom. Literature studied for this research contained Rogers’s diffusion of innovation theory and the change management model developed by Kurt Lewin.

Innovation can take many forms. At the United States Veterans Administration (VA), an innovative training initiative called “Leaders Developing Leaders” is an amalgamation of a cascading “train the trainer” program, an approach to continuous improvement, and a form of
succession planning. Another form of innovation at the VA is the automation and improvement of processes with computers, mobile devices, and online systems.

Decision-making by senior leaders is crucial in determining the likely adoption rate of the new practice, good, or service. Rogers’ diffusion theory seeks to explain the factors influencing the adoption rate of an innovation. According to Rogers, implementation is quicker when the process outlined in the graphic in Figure 1 is followed.

![Figure 1. Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process](source: Rogers (2003))

Since diffusion of innovation takes time, not everyone in the organization gains acceptance of the new idea at once (Rogers, 1962, 1983, 2003). Diffusion begins when early adopters influence late adopters to join in (Rogers, 1983). The pressure from the influencing process can also lead to “over adoption,” i.e., people in the organization adopting new practices before they are ready. Rogers’s theory has innovations promulgated through organizations in five stages: Agenda setting; matching, redefining or restructuring; clarifying; and routinizing.
Rogers states that specific actions and decisions happen at each stage, and actions at later stages cannot occur until earlier stages are completed; in other words, a linear, somewhat closed-loop process that does not take into consideration the effect of external forces and variables. In practice, however, closed-loop processes may not be realistic in large government agencies. To understand what is missing from the explanation offered by Rogers’ model in these organizations, I extended my review of the literature to include another organizational change theory and model; in particular, the perspective of psychologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin’s Force Field Model and 3 Step Model provide insights into what I hypothesize to be missing from the Rogers’s innovation model.

**Force Field Model**

Lewin uses this method to describe group behavior in relation to the complexity of the environment in which the behavior is taking place (Back, 1992). To Lewin (1947), for one to gain an understanding of any situation, it is paramount that “One should view the present situation – the status quo – as being maintained by certain conditions or forces’ (p. 172). Lewin (1947) believed that group behavior alters individual behavior; consequently, “individual behavior is a function of the group environment or field.” According to Lewin (1947), a field is “a totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent…” (p. 240). Lewin’s position is that one needs an understanding of these forces to understand why individuals and groups within an organization act the way they do. This understanding, he argues, positions the organization to better understand what forces in the field would need to be reduced or maximized in order to institute sustainable change.
Many organizational change articles cite Lewin’s Three-Step Model as his key contribution to the field of organizational change. Lewin (1947) argues that a successful change management process should involve the following steps:
Summary

As a practitioner, I have observed that Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation does not sufficiently explain change happens through the organization as predicted. As Lewin’s Force Field model described, there are external forces that interfere with the diffusion of innovation. I hypothesize those forces to be the constant changes in senior leadership in large, bureaucratic organizations. When an organization is at any stage of the Rogers’ diffusion cycle, a change in leadership could revert the cycle back to a prior step in Lewin’s 3 Step Model, thus impeding the diffusion of innovation and contradicting Rogers’ predicted promulgation process.

Introduction

To be highly successful in today’s fast-paced business environment, organizations must constantly reflect on how they perform their work and adopt strategic change initiatives for improvement as needed.

However, the process of improvement is not just a technical problem; it is a behavioral one. To make continuous improvements that are lasting and institutionalized, organizational leadership needs to understand the theory of change management and the theory of diffusion of innovation. This approach calls for creating a resilient set of work practices that are not dependent on the individuals at the top of the government agency. The change should be grounded in repeatable work practices that withstand personnel and technology changes. How can organizations create this? How do organizations achieve lasting results in a large bureaucratic organization, such as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which is the second largest federal government department with over 400,000 employees and where I serve as chief of a major department. Literature suggests that changes must take root in the fabric of the organizational culture. I layered Lewin’s Force Field Theory and Three-Step Model on Rogers’s
diffusion theory to explain the gap that exists in literature and to overcome issues with Rogers’s theory, which does not consider the fact that changes in top organizational leadership is very frequent and complicates top-down change management.

In his article about achieving routine, Peter Frost states that organizations are mainly about achieving routine, predictable practices. Innovation is a tool to disrupt the routine in the hopes of creating a a new routine. In my case study paper conducted using appreciative Critical Incident Technique (CIT) interviewing, I argue that successful diffusion of innovation in government agencies requires a favorable climate that is not contingent on the whims of top leadership. This type of climate persists and continues to innovate irrespective of leadership changes. Middle managers create an internal network that has ownership of, continues to advance, and provides sponsorship of innovations. This literature review specifically examines Rogers’s diffusion of innovation and Lewin’s change management model in a variety of organizational types and sizes to validate my hypothesis.

Protocol

This literature review was conducted using different combinations of keywords/phrases including: “diffusion of innovation,” “change management,” “organizational change,” “lewin force field theory,” “lewin three step model,” “communication strategies,” “decision-making,” and “phenomenological.” The search was conducted using the USF Libraries’ FindIt tool that accesses at least 80% of the Libraries’ electronic full-text and indexed databases. Searches were limited to peer-reviewed articles published after 2000. Results were further narrowed by searching for keywords/phrases in the abstract and subject terms, rather than the full text. The article abstracts were reviewed, and over 30 articles were downloaded. In addition,
bibliographies of relevant articles were also mined for additional information sources. Seventeen articles are summarized below.

**Literature Summary**

This academic literature summary provides organization change practitioners with access to a number of articles which describe, review, critique, and discuss the implementation of various change models and innovation theories.

**Table 1. Individual Source-Multiple Findings Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Kim, T. (2015). Diffusion of changes in organizations. | • change should be a systematic but responsive process as visualized by a sequential but recursive flow of the phases *(effective change management)*  
• change could sustain with the spontaneous function of organizational dynamics  
• before-during-after diagnosis and evaluation is fundamental to the success of change efforts *(effective change management)*  
• importance of managing launched change efforts *(effective change management)*  
• concentrate resources on a few positively or negatively influential individuals and utilize communication networks *(communication and ownership)*  
• there is an organizational hierarchy to the communication and diffusion process *(communication and leadership)*  
• organizational leaders should not participate in operationalization of innovation in order to foster ownership of the change in middle and lower management *(leadership and ownership)*  
• the proper assignment of the roles of innovators, change leaders, and change agents should be a crucial consideration in strategizing diffusion efforts *(effective change management)*  
• a change that fits poorly with the organization’s culture and people can hardly diffuse *(ownership)*  
• root cause analysis of adoption/non-adoption should proceed from the change initiative itself to the systems, and then to the individuals |
<p>| Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change. | • Lewin promoted an ethical and humanist approach to change, that saw learning and involvement as being the |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Key Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capatina, A., Bleoju, G., Matos, F., &amp; Vairinhos, V. (2017). Leveraging intellectual capital through Lewin’s Force Field Analysis.</td>
<td>The Force Field framework can be employed to improve the Intellectual Capital management self-assessment. Effects of the driving forces were observed to be greater than the restraining forces. The need for change, due to high pressures of both external and internal environment, assumes the consideration on how to reduce resisting forces, while driving forces are stronger. Sustainable advantage life cycle of each organization is relying upon managerial capacity to set up the change priorities. Intellectual capital is useful for promoting organizational change processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester, J., Gray-Miceli. D. L., Metcalf, J. A., Paolini, C. A., Napier, A. H., Coogle, C. L., &amp; Owens, M. G. (2014). Facilitating Lewin’s change model with collaborative evaluation…</td>
<td>Disequilibrium and uncertainty can occur without early advocacy by all project partners; early involvement of stakeholders and alignment around shared goals is critical to success. Lewin’s framework can be valuable for operationalizing ideas into practice. Planning must include the results of unintended effects as well as intended effects. Government agencies are rigid in their processes and protocols and change requires flexibility. Lewin’s framework can be easily retrofitted to observed practices; it is just a theoretical framework. Sustained success requires organizational buy-in at all levels, good communication from key stakeholders, and acknowledgment of and response to resistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhalgh, T., Robert, G., Macfarlane, F., Bate, P., &amp;</td>
<td>The longer an innovation is sustained, the less likely the organization will be open to additional innovations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyriakidou, O. (2004)</td>
<td>Diffusion of innovation in service organizations.</td>
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<td>Bourne, B. (2015)</td>
<td>Phenomenological study of generational response to organizational change.</td>
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<tr>
<td>De Déa Roglio, K., &amp; Light, G.</td>
<td>Executive MBA Programs: The development of the reflective executive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bui, Q. (2015)</td>
<td>A Review of Innovation of Diffusion theories and mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lundblad, J. (2003)</td>
<td>A review and critique of Rogers’ Diffusion of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Innovation Theory as it applies to organizations. | • there is opportunity to more fully extend Rogers’ work into the organizational setting  
• there is a need to fully describe the interaction between the innovation, the adopter, the system, and influencers |
| Berk, G., & Galvan, D. (2009). How people experience and change institutions: A field guide to creative syncretism. | • all institutions are composed of an indeterminate number of features, which are decomposable and re-combinable in unpredictable ways (**effective change management**)  
• action within institutions is always potentially creative, that is, actors draw on a wide variety of cultural and institutional resources to create novel combinations |
| Lyttinen, K., & Damsgaard, J. (2001). What’s wrong with the Diffusion of Innovation Theory? | • there is a need to adapt diffusion of innovation theories on site using multiple levels of analysis (**effective change management**)  
• the usefulness and applicability of diffusion of innovation to explain the diffusion of complex, standard-based environments (such as government agencies) is being questioned (**critique of DOI**) |
| Sahin, I. (2006). Detailed review of Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory and educational technology-related studies based on Rogers’ theory. | • Rogers’ DOI theory is primarily constructed with innovation being related to technological change as opposed to organizational change involving humans (**critique of DOI**)  
• to increase the rate of adopting innovations and to make relative advantage more effective, incentives may be used to support the individuals of a social system in adopting an innovation |
| Eisenberg, E. (1984). Ambiguity as strategy in organizational communication. | • a chosen communication style should consider the audience and situation (**communication**)  
• ambiguity has a place in organizational communication depending on the need and intent of communicator (**communication**)  
• without context, ambiguity is neither good nor bad, effective or ineffective (**communication**) |
| Briggs, R. O., De Vreede, G., & Nunamaker, J. F., Jr. (2003). Collaboration Engineering with ThinkLets to pursue sustained success in group support systems. | • creation of repeatable processes is critical to sustaining innovation (**effective change management**)  
• implementor ownership of new processes facilitates acceptance and sustainability (**ownership**) |
| Briggs, R. O., Adkins, M., Mittleman, D., Kruse, J., Miller, S., & Nunamaker, J. F., Jr. (1998). A technology transition model derived from field investigation of GSS use aboard the U.S.S. Coronado. | • in some cases, ad hoc problem solving can be detrimental to adoption of innovations (**effective change management**)  
• high turnover rate of leadership creates challenges for the adoption and sustainability of innovation (**leadership**) |
Future Research

The research question was developed based on a review of Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation and Lewin’s Change Management Model. The research question is focused on diffusion of innovation in large, bureaucratic organizations, and does not address what could happen in smaller organizations with stable leadership. The intent of the literature review is to bridge the gap between theory and practice (what I observed as a practitioner and what is predicted by Rogers). In addition to providing valuable information, the literature review process also revealed potential areas for further research. Several of the articles were critical of or acknowledged shortcomings with Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Lewin’s Change Management Model. Both were developed decades ago when lifetime employment with one company was the norm and the organizational chain of command was strictly enforced. Therefore, the first and most obvious area of follow-up research is to move beyond Rogers and Lewin to ascertain and study other theories and models on how and why organizational change is adopted and sustained, especially those that address the current realities of organizations and the new generations of leaders and employees. What effect does constantly changing leadership and evolving management structure have on an organization’s ability to prioritize, adopt, and sustain change? How are Gen-Xers and Millennials different from the Greatest Generation and Baby Boomers in the ways they lead, follow, communicate, and react to change? A review of the current literature in these areas is obviously necessary, but designing and executing a qualitative study of either question would provide useful insights into human behavior that would be beneficial for identifying or creating best practices for implementing and sustaining organizational innovations in large bureaucratic organizations.
Conclusions

To be highly successful in today’s fast-paced business environment, organizations must constantly reflect on how they perform their work practices and must adopt strategic change initiatives for improvement. They must constantly reinvent themselves to stay in the game for the long-run. In his book The Heart of Change: Real Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations (Kotter & Cohen, 2012), Kotter believes change is the very heart of an organization’s business success. According to Peter Senge, the sustainability of change efforts depends on closing the “engagement gap.” Senge (1990) defined the gap as between the “initiated – those who are part of the instigating group, and the uninitiated – everyone else.”

The literature review of articles cited in this paper focused on Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Lewin’s models. The review provides practitioners with a perspective on diffusion of innovation theory and the limitations of the theory. Lewin’s Force Field and 3-Step Models were reviewed for their practicality to environment dynamics. The literature also revealed four influencing processes that impact the potential for success of change initiatives: ownership/empowerment, leadership, communication, and effective change management.

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4.** Key Factors Influencing Successful Organizational Innovation
Ownership/Empowerment

Lasting change can happen when employees feel included and empowered in the creation and diffusion of an innovation. Empowerment can lead to a feeling of ownership in the formation and implementation of change, which often facilitates acceptance of a change and its sustainability (Kim, 2015; Manchester et al., 2014). In his analysis of Rogers’s theory, Greenhalgh et al. (2004) suggest that innovations are more easily assimilated when there are fewer response barriers and employees’ sense of ownership can reduce barriers to change. Successful change programs in large bureaucratic organizations show that the organizations connect with their employees through shared values (Smollan & Sayers, 2009). Alignment of changes with the values of the organization, its culture, and people is critical in effecting changes to people’s behavior (Kim, 2015; Smollan & Sayers, 2009).

Leadership

Guidance and support from top leadership is also essential during the transformational change. The first three of Kotter’s (1995) 8 Steps focus on actions that must be driven through leadership: “establishing a sense of urgency,” “forming a powerful guiding coalition,” “creating a vision.” Organizations also depend upon management’s ability and capacity to act as the driving forces to create an environment that supports and promotes change and to establish priorities for change (Capatina et al., 2017). In the absence of sustained and consistent leadership, disequilibrium and uncertainty can occur (Manchester et al., 2014), and high turnover rates of leadership create challenges for the adoption and sustainability of innovation (Briggs et al., 1998).
Communication

In every living system there are forces for change and forces against change. These forces, depending on how they are managed, can positively or negatively influence the success and sustainability of change efforts. Sustained success is dependent upon having regular and consistent communication from leadership to those planning, implementing, and being affected by a change, recognizing that resistance is a reality, and providing timely and effective responses to resistance (Manchester et al., 2014). Kotter (1995) includes “communicating the vision” in his 8 Steps for successful transformation and identifies “using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies” and “teaching new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition” as the means. With regard to the diffusion of innovations, both Rogers’s (1995) complexity, via mediation, and observability attributes are related to the application of effective communication to improve the potential success and sustainability of a change. Even ambiguity can be strategically employed in organizational communication depending on the need and intent of communicator (Eisenberg, 1984).

Effective Change Management

In a sense, all of the above are part of the collective term “change management.” Kim (2015) stresses the importance of managing launched change efforts and that change should be a systematic and responsive (i.e., managed) process. In addition to those factors influencing sustainable innovation, risk analysis should be employed to mitigate the impact of unintended results as well as intended results (Manchester et al., 2014). Finally, returning once again to Kotter (1995), successful transformations should be managed to “plan and create short-term wins,” “consolidate improvements and produce still more changes,” and “institutionalize new approaches.”
Many organizations take an appreciative inquiry approach to institutionalize new approaches and reach breakthrough performance. An appreciative approach focuses on what the organization looks like when it is at its best. The influencing processes identified above were consistently present in the literature reviewed and my practical experience supports their reasonableness. As a next step, an appreciative inquiry study of qualified executives with experience implementing and sustaining change is advisable. Use of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) interview is suitable because CIT focuses on identifying what led to a critical incident, e.g., the success or failure of an innovation. This will add to our body of knowledge on what works in diffusing innovation (best practices) and potentially reinforce the importance of leadership, communication, effective change management, and ownership.
CHAPTER TWO:
ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATIONS THAT STICK: BEST PRACTICES IN
SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Introduction

Organizational change is an essential ingredient of organizational growth/life and can be difficult to accomplish. Many researchers and practitioners have studied the challenges and opportunities surrounding effectuating change and innovation in organizations. A recent literature study highlights key process models on organizational innovation (Jammeh, 2018). Diffusion of Innovation attempts to explain how, why, and at what rate change occurs in organizations. Rogers’s theory contends that there are categories of change adopters that range from innovators/early adopters to laggards and that the diffusion process is affected by many variables such as the type of change, the way the change is communicated, time, and organizational culture. In addition, to gain a deeper understanding of why stakeholders in organizational change and innovation processes embrace or resist change, Lewin (1947) proposed his Force Field Method to describe group behavior in relation to the complexity of the environment in which the behavior is taking place and his Three-Step Model that argues change management should involve unfreezing, changing, and refreezing a process in order to be successful. These models provide useful high-level perspectives on organizational innovation and change.
In order to supplement this theoretical understanding with practical insights that can inform best practices, this paper aims to provide a collection of successful organizational innovation examples. A study was conducted on successful innovation in large, bureaucratic organizations to seek common attributes of where innovation worked well and why it worked well in order to develop best practices for diffusion of innovation in large, bureaucratic organizations. To accomplish this, a study was conducted using an appreciative Critical Incident Technique (CIT) interviewing to gain a perspective on what works in diffusing innovation (best practices). Most successful strategic-level change initiatives require involvement and commitment from stakeholders at different levels of the organization. Literature suggests that middle management and non-management employees are more likely to get involved and stay committed when the focus is positive and they have a sense of ownership in the change (Axelrod, Axelrod, Jacobs, & Beedon, 2006). Appreciative Inquiry (AI) operates from the premise that an organization is a mystery to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved and the AI approach to interviewing focuses questions on high-point experiences, valuing, and what gives life to the organization or community at its best (Srivastva & Cooperrider, 1990). For example, an appreciative interview question could ask participants to “describe a time in your organization that you consider a high-point experience, a time when you were most engaged and felt alive and vibrant.”

**Motivation**

I serve as chief of a major administrative department at Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (BPVAHCS) in Bay Pines, Florida. Bay Pines VAHCS is the fourth busiest Veterans Affairs (VA) Department in the United States. The VA has over 400,000 employees and is the second largest Federal department. VA is comprised of three agencies: Veterans Health Administration
The Veterans Health Administration is the nation’s largest integrated healthcare system. VHA has 1,700 sites of care, 300,000 employees, and serves 8.76 million veterans each year.

To achieve consistency in the veterans’ experience, VA has sought to develop a method to effectively identify, diffuse, and sustain best practices in this complex, heterogeneous organization. This effort turned out to be more difficult to implement than anticipated due to the high turn-over of people in top leadership positions. For example, almost all top leadership in the organizational chart in Figure 5 are no longer in those positions, as can be seen in the organizational chart in Figure 6. Based on VA’s annual all-employee survey and the Federal Workplace Survey results (2015, 2016, and 2017), employees are conflicted with how much effort, if any, they should invest in top-level initiatives knowing that it is “only the flavor of the month or quarter” before the next leader steps in with their own new initiative. This statement is also backed by Mosadeghrad, Ferdosi, and Afshar’s (2013) research that “organizations experience low employee involvement and interest… when management commitment is missing at any level” (p. 135) and “lack of top management involvement in and commitment to quality management change is the common reason for… failure” (p. 135). Leadership guidance and support are crucial in managing and sustaining transformational change initiatives (Axelrod et al., 2006). One top executive in the Washington, DC office with whom I work closely on many strategic-level initiatives tells me how frustrating this situation is to her. “I don’t know what and who to trust anymore; they come and go like the wind. Each time I start an important project with someone, the next minute, they are gone.”
Figure 5. Veterans Administration organization chart, July 20, 2015

Figure 6. Veterans Administration organization chart, August 10, 2018
My practitioner experience leads me to hypothesize that diffusion of innovation as predicted by Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory does not account for change dynamics at the VA due to the constant leadership changes. We are constantly going back to the drawing board as leadership changes, and I believe that the impact of top management turnover and direction results in change efforts that are not institutionalized in the fabric of the organization. New leaders start their own initiatives with little or no regard to the last initiative already in progress. Employees are often left frustrated (and feel uncommitted to the new initiative launched by the new leader). I want to do something about this organizational problem. The situation at my organization is the type of problem the practitioner-driven DBA program at USF is geared towards—bridging the gap between theory and practice. My goal is to contribute to the creation of a favorable environment for the generation of new ideas and the discipline to institutionalize those ideas, transient of leadership changes.

Data Collection Procedures

Now that I have described the problem and my motivation for addressing it, I question what best practices are essential for organizational innovations to be sustainable in big bureaucratic organizations. To answer my research question, I flew to Los Angeles, CA to interview a group of people who have experience in instituting change in large complex organizations. My access to this group of experts came through one of my dissertation committee members who teaches at the World Bank-USC Annenberg Summer Institute In Reform Communication: Leadership, Strategy and Stakeholder Alignment. Through his contacts and years of involvement with the World Bank-USC program, I was able to attend the conference for one week and conduct interviews with 12 participants. Interview times ranged from 25–30
minutes and were conducted in the mornings before conference start times, during lunch breaks, after sessions ended in the evening, or during dinner.

**Table 2. List of Interviewees and Their Professional Positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Name</th>
<th>Interviewee Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 1</td>
<td>NGO senior division communication manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 2</td>
<td>NGO senior program officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 3</td>
<td>NGO senior communication conflict specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 4</td>
<td>NGO lead consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 5</td>
<td>NGO senior social development specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 6</td>
<td>NGO senior communication officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 7</td>
<td>NGO managing director, international cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 8</td>
<td>NGO senior communications associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 9</td>
<td>NGO chief executive director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 10</td>
<td>NGO senior associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 11</td>
<td>NGO senior communication strategist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate 12</td>
<td>NGO chief executive officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the 12 participants I interviewed are from Africa. They work in different executive-level positions for the World Bank. Of the 12, one is originally from Saudi Arabia, but currently works as senior communication officer for the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) in Australia; one is from Indonesia and works for the World Bank as Senior Social Development Specialist; one is from Egypt and works as Department Manager, Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy (and also serves as the financial officer for the World Bank Transition Fund); one from Brazil and serves as senior World Bank Communication Associate; and one from China, and serves as the Executive Director of China Blue Sustainability Institute.
Before my interviews, the conference chair and my dissertation faculty member gave me a few minutes to introduce myself (I am originally from Gambia, West Africa) and talk about my doctoral program at USF and my research interest. The participants seeing that I am from Africa (a developing continent), perhaps felt more comfortable in quickly bonding and agreeing to give me time out of their hectic schedule to answer my research questions candidly. Some were willing to schedule dinner interviews with me even though they had assignments to complete for the next day of classes. My interviews were taped and transcribed using Rev.com (a transcription software).

**Methodology**

In analyzing my data, I used a phenomenological study modeled after Bourne’s “Phenomenological Study of Generational Response to Organizational Change” published in the *Journal of Managerial Issues* (2015). My case study involved 12 participants at a 2018 World Bank-Annenberg Summer Institute Conference In Reform Communication: Leadership, Strategy, and Stakeholder Alignment in Los Angeles, California. Of the 12 World Bank leaders interviewed, six were female and six were male.

According to Creswell (2013), “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. A phenomenologist focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (p. 76). This account involves “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). Most qualitative research involves a participant size ranging from 5 to 25 (Polkinghorne, 1989). The fewer the number of participants, the higher the ability of the researcher to offer a detailed description (Creswell, 2013). However, the size of the participant pool represents a limitation when the study is extended to an entire industry/agency.
A further limitation of this study is that the participants are only those World Bank leaders who could make it to the conference for one reason or another. However, this particular group is comprised of well-experienced experts with years of experience in strategic change management, communication, strategy execution, and leadership. Further study with a larger pool can be beneficial in determining if this group is representative of all of their colleagues who did not attend the conference.

Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen (1990) listed the following as defining features of a phenomenological study:

- An emphasis on a phenomenon to be explored, phrased in terms of a single concept or idea.

- The examination of this phenomenon with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. The size of the identified heterogeneous group can vary from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15.

- The discussion centers on the lived experiences of individuals and how they have both subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people.

- The researcher brackets himself or herself out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon. This bracketing allows the researcher to focus on the experiences of the participants in the study.

- Data collection procedure involves interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.

- Data collection follows systematic procedures that move from the small units of analysis (e.g., significant statements), and on to broader units (e.g., meaning units), and on to
detailed descriptions that summarize two elements, “what” the individuals have experienced and “how” they have experienced it.

A phenomenology ends with a descriptive passage that discusses the essence of the experience for individuals incorporating “what” they have experienced and “how” they experienced it. The “essence” is the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study.

To apply this methodology, I selected a group of 12 top executives who have experience instituting innovative organizational change. I interviewed my respondents about their individual and collective experiences with the implementation of strategic change and what factors influenced the success or failure of the change. The focus of the interviews was on the lived experience of the participants during which I attempted to exclude my personal experiences and opinions from the conversation. The interviews consisted of initial topics of specific changes the participants had experienced and the broader context of how the experiences affected the interviewee and the organization at large.

**Interview Questions**

Each study participant at the World Bank Conference met with me for about 15–30 minutes during the conference, evenings, between sessions, before or after meetings. Some meetings were held in closed offices and others in an open environment (but semi-private). Participants were more relaxed in some sessions and a little hurried in others due to their busy conference schedule. I believe these conditions did not impact the quality of the interviews because all or most the participants are used to working in conditions that require flexibility and adaptability.

The focus of the interviews was on the appreciative approach (positive or successful); however, to know what works, we also must be mindful of the reasons and factors that contribute
to failure. For this reason, interview question #4 specifically asks about failed initiatives and their contributing factors.

1. Thinking about all the different organizations that you played a major part in, is there a time when an initiative that was launched at the top of one of them really took hold. What do you think made it work?

2. Follow-up questions: Did the schedule make a difference; did geography make a difference; did being co-located make a difference; did the medium of communication—e.g., consistent messaging, line of sight) make a difference; political conflicts avoidance; buy-in from everyone at the top; buy-in from the middle-managers; support from external constituents (legislators, shareholders, donors, supporters, etc.)—make a difference?

3. In your experience at your last organization or the one just prior to it, tell me about how innovation sticks or spreads throughout the organization?

4. What characteristics of a top-down innovation do you think encourages failure? Or can you tell me about a time when you experienced a true disaster and what made it a disaster? (Note: this question is basically critical incident technique turn up-side-down.)

5. How does your organization generate and select which innovations to pursue? Are there specific stages or steps that the innovation must go through in order to be implemented?

6. Could we wrap up by telling me about the most creative idea that you came up with in your career that you saw through to implementation? What was that like and what made it successful?

Data Analysis

Qualitative data are textual, non-numerical, and unstructured and many processes are required to make sense of qualitative data, of which data analysis is one of the most difficult and
crucial. The objective of qualitative data analysis is to determine the relationships, themes, and categories, also known as codes, in a corpus that describes something meaningful within the focus of the research. Coding involves identifying the categories, etc., then assigning those codes to words, phrases, sentences, or entire paragraphs within the texts being studied. This is usually an iterative process since the researcher often discovers new categories as the texts are more deeply studied.

For this project, the 12 transcribed interviews were uploaded as “sources” to NVivo 11 Pro, a qualitative data analysis software available via the USF Application Gateway. The longest interview, Steven S., an NGO Communications Manager, 49 minutes, was read through and an initial set of codes were created and entered into NVivo as “nodes” (Table 3). These nodes were assigned to appropriate words, phrases, etc. in the Shalita interview and then to the remaining eleven interviews. New nodes were also discovered in some of the other interviews. Therefore, the interviews were read through again to ensure that the full set of nodes had been applied to all interviews.

Table 3. Initial Code/Node List Derived During First Read of Steven S. Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code/Node Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good top down communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good bottom-up communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established goals &amp; mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down forced change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At this point, it was obvious that higher level themes were emerging from the coding process. The highest level of themes were reasons for success and reasons for failure.

Table 4. Final List of Codes/Nodes and Parent Nodes as Derived from Analysis of All Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Node Name</th>
<th>Node Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Bad or lack of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Forced change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Know-it-all attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Lack of follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Lack of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>One size doesn't fit all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for failure</td>
<td>Top-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Goal-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Management listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Management sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Communication</td>
<td>Town hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Focus on solving problem, not implementing a specific solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Gradual change to minimize impact on constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Identified change agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Effective change management</td>
<td>Problem solving-diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Defined mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Lead by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Leadership</td>
<td>Upper-level buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Ownership</td>
<td>Empowerment, support, recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Ownership</td>
<td>Fresh viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Ownership</td>
<td>Involvement at all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for success:Ownership</td>
<td>Middle management buy-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, sub-themes or parent nodes were also apparent (Table 4). Within each theme, parent nodes were identified as leadership, communication, ownership, and effective project management (Figure 7) and the original set of nodes were grouped as sub-nodes under the parent nodes. As mentioned above, this was an iterative process and new sub-nodes were sometimes discovered during an iteration.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 7.** The Four Core Themes Discovered through and Used to Analyze the Interviews

This coding/recoding process created an organized structure of core themes through which the 12 interviews were analyzed. The results of that analysis follow in the next section.

**Results**

I used a number of related techniques, including word frequency analysis, word clouds, histograms, and pie charts to ascertain the underlying themes in the interviews and to develop my interpretations. Once coding was complete, quotes related to a theme, sub-theme/parent node, or code/node were easy to access and use to support my interpretations.

To begin, when analyzing text, a common starting point is to quantify word frequency. This is useful when the researcher plans to code the text, as code words and themes can be detected through the summative approach of word counting. Although it does not in itself infer meaning, word counting identifies high use words, which can eventually contribute to understanding the contextual use of the words. In the case of this study, a word frequency
analysis of the interviews (Table 5) and its visualization in a word cloud (Figure 8) identifies the words think, make, work, and know, people and organization, communication, talk, spread, and tell, innovation, managers and leader, idea, experience, and difference as highly used words.

Using this information, I identified communication and leadership as topics to be aware of when coding the interviews and information from the word frequency table provided lists of similar words that were used to search the interviews for broader meanings present in the data and to develop codes/nodes.

**Table 5. Sample list of the interview word frequencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Weighted %</th>
<th>Similar Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>make</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>brand, branding, build, building, caused, clear, clearly, create, created, creates, creating, draw, establish, established, fix, fixes, form, forms, gains, give, gives, giving, hit, hits, make, makes, making, name, names, nominate, nominated, prepare, produce, produced, producers, produces, producing, reach, reached, readiness, ready, score, throw, throwing, work, worked, working, works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>believe, believed, guess, imagine, mean, meaning, means, reason, reasons, remember, supposed, think, thinking, thinks, thought, thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>cultivate, employers, employing, exercise, exercises, form, forms, operate, operating, operation, operations, plant, play, played, playing, plays, process, processes, run, shape, shaped, solve, turned, turning, turns, work, worked, working, works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>acknowledge, acknowledged, bang, bed, experience, experiences, experiment, fuck, know, knowing, knowledge, knows, live, lived, lives, love, recognized, recognizing, wise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>administration, administratively, coordinating, coordination, engineer, establish, established, form, format, formatted, forms, governance, government, governments, organization, organizations, organize, organized, prepare, system, systems, union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovation</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>concept, creation, design, designed, designing, found, foundation, initial, initially, initiative, initiatives, innovate, innovation, innovations, innovative, institute, institution, institutional, institutions, introduce,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the codes/nodes were created, revised, structured, and applied to the interviews, the software provided many other features and tools to visualize, explore, and facilitate analysis of the data. For example, histograms of parent nodes and pie charts of nodes, as seen in the following sections, provided information that I used to compare the amount of coding at nodes, visualize prominent themes, and identify areas that needed further investigation. In addition, summaries of all of the quotes related to a theme and sub-theme/parent node were easily accessed, considered, and selected for the analysis that is explained in the following sections.

**Reasons for Success**

Since this is a phenomenological study, the discussion of each of the four themes (Figure 9) will include a narrative (from the perspective of the interviewees) from the transcripts. In the
following sections, I present data to show results for each of the four reasons for success, beginning with leadership.

**Leadership**

Responses from 90% of all participants supported the theme that leadership plays a critical role in guiding and sustaining strategic change initiatives. These findings support literature that “top management turnover is a major threat to the long-term success of strategic intervention, and makes it very difficult to sustain it benefits (Mosadeghrad et al., 2013).
Big bureaucratic organizations are complex in nature. Long-term thinking and commitment in strategic objectives are aided by stability at the top of the organization. The following quotes are drawn from the interview transcripts.

Alphonso on leader being encouraging:

*I have taken over the interns and most of the key areas for innovation I’ve populated with young guys so they can experiment, fail, experiment, fail without any frustration or with the validity through frustration. So, I think one is enthusiasm. Innovation is about not giving up. So, if people are not enthusiastic they can easily give up.*

Alphonso on leadership and goal setting:

*The first thing is that we developed a five-year strategic plan, corporate strategic plan. And in the corporate strategic plan, we identified key areas with key...*
performance indicators. So, each one of the departments had at most five key performance indicators... we broke it down to annual work plans. Each department has an annual plan. Subsequently, all the members in that department, they have their own annual plan with key performance indicators. And then we started a performance appraisal system based on the key performance indicators.

**Alphonso on the importance of upper-level buy-in:**

*It's very difficult to introduce incentive programs. So, there was one program where I wanted to take out the overtime because people wanted to work in the time that would qualify for overtime. So, I took it out and I introduced incentive payments for those that could meet the key performance indicators. They could get their money... And the minister gave me an okay official that you can proceed.*

**Amr Aly on the importance of a sponsor for a strategic initiative:**

*If you're coming up with a change initiative, it's okay to get a sponsor from the top, but build a network of middle managers that's going to carry the change. Responsible for the change. Even when the top person changes, you can find another sponsor. You will look for a sponsor for the change. The middle managers will look for a sponsor to promote their ideas about the change and how we can improve.*

**Amr on the importance of mentoring the next generation of leaders in your organization:**

*So, to make it sustainable, you have to take care of our future young leaders in your institute or organization, that's a key. Investing into young people, young leaders in your organization.*

**Steven on a new president's approach to reorganizing/restructuring World Bank:**

*People say can't be done and he is the kind of guy who says every single time “it can be done.” Kim is not an insider, so he comes with an outsider's view, “I'm going to do things differently and I'm going to set targets and how to achieve them... Nobody had done that, and everybody actually say that can’t possibly happen, but at least we had a goal we had to target. If it's not achieved, at least we know it and communicating that... There were protests before, say, no, we don't like this and all this and all that. But he kind of got away with it. He would explain. I think if there is anything that he does is stakeholder mapping. Who are the critical players here, the staff association, the leadership team, the board... So, I think that he made things work and I would say in the last five years, every single objective... he has been able to do it because he knows it is important and what to give them and how to explain it to them.*
Han on being a new leader with a young team:

*This probably is my first experience as a leader... I was doing team building and internal communication and setting up the rules and code of practices... they are the freshly graduated, so they don't really have that much work... So, it's really about like you have to coach them*...

**Communication**

Responses from 92% of participants identified communication as a key component of the success of innovation implementation and sustainability. This finding is supported by literature that leaders should strategically communicate the needed changes and why those changes are needed (Goldberg, 2005). Literature also shows the perceived gap in communication between what the leader's opinion of the change implementation is and that of the employees (Lewis, 2006). Bourne (2015) states that “employees are likely to ignore a change initiative when they lack clarity about the vision, do not receive quality information, or do not believe their opinions are valued” (p. 152). According to Elving and Bennebroek Gravenhorst (2009), quality communication has a positive impact on uncertainty, which has a direct positive impact on the organization’s readiness for change. Ambiguity as a strategy in organizational communication can be used by skilled executives to achieve strategic organizational goals (Eisenberg, 1984). Eisenberg (1984) also suggests striking a balance between “being understood, not offending others and maintaining one’s self-image” (p. 229).
Steven S., Margaret R., and Mauricio R. identified the importance of communicating a change, what the change is, and the reason for the change. The following quotes are pulled from their interview transcripts.

Steven on addressing globalization:

*I think it was successful because of two reasons. One, it was a different thinking with a leader that was determined to change this to rather than what most presidents do. He went and presented this to the board before he did it and the board bought into [his] appeal that this is a global institution. We should provide global knowledge based on themes rather than just departments... then he appointed two change vice presidents. This was their full-time job. “You guys manage the change process administratively, all that you have a year to do this, communicate, communicate, communicate.” So actually, one of the biggest roles, it's tied to communication. These two vice presidents were supposed to*
communicate the change and how it will work and answer questions from staff, so kind of going over and over it so that it may be successful. It wasn’t so complicated. It's just do some public opinion surveys and tell people, respond to people's real problems.

Margaret on change in funding models for the Ford Foundation, so they have to change:

So, to orient people, you have to give them a reason to understand why you're moving, but also make them understand that the change is going to be a process. It's not going to happen in a day... So, I think it stuck for a couple of reasons. One is there was good explanation of why the foundation is changing strategic direction...

Mauricio on reduction of gas flaring in oil production in Nigeria (bad for the environment):

    We actually designed a whole communications strategy on this. How you frame things, how you position, how you sell them in a very consistent way to all our stakeholders. And actually, that was part of my role. I helped them position the issue... So, we aligned our communication strategy along three pillars and we've communicated consistently to companies and government saying you need to join this initiative. Gasoline reduction is relevant, is viable, and it’s desirable. We hammered out along those three pillars all the time.

Effective Change Management

Responses from 83% of all participants supported the theme of effective change management and how it impacts institutionalizing change efforts in the fabric of the organization. These findings support literature that 70% of organizational change efforts fail or miss desired objectives (Axelrod et al., 2006). A recent Oxford University study on change reveals that 68% of employees welcome significant involvement in change. The Oxford study also shows the missed opportunity “in the relationship between the failure rate of organizational change efforts and people’s desire for meaningful involvement.”
Figure 12. Chart of the Sub-Theme Reasons for the Success of Innovation Related to Effective Change Management Discovered During Text Analysis and Coding of the Interviews

The chart of the sub-themes in Figure 12, and quotes from Han, Alphonso, Lily, Muhammed, and Steven below show reasons for success of innovation related to effective change management.

Han on dealing with employee turnover and how it affects change:

*We wanted to make everything streamlined the process. We want to document everything, so we want to make it like a more replicable or standardized process, then it doesn't matter who come to do the work. We have the manual, we have the history, historical archive.*

Alphonso on being flexible when there is resistance to change:

*Drive the strategy. It is very difficult for everybody else too to be on board. So, I would say we have seen that we can have support and sometimes you don't have support, so every time you have to reorient your efforts and focus.*
Lily on implementing a change:

Whether it actually makes sense in terms of the implementation, but that turns the tough part. I think you really need to test always test... Turned out it doesn't work at all. Well, you need to tweak a little bit here and there... so that it make it possible for people in Kenya, for example, to submit a beat with the limitation in the internet and things like that... So we have now proven that it can work when you need to allow for exception that is tailored to the context of some country basically.

Muhammed on managing changes that are being implemented in multiple countries or geographic areas:

We brought together two other profit centers that already implemented the system and tried to learn from their experience and then you sit together and try to try to adjust what the system. The system is standard centralized, but it can be adjusted to the situation. So, after we learned a lot from what was experienced in a lot of provinces, then you sit down together and try to put everything to match that with the local condition.

Steven on implementing a complete structural change to the organization:

It impacted the bank in the sense that all of a sudden people belonged to these 10 or 14 global practices and changed the entire model of how we work now. It was started on an experimental basis and it has gone on, but the thing that has happened is that it wasn't a perfect model. Clearly, it was changing... How are the global practices performing? Not perfectly. They have some challenges, but there has been space to innovate, so actually, right now they've broken down. Some of them, they have merged. Others they have tried to create different models.

Steven on dealing with resistance when implementing new tap water process in Kenya:

You can't force change even when you think it's good for them. You can’t. So, what we did anyway, I think is innovative was to use a different approaches. We gave these guys free water connections. It will come to their house. They don't want it... I said, ‘rather than fight them, let us work on a way to clean the wells’ because ultimately, we want clean, safe water. So, instead of tap water resistance, so you focus on, first of all, people cleaning the wells. So, we asked the test team leader to allow us to use some of the funding to do a diagnostic a report in terms of the institutional organizational behavior and recommendations for improvement. So, we coined it the Pathway to Success document or report, Pathway to Success. And, a couple of areas were identified as areas that needed improvement and we just nominated five out of the many areas that we needed to improve on. I must say that we haven't been able to implement all the five, but those areas that we've implemented have turned out to be very, very profitable to the extent that out of the five Water Boards, we are the only Water Board that is a
remaining profitable and most of the parameters that were not doing well, we're doing well.

Ownership

Responses from 100% of the participants supported the theme that ownership plays a critical role in guiding and sustaining strategic change initiatives. This finding is supported by literature that no chance efforts can be sustained in the long run in the face of overt or covert resistance by those who need to get involved and own the process (Axelrod et al., 2006). Real ownership starts with involvement. I have heard it said by many change management practitioners that people will embrace your change when they are ready, or the boat will be built when the crew is ready. The following quotes speak to the strategic nature in which change process has to be managed.

![Reason for Success Ownership](image)

**Figure 13. Chart of the sub-theme reasons for the success of innovation related to Ownership discovered during text analysis and coding of the interviews**
Alphonso:

So, I went out to a conference in Cape Town. I came back, I shared with my colleagues and most of the times when I'm traveling, I travel with four or five middle managers. So, on our way back, we said, let us adopt an innovation... And it worked in a year... to allow people in the low-income areas access water 24/7 by automating their communal water kiosks.

Alphonso:

The first thing is that we developed a five-year strategic plan, corporate strategic plan. And in the corporate strategic plan we identified key areas with key performance indicators. So, each one of the departments had at most five key performance indicators... we broke it down to annual work plans. Each department has an annual plan. Subsequently, all the members in that department, they have their own annual plan with key performance indicators. And then we started a performance appraisal system based on the key performance indicators.

Alphonso:

I think middle managers are key. Very key. So, I would say that in my, what my assessment was that, um, I'm, I'm making use of um, maybe less than 20 percent of the middle managers that are driving the whole process, the oedipal percent thereabouts, that just flowing with the wind.

So, why are you putting emphasis on middle managers? Why is the role of managers important in driving innovation and sustaining it?

It's almost impossible to drive any reform without the middle managers. It's impossible because your interface is with the middle managers more often than not. And they're the ones that if... they take it up as their own, then they start talking to them, to their people with ownership.

Amr Aly:

If you're coming up with a change initiative, it's okay to get a sponsor from the top but build a network of middle managers that's going to carry the change. Responsible for the change. Even when the top person changes, you can find another sponsor. You will look for a sponsor for the change. The middle managers will look for a sponsor to promote their ideas about the change and how we can improve.

So, you need buy-in from those middle managers?

Yes, they will make the system is stable. Then you will secure the sustainability for the system. I didn't believe in the top managers because they just are useful for
one year, two years and they leave, they will switch to another place. So, to make it sustainable, you have to take care of your future young future leaders in your institution or organization.

Reasons for Failure

One hundred percent of all participants cited top-down management and forced-changed as reasons for failure in institutionalizing change, along with several other factors as shown in Figure 14. These findings are supported by research on organizational change which discovers that top-down and forced change do not translate into lasting change (Beer et al., 1990). Other change management principles support the statement that people will embrace your vision when they are ready because of the notion of “take it or leave it” following “undiscussable barriers to sustained commitment and performance” as the silent killers:

- Unclear strategy, values, and conflicting priorities
- Leadership style—top-down or laissez-faire
- An effective top team
- Poor coordination across functions
- Inadequate leadership/management skills and development in organization
- Closed vertical communication and resulting low trust (Beer, 2014)
The following quotes are pulled from the transcripts of Alfanso, Amr, Lily, Reem, Steven, Mauricio, Umou, and Juliana.

Alfonso on how top down management and forced change can lead to innovation failures:

There's probably going to be failing because of the way we manage it from top down... when the leader forces innovation. "I want this, and I wanted done by you." It's a complete disaster.

We have about 3000 kilometers of pipe distribution network and I wanted it to be digitized, into GIS and a model developed. I struggled because I two, three times in a week, I was in his office forcing... the team members to give me the output. It felt for years we are only, I think some 80 percent done and they had gotten the model about 70 percent done. It's not even calibrated. That's the time I
withdrew. That's when we made a few strides to reach the 80 percent. Otherwise, I think that as long as is innovation is forced, it doesn't get accepted.

Amr on the failure of innovation because top management changes too frequently:

I didn't believe in the top managers because they’re just useful for one year, two years and he leaves, he will switch to another place.

Lily on top management not considering the actual needs of the organization:

Top-down innovation fails when, you know, vision does not take into account the real need at the field.

Steven on top management not considering the actual needs of the organization:

So anyway, I think that's an example of top-down reform does not achieve results because it does not take into consideration the needs and the understanding of the people. It was almost the example of the baton. So today these guys were passing the baton to nobody and then they just [dropped it]. Yeah, and then the guy has not grabbed it, but you let it go... It's finished. We're done. They're done.

It's the attitude they have. And so, when you're dealing with what you're dealing with, especially in most times, it's the attitudes rather than the facts. Everybody needs water. What do you mean that we need to ask them if they need water? Of course, we know they need water. But, do you know how they want to receive it?

Steven on resistance to change when top management not considering the needs of the organization:

So, because they had used the approach of top-down the people just resisted the reform. People are saying we will not leave, people are going to sue, people are going to do this... top-down reform does not achieve results because it does not take into consideration the needs and the understanding of the people.

Reem on top management not consulting experts in the organization when planning a change:

It's when a top-down message arrives and the experts in this specific message, we're not consulted and let's say they were not consulted, which is typically the case.

Mauricio on top management not consulting experts in the organization when planning a change:
When the people who should be consulted, and I'm not just talking about the inner circle, right? But the people who have a stake on any sort of type of innovation or have not been consulted at all and suddenly they're just been told that this change is coming down, that you need to implement it and this is the way it's going to be enough from now.

Umou on top management not consulting experts in the organization when planning a change:

The bosses sit down without consultation on anything and say this is how it should be. It interrupts performance. People get discouraged. Everybody gets moved to where they have to learn new things. Then a few years after that, it starts going back the old way, the way it was before.

Mauricio on top management not consulting experts in the organization when planning a change:

Even if you can communicate really well, I mean, it's just the fact that there has not been any type of consultation, any effort or bringing in the thinking of the people who are going to be affected by this change. You know, it's just a big, a huge meltdown. It demotivates people to try to even, you know, to try to implement the change. I mean I've seen it also in my own organization how things, sometimes when they are too top down and they're expecting us to implement something, but nobody has even asked us for what we think about it. It's a no go zone. How many people get completely turned off, you know, even if it's a director coming from above? I mean, people may try to implement in one way or another just to follow orders, but in the longer term, it's not going to work.

Steven on top management not consulting experts in the organization when planning a change:

Let's assume again, in the communication field, this is my expertise. I get a directive from my management that we need to do x, y, z in communication. And you as the communication experts say we advise against it and you provide the scenarios or the outcome that could happen... or you advocate against it or you provide scientific or data, you know, kind of advocating against it, but they still do not listen, and they still do it and it happens.

Amr on lack of communication from top management when planning a change:

The staff of the institute or organization didn't have the idea about the way forward. Employees will not support you. So, from top down you have to have a communication network. If there is no communication network, top-down change will fail. What kind of characteristics of a top-down innovation... will make sure
it's an absolute disaster? I think it's when, if I bring up something or I order something without explanation about why we should do this.

Juliana on lack of communication from top management when planning a change:

*What characteristics of a top-down innovation will guarantee that it's going to fail? It's going to be a disaster? You don't have it well disseminated and well explained.*

**Discussion/Summary**

My original hypothesis stated that diffusion of innovation as predicted by Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory does not fully explain change in my organization due to the constant leadership changes. My analysis of the interviews supports this hypothesis, especially if we accept that successful communication, effective change management, and employee ownership of changes and the change process are all directly impacted by the quality and consistency of organizational leadership. Organizations need to recognize that management turnover and resulting strategy and priority changes affect the success of innovations and that methods to reduce the impact on the implementation and sustainability of innovations because of leadership changes are needed. Organizations can benefit from the results of this study by being able to customize diffusion of innovations by taking into the reality of organizational behavior within the context of change leadership. Organizations will also benefit by creating ownership of change culture under an environment of frequently changing leadership through empowerment of change councils. The creation of empowerment council or culture committee will allow middle managers to create secure networks in an adaptive organization. The active network support amid transient leadership would sustain a continuing commitment to institutionalizing good ideas. Lewis (2016) shows that the active involvement of middle managers in the design and implementation of change leads to lasting results. Lewis further states the active involvement is not always the case in organizations due to the lack of engagement of key stakeholders in the
change process. Indifference in initiatives comes from passive empowerment and feeling excluded in strategy (Lewis 2016).

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that only African and Asian participants at the 2018 USC Annenberg-World Bank conference were interviewed and the World Bank is a global institution. As such, the study should be repeated to include executives from other geographical regions.

Additionally, the study should be repeated for another organization of similar size and complexity as the World Bank, but in a different corporate or government sector, such as healthcare. This will help in determining whether the findings are representative of different kinds of large bureaucratic organizations—that is, if the findings are generalizable across similar industries. It may also be beneficial to repeat the study using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Conclusions

This paper focuses on successful innovation in large bureaucratic organizations to seek common attributes of where innovation works and why it worked in order to develop best practices for diffusion of innovation in large, bureaucratic organizations. According to Kotter (2002), the current rate of organizational change will continue into the future. Consequently, there is a need for busy executives in practice to know why certain ideas/initiatives get institutionalized and why others don’t. Knowing these factors provides practicing executives with a starting point to more fully understand their workforce and what motivates their employees to embark on repeatable practices irrespective of top leadership changes (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004). It is important to determine (through a follow-up study) if the findings of this study are representative of different kinds of large bureaucratic organizations. If they are the
same, best practices can be developed and leaders across large bureaucratic organizations can adopt similar approaches to institutionalizing.
CHAPTER THREE:

INSTITUTIONALIZING INNOVATIONS: CASCADING CHANGE INITIATIVES THROUGH THE ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Peter Senge, an organizational strategist, first promoted the idea of a learning organization. In his ground-breaking work, The Fifth Discipline (1990), Senge defined his vision of learning organizations as “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new (innovative) and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole picture” (p. 3).

Organizational change is an essential ingredient of organizational growth/life and can be challenging to accomplish. Many researchers and practitioners have studied the challenges and opportunities surrounding effectuating change and innovation in organizations. However, there has been little practical analysis of the theoretical relationships among the key apparatuses that make change stick, including the organizational climate (in my case, short-lived leadership), institutionalizing innovation in big bureaucratic organization and using appreciative approach to drive organizational change. In order to supplement this theoretical understanding with practical insights that can inform best practices, this article aims to provide a collection of successful organizational innovation examples based on responses to a critical incident analysis survey of
12 participants from a 2018 World Bank – USC Annenberg Summer Institute program on reform communication.

**Key Findings from Paper 2**

From the interviews and my literature review, I discovered four themes that influence the effective diffusion and institutionalization of innovation in large, bureaucratic organizations. Using stories from my interviews, I identified a collection of best practices related to each of the themes that organizational leaders should consider in order to better lead their organizations through the generation and institutionalization of new ideas.

This section identifies the four core themes discovered during text analysis of the interviews, best practices that I developed through this research, that an organization should adopt to support the innovation process, and specific examples from the interviews of why an innovation succeeded/stuck (and the potential practices or pitfalls of which we should be mindful.)

- Best practices for Leadership
  - Communicating as a process to create an environment for effective change management
    - [The leader] appointed two change vice presidents. This was their full-time job. “You guys manage the change process administratively. All that you have a year to do this, communicate, communicate, communicate.” So actually, one of the biggest roles, it's tied to communication. These two vice presidents were supposed to communicate the change and how it will work and answer questions from staff, so kind of going over and over a bit so that that may be successful.
    
    **Lesson:** You can never communicate enough. See communication as a means to an end. It is not a one-time process, and constancy is key to realizing objectives. Appointing a full-time FTEE to managing a big strategic goal is in itself a strategy.

  - Effective management of talent (emotional intelligence)
The bank is full of very smart people. I honestly have never found a place that has a high concentration of smart people [Ph.D. economists and statisticians] like the bank because you present one idea and you'll find there are hundred different other ideas that are equally impressive... it's also very averse to change because intellectuals have a certain way they think.

[The leader] supported us to have a very professional training programs approach in capacity building leadership skills... And he started to use leadership skills with us and give us delegation [by sending us to conferences and meetings].

Lesson: Leaders need to be equipped in all four emotional intelligence quotients – self-management, self-awareness, situational awareness, and relationship management. Managing a diverse workforce with talents requires good skills. Developing the employees (personal mastery) alongside the organization’s strategic objectives is essential to effective talent management.

- Clearly defining and communicating what success looks like / aligning vision with strategy

  The first thing is that we developed a five-year strategic plan, corporate strategic plan. And in the corporate strategic plan, we identified key areas with key performance indicators. So, each one of the departments had at most five key performance indicators to be performed. And, we broke it down to annual work plans. Each department has an annual acre plot plan. Subsequently, all the members in that department, they have their own annual work plan with key performance indicators. And then we started a performance appraisal system based on the key performance indicators.

  We coined it the Pathway to Success. And areas were identified as areas that needed improvement and we just nominated five out of the many areas that we needed to improve on. I must say that we haven't been able to implement all the five, but the areas that we've implemented have turned out to be very, very profitable.

  Lesson: Celebrating milestones, clarifying expectations and communicating what success looks like is critical to effective communication. The three to five-year strategic objectives have to be broken into weekly and daily tasks so the teams can build momentum and pathways to the end goal.

- Encouraging, mentoring, and inspiring

  This probably is my first experience as a leader... I was doing team building and internal communication and setting up the rules and code of
practices... they are the freshly graduated, so they don't really have that much work... So, it's really about like you have to coach them...

- So, to make it sustainable, you have to take care of our future young leaders in your institute or organization, that's a key. Investing in young people [star performers] in your organization.

- I think one is enthusiasm. Innovation is about not giving up. If people are not enthusiastic they can easily give up. I would say that the team spirit under leadership in innovation is very key as well.

Lesson: Organizations often say that their employees are their best asset. Investment in your assets in the form of mentoring and coaching is necessary for retaining talent.

  o Building teams and consensus

    - It was different thinking with a leader that was determined to change this to rather than what most presidents do. He went and presented this to the board before he did it and the board bought into it. These are the changes I want. And, he did it and he made an appeal.

    Lesson: Seek input and support from the top before moving ahead with impactful changes initiatives. The support may come handy when you hit bottlenecks along the implementation stages.

- Best practices for Communication

  o Having a network and process for communication

    - It's every week we have this regular meeting with the staff. Everybody reports back their progress and challenges in the projects and the others will give the suggestions or ask the questions. I think that process usually helps to generate new ideas.

    - It is awareness for the whole organization... about how the change will be... the staff of the institute or organization didn't have the idea about the way forward. So, they will not support you. So, from top down, you have to have a communication network with the whole [organization]. So, if there is no communication network, top-down [innovation] will fail.

  o Have a clear and consistent message about the change

    - [The leader] appointed two change vice presidents. This was their full-time job. “You guys manage the change process administratively. All that you have a year to do this, communicate, communicate, communicate.” So, actually one of the biggest roles, it's tied to communication. These two vice presidents were supposed to communicate the change and how it will
work and answer questions from staff, so kind of going over and over a bit so that that may be successful.

- [We achieved our goal because our leader] knows what is important and what to give them and how to explain it to them.

  o Accept and consider input and feedback on the change and change process from all affected

    - [Change fails] when the people who should be consulted, and I'm not just talking about the inner circle, but the people who have a stake in any type of innovation have not been consulted at all and suddenly they're just told that this change is coming down, that you need to implement it, and this is the way it's going to be from now on.

    - [When] there has not been any type of consultation, any effort or bring in the thinking of the people who are going to be affected by this change, it's just a big, a huge meltdown. It demotivates people to try to even try to implement the change.

Lesson: Make yourself available to answer questions from staff at all times during the change implementation process. Be flexible and incorporate good feedback to gain involvement and ownership of the change.

- Best practices for Effective change management

  o Identify change agents/managers

    - [The leader] appointed two change vice presidents. This was their full-time job. “You guys manage the change process administratively. All that you have a year to do this, communicate, communicate, communicate.” So actually, one of the biggest roles, it's tied to communication. These two vice presidents were supposed to communicate the change and how it will work and answer questions from staff, so kind of going over and over a bit so that that may be successful.

  o Be flexible with the details of the change and change process to accommodate different organizational realities (e.g., D.C. main office vs. Indonesian field office experience)

    - [The implementation of a new e-procurement system] worked I think because the people who make the system, actually responded to the criticism, you know, the feedback, especially from the field office.

    - We brought them to a field office that already implemented the system and tries to learn from their experience and then you sit together and try to adjust the system. The system is standardly centralized, but it can be adjusted to look at the situation.
Best practices for creating Ownership of the change/change process

Middle management buy-in to build ownership of the change or process

- I think when you have a major change, to make it succeed you should identify and include the main young leaders in the organization... If any change of the top happens, the network in the middle, they are very strong. They will keep promoting for the change until they find another leader/sponsor for the new change and they will continue.

- I think middle managers are key to the successful implementation of innovation... It's almost impossible to drive any reform without the middle managers. It's impossible because your interface is with the middle managers more often than not. And, they're the ones that if they start saying the boss says it'll never work, but if they take it up as their own, then they start talking to their people with ownership it makes a very big difference.

Supporting evidence from the literature review

- Organizational leaders should not participate in the operationalization of innovation in order to foster ownership of the change in middle and lower management (Kim, 2005).

- Disequilibrium and uncertainty can occur without early advocacy by all project partners; early involvement of stakeholders and alignment around shared goals is critical to success (Manchester et al., 2014).

Involvement of all levels of the organization

- [New ideas come from] brainstorming session or the meetings that we have internally... or talking to stakeholders.

- Little by latter, they become agents to communication because now they know what we can bring to them and they do propose.

- [The implementation of a new e-procurement system] worked I think because the people who make the system, actually responded to the criticism, you know, the feedback, especially from the field office.

- I think what makes top-down innovation fail is when the vision does not take into account the real need at the field.

Empowerment, support, recognition of people affected by the change
• Give [the staff] the power to make the decision that really inspire them or energize them... no involvement, no commitment.

• [The leader] supported us to have a very professional training programs approach in capacity building leadership skills

• If you want the process to hold, [keep your young leaders] informed and listen to them. They can have some [input] into plans.

Lessons: Institutionalizing good work practices in a bureaucracy requires strong support of middle managers. Research shows that middle managers effectuate change processes through the creating of network support systems (Lewis 2016). The secure network is vital to surviving continually changing leadership. The different communication methods/tools are necessary to build belief and sustenance in the change, but ownership and involvement of the change process are more likely to yield a more significant impact in the long run. The “empowerment—inclusion matrix and change adaption” by F.R. Wesley (1990) underscore the behavior of middle managers during the change. The role of the middle manager needs to change from “vertical.” and “bureaucratic” to codependent and mission-centric.

**Recommendation**

Make the innovation a participative process by involving all mission-critical stakeholders in the evaluation, prioritization, etc. of innovation before implementation. Also, anchored the innovation in a repeatable work practice so that it can withstand top leadership and technological changes.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Initially, in the literature review and the analysis of the interviews, four independent themes were discovered. However, core themes and sub-themes cannot be viewed as independent. What effects one often impacts another. A deeper and data-driven analysis of the interviews revealed the interconnectedness of all of the themes as shown in the Venn diagram Figure 15. For example, two-way communication is vital to effective change management, ownership, and communication and shared vision is contingent on good leadership and employee engagement and ownership of the change.
Limitations That Have to Be Considered When Interpreting These Recommendations

The sample size of the interviews has to be taken into account when interpreting my recommendations. A future research approach is to test the model developed from the study in my organization (healthcare) and subsequently in a variety of other organizational settings. The study should also be repeated with equal emphasis on the causes of failure as well as the successes since the appreciative inquiry approach limited the opportunity to study restraining forces.
REFERENCES


