

**The evolving role of managers and non-manager
professionals in a dispersed change
management context: issues and implications**

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Dedicated to:

Michael Doyle, 1925 - 2004

Julie-Anne Doyle, 1971 - 2004

For you both...

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Abstract

This study carries forward earlier research by the author into the management of change and the evolving role of managers and professionals who now find themselves involved or implicated in the process of organisational change. The conceptual focus for the study is the dynamic interplay between the structures that are generating the distribution of change management responsibility and the freedom of social actors to make intentional choices and decisions about how they will or will not assimilate that responsibility into their role, and the consequential effects this produces for them and the change process.

The case study method was employed to investigate the roles of managers and professionals in two contrasting organisations: one a large Primary Care Trust, the other, a small Research and Technology company. A total of forty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted with a non-probabilistic sample of managers and professionals in both organisations. The data were supplemented by observation and an in-depth analysis of documentary data sources which were used to define and describe the substance and context of the change processes under investigation. Analysis of qualitative data was based on a modified grounded theory approach.

The findings suggest there are challenges to the sustainability of rational, centred, top-down, hierarchical models of change management when they are confronted by the discontinuities and instabilities of contemporary change scenarios where hierarchy and status are arguably less meaningful and important and where control and certainty become more problematical. Arguments are made that senior managers, as change strategists, may have to learn to modify or even discard existing models of directive control. Instead, they will look to make second-order interventions that generate the receptive contexts for successful change. The aim is to ‘push’ responsibility towards their middle and junior managers and professionals and in doing so, to influence their willingness or otherwise to accept that responsibility.

However, at the same time, change strategists may have to acknowledge and accept that the receptivity of individuals to ‘pull’ a responsibility for change management into their role by accepting a delegated responsibility, or to unilaterally and independently create their own area of responsibility, is a significant consideration in framing a progressive change strategy. Equally, any strategy has to acknowledge that individuals may resist or reject efforts to involve them in change management, or they may view responsibility as means to attain personal goals which may or may not be congruent with those of the organisation, and in that sense, change management responsibility could be used to undermine or even usurp the change process.

With these issues in mind, the findings of the study suggest that the theory around change management appears to be underdeveloped and does not reflect the complexity and fluidity of leadership revealed by more recent empirical studies. Practical improvement must revolve around a more explicit need to “manage the change managers.” Here, the positive and negative effects of distributed responsibility are framed in a coherent HR strategy for selection, skills development and support to those involved in change management.

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Chapter 1

Background, rationale and aims for the study

1.1 Introduction

A recurring and persistent theme in the organisational change literature are the exhortations being made to work organisations that they must adapt and change if they are to survive and succeed in the face of turbulent environmental forces (Kanter, 1999; Henry and Mayle, 2002; Dunphy, *et al.*, 2003). Private sector organisations are being urged to innovate and transform themselves if they wish to remain competitive and meet the growing challenges and opportunities of a global marketplace. Similarly, there are growing pressures on public sector institutions to respond positively to rapidly changing government policies and shifts in funding arrangements; while transforming themselves into more efficient and cost effective organisations – both to deliver the better services, higher standards and added value that taxpayers are seemingly demanding and to meet the political and ideological agenda of the government of the day (Senior and Fleming, 2006; Holbeche, 2006; Hayes, 2007).

It is from within this transformational and often radical context, that the effective management of organisational change is increasingly coming to be seen as a strategic imperative. As a consequence, managers at middle and junior levels, and a growing number of non-manager professionals, now find themselves having a responsibility for managing some aspect of the change process. In this role, they are now being viewed as a strategic resource – they are seen to be ‘critical’ or ‘pivotal’ in using their expertise and commitment to lead their organisations through the process of change to meet stakeholder expectations; to deliver anticipated outcomes and reduce the risk of failure and eventual demise (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992; Storey, 1992; Wilson, 1992).

But how do these middle and junior managers and non-manager professionals actually become involved in change management? How do they assimilate change responsibilities into their existing functional and professional duties? What are the

effects on them and their organisation? What theoretical and practical issues and implications are raised and how are these being addressed in terms of proposals for ongoing theory development and ideas for practical improvement? In this study I aim to explore these and other questions.

1.2 The rationale for the study

The genesis of this study lies in the accumulation of some ten years of experience in the field of change management as an academic researcher and change consultant and prior to that, as a practising manager leading major change projects. This experience has led the researcher to adopt a more challenging and critical perspective about the way the management of organisational change is being interpreted and enacted in modern organisations. A review of the mainstream literature suggests that most conceptions of the management of change are philosophically premised on perspectives and assumptions that have their antecedents in rational, functional theories and models of hierarchy, status, control and compliance. However, there are now emergent challenges to the sustainability of these rational, centred, top-down, hierarchical models of change management when they are confronted by the discontinuities and instabilities of contemporary change scenarios, where hierarchy and status are arguably less meaningful and important and where control and certainty in the process become more problematical (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Collins, 1998; Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Denis, *et al.*, 2001; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Gronn, 2002; Caldwell, 2003a, 2005, 2006)

In critically reviewing the management of change literature, and the findings from more recent empirical studies of change and change management, it is becoming increasingly evident that conceptions of change management can no longer be confined to the follow-me leadership behaviours of 'heroic' and charismatic senior managers or the activities of singular, mandated full time change 'experts' such as external OD consultants or nominated project leaders, who, drawing on their power and expertise, see their primary role as issuing instructions and directives for others to implement. The role of senior managers, as change strategists, has now shifted to one of enabling and promoting appropriate change-creating behaviours, attitudes and the personal capacities to inspire individuals and teams to become involved; to take the initiative; to embrace

change wholeheartedly; to make a difference to their organisation. Some, in a more rhetorical vein, argue that responsibility for initiating and implementing change has to be dispersed to a wider “cast of characters” (Hutton, 1994) who will respond to their newly empowered change responsibilities with enthusiasm, commitment and a sense of shared purpose in delivering change goals (La Marsh, 1995; Katzenbach, *et al.*, 1997). In other words, everybody can now be involved in managing change; everybody can be a change agent and make a difference. However, closer scrutiny reveals that this perspective is likely to be more aspirational and idealised than real and concrete. Such sentiments may have democratic intent, and may be seen as a way of coming to terms with the complexity of radical change and a way of making change more palatable, but in practice, change management remains firmly within existing hierarchical systems of power and control (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Kanter, 1999; Gill, 2003; Storey, 2004; Woodward and Hendry, 2004).

With the growing complexity of change management, the researcher contends that the dynamics of its distribution and consequential effects are not being fully represented nor well understood and that current models of change leadership are therefore likely to be theoretically under-developed and less efficacious in practice than they should or could be to meet the challenges of change. Evidence suggests that existing models should be subjected to a more probing critical investigation to expose inherent contradictions and ambiguities framed within their over simplified assumptions (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000). For instance, there is evidence from these and other studies to suggest that in some cases, more conventional top-down, empowering models are being complemented by, and even on occasions supplanted by, a bottom-up dynamic that is generated by individual motives and collective patterns of informal relationships, networks and alliances which have emerged as a consequence of growing complexity. Within these more fluid and informal models change management becomes a way of exerting localised decision-making and control so that the process of change can be made to fit with operational and local contingencies. However, while these adapted models of change management might fit with local needs and personal agendas, they may or may not be congruent with formal organisational goals and therefore could present risks to the formal change process (Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan 2003a).

Additionally, prior research in which the researcher was involved, has highlighted the apparent disjunction between what might be deemed mainstream theories and models of change management and the more practical reality or ‘lived experience’ of those managers and professionals who have willingly accepted, or found themselves the unwilling recipient of, some aspect of a change management in UK public and private sector organisations (see for example: Buchanan *et al.*, 1999 and Doyle *et al.*, 2000).

More recent research studies have developed this theme and sought to investigate the ‘lived experience’ of those involved in or implicated in, the management of change. These studies have begun to develop a greater awareness and understanding about the form and dynamics associated with the process of managing change and more recently, how these dynamics are leading to a number of issues and implications for individuals and the organisations involved (see for example: Caldwell, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007a). For example, there is felt to be more scope to consider the consequential effects when those who find themselves cast in the role of change agent – especially if they perceive themselves to be ill-equipped to manage change, e.g. they may lack the skills and capacities to implement change or cope with the workloads and pressures this implies. Rationally, and logically, if these individuals are deemed to be a valuable and important strategic resource and that they are pivotal to the change process, a lack of knowledge and skills about how to assume, manage and cope with change responsibilities may place an avoidable risk against the whole change process. In that regard, issues such how receptive individuals and collectives are to becoming involved in a change management role, and more strategically, how to “manage the change managers” become relevant for closer consideration (Doyle, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a). It is from with this challenging perspective that the researcher framed his main aims.

1.3 Aims of the study

With the rationale for the study explained, the main aims can now be established. The central research question for this study to be addressed becomes:

What are the dynamics of change management distribution and how are change management responsibilities being assimilated into middle and junior manager and non-manager professional roles within transformational change contexts? More specifically, what issues and debates arise as a consequence and what challenges and opportunities do they present for theoretical development and practical application?

This central question generates a number of more specific sub-questions and these are used to frame the research design and aid data collection:

- *What are the mechanisms which distribute change management responsibilities and how are these being assimilated into the roles of middle, junior managers and non-manager professionals?*
- *What are the effects of this assimilation of change management as managers and professionals willingly or unwillingly assume a responsibility for some aspects of managing change? How do these effects manifest themselves at an individual, collective and organisational level?*
- *To what extent are these effects considered by those who have a strategic responsibility for change planning and implementation and how far is a consideration of these effects reflected in organisational policies and practices?*
- *In respect of the effects on manager and professional roles in two contrasting case contexts, what variables account for any similarities and differences? Where there were consistent patterns across case contexts, are there possibilities for generalising from those similarities – especially in relation to lessons for change management practice?*

With the rationale for the study explained and the main aims established, the next section provides a conceptual overview of the content, structure and organisation of the study.

1.4 A conceptual overview of the structure and organisation of the study

Chapter two undertakes a critical examination of current literature in the field of change management - how change management is being interpreted, distributed and how it is pervading the roles of managers and professionals. It will explore different, contrasting perspectives of organisational change and change management to argue that a more commensurate view of change management is required in which different perspectives are theoretically 'blended' as composites to form a more synergistic view that increases understanding and insight (Van De Ven and Poole, 1995, 2005; Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

This more synergistic view is captured in an agency-based conceptualisation of change management distribution (Caldwell, 2006). Here the interplay between the structures and processes driving change and the choices and actions of those affected becomes the main focus. The chapter then explores the assimilation of change management responsibility into the roles of managers and professionals and explores case-based evidence to identify and understand the consequential effects it is having on them and their organisations.

Chapter three establishes the research paradigm within the tenets of critical realism. Here, the causal interplay between the 'objective reality' of structures and processes generating change and the subjective, concrete reality interpreted and enacted through the choice, intentionality and behaviours of social actors, become the main focus for debate and analysis. But adopting a critical realist stance does not mean accepting a wholly realist ontology of unchallengeable truth or fact. On the contrary, this study acknowledges that there can be no factual truth with regard to social reality 'out there' nor can we be "positive about our claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans" (Cresswell, 2003:7). Any empirical 'facts' about observed phenomena have to be tested and any findings interpreted and may be rejected in favour of other 'facts' where alternative value judgments are made about the findings or evidence. In other words, the research design paradigm reflects a retroductive approach to theory development and theory building that advances understanding; but not towards

a positivistic absolutism or post modern relativism. Instead, the search is for a philosophical and methodological ‘middle ground’ where a valid and coherent explanation of events and circumstance can be made from the empirical findings which then become the basis for some sense of improvement or advancement – both in understanding and social practice (Reed, 1992, 2005a).

At the same time, while there is no claim that the findings are universally generalisable to other situations and contexts, the study is predicated on an assumption that there might be the possibility of providing some theoretical and practical generalisation that transcends context; especially as the empirical research is being conducted within a cross-sectoral case study approach that embraces significantly contrasting settings. The anticipation is that this approach might yield some theoretical principles, practical lessons which may be transferable to other contexts (Yin, 1994; Gomm, *et al.*, 2000).

In chapter four, the research design is framed in a study of change management being dispersed to two groups of managers and professionals located within two contrasting case study organisations [N.B. a brief overview of the case contexts is provided at the end of this chapter and they are described in more depth in chapter three]. The research strategy is framed in the case method where the similarities and differences between the two contrasting organisations are analysed and compared. Both organisations display significant differences in terms of their size, task and history etc and it is anticipated that this divergence of context will provide an important opportunity to compare and contrast the interplay between approaches to change management distribution and the context and substance of the change process, e.g. are there sector specific requirements for knowledge and skills or is there commonality across the two sectors; do managers and professional experience similar effects when their roles are hybridised or do context specific factors ameliorate and mitigate these effects in some way?

Within a critical realist ontology, the research design will employ a multi-method approach in which a blend of both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be implemented. Quantitative data from secondary sources will provide information about contextual settings, the nature, form and substance of the change processes. But within that assumed objectivity, the research adopts an essentially qualitative approach to data collection. It will use semi-structured interviews and observational methods to gather

data about the lived experiences of social actors (in this study individual managers and professionals) and their interpretation of the dynamics of change management dispersal and the consequential affect on their roles and personal lives and how those consequences iteratively may, in turn, come to shape and reconfigure existing structures and processes. Data will be analysed using the principles of grounded theory to identify emergent themes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Emergent themes will then become the basis for critical comparison and debate with existing assumptions and perspectives about the dynamics and effects of change management.

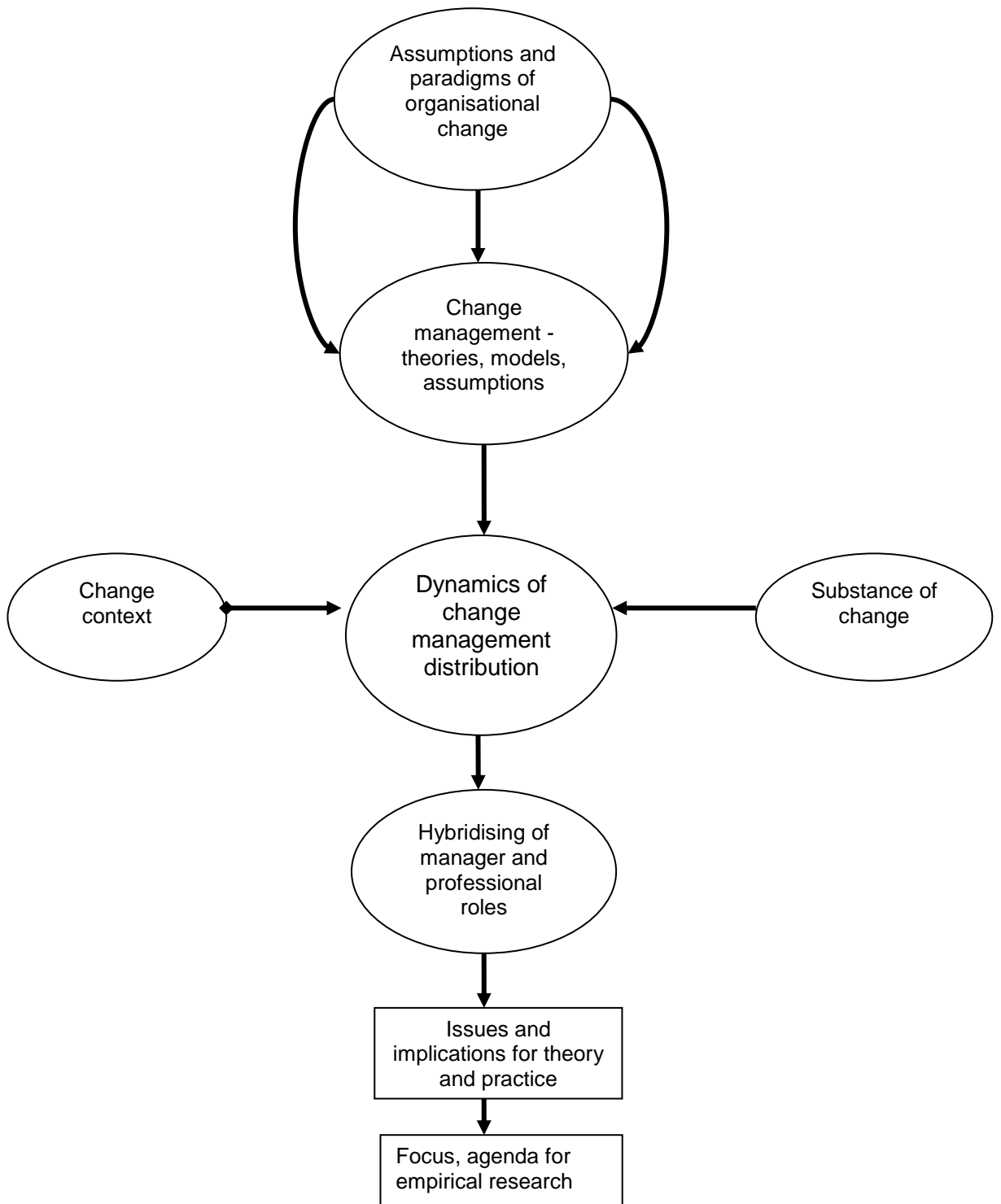
Chapter five presents the results from the data analysis. The results are in a narrative form, interspersed with a liberal number of quoted extracts from the interview transcripts and other sources to add richness to the findings and to reflect and illustrate particular themes. Throughout the discussion of the results, comparisons and contrasts will be made between the similarities and differences in the two case organisations, a Primary Care Trust (PCT) and a small Research and Technology (R&T) company. Comparative tables will be presented to summarise perceived similarities and differences and these will form the basis for inductive reflection leading to discussion and conclusions in the final chapter where a number of propositions for future research and workplace recommendations for improving the management of change will be made. The chapter closes with brief discussion of the theoretical, methodological and practical limitations that prevailed throughout the study and how the researcher acknowledged and dealt with them.

Chapter six inductively and creatively, integrates the findings from this study with existing theory, extant empirical research findings and the practice of change management viewed from a number of different perspectives within the domain of organisational change. It critically compares the findings from this study with current knowledge and literature and recent empirical research evidence and the extent that the findings support, add credence to, refute, disagree with or contradict current thinking. It considers what new perspectives, arguments, areas of understanding might be opened up for further investigation. Finally, the discussion examines the practical issues and implications – especially how far the comparative case study approach has might lead to generalised principles for further dissemination to practitioners.

Chapter seven is the closing chapter to this study. It pulls together many of the themes and issues that have run throughout this study. It draws on the results presented in chapter five and the ensuing analytical discussion that was presented in chapter six, to identify some theoretical and practical issues and implications which suggest areas for ongoing theory development and practical improvement.

Figure 1.1 summarises the basic conceptual plan for the study. While the plan demonstrates its logical progression and convergence towards its central aims, a more complex, iterative process of inductive-deductive reasoning is embedded in the study. The reader should note that study has taken place over an extended period of time and initial aims and understanding have gone through a number of revisions – especially as an ongoing critical analysis of the change management literature, recent empirical studies and emergent theory have provided fresh insight, new perspectives and new questions to be addressed.

Figure 1-1 A Conceptual model plan of the study



1.5 An overview of the case study organisations

This introductory chapter closes with a brief overview of the two case study organisations with the aim of orientating the reader to the context and substance of the change scenarios under investigation. A more detailed description will be provided in chapter three. Both case organisations were anonymised to preserve confidentiality.

1.5.1 Case Study 1 – A Primary Care Trust (PCT) in the NHS

This Primary Care Trust (PCT) was formed in April 2002 as part of the new restructured NHS. As a PCT, it became a free standing, statutory body responsible and accountable for improving and delivering health care to the local population of 250,000 residents in the North West of England. The PCT employs 1225 staff (as at May 2004). The majority of staff have a managerial and/or clinical background. They are based in GP practices and clinics across the region. The published aim of the PCT is to: improve the health of the population and address health inequalities while providing community health services and developing and redesigning services across the primary and acute sectors.

Overseeing the strategy and direction of the PCT is the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) with a reporting and accountability pathway to the Department of Health at a national level. In terms of strategic leadership, the PCT is led by a cohesive and experienced “Triumvirate” consisting of: the Chief Executive, an experienced NHS manager; the Chair of the Main Board (who holds a professorial Chair at a local University) and the Chair of the Professional Executive Committee PEC [the governing body of the PCT] who is an experienced senior GP. The formal strategic and operational management of the PCT operates through a complex web of meetings, subcommittees, cross- functional project teams and implementation teams, involving a large number of standing and co-opted managers and clinical professionals from within and beyond the PCT.

The PCT has had considerable success in delivering its strategic goals since its inception in 2002. It had responded positively to the challenges of the NHS Plan –

mainly through its empowering, cohesive, collegiate culture in which patient care is the driving ethos. However, during 2004 it had to cope with a radical organisational change agenda being introduced in a very short timeframe. This change agenda held the real risk of inducing instability, complexity and ambiguity on a massive scale but the PCT was able to cope – largely because of the enthusiasm and commitment of its clinical and managerial staff to assimilate change and make it work. However, a lack of resources, dated technologies, rapid and constantly shifting of goals and performance targets emanating primarily from National and Regional NHS management has meant that the process of introducing the change agenda was onerous and has led to initiative fatigue and work overload for many of those involved.

1.5.2 Case Study 2 – A Research and Technology (R&T) company

The second organisation in which primary research was conducted describes itself as a Research and Technology Centre and is located in the UK East Midlands. The organisation was founded in 1919 as a not-for-profit organisation to provide research and technological support to the UK footwear industry. The company employs c.180 staff located in ten discrete business centres, each covering the main business and support services offered to members and customers. The majority of staff have a technical, scientific or professional background.

Up until the late 1980s /early 1990s the company was heavily reliant upon research grants from UK Government, the European Union (EU) and income from membership subscriptions to support its core operations. However, a rapid decline in the footwear and leather goods industries in the face of lower-cost manufacturing operations, predominantly located in the Far East, placed the future of the organisation in jeopardy. During the 1990s, this led the company to take the strategic decision to diversify out of its traditional area of operations and expertise and to explore new commercial opportunities beyond the footwear and leather good industry which exploited their expertise and reputation in testing and accreditation.

Over the last 15 years the company has produced a surplus of 5% on revenue which has grown from £3.5m in 1990 to £7.7m in 2004 with a surplus for 2004 of £170K for

reinvestment. This annual surplus has been reinvested into new buildings and laboratory facilities, new capital equipment for testing and into developing and rewarding the staff.

In comparison with the PCT therefore, the process of change has been a more gradual, measured and controlled process and very much on the company's terms. Under the leadership of a strong and experienced senior management team consisting of four Executive Directors, the company has utilised its inherent strengths to respond with significant structural and cultural shifts. These have resulted in a successful transition into new business areas and the prospect of steady growth in the future.

Having explained the rationale and aims for the study and how it is conceptually organised, the next chapter will critically analyse and debate the dynamics of change management distribution, how it is being assimilated into the role of managers and professionals and the consequential effects for both individuals and organisations.

Chapter 2

Distributing change management: issues and implications for managerial and professional roles

2.1 Introduction

Underpinning the rationale for this study, was the argument that interpretations of change management do not reflect more radical, complex and discontinuous change environments confronting contemporary workplace organisations. The claim is made that equally valid, alternative perspectives are being marginalised and backgrounded by a dominating, rational-functional perspective and that this has implications for theory development and change management practice. This chapter therefore opens with a critical examination of change management from a number of different philosophical perspectives before arguing that a more commensurate, synergistic stance provides an opportunity for greater understanding and insight and a sounder philosophical basis for exploring change management distribution to managers and professionals.

The chapter then explores the dynamics of change management dispersal from within an agency based conceptualisation where the interplay between the structures and processes that generate dispersal and the choices and actions of those involved, affected and implicated becomes the main focus within a critical realist ontology. It examines and contrasts different models of change leadership to argue that top down, empowering models of leadership may have to be revised to accommodate a more fluid, less formal, sharing perspective where the unilateral and independent motives informing the choices enacted by individuals and collectives, have to be accommodated.

The discussion then switches from the abstract to the more concrete as it examines how change management responsibilities are being assimilated into the roles of managers and non-manager professionals. It will argue that the constructs of “the manager” and “the professional” in the role of change agent need are over-simplified and need to be reinterpreted within the context and substance of the change process under

consideration. Drawing from recent empirical studies and case study evidence, there follows a critical analysis of how managers and professionals are responding to change agency as a feature of their role and the effects this is having on them and their organisations.

2.2 Interpreting and understanding change management

Different assumptions and theoretical perspectives about the process of organisational change will shape and influence understanding about the nature and form by which the process of change can or should be managed. This opening section therefore leads with a proposition: that theorising about change and change management would benefit from a greater conceptual pluralism with the aim of shifting understanding about organisational change beyond the partiality and narrowness of mechanistic and rational assumptions and the primacy of managerial thinking and action which pervades mainstream theory and practice, and towards a stance that explores alternative perspectives and discourses where a synergistic and integrative blending of perspectives could provide the opportunity to engage in different modes of thinking and new ways of looking at change events and situations (Van De Ven and Poole, 1995, 2005; Palmer and Dunford, 2008; Woodman, 2008).

But any desire for theoretical, paradigmatic pluralism in change theory development has to acknowledge that many different commentators and theorists will remain committed to presenting a monological perspective which reflects their preferred (entrenched?) epistemological and ontological stance in relation to social reality (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Morgan, 1990). It is argued therefore, that competing narratives and embedded assumptions obtained from a preferred theoretical perspective, can only ever present a partial description and analysis of the change process (Collins, 1998; Buchanan, 2003b; Palmer and Dunford, 2008; Woodman, 2008). As Palmer and Dunford (2008) contend, the challenge for research in the field of organisational change is therefore to “reconcile this diversity” in assumptions which not only has the effect of biasing and distorting how the process of organisational change and the way it is managed are conceived, but how change outcomes are evaluated. In other words, the need is to utilise different

images or sets of assumptions in contingent ways to suit different contexts and phases of change and to deal with the complexity induced by multiple change initiatives.

With apologies to my grandchildren, I will therefore argue that to understand change management is rather like playing with Lego bricks or other assembly toys (such as the more recent ‘Transformers’). Greater insight and understanding is possible if we can combine one perspective with another to both conceptually and practically, create new theoretical forms. Just as the child develops enhanced understanding and greater insight as they manipulate these toys to create new and often more complex forms through an understanding of how the different elements in the toy interact and interrelate, so theorising about change can be recreated and reconfigured as multiple perspectives which are blended as theoretical composites to contribute to new or fresh understanding.

Table 2-1 Comparing Change Theory

Paradigm Assumptions and issues	Change as planned activity	Change as unfolding process	Change as chaos and complexity	Change as social action and negotiated order	Change as expression of conflict and emotion
<p>Philosophical, theoretical assumptions</p>	<p>Assumed rationality; logical, systematic, programmatic approach; certainty of outcomes; linear causality; normative and prescriptive; visionary and unitary in outlook; conflict and resistance viewed as deviant behaviour;</p>	<p>Change as an unfolding, unpredictable, organic process over time; deterministic outlook; inner and outer context shapes change; competing interpretations of change process;</p>	<p>Change viewed holistically, flux and transformation; process is spontaneous, non-linear, self-organising, random, messy, untidy, with unforeseen consequences; shifts between order and disorder, chaos; small inputs lead to large effects; centralised control over process is limited due to complexity</p>	<p>Change process viewed as interplay between agency and structure; social action subjective and defined and shaped through metaphor, discourse, values systems, personalities and predispositions; change process outcome of negotiation, renegotiation between competing interpretations;</p>	<p>Change dialectical, pluralistic process, result of inequality, exploitation and conflict in employment relationship; manifested in resistance and political games playing; see confrontation and conflict as normal pattern of behaviour; conflict can be creative or dysfunctional generating positive and negative effects</p>
<p>Issues and implications for change management</p>	<p>Change as problem to be solved; managerial control of process; elite and expert driven leadership; planning confers legitimacy on process; project-based approach to implementation; assumed technical competency of managers to manage change; top down distribution of responsibility</p>	<p>Change managed as it happens; limited control over process; essentially contingent and reactive stance to management of change; limited practical guidance to those who manage change; understanding historical, social and political context shapes management approach</p>	<p>Change leadership distributed, informal, collective, transient, fluid Focus on understanding non-linear causality, relationships, positive and negative reinforcing effects; need to operate at edge of chaos; design for emergence by facilitating self-organising processes; understanding complexity is now a key competency for change agents</p>	<p>Control limited by competing frames of references; understanding sense-making process; how to manipulate communications; manage meaning, mobilise bias, how to reconcile competing interpretations; engage in political action, shape ideology and culture; acknowledge limits imposed by external, macro variables</p>	<p>Change management aims to mediate and manage conflict but often from unitarist, rational rather than pluralistic perspective; understand causes of conflict and political competency key to change management; those who manage change are subject to psycho-emotional effects which are hidden and neglected</p>

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the different perspectives and assumptions that are perceived to frame different paradigms of organisational change and change management found in the change literature. The contention is made that any interpretation being placed on management of the change process depends to a large extent on the conceptual, paradigmatic lens through which it is being viewed. It also becomes apparent from Table 2.1 that different theoretical perspectives of the change process will raise different issues and implications for interpreting change management - reflecting the philosophical assumptions on which they are based. Therefore, just as a synthesis of theoretical perspectives brings greater insight and understanding about the process of change, so the management of change might be considered from within a more synthesised, interlocking framework of perspectives offering the prospect of greater insight and relevance to the change situation under consideration (Palmer and Dunford, 2008). In other words, that analytically it may be possible to move across and between different and sometimes competing, paradigms of change management; bringing them together and utilising different perspectives to construct 'theoretical composites' of change management that are both complementary but which also provide the basis on which to critically challenge the way change management is both conceptualised and practiced. (Van De Ven and Poole, 1995, 2005)

For instance, contrasting a chaos, complexity perspectives of organisational change with more rational, planned change models and theories would appear to caution against change management being perceived exclusively from within a top-down leadership orthodoxy where control is centred on a small managerial or expert-led elite. Can such rational models of change management be sustained in complex change environments where there may be intellectual and practical limits in understanding change dynamics, and the motives and behaviour of social actors in the change process who influence and shape those dynamics? To try and exert inappropriate systems of centralised control may at best be fruitless or at worst produce a negatively reinforcing dynamic that leads to undesirable change outcomes. Instead, change management may have to acknowledge there are limits to top-down control and how far certainty over outcomes can be induced in the change process. The aim therefore becomes one of making second-order interventions that shape the process and mitigate risks in a less directive, controlling manner (Tosey, 1983; Stacey, 1996; Beeson and Davis, 2000, Burnes, 2004; Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Equally, a processual interpretation of organisational change aims to provide a much more theoretically complex and sophisticated view of the change process than that suggested by planned change models where certainty and control are assured in logically sequenced, carefully thought through and meticulously implemented plans. The contention is made that it is only by adopting a holistic, multi-dimensional perspective of change that spans both internal and external context, can we arrive at a deeper understanding of the way change unfolds in all its messy and uncertain complexity (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 2001; Burnes 2000; Dawson, 2003b). But despite its contribution to a theoretical understanding of the process of change, processual interpretations of change are criticised for their overly deterministic stance which, it is argued, gives insufficient attention to the role that strategic agency, choice and leadership play in shaping the change process. As Caldwell (2005) observes:

“The full implications of ‘leading change as a distributed or dispersed process have yet to be fully exploited with contextual research. In this sense, perhaps the greatest weakness of contextualism is that it never developed a theory or agency to complement processual explorations of the nature of strategic choice and organisational change.” (p.106)

Put another way, contrary to rational, teleological interpretations, those involved in change management are deemed to have little control over the change process which is determined by wider social, political and cultural forces to which change leaders have to react. Change strategists and those to whom they delegate change responsibility are deemed to be largely passive and reactive in then change process. Relatedly, others are critical of a processual perspective’s apparent inability to translate theory into practical action to bring about and manage change (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Collins 1998),

Table 2.1 therefore summarises the different perspectives of organisational change extant within the literature and how they are assumed to influence varying interpretations of change management. The next section will move forward to a more focused and critical analyse of the dynamics of change management *distribution* as a precursor to considering how change management or agency is assimilated into the roles

of managers and professionals, and the consequential effects on those involved and implicated.

The analysis begins by considering change management and its distribution from within a rational-linear orthodoxy which it is argued, dominates much of the mainstream practitioner literature (Collins, 1998, Burnes 2000; Caldwell, 2005, 2006). Here change management is framed within top-down, centred models of change leadership which control and certainty in the change process is assumed without question (see for example: Carnall, 2003; Cameron and Green, 2004; Holbeche, 2006). This rational model will be critically contrasted with a more complex, multi-perspective, agency based view of change management distribution where the interplay between the context and substance of change and the reciprocal behaviours of those involved becomes more explicit and where the efficacy of a more synergistic approach to theorising about change management will become apparent.

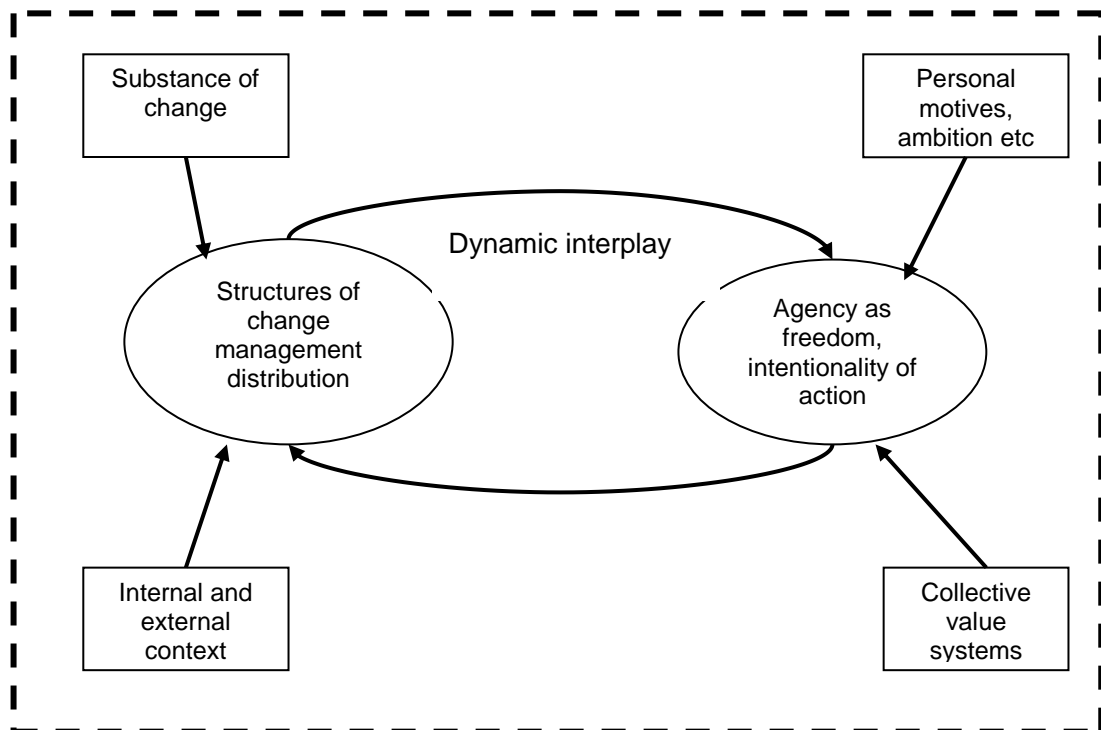
2.2 The dynamics of change management distribution viewed as agential dispersal

In this section, it will be argued that a change agency perspective provides a broader, more developed and possibly more relevant and valid conceptual framework than that currently offered by more orthodox conceptions of change management distribution. Instead of viewing change management exclusively from within a model of top-down leadership exercised by a small elite of senior managers supplemented and supported by so-called change experts, the analysis is broadened to incorporate a more extended notion of change management premised on a dispersalist, agency-based model involving different individuals and collectives in the change management process and where change management is perceived less as individuals having an explicit, controlling and directive leadership role and more as individuals having some form of *responsibility* for initiating and implementing change as a feature of their managerial or professional role.

Figure 2.1 is a diagrammatic representation of this change agency conceptualisation. It makes explicit the connective relationship between assumptions and interpretations of

change management, distribution influenced by the substance and context of the change process, and the agency or freedom of choice, intentionality of social action which may be governed by political or personal motives and goals and collectively by ethical value systems, codes of conduct etc. The key feature is the dynamic interplay suggested by the interconnecting arrowed lines between these different variables and the patterns of causality and reinforcement they generate. For example, that an empowering distribution of a change responsibility may be resisted, especially by professionals, if it conflicts with certain value systems. This may set in train a negatively reinforcing loop that creates a vicious circle, e.g. there is resistance to changing value systems leading to political conflict as individuals or collective entities seek to unilaterally subvert or exert their own control over the change process.

Figure 2-1 Distributed change management conceptualised within a change agency framework



It should be noted that in explicating this conceptual model, the intention is not to align it philosophically with Giddensian notions of agency where agency and structure are conflated into a constructionist model of social reproduction, (Silverman 1970; Giddens,

1984; Whittington, 1994). Rather, the model of change agency adopted by this study is one that is premised on an essentially critical realist epistemology and ontology which is not seeking to privilege agency over structure (Bhaskar, 1998; Archer, *et al.*, 1998; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Willmott, 2000; Reed, 2000, 2005a, 2005b). Here the focus is on investigating and analysing the interrelationships and interplay between the intentional freedom or voluntarism of social action and the framing determinism of the systems and processes within which those actions are enacted, out of which they arise and to which they adapt and in turn transform (Crouch, *et al.*, 1992; Willmott, 2000; Reed, 2000, 2005a, 2005b). Critical realism as a framing epistemology, ontology and methodology for empirical research will be explained in more depth in the next chapter.

2.2.1 Defining change management within a change agency perspective

Caldwell (2006) provides a tentative definition of change agency as:

“The capacity of internal or external human actors within organisations, individually or in groups, to consciously choose to use their knowledge, skills, power, expertise or reflexivity to sponsor, initiate, enact, direct manage or implement a specific change idea, process, initiative, project or a complete programme of change which impacts directly or indirectly on the efficiency or effectiveness, values or culture of an organisation and the behaviour or actions of its members.” (p. 10)

This definition is useful in a number of ways. It makes explicit the notion that individuals and collectives have the capacity to become involved in the change process and to exert an influence within that process. However, as Caldwell (2006) asserts, what it does not convey is the nature of that involvement, who these individuals are, how they become involved and why they are involved. He argues that this definition can only ever be partial in that it reflects an essentially planned change perspective where those involved are occupying a directing, controlling role normally associated with the top-down, expert-driven models of leadership for rational ends or where leadership is delegated to others but who remain under the overall controlling influence of a small expert or managerial elite. Furthermore, there is an underlying assumption that the choices and motives that drive individuals to become involved are seen to be congruent with and supportive of the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness in the host organisation.

However, within the aims of this study, a modified definition of change agency is offered – one that is resonant with that offered by Caldwell but which takes account of the different perspectives of change management that were identified in the previous section. Change agency for the purposes of this study is therefore defined and interpreted as:

The relative freedom of individuals or collective entities to accept, seek or reject a responsibility for some aspect or element of the organisational change process. This may involve a partial or complete involvement in the initiation, implementation and ongoing management of the change process, and may or may not be coupled to some formal or informal leadership role which may extend beyond the boundaries of formal control processes for motives which may or may not be congruent with organisational goals.

This alternative definition is useful in that it reflects the more interactive, dynamic nature of agency suggested by Figure 2.1. In this definition, assumptions about the dynamics of change management distribution are extended beyond those found in more orthodox, rational models of change management. It offers scope to consider the possibility of independent and unilateral social actions (agency) by individuals and collectives being shaped by the fluid, complex and often fuzzy and ambiguous interplay between organisational, team and individual characteristics. For instance, this wider conceptualisation does not ignore the possibility that a responsibility for some aspect of the change process can be created, acquired or rejected through independent intentional choice, rather than just being the outcome of delegated leadership behaviour in a traditional hierarchical sense operating within formal systems of control and where actions may or may not support organisational goals (Crouch, *et al.*, 1992; Landrum, *et al.*, 2000; Denis, *et al.*, 2001; Gronn, 2002).

It can also accommodate the notion, as processual, complexity and political driven perspectives of organisational change suggest, that it may be more appropriate to consider an alternative view of change management – one that may not necessarily be considered as synonymous with conventional models of top down, directive change leadership. Instead of considering change management in terms of change leadership, it may be more valid to consider individual or collective entities having some degree of

responsibility for managing change. This may include a conventional top-down leadership role which is confined to singular individuals such as senior managers operating as change strategists. But it may also be expanded to incorporate forms of change management where leadership in a conventional sense is hardly expressed, e.g. where responsibility is dispersed across collective groups in an informal and fluid manner and where denoting a specific leader role to an individual may become problematical, e.g. in professional groups or networks.

Having located change management distribution within a change agency conceptualisation, the next section critically examines more orthodox, centred models of agency and the extent that they remain influential in the process of managing change, before moving to explore more dispersalist notions of change management distribution.

2.2.2 Centred models of agency

Conventional conceptions of change management that predominate in the mainstream change management literature have tended to be centred rather than decentred. In other words, change management or leadership duties and responsibilities are invested in the singular, mandated change agents or small elites who, operating as change strategists, are seen to possess levels of knowledge and expertise not seen to be held by others in the organisation. This enables and equips them to direct, manage and control the change process and in doing so, it sets them apart from other operational managers and professional groups. A typical representation of the mandated change agent can be found in the Organisational Development (OD) literature where the role of the OD practitioner as experienced change consultant is extant (Cummings and Huse, 1989; French and Bell, 1990; Burke, 1994; Cummings and Worley, 2001; Caldwell, 2003a). The OD practitioner is generally considered to be qualified in some aspects of the behavioural sciences. Armed with this expertise, they are in a position to significantly influence and shape the change process with a focus and emphasis on social, cultural and individual behavioural change (Wooton and White, 1989; Grievies, 2000).

Mandated individuals are also manifest in the ubiquitous management consultant who in contrast to the OD professional, is more likely to adhere to rational and 'harder' models

of change management rooted in a project management orthodoxy and methodology. This is complemented by a more strategic set of skills and extensive experience as management practitioners which, they claim, enables them to organise and synthesise multiple change initiatives, e.g. programmatic changes such as total quality management, business process reengineering, mergers and privatisations (Beer, *et al.*, 1990; Wilson, 1992; Caldwell, 2003a).

Much of the OD and management consultancy literature directs its attention at the notion of the *external* consultant who engages with the client organisation in some diagnostic, advisory capacity using behavioural science knowledge and expertise and as management consultants, utilising hard systems, project-based methodologies (Wooton and White, 1989; Burke, 1994). However, in certain organisational contexts, there may be individuals operating as *internal* consultants. Typically, these are members of the organisation who may have developed - through some form of explicit training programme and/or developed through their exposure to practical change scenarios - a level of specialist expertise that sets them apart as quasi OD practitioners. As such, they are mandated by the organisation to use their expertise to operate as full time or part-time change agents – often in combination with external consultants (Case, *et al.*, 1990; James and Ward, 2001; Hamlin, *et al.*, 2001; Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

Other examples of a centred model of agency - and one replete with superlatives – include individuals in the role of: visionary, change leaders, change masters, change champions, opinion formers, innovators, entrepreneurs. These individuals - often equated in the mainstream literature with senior managers - are seen to possess almost extraordinary, superhuman personal qualities to create and control the change process, to provide exemplary leadership and upon whom there is great dependency by the organisation(s) concerned. These charismatic leaders inspire and lead others by deploying their exceptional qualities of self confidence, self-belief, strategic vision, creativity, innovation and political acumen to bring about change (Kanter, 1983; Carr, *et al.*, 1996; Collins, 1998; Kanter, 1999; Gill, 2003; Caldwell, 2003b).

But whether it is the OD expert, the management consultant or the heroic, charismatic man or woman in a change leader role, or any combination of these, the orthodoxy of the rational change model has dictated that these individuals should exercise an

essentially centralised control over the planning, initiating, implementing and managing the process of organisational change over time. That control is usually manifested through a series of discrete change interventions, projects, consultancy assignments etc, which they may lead or advise on. Assumptions about the manner in which the process of change is to be managed are therefore rooted in the models of rationality and linearity, identified earlier in this chapter where a systematic, staged methodology such as project management is employed. The assumptions being made is that these mandated agents of change will use their charismatic, expert or position power to shape a process of change management - but in a top-down manner and very much on their terms and under their control (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Collins, 1998; Kanter, 1999; Nadler and Tushman, 2004).

2.2.3 Challenges to a centred model of change agency

There are growing indications from recent empirical research that structural and cultural forces may now be presenting a challenge to the sustainability and credibility of a change management orthodoxy captured in the ideal of the singular mandated individual and/or 'dominant elite' model of the change agent role which has served as an informing and guiding model for those who have to implement and manage change. Just as a rationalist discourse seemingly presents an over-simplified impression of the change process that is challenged by other perspectives (see Table 2.1. earlier) so recent research is coming to suggest that a centred perspective belies the complex reality and lived experience of how change management is actually being enacted by individuals and teams in organisations undergoing radical change (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Buchanan, 2003a; Caldwell, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007b).

The findings from these empirical research studies, while not denying the active and important role of the mandated change agent in the form of external/internal consultant or even as the heroic leader, nevertheless call into question the assumption that change management has to be seen as the exclusive preserve of a select and elite group of individuals. On the contrary these findings suggest that the scope and freedom to participate and influence aspects of the change process has, and perhaps always has

been, dispersed across an organisation through the impact of complex contextual patterns and features such as differentiated and decentralised structures, autonomous professional roles and bodies, the ability to exercise expertise and power blocs such as Trades Unions, professional bodies and other representative agencies and through formal and informal networks of professional and social relationships but most significantly, through the independent actions of individuals who may decide, for whatever reasons, to reject, take or create agency for themselves outwith any formal sanction or approval.

There are also concerns about the efficacy of the singular change agent model as a practical methodology for managing change. Doubts emerge about the capacity of these mandated individuals to deliver expectations and meet anticipated outcomes (Wooton and White, 1989; Beer and Nohria, 2000). For instance, OD and management consultants faced with a change reality that is often in conflict with the rationality and certainty of planned change models, may find that their expertise is of limited value in coping with a plurality of interests and the power and politics this engenders and may be too reliant on past experience which may be limited in scope and lack relevance to contemporary change situations (Di Bella, 1992; Church *et al.*, 1992; Grieve, 2000). In some cases, OD consultants may be less efficacious when they are locked into a particular ideological and methodological frames-of-reference and fail to adopt a more situational perspective in relation to different stages of the change process and the needs of client systems (Wooton and White, 1989; Grieves, 2000). Even more concerning are cases where OD consultants and others in a similar field might be compromising their original humanistic values and adopting an agenda that is less concerned with issues surrounding social processes and human behaviour and more with bottom line productivity which may be constraining their ability to bring their expertise to bear and consequently the extent of their influence over the change process as their credibility is compromised (Wooton and White, 1989; Church *et al.*, 1992). In addition, some OD consultants may be diluting their expertise by engaging in activities aimed at disguising their shortcomings and failures and presenting a misleading impression of their efficacy in the change process (Schaffer, 2000).

In relation to the heroic leader interpretation of centred change management, question marks have to be placed alongside the assumptions on which this construct is premised

– especially when those in the role are confronted by the sheer complexity of radical, discontinuous, transformational change which threatens to undermine idealised notions of rational control and certainty. Far from being able to establish a clear and unambiguous vision that can be communicated and shared by all, such change leaders may be left struggling to comprehend events that, rather than being subject to rational forces and certainty, are influenced by self-organising and self-referential dynamic forces increasingly outside of their understanding and beyond their control (Di Bella, 1992; Stacey, 1996; Coram and Burnes, 2001; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007a).

Caldwell (2003a) summarises these concerns about the accuracy and efficacy of the centred model of change management:

“These failures have led to a growing disillusionment with large-scale programme change driven by outside consultants and a renewed emphasis on ‘enacted’ or incremental change through groups, teams and ‘communities of practice’ that gradually cultivate and create a new mindset within and organisation.” (p.138)

Caldwell’s claim about “disillusionment” and the suggestion that change agency is now being dispersed, decentred, distributed across empowered individuals, teams, taskforces, cross-functional projects is both revealed and underscored by contemporary research (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Caldwell, 2003a, 2005, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007a; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007b). For instance, in Doyle *et al.*, (2000), it was reported that 79% of respondents disagreed that change management was a specialised area of expertise that should be left to full-time professionals and 91% agreed that change management skills were relevant to people at all levels. And in Buchanan *et al.*, (1999), 65% disagreed that their organisations appointed full time project managers to manage change, with 87% agreeing that change management was an integral part of the role of all managers.

This “disillusionment” therefore becomes a prompt for a review in the next section for a more decentred perspective of change management. It considers decentred agency dispersal from within two competing perspectives. The first perspective captures the notion of decentring through a downwards dispersal of a change management through some form of allocative, empowering process but one that remains firmly within

formalised mechanisms that coordinate, monitor and maintain overall control by senior manager elite. The second perspective assumes a less formal stance where the process of allocating change management roles is far less directive and much more organic and fluid.

2.2.4 Decentralised agency dispersal as empowerment

It could be argued that the ideal of sharing responsibility for initiating and implementing elements of the change process fits well with concepts such as, empowerment and continuous improvement; knowledge management and the learning organisation which have characterised many change recent initiatives (Senge 1990; Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000). Such motives and aspirations fit well with programmatic approaches such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) where rational-functional, unitarist ideals underscore such initiatives (Wilson, 1992; Collins, 1998).

Socially and psychologically the ideal of giving power and freedom to individuals and teams for some aspects of the change process links well with notions of organisational democracy and democratic styles of leadership that are now anticipated and expected as desired patterns of behaviour (Landrum *et al.*, 2000; Gronn, 2002). The dispersal of change agency has therefore seemingly provided opportunities to involve staff and permit them to participate in shaping and delivering the goals and vision of the organisation and to 'make-a-difference'. All members of the organisation are encouraged to see themselves as part of a wider "cast of characters" who have an important role to play in the change process (Hutton, 1994; La Marsh, 1995; Katzenbach *et al.*, 1997; Frohman, 1997; Kanter, 1999; James and Ward, 2001).

Structurally and culturally, a more empowering view of change management dispersal is facilitated by and itself facilitates the introduction of modern human resource practices such as performance management through objective setting, the need for enhanced training and development and the creation of opportunities for career advancement (Kanter, 1999; Doyle, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a). Participation in the management of change in some capacity, whether this is through specific targets to deliver change or

involvement in a change taskforce, is, apart from its motivational impact, increasingly being seen to represent criteria for judging performance and therefore can be used as the basis for reward and career advancement (Schaffer and Thomson, 1992; Dover, 2002; Buchanan, 2003a).

But despite its attractions, a more empowered model of change management distribution does not remove the requirement for some form of centralised control if the overall change process is to be kept on track and change outcomes are to be met. Within an empowering philosophy, it is assumed that control should be less visible, more discrete and remote but nevertheless must be present in some form – ostensibly to prevent anarchy and chaos in the change process from emerging. Change strategists will seek to spread change responsibility throughout the organisation by making cultural, knowledge management, teamworking and communication interventions but all the time seeking to retain overall control in the change process (Schaffer and Thomson, 1992; Landrum *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Gill, 2003; Karp, 2006). However, maintaining control within an empowering change environment is not without problems – especially the challenge of maintaining the right balance between transferring the freedom of individuals and collectives to manage the change process at an operational level while performing innovatively and creatively in their role, with the need to meet strategic change outcomes and also political and status driven considerations, e.g. how far senior managers as change strategists may be willing to cede power (Beer *et al.*, 1990; Hopfl and Dawes; 1995; Doyle, 2001; James and Ward, 2001; Dover, 2002).

2.2.5 Decentred agency dispersal as intentional and/or spontaneous action

What might be considered as a more radical departure from the empowering model of change management - and one which brings the notion of change agency into sharper relief as a conceptual reframing of change management – is found in the work of commentators such as Gronn (2002) and Denis, *et al.*, (2001) exploring concepts of shared, dispersed leadership. Gronn (2002) presents a powerful argument for a revision in the assumptions about the concept of leadership captured in the traditional leader-follower model. He argues that this paradigm “may have run its race” and “that time is up for the leader with vision” (p.426) as increasingly there is less linkage between the

efforts of a leader and peoples' behaviour and organisational outcomes. He argues that new tasks, new technologies and evolving social perspectives of work have led to new forms of role interdependence and coordination which have not only distributed leadership responsibility, but have resulted in the development of what he terms "conjoint agency" where "agents synchronise their actions by having regard to their own plans, those of their peers and their sense of unit membership" (p. 431).

Denis, *et al.*, (2001) focus on the interplay between strategic change leadership processes in a pluralistic, politicised context where change leadership can be viewed collectively but always as a fragile, fluid, transient and diffuse construct. Their work brings to the fore a more distributive conception captured in the unilateral intentionality of social actors "our analyses suggests much greater dynamic continuity in issues and in actors, and it emphasizes the role of creative individuals and committed unified group in proactively moving to make change happen" (p.834). But they also draw attention to the idea that change management can reach beyond intentional action as non-linear, self-organising forces challenge any sense of intentionality or control over the change process.

Recent research by Buchanan, *et al.*, (2007b) has sought to confirm these propositions. This research, conducted in a large public sector institution, critically challenges more orthodox conceptions of change leadership and suggests there may be an argument for shifting the focus away from heroic leadership to a more distributive conception. Like Gronn (2002) and Denis, *et al.*, (2001), they emphasise notions of dispersed, shared, collective leadership which reach beyond mandated individuals or change experts and top-down empowerment. Instead they focus on the interplay between the substance and context of change and what might be considered as the unilateral intentionality of social action and how that influences distributive processes:

"Across the spectrum of a diverse workforce, healthcare may thus have numerous leaders whose capabilities and contributions are unrecognised and untapped. These are the unsung heroes who accept personal responsibility and risk for driving change without always waiting patiently for others or simply following directions... To understand the nature and impact of either individual or dispersed leadership it is necessary not only to appreciate the qualities and capabilities of the person, but also to combinations of factors and the conjectures

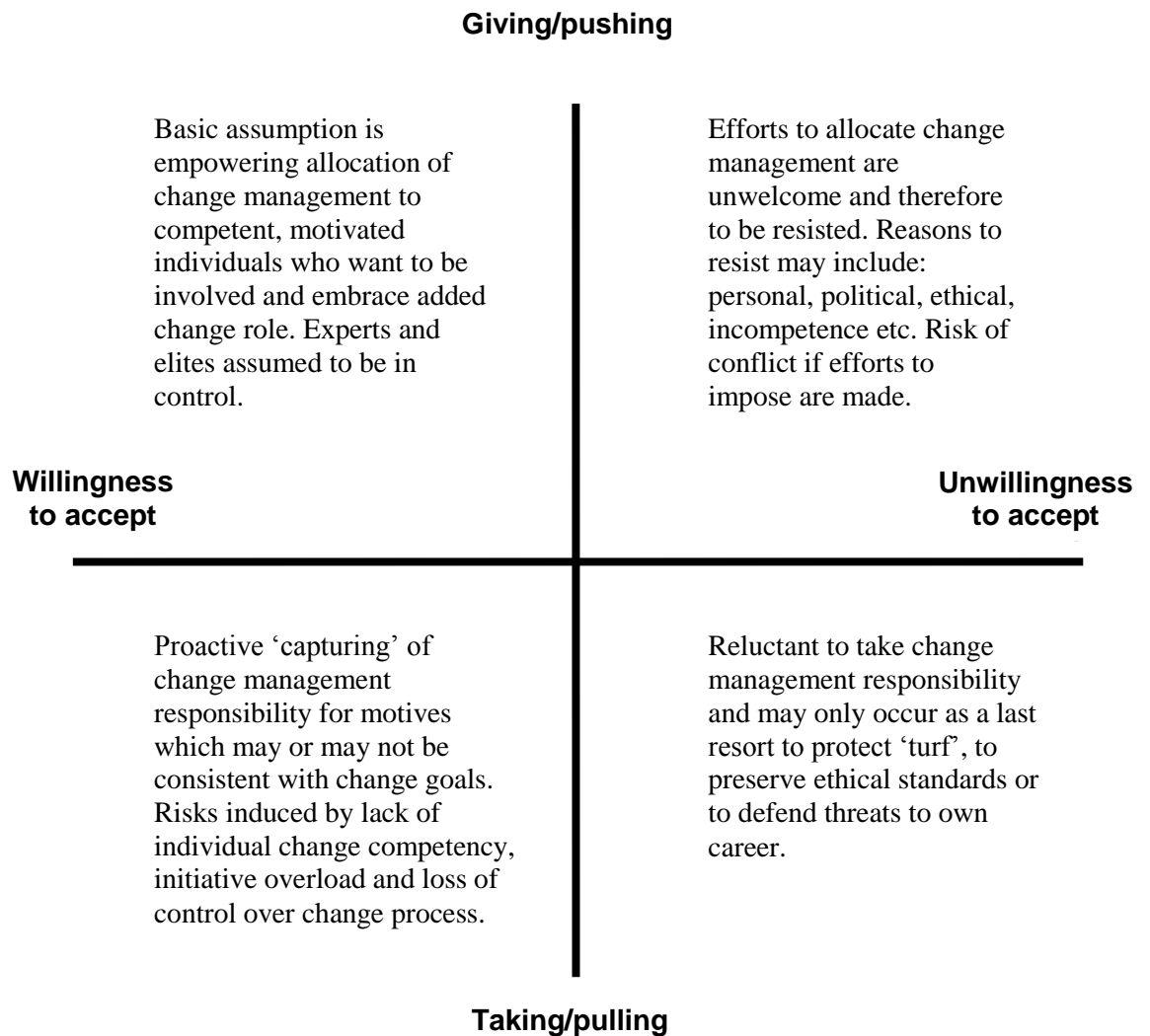
of events that contribute to service improvements and to the role of leadership practices in change processes.” (p.251)

In a similar vein, Buchanan and Storey’s (1997) analysis of role switching also signifies how individuals have the freedom to make choices about how, when and why they might be willing to participate in moves to involve them in the management of change and in doing so, present a challenge to some of the assumptions on which an empowering perspective of agency dispersal is premised, e.g. the manner and motivation to passively accept or proactively take a role in the change process as a change agent. They argue that “role taking and role switching are conscious and creative acts” (p. 143). This notion of role taking and switching introduces an important issue into the dispersal debate: to what extent do individuals have a choice over their participation in a change management role, e.g. can they refuse efforts to involve them in a change management role and if so what sanctions might be exercised? In a similar vein, what are the motives underpinning this “conscious and creative act”? Is it to make a difference as some would argue or is it more concerned with capturing or seizing agency as a tool for self-aggrandisement or as a source of political power (Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Doyle, 2001)?

Figure 2.2 summarises the argument about an individual’s willingness to take or accept change management responsibilities as it is ‘given to’ or ‘pushed at’ individuals and collectives by empowering techniques such as delegation or where change management may be distributed by mechanisms where it is ‘taken’ or ‘pulled into’ roles unilaterally through independent actions of individuals and collectives. But again, different motives and agenda will dictate if this can be achieved willingly or unwillingly.

What is significant about Figure 2.2 is that it demonstrates the intentionality and spontaneity that an agency based perspective of decentred change management distribution brings to the fore and how that in turn, presents opportunities for new insights for theory development and improved practice. With this and other issues in mind, the next section speculates that the time may have arrived for a reappraisal of change management distribution.

Figure 2-2 Giving/pushing' and 'taking/pulling' of change management responsibility into roles



2.2.6 Time for a reappraisal of change management distribution?

The previous section has reviewed the dynamics of change management distribution. More orthodox, centred conceptions of distribution where involvement is confined to a small expert led elite who delegate tasks to others within mechanisms of tight control, e.g. project management techniques, were contrasted with more decentred, empowering notions of involvement, but where control is still exercised centrally but more remotely and discretely. Based on more recent theorising, a third perspectives was elaborated to present a more diffused and fluid conception in complex and chaotic change environments where centralised control over the involvement in change management was constrained and where involvement was more closely linked to spontaneous and creative intentional choices and actions on the part of individuals and collectives for

motives which may or may not be congruent with the formal goals of the change process. With these different conceptions of change management distribution in mind, we can summarise the debate thus far by considering a number of issues and implications that have emerged before exploring the assimilation of change management responsibilities into the roles of managers and professionals.

First, the efficacy of a top-down, empowering model of dispersal under the control of a senior management elite is challenged by rapid structural and cultural shifts captured in a growing division of labour due to the challenges of global market forces and resultant complexities that now characterise the organisational change process. This has necessitated a greater devolvement and sharing of tasks beyond traditional boundaries of change management. Arguments are made that the planning and implementation of the process of change has now become so complex that the level of intellectual knowledge and degree of power and control has shifted beyond the ken of any single specialist to grasp and act in the singular role of change leader. In other words, their expert knowledge and expertise, which forms the basis of their assumptions about change management, may be inadequate and insufficient to ensure future success in an unstable global environment (Kanter, 1999; James and Ward, 2001; Caldwell, 2005, 2006). Indeed to rely too heavily on charismatic leadership models may present strategic risks by placing too heavy a reliance on their personal qualities and assumptions about their longevity in leading the change process (Landrum, *et al.*, 2000).

Second, and related to the first issue, a more unilateralist and localised view of decentred agency also presents challenges to formalised systems of change management allocation and control. For instance, models that empower individuals also present challenges to current frameworks of power and control which in turn, may lead to resistance and ultimately (and paradoxically) may even jeopardise the change process itself. It presents those who are in overall charge of strategic change planning and implementation with a 'paradox-of-control'. The paradox revolves around change strategists exerting their control over change management dispersal without creating dysfunctional reactions such as a feeling of frustration and alienation when limits are brought to bear by senior managers feeling threatened by empowering initiatives (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995; Claydon and Doyle, 1996; Doyle, 2001).

Third, in situations of fluidity, ambiguity and complexity, change management may limit top-down efforts to control and instead suggest a more strategic focus on intervening in a facilitative manner to allow the self-organising and self-correcting forces inherent in change situations to exert their influence. As Buchanan, *et al.*, (2007a:1086) suggest: “Counter intuitively, and ignoring conventional wisdom, there may be settings where it is advantageous not to appoint a dedicated change agent or project manager, deliberately to encourage fluid and ambiguous responsibilities, wilfully to have nobody in charge.”

Fourth, the dynamics of agency dispersal are seemingly not just driven by formalised empowering, delegating initiatives, or through a voluntary involvement in the change process, e.g. being part of a change project supporting an overall change goal. The dynamics may also be shaped by patterns of change creating or resisting behaviours that are often seen to be operating *unilaterally* and *independently* of any top-down, senior management led process. As Figure 2.2 above suggested, individuals or teams may exercise a choice, a willingness or unwillingness to take or reject change agency in ways that have little to do with the goals of a strategic change agenda, e.g. in certain contextual situations or at particular points in the change process, they may decide for motivational, career enhancing or political reasons to independently assimilate change agency into their functional or professional role with consequential effects on the overall change process (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a). As Buchanan and Storey (1997) assert:

“One would expect rather to see individuals adopting different roles and playing those roles differently through time according to the pressures and demands of events as well as on personal preference and expertise. The manner in which organisational events then unfold may then be explained in part by role taking and switching, and on different levels of competence with which interlocking agents conduct themselves when engaging in the organisational change performance” (p.141).

The distribution of change management is therefore not just complicated by the interplay of contextual variables but is made more complicated by the pluralistic choices made by actors – both individually and collectively as they switch roles according to the way they interpret and come to define the change situation they are involved in. As

Clarke and Meldrum (1998) revealed when reviewing the role of individuals as managers performing in the role of change agent:

“It was natural for them [the managers] to think of their own self-interest as well as developing realistic visions for their teams in response to business issues which were considered local and relevant, yet still of organisational significance. It was entirely real and understandable for them to create change in this way” (p. 79).

It might therefore be concluded that change management distribution considered from within a change agency framework, now appears more complicated, fluid and dynamic than even some recent research studies have suggested. Not only is agency being dispersed through top-down, empowering, delegating decisions on the part of those sponsoring or leading change at a strategic level, but it is being dispersed through the independent choices, behaviours and actions of those at more operational, localised levels. Decisions to become involved and to participate in some change management capacity are regulated not just by the formal goals of the change process, but the personal motives, ambitions, values and concerns of individuals and collective entities. And under certain conditions, the sheer complexity of the change process itself may be rendering the dispersal of change agency a fluid and uncertain process that is not amenable to close-quartered, top-down control and regulation; instead it is reliant on novel, fluid and transient structures and networks of human decision and action by managers and professionals. Caldwell (2003a) concludes:

“Together, these one-dimensional interpretations of change agency have diverted attention from the seemingly vital task of understanding the empirical complexity of change agent roles within organisations and of finding new ways of managing change processes in an integrated and coherent manner to affect successful and lasting change” (p. 141).

Finally, how might those who have strategic involvement in change management and its dispersal view a radical decentring perspective that is premised on unilateral choice and limits to control? In a nutshell, it is unlikely to be appealing to the rational instincts of many managers at a senior level who, when faced with the prospect of limited control and the threat of unilaterally empowered individuals challenging their status, are forced into a reactionary response both to sustain, as they interpret it, the overall momentum

and goals of the change process, but also to mitigate and offset any threat to their power and status (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995; Doyle, 2001).

As the discussion later in this chapter will suggest, for those at middle and junior managerial levels and non-manager professionals, the reaction may be different when complexity offers them greater power in the change process through an enhanced dependency on their knowledge and cooperation. A more unilateral and localised responsibility to initiate and implement change provides opportunities to meet personal ambitions such as career advancement or other ethical and political motives but at the same time may be perceived as a threat to existing orthodoxy by others in more senior and elitist change leadership roles and therefore to be resisted. It might be concluded therefore that a more radical perspective of decentred change agency dispersal may be better suited to dealing with the real complexity of the change process but at the same time, has to consider the significant implications for current interpretations of change management which may require to be theoretically and practically reappraised as a consequence (Di Bella, 1002; Dover, 2002; Saka, 2003; Buchanan, 2003a; Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

Table 2.2 summarises the main arguments in the discussion thus far about how change management responsibilities are being distributed. It is not intended that these perspectives be considered mutually exclusive, rather (and capturing the philosophical thrust of this study) they are seen to represent a more integrative outlook where the concern is to acknowledge that different perspectives can be brought to bear to aid understanding and to address the practicalities change management in complex organisational settings. For example, comprehending and exploring the contradictions that arise when change strategists espouse an empowering perspective in relation to distributing change management responsibility to middle and junior managers and professionals but in reality, their theory-in-use is closer to a mandating perspective underpinned by the need for certainty and control redolent of a rational conceptualisation of the change process, and where the primary objective is to avoid chaos, risk and uncertainty (Beeson and Davis, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Abel and Sementelli, 2004; Karp and Helgo, 2008). But their position becomes complicated and frustration may set in when their efforts to exert control is found to be inadequate or inappropriate in complex change scenarios and limits to the efficacy of their expertise and the extent

of their leadership remit are exposed. At the same time, they may find their formal leadership role is being undermined by the unilateral actions of what are assumed to be recalcitrant or resistant employees but in fact turn out to be those middle and junior managers and professionals who have the motives, power and autonomy to behave unilaterally and independently.

Table 2-2 Different perspectives of change management distribution

Perspectives of change management distribution	Characteristics
Mandating	The responsibility for initiating and/or implementing the process of organisational change is placed in the hands of singular, mandated change leader(s) and/or change expert(s). Senior change leaders will have a prime responsibility for initiating the process of change and setting the formal change agenda. External change experts will advise and guide the process of implementation. Middle and junior level managers and professionals will be expected to implement change according to the project plan or change ‘blueprint’ and exhibit their support and commitment to the process.
Empowering	Efforts are made to spread responsibility for initiating and implementing change to a wider ‘cast of characters’ through a range of management techniques, e.g. delegation, cross-functional and self-improvement teams. However, where agency is dispersed, it is within defined parameters and is controlled through formal mechanisms, e.g. project management, steering groups. Managers and professionals are expected to use their knowledge and expertise to facilitate the change process while conforming to a specified change agenda and at the same time, exhibiting innovative, change-creating behaviours to deliver successful change outcomes.
Fluid, organic, self-organising	Change leadership lacks certainty and control. It is emergent and evolving, determined and driven by the fluidity, ambiguity and instabilities within the context and substance of the change process. The inability of senior change leaders to comprehend complexity and thereby exert control in the process allows individuals and groups to resist and reject the goals of the formal change strategy and/or initiate their own change process without a formal mandate. Acting independently, they have the power or professional knowledge to determine the nature and form of the change process according to their interpretation of local context and their personal needs and values which may or may not coincide with the overall change strategy.

In sum, the central debate in this section has been in the form of a philosophical and practical argument that conceptually, a change agency perspective provides the

theoretical foundation for a more meaningful exploration of how change management is considered to be pervading the roles of managers and professionals who, are increasingly becoming key actors in the change process as significant responsibilities for change management are transferring to them but at the same time, who also carry a considerable risk for the overall change process if they fail to implement that responsibility. It has been argued that the dynamics governing this transfer of responsibility cannot be considered exclusively from within a mandating or even empowering perspective where rational conceptions of centralised control are retained or where unitarist assumptions of sharing and commitment to organisational goals predominate. Instead new perspectives are emerging to challenge these rational conceptions. Here, responsibility for managing change is no longer viewed in more orthodox leadership terms but is considered the product of growing pluralism as complexity and chaos in the change process places limitations over centralised influence and control. The intentional actions and choices by individuals and collectives permit responsibility to be both created and transferred to them and often on their terms to meet their needs and requirements which may not necessarily be congruent with those of the organisation.

With these considerations in mind, the aim of the next section is to critically examine how these responsibilities are being transferred to managers and professionals and how the effects of this dispersal can influence the change process and the personal lives of the individuals and collectives concerned.

2.3 Change agency and the hybridisation of managerial and professional roles

Before examining the role of managers and non-manager professionals in the management of change, a number of points need to be made about the nature of the relationship between the two roles and why they are being considered integratively as the basis for investigation and analysis in this study.

In practice, there is a significant overlapping between the role of manager and professional. Many managers are also professionals and much of their work

incorporates a professional dimension. Equally, many non-manager professionals appear to assume, either formally or informally, managerial responsibilities, e.g. it is not uncommon to find that managers, especially at the junior levels are working closely on a day-to-day basis with their professional colleagues and performing professional as well as managerial functions (McConnell, 2002; Dunphy *et al.*, 2003). Therefore in exploring the dynamics of change management distribution to these two groups, it seems reasonable to assume for analytical and practical purposes, a more integrative, dualist perspective of the manager/professional role – in effect that many individuals now wear two ‘hats’. But, as the evidence to be discussed in the following sections will suggest, a more accurate representation of the reality for a growing number of managers and professionals is that they are now being asked, or are choosing to wear, ‘three hats’ as they find their role is increasingly being expressed in terms of the need or desire to become involved in some capacity, in the management of change.

2.3.1 Defining the change agent role

Ottaway (1979, 1983) was one of the first commentators to describe and analyse the complexity of roles that could be occupied by change agents. In defining his taxonomy of change agent roles he argues that a better understanding of the nature of the role and how it is to be implemented can be obtained. He describes three categories roles with sub-roles beneath them which he links to Lewin’s 3 stage model of the change process:

Change Generators are those who are seen to catalyse, to initiate change. They are the drivers for change, the change strategists who demonstrate the need to change; a role usually attributed to senior managers.

Change Implementors follow the role of the change generator and working alongside them, plan the implementation of that change, typically as internal or external consultants.

Change Adopters assimilate and absorb the change and put the new systems, procedures, structures into practice and embed them into the organisation, typically

considered by this study to be middle and junior managers and non-manager professionals.

Ottaway suggests that his taxonomy provides a framework for ongoing research and understanding about the roles, tasks and identities of those who perform as change agents. However, there are some reservations about the apparent simplicity and neatness that is conveyed by his and other taxonomies. For example, in contrast to Ottaway, Buchanan *et al.* (2007a) point to the ambiguous and fluid interpretation that characterise more contemporary definitions of the change agent. They argue the need for a broader understanding – especially when the role of change agent is linked to that of leadership in the change process. As they state:

“While leaders are typically regarded as agents of change, change agents are not always seen as leaders. However, the notion that leaders provide inspiration and direction, while change agents carry the burden of implementation, is oversimplified. The change agent who is not able and willing to influence, to motivate, and to inspire other members of the clinical team is likely to struggle in that role. Equally, the leader who is not able and willing to pursue a vision to completion may find their leadership credentials questioned.” (p. 248).

There is also an issue of partiality when such typologies are seen to adhere to an essentially rational representation of the change process which, it has been argued in earlier sections of this chapter, often fail to accommodate the political, social and psycho-emotional complexity of being a change agent and managing aspects of the change process. This complexity has begun to be explored by theorists such as Buchanan and Storey (1997); Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, (2001); Buchanan, (2003a); Dunphy, *et al.*, (2003) who have all sought to deepen the analysis by offering a more critically developed view of the plurality and diversity inherent within the change agent role. The analyses of these commentators adhere less to the functional rationality of the Lewinian, OD model with its associated expert, heroic leadership roles as implicit in typologies suggested by commentators such as Ottaway (1983) and more to the complex interactions between the context, substance and process of change – including the process of becoming a change agent – that shapes the social, political and psycho-emotional inherent within that role.

Some commentators have captured the change agent role in notions that everybody is a change agent. For instance, Hutton's (1994), "cast-of-characters"; Buchanan and Storey's (1997) "plurality of players" or "multiple actors"; Frohman's (1997) "movers and shakers" or Katzenbach *et al.*'s (1997) "real change leaders" all capture the elaborate forms of rhetoric and cultural manipulation which encourage and expect individuals to accept, and indeed proactively to seek to take on some or all of the responsibility for managing change in areas that involve or affect them (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Kanter, 1999; Doyle *et al.* 2000).

The notion that everybody is a change agent and can make a difference to the change process is captured in this rhetorical passage from La Marsh, (1995):

“... people who plan and support change. They are the project leaders, implementation teams, first-line supervisor, union steward and fork-lift truck driver on the third shift. Anyone and everyone who takes a responsibility for figuring out how to make changes happen and how to support the targets are change agents” (p.51).

Buchanan and Storey (1997) introduce a more measured and complex interpretation when they identify how change agents are actors who constantly switch between different roles to suit the exigencies of the change process and possibly, their personal interests and preferences: “Actors choose to engage in and disengage from the process in different ways, in different roles, in different modes and at different times” (p.129). Others suggest that the process of role-switching is not always smooth and harmonious as mainstream conceptions of the change agent might suggest. Buchanan (2003a), argues that much of the change agent literature tends to categorise the change agent role in “loads of taxonomies and lists of competences” without really examining the “dynamic reality of organisations undergoing strategic change and fail to get inside, to capture the lived experience of those in change driving roles” (p.666). More significantly for the aims of this study, both Doyle, (2001) and Buchanan (2003a) emphasise the dynamism and fluidity of the change agent role which is shaped not just by contextual variables but the perceptions of those who are involved and affected by being in that role. This is an issue that will be explored in more depth later in this study.

Having briefly outlined the nature of the change agent role, the study will now focus on how the role of change agent is now pervading the role of managers and professionals and how they are integrating, assimilating change management with their operational and professional duties.

2.3.2 Managers as change agents

The functional, operational features of managerial work, role and activities are well-documented and there is no need to rehearse what managers do or what they are supposed to do in this chapter (see for example: Drucker, 1988,1999; Stewart, 1988; 1994, 1997; Salaman,1995). Whereas earlier research into the managerial role was concerned with how managers should manage and focused on functional areas such as planning, organising, leading and controlling, more recent years have seen a more enquiring, challenging and critical focus. Much of this recent research has resulted from a more qualitative, ethnographic approach to researching 'the manager' and managing and has identified and exposed previously hidden or undiscussable issues, paradoxes, contradictions, dilemmas and stresses. Not only have these empirical studies brought to light the sometimes contentious and uncomfortable features of the role, they have presented challenges to some of the fundamental assumptions and values on which the managerial roles itself is premised (see for example: Scase and Goffee; 1989; Watson, 1994a; Watson and Harris, 1997; Hales, 1999; Fulop and Linstead, 1999; Golding and Currie, 2000; Watson, 2002; Thomas, 2003; Linstead, *et al.*, 2004).

There is now a persuasive message which features prominently in the management of change literature expounding with considerable energy, the message that all managers must now consider performing as a change agent to be an integral feature of their role. Not only must they be prepared to initiate, plan and implement organisational change, the expounded message is that without their knowledge, expertise, leadership, enthusiasm and commitment, change will fail to fully deliver outcomes and to meet expectations. In other words, the manager performing as change agent has now become the focal point for strategic and personal attention and they are now expected to assimilate into their role, the required attitudes, behaviours and competences to fulfil its

requirements (Kanter, 1983; 1991; Morgan, 1988; Storey, 1992; Cockerill, 1994; Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Burnes, 2000, 2003; Caldwell, 2003b; Saka, 2003).

2.3.3 How have managers responded to change management as a feature of their role

As the previous section has suggested, in debating the manager-as-change-agent and how managers become change agents, there is a tendency for the literature to adopt a narrow, technically oriented, top down view of change management distribution, perceiving it as an empowering, delegating activity. In doing so, it often fails to capture the wider functional, structural and social complexities that added change management responsibility induces in the managerial role e.g. how the dynamics of distribution may generate political games playing or raise ethical concerns amongst managers (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Buchanan and Badham, 1999; Doyle, 2001).

One empirical research study in particular exemplifies this need for a more contextually focused consideration of the challenges facing managers as they assimilate change management into their role. In a study of managers operating as change agents in the public sector, Hartley, *et al.*, (1997) point out that “The distinctive purposes and features of public service organisations and their differences from private sector organisations are increasingly recognised, but there is less literature on the implications, for organisational and culture change, of the political dimensions ...” (p.62). Their research, which studied the experiences of managers and professionals as change agents operating in a highly politicised public sector context, concluded in an implied rebuttal of change skills development based on rational models of managing, that change agents learning needs have to be developed within the uniqueness of the contexts in which they operate and to meet the particular needs of that context – in their case to develop the required levels of political competency to deliver change.

And in another study which involved project managers implementing change, a similar message was forthcoming. Buchanan and Boddy (1992) argued that success in the role of change agent depended as much on “backstage”, politicking activity as it did on front-of-stage planning and organising skills. If managers were to be effective in their

change agent role, they not only had to acquire the knowledge and skills to perform as a change agent but they had to develop the expertise to know how and when to use those skills in messy and uncertain change contexts.

Other empirical studies have followed a similar analytical trajectory to reveal the need for a broader and deeper analysis of the manager-as-change-agent. For example, Buchanan, *et al.*, (1999) and Doyle, *et al.*, (2000) drew attention to the different experiences of those managers (and professionals) managing change in public and private sector organisations. Like Hartley *et al.*, (1997) they pointed to the manner in which internal political factors, modernisation agendas and low levels of morale and motivation factors related to conditions of service in the public sector, were shaping management of the change process and interpretations of the public sector manager-as-change-agent role in contrast to those in similar roles in the private sector. As Doyle *et al.*, (2000) concluded this is contributing to “public misery, private sector bliss” (p.S67).

There is also evidence of confusing and ambiguous interpretations of what the manager-as-change-agent role should entail and the confusion is not helped by what could be judged to be a misleading rhetoric. For example, assumptions are consistently made in the change management literature about the degree of homogeneity and uniformity of perspectives that managers hold/should hold about change goals, implementation methods and eventual outcomes. Not unsurprisingly, within a rationalist, planned change discourse there is an apparent tendency to ignore, disregard or even reject notions of discord and disunity within the management team about the nature of the change process and the way it is being interpreted. Misleading assumptions are therefore being made about a shared unity of purpose, consistency of behaviours, certainty and predictability of outcomes and the capacity to perform, when enacting the manager-as-change-agent role.

But recent evidence is now challenging such assumptions. It is suggesting that they may be flawed and that this may be contributing to underlying tensions in the manner by which different categories and groupings of managers come to interpret the change process and their role as change agents in that process, e.g. that all managers should consider themselves to be innovators when in fact for middle and junior managers the innovative aspect of the change agent role may be hardly evident and they are viewed as

implementers – taking responsibility for change management but in a directive and controlled manner. This is illustrated by Caldwell (2003b) who, in his research study, requested an expert panel of senior managers and consultants with experience of change management to identify the attributes of change leaders and change managers. (The fact that his expert panel, despite identifying overlap between the roles, was able to differentiate these attributes within an orthodox leader/manager dichotomy signifies the continuing strength of the rational-functional model in defining change agency). Caldwell was able to identify and argue for overlap and complementarity between attributes of the manager-as-change-agent role and that this represented “a useful corrective to leadership models of change agency, with their negative counter-images of managerial roles” (p. 291).

However, in the eyes of his ‘expert’ respondents there remained what appeared to be an ambiguity about the roles of senior managers who were responsible for the envisioning and innovative aspects of change and middle managers, who carried forward and implemented change. Echoing the earlier discussion about a possible mismatch between the espoused theory and theory-in-use of senior managers in respect of change leadership roles, such perceptions appear to run counter to empowering notions of change management distribution where managers at middle and junior levels are encouraged to both innovate and implement change in their area of responsibility. It suggests that while there may be aspirations towards greater distribution of change management along the democratic, egalitarian lines suggested by Gronn (2002) which involves innovative thinking and behaviour, this may be cloaking a more fundamental rigidity to shift responsibility and that this in turn, is influenced by status and elitist considerations (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995).

Other evidence for perceptual ambiguity in defining the roles of senior managers and middle managers was suggested in Doyle *et al.*, (2000). For example, in their survey findings, they compared the perceptions of senior and middle managers in the management of change. They found that 71% of senior managers agreed “change has meant a welcome increase in empowerment” while only 44% of middle managers agreed (however, this may not relate to a specific dispersal of change responsibility). And 71% of senior managers said they felt that their organisation had “remained faithful to the principle of participative change implementation” while only 43% of middle

managers agreed and while 75% of senior managers agreed, only 47% of middle managers agreed that “there was more genuine cooperation amongst managers than five years ago.” It would seem therefore that the fundamental attitudes and perceptions rooted in more orthodox models of management hierarchy and status still remain to demarcate change responsibilities along traditional boundary lines.

Such findings would also appear to challenge the idea of homogeneity and unity of purpose between layers of management about how the change agent role should be interpreted and enacted and this may have consequential negative effects for the change process. For example, rhetorical devices urging middle and junior managers to innovate only to discover that the role of innovator is severely curtailed by cultural barriers such as senior managers who feel threatened and react accordingly. For example, in a water company, middle managers were encouraged by their senior managers to involve themselves in strategic change processes until it was realised that their involvement had undermined the strategic role of senior managers who then took peremptory action to limit their involvement. As the CEO eventually admitted: “we had opened a can of worms” (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995).

In their commentary on the senior/middle manager relationship, Doyle *et al.* (2000) conclude:

“Whatever the reasons these difference in perception are potentially damaging from a managerial perspective. Problems could be predicted to arise when senior and middle managers in the same organisation are working with competing assumptions regarding, for example, decision-making, prioritising, planning, implementation methods and resource allocation in relation to major organisational change” (p. S69).

In addition to a lack of clarity and ambiguity about roles and relationships amongst managers, it may be the case that a limited awareness and flawed assumptions about the knowledge skills and attributes required of those managers finding themselves in a change agent role is also contributing to the failure of change processes to fully deliver anticipated outcomes and meet expectations. There is a considerable body of literature that prescribes the competences required for managers to perform in the change agent role. But the difference and demarcation between change competency and operational or professional competency is unclear and there is a tendency to conflate the two in the

literature. While nominally the same, differences in the substance, scale and context of a change role may indicate that some differentiation is required if managers are to receive the required level of developmental support as their role is increasingly evolving along what might be viewed as a hybridising pathway. This is most clearly demonstrated in the area of intellectual knowledge and political expertise where the required level of knowledge and experience is significantly higher than what might be expected in an operational role. But the *blend* of required change competency will depend on the substance and context of the change and the extent that discrete change management responsibilities have pervaded the role (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Cockerill, 1994; Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Doyle 2002a, 2002b; Buchanan 2003a).

This need to consider a differentiation between status and functional levels amongst managers and operational and/or professional competency associated with change management is captured by Schaffer and Thompson (1992). They pointed to a lack of change capability forcing operational managers who had exhausted their own ideas, to bring in staff specialists and external experts who relied on generic rather than specific solutions which in turn, failed to deliver successful change. In a similar manner, Bamford (2006) studying change in a large British Multi-National, found a chaotic process of change that he described as “emergent” which was a euphemism for the inability of senior managers to handle the complexity of change and instead were perpetually in a reactive mode, trying to introduce a range of programmatic measures that only succeeded in generating frustration and alienation amongst middle managers and produced a highly charged political environment which was divisive and damaging to the overall change effort. And Coram and Burnes (2001) describing change in the public sector, attributed a less than satisfactory effort to privatise the Property Service Agency to a rigid reliance on planned change approaches which focused on structural and technical aspects and ignored the knowledge and skills required to effect culture change. This was compounded (and explained) by the evidence of managers not possessing the required skills to manage change beyond a wholly stable and predictable environment. This echoes the point above - managers may be competent in their operational role but when such roles are overlaid with change responsibilities it does not automatically follow that they will be as proficient in the hybridised roles and consequentially, the overall change process may be placed in jeopardy.

But beyond the necessary change knowledge and skills, rational-linear, planned change perspective continues to dominate assumptions about the attitudes and perceptions that managers should adopt as they assimilate change management features into their role and evidence suggests this may be creating tension and conflict. Saka, (2003) exploring change management in two private sector organisations, demonstrated the emerging tension between the rational models of thinking and behaviour that managers-as-change-agents were expected to exhibit with the reality of incoherent and disorderly events where the pressures of resources, time and information constraints led to widespread political activity and irrational forms of behaviour - what Blackler (1992) refers to as 'false necessity'. In effect, they had to find a way of reconciling the messy complexity they were actually encountering with the rational assumptions that were supposedly defining their management role. As Saka (2003) concludes: "The normative patterns of change agents were clearly different from the non-rational perspective that is actively pursued in practice" (p.493).

The tensions between so-called rational and non-rational perspectives influencing assumptions about attitudes and skills and the consequences it produces, is captured in one case study where rational models became the basis for change agency skills development in a major Multi - National Cooperation, Siemens Nixdorf (Dover, 2002). The resultant 'clash' with the complex reality of implementing a major culture change programme led to negative consequences for the organisation and some of the change agents (who were managers assimilating a change agent role as part of their management development). Amongst the lessons to be learned from the clash was how a rational model of change agency development and implementation has failed to consider and cope with basic social and emotional influences that change induces such as: a lack of support from senior managers for those in change agent roles; the jealousy and resentment change agents received from other staff who were not chosen to be part of the programme. Similarly, in Hopfl and Dawes, (1995) middle managers became frustrated and demotivated by the efforts of senior manager to reassert control over the change process. And as Doyle (2001) and (Buchanan, 2003a) both found in their research, similar patterns of jealousy and resentment were observed between managers and professionals seconded to perform as change agents and those who were subject to their activities. This clash of plurality of interests, motives and agendas amongst those

charged with change management has created political, social and psychological tensions that can lead to instabilities in the change process and yet hardly features in the formality of orthodox change management perspectives.

More positively (and what might be construed as deviant behaviour in more orthodox models of change management) Beer *et al.*, (1990) demonstrated how independent action on the part of middle managers can circumvent prescribed models of change management and help to avoid failure. They demonstrated how some managers can take the initiative and side-step grandiose programmatic change introduced by their senior managers. They were willing to take responsibility for change themselves and to make it succeed through a focus on “concrete business problems” that affected them. While the authors point to the limits of control that senior managers can exert over organisation-wide change and the need for senior managers to disperse agency lower down the management hierarchy, it might also be concluded that such behaviour demonstrates how change agency can be ‘wrested from’ formal functional and reporting structures through informal actions by actors who are willing to assume the role of internal change agent without necessarily receiving the sanction from those nominally in control.

But equally, this can create a paradox of control as innovative and unilateral behaviour on the part of middle and junior managers can spark a backlash from senior managers, who having empowered their employees, feel they must place a limit on further empowerment or worse, try to wrest control back (Doyle, 2001). They may do this explicitly and directly by rejecting the innovative ideas and proposals from junior managers and staff who want to be more involved in the change process (Hopfl and Dawes, 1995). Or they do so indirectly when they perceive there is too much innovation and freedom in the change process and retrospectively introduce centralised control mechanisms such as a ‘gatekeeping’ bureaucracy which is aimed at restricting or damping down the empowering process. But as a consequence of curtailing the freedom to innovate, senior managers are at risk of inhibiting their middle, junior managers and experienced professionals from taking the initiative and a responsibility for implementing change – the very thing they initially tried to encourage (Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001).

In sum, what has been interesting to note from these case examples is a level of support for the claim that change management responsibility is permeating managerial roles; that roles are being hybridised by growing change management dispersal. However, there is an apparent ‘misfit’ between the more idealised perspectives of change management dispersal presented in the rational-functional change literature and the actual outcomes and the scenarios portrayed and reflected in these and other case accounts. Images of an over-simplified, top-down, controlling perspective for dispersing change management appear to be undermined by the complex interplay between the substance of the change process, the context in which it is located and actions of those managers who are finding themselves willingly or otherwise assimilating a change agent dimension into their role. Furthermore, it becomes clear that trying to identify and define a clear and unambiguous demarcation in management hierarchies about who does what in complex change environments is difficult and depends to a large extent on the context and substance of the change processes under consideration.

Assuming therefore that on the basis of current evidence it is difficult to adopt a definitive position in respect of change management roles as they meld and overlap, nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, the demarcation that was suggested by the emergent empirical research from Buchanan, *et al.*, (1999), Doyle, *et al.*, (2000) and Caldwell (2003b) will be employed as a theoretical and methodological framework for analysis throughout the rest of the study; but all the time conscious of and accepting that this is a rudimentary and arbitrary classification and is not intended to deny the capacity of individuals to switch and shift in their roles to suit organisational contingencies and personal needs (Buchanan and Storey, 1997).

Senior managers (Chief Executives and Board Directors) are considered to be in the role of *change leaders or strategists* – responsible for analysing and interpreting forces in the change environment and then planning appropriate change responses to those forces and presenting these in strategic plans and goals and setting the agenda for change implementation within existing structures and cultures. Having determined the nature and form of the change strategy, responsibility is then seen to be transferred to middle and junior managers (department, section and team level managers) who will be considered predominantly as *change drivers or implementers* - those who find themselves ‘pushed’ by structural and cultural forces such as empowering activity, into

accepting some form of change responsibility as an integral part of their role. However, these middle and junior managers acting individually and collectively have, at the same time, a relative freedom or agency to make intentional choices about whether to accept or reject that responsibility or, crucially, to ‘pull’ change management responsibility into their role by independently and unilaterally creating a responsibility through some innovative, creative activity to meet particular needs or motives which may or may not be congruent with strategic goals.

Therefore in this study when reference is made to managers assimilating change management into their roles it is primarily focused on those at middle and junior levels – those who are the primary targets for change management distribution. However, it is acknowledged that the interrelationship between those categorised as change strategists and change implementers is an organic and interdependent one and the consequential effects of having a change responsibility at a strategic level carries many similarities to those in more junior positions.

Earlier in this chapter it was explained that it was not only managers who were seen to be pivotal in the change process – individual professionals and professional groups also have an important role to play and like their management colleagues, are being exhorted to see the change management as an integral feature of their role. The next section will now explore perspectives of professionals as change agents but noting the earlier point that managerial and professional roles are considered to be overlapping and intertwined in many contexts.

2.3.4 Professionals as change agents

In addition to managers being viewed as change agents, there is a growing focus on the efficacy of the expert professional role in the change process. Professionals in different organisational contexts are now subjected to similar exhortations and rhetorical devices urging them to innovate and take ownership for aspects of the change process. The message is that with a growing complexity in the process of organisational change, the technical, financial or other forms of expertise they possess (which defines them as professionals) is critical in achieving successful change outcomes. Organisations it is

claimed, must seek to harness the intellect of their professionals in the pursuit of innovation and change excellence, and to do this they must provide the requisite developmental and motivational cultures and structures such as a learning organisation to capitalise on their knowledge and intellect (Webb and Cleary, 1994; Quinn, *et al.*, 2002).

However, professionals, like their manager colleagues, may also use their expertise and power to present risks to the change process. Individually or as collective groupings, they may seek to mediate or overtly resist in the process of change which they see as subverting or conflicting with their professional priorities or ethical values (Ferlie, *et al.*, 2005). And as senior managers, operating as change strategists, come to rely increasingly on their expertise – especially when it is related to innovation and change - they face the inherent contradiction of trying to find a way to accommodate the freedom of professionals to use their expertise (whether that is individually or through some form of collective association) while at the same time feeling the need to maintain some semblance of centralised control and achieving their strategic goals without alienating those same professionals on whom they depend (Webb and Cleary, 1994; Greenwood, *et al.*, 2002).

It would seem therefore that the growing imperative for public and private sector organisations is to find the right mechanisms and cultural techniques to persuade their professional cadre to assimilate responsibilities for initiating and implementing change into their professional roles. In addition to performing their professional duties, professionals have to be persuaded to accept and assimilate change agency into their role, and to develop the necessary attitudes, change capabilities and skills which they must consider just as important as acquiring levels of professional knowledge and skills. As Caldwell (2005) observes:

“The problematic role of professions and consultants in the creation, diffusion and institutionalisation of new expert discourses about knowledge, power and agency...as key carrier groups and ‘knowledge entrepreneurs they are often crucial in developing new instrumental product ideas, or the hard and soft technologies of ‘managing change’ or ‘facilitating change’ that can be engineered or programmed into organisations as quick fix solutions.” (p. 105)

2.3.5 How have different professions have responded to change management as a feature of their role?

One of the most prominent examples of a profession that is being urged to view change agency as a more pervasive feature in their professional role – and which captures many of the issues that this evolving hybridisation is creating for professional roles – is that of human resources (HR) practitioners. Driven on the one hand by doubts over their contribution to the strategic change agenda (Kochan and Dyer, 1993), and on the other hand (and somewhat paradoxically) by a growing realisation in the change literature that failure in the change process has often been attributed to the ineffective management of the ‘people dimension’ of the change process (Beer, *et al.*, 1990; Schaffer, and Thomson, 1992; Kotter, 1995 ; Hamlin, *et al.*, 2001), human resource professionals are repeatedly urged to take up the challenge of the new mandate on offer and become an agent of continual change (Ulrich, 1998). They are urged to improve the effectiveness of the HR function by initiating and leading strategic innovations in a way that adds value to the organisation. They must reinvent themselves as change agents and move from the margins to the centre of the change process and by doing so, forge for themselves a new professional identity as they integrate the role of change agent with other professional duties– even if that means assuming increasingly complex and paradoxical roles (Conner and Ulrich, 1996; Caldwell, 2003c).

Just as for managers, numerous prescriptive articles map the blueprint for this new hybridised HR professional role. For many, the advice is destined to take them beyond the transactional requirements and functional, administrative duties which they have trained for and qualified in. Storey (1992) exploring the evolving role of the HR professional, identified the emergent “changemaker” role as one of the keys to future professional effectiveness. Ulrich (1998) was another to urge HR professionals to adopt the role of change agent if they are to deliver “organisational excellence.” For both of these commentators, the role of change agent is now considered to be an integral feature of the HR professional role for the future. However, what is less evident in the work of these commentators who are proclaiming the HR function’s aspiration to occupy a change agent role as part of their new mandate, is what does this mean in practice; what issues does it raise for individuals and the HR profession as a whole?

Others however, have considered this in more depth. Prominent amongst these commentators is Caldwell (2001) who identified four variations of the change agent role that HR professionals could occupy:

Change champions – Senior HR professionals who initiate and lead strategic HR policy changes

Change adaptors – Middle ranking HR professionals who “carry forward and build support for change within business units and key functions”

Change consultants – HR specialists in charge of discrete change projects

Change Synergists – HR specialist coordinating change projects across the whole organisation.

Not only has Caldwell elaborated on the complexity of HR as a change agent, he has sought to move beyond the rhetoric of ‘sunny uplands’, ‘new dawns’ and ‘bright future’ visioning redolent of much of the practitioner literature which focuses mainly on exemplar case studies involving the more seasoned HR professionals but which may not be representative of the wider profession (Whittington, *et al.* 2002; Woolridge and Wallace, 2002). Caldwell (2001) argues that seeking to integrate a change management dimension with HR professional duties exposes a panoply of ambiguities, paradoxes and contradictions, not only in the changing functionality of the role, but more specifically in the aspirations to lead and drive the change process. For example, and with echoes of Buchanan and Storey (1997), he has identified the inherent contradictions in such role-switching by HR professionals when he argues that moving into a more change focused role both threatens the profession as it undermines their occupational self-identity while exposing them to competitive threats from external and internal change experts who may have considerably more experience and capability in the field of change management (Caldwell, 2001).

Later, in Caldwell (2003c) he replicates the mapping of Storey’s (1992) earlier study to probe further and to comment more specifically on the change agent dimension of the HR professional’s role. For example, he challenges the efficacy of the proactive and progressive image being presented by the HR practitioner literature which he sees as sitting uncomfortably with the “old ambiguities and paradoxes of the personnel role” where a lack of power, poor image and marginalisation has acted to limit the ability of

HR professionals to occupy and perform in this role. And a recent study of professional roles in the enactment of change in the public sector (UK NHS) appears to confirm the problem of marginality, reactivity and a seeming inability by HR professionals to forge a viable strategic role in the change process:

“The HR function within many trusts is far too distanced from the clinical workface and workforce. It does not play a facilitative and advisory role to service GMs [General Managers] and CDs [Clinical Directors]. It appears to play a more limited maintenance role to sustain the system as is” (Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006: 219).

The debate surrounding HR's change agent role continues in the HR practitioner literature. For instance, some have both questioned the realism of any shift towards this progressive and visionary agenda while others have reacted strongly against it. For instance, Guest and King (2001) writing in the UK HR professional publication *People Management*, like so many others before and since, point again to the ambiguous and vulnerable nature of the HR role and wonder whether, rather seeking strategic leadership, they should leave change management to their line manager colleagues and find a role supporting line managers as they drive the change agenda. And Torrington (1998) in a polemical article, goes even further to argue that HR should forget their proactive and strategic aspirations – including a leading change agent role - and focus instead on adopting a mainly reactive role to changing strategies whilst at the same time honing their operational, functional and professional capabilities.

Another profession that has been subjected to the same exhortation to assimilate change agency into their professional roles is healthcare. However, this is not a new phenomenon. For example, Lancaster and Lancaster (1982) stressed that the role of change agent was an essential part of the clinical nurse role and they set out in considerable prescriptive detail both the theories and practical techniques that nurses needed to acquire to perform as a change agent. More recently, this need for change skills in the professional role was affirmed by Cohen (2006) who stressed the need to for nurse managers to respond to the challenge of change and meet the expectations of their staff; but arguing they can only do this if they develop the skills of the change agent. Another recent exhortation, this time to the primary care sector, urged GPs, nurses, practice managers and other similar clinical occupations, to consider that just

relying on their clinical competences might be insufficient in their professional role, and that in future they must acquire both the managerial skills and change skills if they were to implement changes in clinical governance, leading to quality improvements in patient care (Huntington, *et al.*, 2000). And in a wider study of NHS clinical professionals operating in what they describe as a quasi-market situation, Fitzgerald and Ferlie (2000) argue that major reconfigurations of their internal and external context – in particular shifts towards a market orientation in UK healthcare accompanied by a growing managerialisation of professionals in the public sector – has led to a reorientation of role identity and with that, the emergence of a more hybridised professional/manager who now carries dual responsibilities as a clinical professional and an operational manager. With echoes of the HR professional role, they see the role of proactive strategic leader and change champion as a growing feature of this emerging professional/manager hybrid role:

“... the capacity to move beyond their speciality and to comprehend the broader, organisational context; to translate issues for clinical colleagues and to negotiate between a varied array of stakeholders ... driven by a vision of better healthcare” (p.734).

But the same tensions and conflict, the ambiguities and paradoxes found in the hybridised HR professional roles are also evident amongst healthcare professionals too. For example, Bolton (2005) found that amongst UK professional nurses (ward and unit managers) who have subsumed a managerial dimension into their roles, many have experienced a certain ambivalence and discomfort in combining managerial duties with their professional nursing role which they viewed as incompatible. They were only able to reconcile the two by denigrating their managerial role and espousing a defining commitment to patient care through their clinical role. Bolton claims that while nurses “enthusiastically embrace many aspects of the management role” they distanced themselves from “entrepreneurial activity which is clearly at odds with the values of public health service professionals” (p.6). Interestingly, Bolton provides further evidence of the mediating role that professionals can adopt if they feel their values are threatened by an involvement in innovative activity. It also becomes clear that in assimilating a management role, they also assimilate a change dimension, e.g. the anticipation that they would perform as innovative entrepreneurs. For instance, in Bolton’s study, 64% of nursing managers agreed that their managerial role allowed

them to introduce new policies effectively; while 62% agreed with the statement “I am a successful change agent”; and 84% agreed with the statement “I am innovative and enthusiastic.” What was not clear from the findings however, was the extent and manner by which respondents integrated their change agent role with their professional and managerial duties. On the one hand, there was an apparent rejection of entrepreneurial activities being dispersed to them via top-down, external change leadership but on the other hand, did they see themselves as enthusiastic change agents when it involved them leading and driving change through localised change initiatives that are meaningful and relevant to their needs and professional values?

Further evidence for this role ambiguity and ambivalence is suggested by more recent empirical studies in healthcare. In a major national study within the UK NHS, many individuals and team members found themselves wearing three hats instead of two as the role of change agent was being distributed and assimilated by them into their professional and managerial duties and responsibilities (Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006). However, (and echoing the debate about empowering and more unilateralist, localised forms of decentred agency earlier in this chapter) what the findings from this large-scale study have suggested is that the process of dispersing change management to clinical managers and professionals can be seen to contradict the more formalised leadership models being developed across the NHS. The indications are that alongside these top-down models, change leadership might also be viewed as a more collective and dispersed ideal and is in line with the findings of Denis *et al.*, (2001) Buchanan, *et al.*, (2007b) discussed earlier in this chapter. The findings also reinforced the need to consider as a basis for theoretical analysis, the dynamic interplay between the actions and behaviours of clinical professionals and the need to develop a “receptive context for change” (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992).

But more controversially perhaps, these studies appear to be intimating that the whole edifice of centred, rational change leadership dispersal in large bureaucracies such as the NHS might be challenged by, or at least be seen to uncomfortably co-exist with the notion of “*nobody in charge*”- that in certain situations, the notion that change management might be determined by the complexity, fluidity and ambiguity of the change situation as much as any overt directive process of distribution (Buchanan, *et al.* 2007a).

What these and other studies have identified are the inherent tensions in efforts to control and manage the overall change process in healthcare. It is not difficult for example, to visualise that clinical professionals who, in the face of an overwhelming and complex change agenda, crippling bureaucracies, and starved of resources might adopt a perspective which tells them that the only way to enact change, and to ultimately improve patient care, is to take the initiative yourself, or with colleagues, and just make change happen. Others may go further and while willingly seeking to take or create change agency, do so for purposes that may be at odds with the overall change strategy. This leads to the creation of instabilities leading to unnecessary risks, and problems for the organisational change process with eventual outcomes that were unanticipated and unwelcome (Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a).

The education sector is another example where professionals are being urged to embrace change management and assimilate it into their roles. For instance, fundamental shifts in government policies and strategies towards schools are having a major impact on the role of headteachers and their teaching colleagues. West (2000) in a study not dissimilar to some of the studies in the NHS explored above but on a lesser scale, researched the process of change in a group of five schools under the banner of the “*Moving Schools*” initiative. The researchers studied how change management was being dispersed and assimilated into the roles of headteachers (as manager/professionals) and teachers (as education professionals). The study revealed that, just as in the cases of clinical professionals and human resources professionals discussed previously, the dynamics of change management dispersal were far more complex than previous research or conventional models of change leadership are suggesting. For instance, headteachers were being urged to occupy the role of strong leader/manager while all the time conscious that their personal workload and responsibilities and the complexity of running their school also demanded that they encouraged their fellow teaching professionals to take more responsibility for introducing improvement activities. At the same time they had to accept that some areas of improvement would always be outside their control as teachers had scope to unilaterally take the initiative themselves without their mandate. And echoing the mediating and resisting potential of the professional identified earlier, some teachers were apparently resisting the challenge to innovate or actively participate in improvement activities. Instead they used the

ambiguity about what was required of them as change agents to resist any involvement or responsibility in the change process, confident in the knowledge that there was little opportunity for sanctions against them from their respective headteacher when that same headteacher was reluctant to impinge upon their professional autonomy and discretion on which they depended.

This last point is important because it continues to highlight an earlier discussion in this chapter about the interplay between the substance of change, the receptivity of change context and now bringing to the fore the *receptivity of the individual* who is prepared to occupy or perform in the role of change agent or to resist such a role. In West's study, major efforts were made by headteachers and others to create the ideal of the "whole school" to gain teacher commitment in identifying areas for improvement and encouraging them to accept change responsibility. While some departments and individuals responded, others were hostile and unwilling to combine the change agent role with their professional role. Consequently, they were referred to by the heads as "a deviant group – a group composed of those who do not seem to be responding to the climate for improvement which has come to form the new orthodoxy within the school's formal culture" (p. 52). It would seem therefore that in the education sector at least, the dynamics of change agency dispersal not only relate to a receptive context, they are dependent upon the receptivity of an individual to accept that agency – in effect to 'play the game according to the rules'.

West (2000) also highlights the significance of the instability, complexity and diversity of change substance and context in the education sector and suggests, just as Buchanan *et al.*, (2007a) and their notion of 'nobody in charge' have suggested, centred or empowering models of change management dispersal may not be appropriate when dealing with certain types of change process and in certain change contexts and that a much more flexible, contingent approach is required. As West observes:

"It seems important to remember the role played by the individual teacher's professional judgment and professional knowledge of his/her classroom. We feel that this points towards the need for consensus about purposes, but freedom to experiment with/vary methods although it is clear this can cause a level of discomfort for those managing improvement programmes within the school"(p. 53).

Again mirroring some of the research evidence from other studies about issues in respect of developing change capability amongst those to whom change management has been dispersed, West also highlights the tensions, ambiguities and conflicting priorities that may exist within cadre groups (such as cross-functional project teams) in areas such as selection for a change agency role, what was expected of them in their change roles, skills development and support as change agents etc (Doyle, 2002a, 2002b).

Structural and cultural changes in recent years may therefore be forcing a reconsideration of how change leadership should be interpreted by educational professionals and others involved in shaping the profession. For example, the introduction of the '*Workforce Remodelling*' initiative has involved the significant recruitment of teaching assistants to take responsibility for some of the more routine aspects of the teacher's role – ostensibly giving them more time for preparation and classroom teaching. This restructuring is intended to free teachers to be more innovative in their role and to "take ultimate responsibility for the pupil's educational progress" (Wilkinson, 2005:429). The underlying logic of workforce remodelling is therefore dependent on efforts to introduce more distributed forms of leadership in schools. Hatcher (2005) for instance, argues that distributed leadership is seen by managers and government agencies as being vital in achieving the "the commitment of teachers to management agendas" (p. 254). Such commitment is required, not only to empower teachers and encourage them to innovate in their role, it acknowledges that the only way to solve complex problems and achieve reform in schools is to involve all teachers:

"Heads are dependent on their teacher colleagues to implement mandated reforms. The heroic leadership model of the past has proved unable to cope, as a failure of Fresh Start demonstrated" (p. 254).

However, this change to the professional teacher's role has been met with alarm and anxiety. Some teachers view this as an encroachment on their professional jurisdiction leading to threats of a de-professionalisation of their role. Therefore, rather than generating a greater 'receptivity' within individuals to innovate and implement improvement change, the reaction has been one of hostility and resistance to the proposed changes from a group that has the power individually and collectively to be 'unreceptive'.

This idea of receptivity in individuals and collective entities is also influenced by the nature of the relationships that individuals recognise and understand as shaping their professional behaviour. Whereas in healthcare, notions of clinical excellence and patient care underpinned a collegial, supportive, networking relationship amongst professionals where distributed forms of change leadership were, in the main, seen to be a necessary part of the professional role to get the job done and to make a difference, education currently appears to rest more on “government-driven headteacher managerialism” which according to Hatcher contradicts fundamentally the democratic, sharing notions of distributed leadership as it is articulated by Gronn (2002). For example, headteachers, with a desire to drive through a government agenda are faced with the paradox of control debated earlier in relations to empowerment; that it can only be done through and with the professionalism of teachers. As they empower their teacher colleagues to gain their cooperation and implement reforms, they face the dilemma of how far to extend democratic, collective control over a wider education agenda represented in empowered teachers if it presents too many risks to a managerial agenda and by implication, presents a threat to management hegemony and their personal careers:

“Sharing leadership is risky for headteachers. Distributed leadership may not succeed in reinforcing commitment to management agendas and it is headteachers who are held accountable for meeting government targets” (p.260).

Similarly, there may be resistance to efforts by headteachers to distribute leadership to their colleagues if it means that they, as headteachers, are complicit in a change strategy such as workforce remodelling which may ultimately reform them as well as their colleagues out of a job!

These individual interpretations placed by education professionals on the way change management has pervaded their professional roles are significant. For instance, Day (2004), reflecting on the changing nature of the teaching profession and the challenges facing teacher educators, identifies different perceptions by teachers of their professional identity which influence how they will react through their freedom to make intentional choices about courses of action. In Day’s study, some teachers were classified professionally as *entrepreneurs* while others were seen as *activists*. Entrepreneurs are supportive of high quality teaching as it is related to and measured by

externally imposed policies and performance measures. Activists on the other hand, were seen to adhere to wider societal values, moral codes and a sense of ethical purpose and “feel threatened by corporate, entrepreneurial models that promote teaching and learning agendas that focus upon improving schools ... within a restricted, measurable range of subjects” (p.147). By inference therefore, activists may or may not decide to participate in efforts to distribute change management or forms of agency which allows them to innovate if it requires them, as change agents, to seek improvements in ways that threaten their underlying moral code and/or personal interests. Here again, the receptivity of the individual to participate in efforts to introduce change management into professional roles may be complicated by ethical and personal as well as functionally related concerns.

Another group of professionals who are finding that change agency is permeating their professional roles but in a different manner and to meet different contingencies, are IS/IT (Information Systems/Information Technology) specialists. Reflecting many of the tensions and ambiguities seen amongst HR professionals discussed earlier, there is growing evidence of a fundamental rethink around the role of IT professionals. The essential message appears to be: in the face of a changing business environment and changing technologies which is changing the skills mix and activities of IT professional roles, IT professionals must shift from what is perceived as a narrow, highly technical, project management focused role in which users and business needs hardly feature, to one that both broadens their responsibilities and aligns their actions with business strategies and client needs. In effect, like other professional groups, they to must be persuaded to accept or take change responsibilities and assimilate change agency into their professional role (Webb and Cleary, 1994; Lee, *et al.*, 1995; Marion and Marion, 1998; Weiss and Anderson, 2004).

Interestingly, while IT professionals and their senior managers are seemingly recognising the need for a rethink about their role, a key issue appears to be, as it is in the case of HR professionals, the need to develop the required competencies beyond their current professional knowledge if they are to incorporate change agency into their role. As Lee, *et al.*, (1995) argue: “... the ability to function effectively as change agents may become even more important than business analysis skills and technical competence” (p.332). It seems that additional change competencies must include

broader business and human/social skills, but that the current position amongst IT professionals is that many do not yet possess these skills. For instance, Weiss and Anderson, (2004) in their research suggested that in terms of communication, social and political skills, IT professionals were rated low by other stakeholder groups. However, just setting in place an infrastructure to develop broader change knowledge and skills may be insufficient. As Marion and Marion (1998) argue, proposing an agenda of how IT professionals might develop broader change skills to reflect their evolving role is insufficient; they will need support in making the transition. Apart from internal initiatives to develop these necessary skills amongst IT professionals, there may have to be, as in the case of educational professionals, (Fullan, 1993) a major restructuring of those institutions which define and develop professional knowledge and educate those who practice in the field (Lee, *et al.*, 1995).

2.4 Framing a statement of the research problem

The genesis of this study was the empirical research into change management which the researcher has conducted independently and in conjunction with colleagues over the last ten years. This research has focused on the lived experience of managers and professionals as they became involved in, caught-up, implicated in some capacity in the management of organisational change. Two large scale studies of managers and professionals involved in the management of organisational change in particular were instrumental in exploring these experiences (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000). These studies were useful to the researcher in that they explored change management, but very much from the perspectives of those directly involved and affected. The empirical research approach was initially determined by cohorts of practising managers and professionals who attended preliminary exploratory workshops. The findings from these workshops were used to define and frame the research agenda. The findings then led into the design of two comprehensive surveys which were followed up by in-depth interviews with managers and professionals from in two major organisations who participated in the initial workshops.

Both of these studies produced a considerable volume of insightful data about the individual and collective experience of managing change. But, for this researcher, they

generated further puzzles, conundrums and issues which he felt had to be explored and investigated. In particular, the researcher's interest was focused on how managers and professionals – two groups which the literature argues have a critical, pivotal role to play in the successful planning and implementation of organisational change and was confirmed by the findings of these two empirical studies – come to find themselves involved in change management, and the consequences of that involvement.

Orthodox research suggested that the effects of becoming involved in change management were to be determined from within a dominating rational perspective. Alternative perspectives of change management distribution such as those which emphasise the complex interrelationship between the context and substance of change and the individual and collective intentions and actions of those who find themselves involved or implicated, were hardly debated. Consequently, the full effects of change management distribution which defined the lived experiences of those involved was felt to be poorly understood – both theoretically and practically. Moreover, this lack of understanding was marginalising ethical, political and emotional considerations on the part of those involved and in doing so, is presenting risks to the overall strategic outcomes of the change process when issues such as the level of competency, motivation and commitment to become involved in change management are not addressed.

The literature and empirical studies reviewed in this chapter have added weight to these inductively derived propositions. The evidence from a number of case studies lends support the argument that interpretations of change management, the dynamics of its distribution and assimilation into managerial and professional roles and the consequential effects are more complicated than mainstream, orthodox models and theories suggest. For example, how the assumed homogeneity in the concept of 'the manager' as a change agent is challenged by demarcation and division in terms of managerial role, function and status. How the increasing role of the professional as change agent is hardly acknowledged or understood in the mainstream literature where the manager is the key focus for attention.

Going forward therefore, the challenge for this researcher was two-fold. On the one hand it was to continue to draw attention to the over-simplistic, even at times, naïve

portrayal of the change process inherent in rational models which ignores, or at the very least over-simplifies the complexity of change management and how it is dispersed and assimilated into roles. More practically, there was a need to draw attention to the consequences of this apparent over-simplification which appears to be generating disillusionment and frustration amongst those who have to implement change and undermining the effectiveness of achieving desired change outcomes as they are guided by principles and guidelines that are of limited value and with knowledge and skills that are inadequate to deal with the complexity and ambiguity of contemporary organisational change (Pettigrew, 1985, 1987, 1988) Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; DiBella, 1992; Collins 1998; Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999, Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Buchanan, 2003a; Dawson, 1994, 2003a 2003b; Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

Simultaneously, the researcher was challenged to continue to develop and facilitate a broader and deeper theoretical exploration of the change phenomenon leading towards a more robust foundation for building understanding and ongoing theory development which in turn, will inform meaningful action at practitioner level – especially for those whose role is increasingly assuming a change management dimension (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Watson, 1994b, 1997; Dawson 2003a; Pettigrew, 2000; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001; Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

Collins (1998) captures this ideal when he asserts that practical action in the field of change and its management has to rest on some sort of platform of theoretical assumptions – even if these are implicit and hidden behind a screen of “practical matters.” The issue therefore is not just about making theory more relevant to practitioners, it is also about making sure that there are more critical and challenging frameworks of theorising that can accommodate the messy, uncertain, politicised and conflictual nature of the change process and in doing so challenge the theoretical hegemony that pervades a change textbook orthodoxy that would appear to currently dominate practice (Burnes, 2000; Pettigrew, 1985, 1987; Watson, 1994b, 1997; Siegal, *et al.*, 1996; Watson and Harris, 1997; Dawson 2003a, 2003b; Thomas, 2003).

However, persuading those who theorise about change and those who have to manage change and its consequences to engage in this form of theoretical and practical eclecticism is itself another challenge and that challenge is compounded when they imply patterns of behaviour that lie outside accepted models of rational management which

many practitioners may find unacceptable or at the very least, hard to come to terms with (Thomas, 2003).

With these challenges in mind, the central research question for this study therefore becomes:

What are the dynamics of change management distribution and how are change management responsibilities being assimilated into middle and junior manager and non-manager professional roles within transformational change contexts? More specifically, what issues and debates arise as a consequence and what challenges and opportunities do they present for theoretical development and practical application?

This central question generates a number of more specific sub-questions and these are used to frame the research design and aid data collection:

- *What are the mechanisms which distribute change management responsibilities and how are these being assimilated into the roles of middle and junior managers and professionals?*
- *What are the effects of this assimilation of change management as managers and professionals willingly or unwillingly assume a responsibility for some aspects of managing change. How do these effects manifest themselves at an individual, collective and organisational level?*
- *To what extent are these effects considered by those who have a strategic responsibility for change planning and implementation and how far is a consideration of these effects reflected in organisational policies and practices?*
- *In respect of the effects on manager and professional roles in two contrasting case contexts, what variables account for any similarities and differences? Where there were consistent patterns across case contexts, are there possibilities for generalising from those similarities – especially in relation to lessons for change management practice?*

Having conducted a critical review of extant literature and empirical evidence in the field of change management to identify a number of issues for investigation, the next chapter explains the philosophical and methodological approach which justified the research design. It then describes the case study method, and its appropriateness in framing the research strategy and the multi-method approach to data collection. It concludes with a brief description of the case organisations which formed the subject of the empirical investigation.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

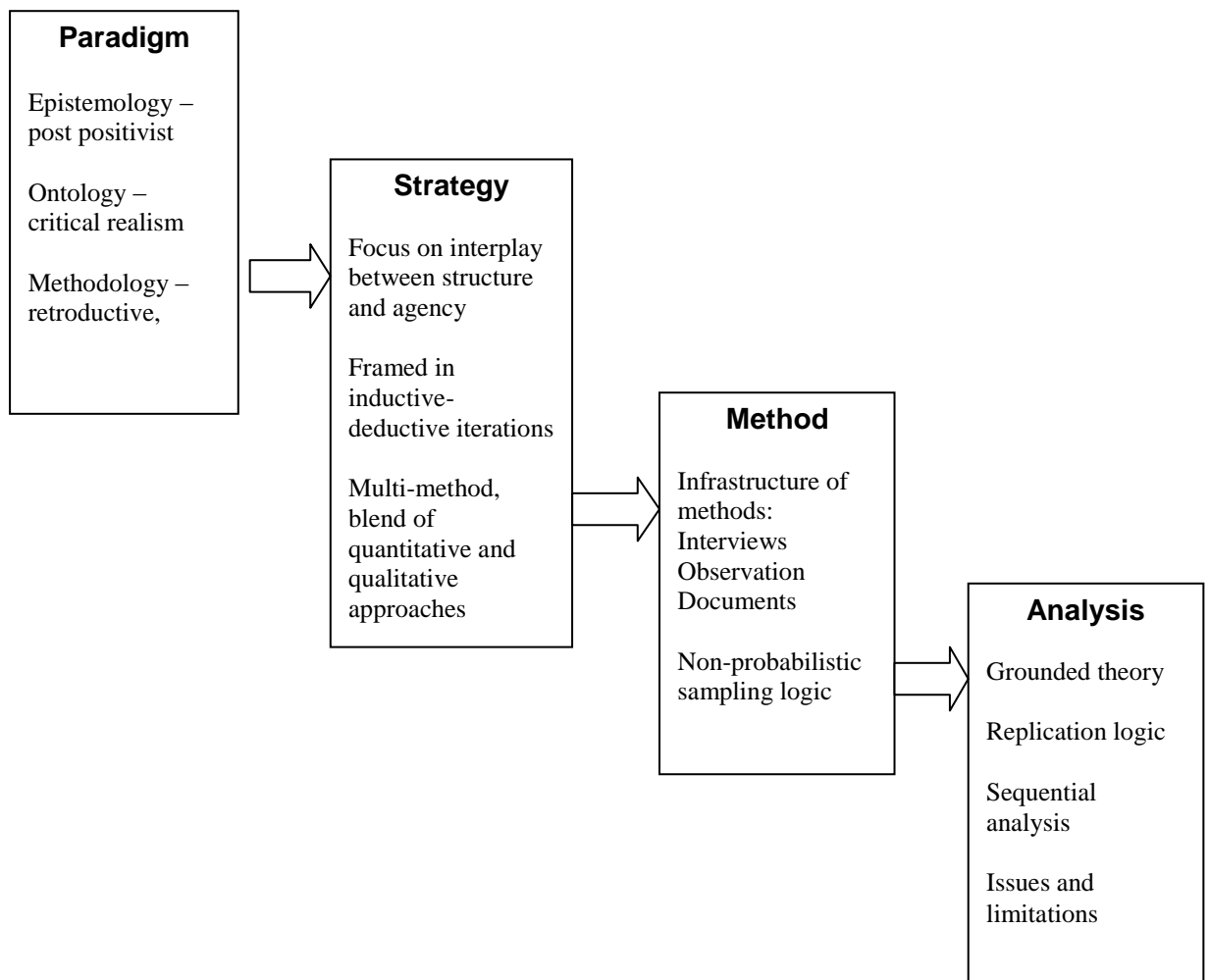
In chapter two, arguments were presented to suggest that orthodox perspectives of change management premised on models of centralised, expert-driven leadership or even a top-down decentring of change leadership responsibility through empowerment mechanisms, were now being subjected to increasing critical analysis and challenge. Recent research had suggested that a much more fluid, less certain and more diffuse and informal model of change management distribution may be emerging where change management is interpreted in terms of a responsibility rather than formalised leadership roles. In this sense, the dynamics of distribution might be attributed as much to the independent and sometimes unilateral actions of individuals and collective groups taking a responsibility for change, as to any rationally driven leadership behaviour on behalf of senior management and/or expert change agent advising or even coercing them. Moreover, this independent, unilateral action may be on the basis of motives and needs that may or may not be congruent with change strategies and goals. There were suggestions that change management distribution may, under conditions of chaos and instability, be driven by inherent self-organising forces where the distribution of change management responsibilities are dictated by the exigencies of the situation or the intuitive behaviours of individuals, rather than any sense of top-down control or overt bottom-up desire to ‘make a difference’ (Doyle 2001; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a).

With these more complex interpretations of change management distribution in mind, consideration was given how change management was being assimilated into the roles of managers and professionals – two groups identified in the change literature as pivotal to a successful change implementation. Although the analysis produced evidence to suggest that their roles were being hybridised as they assimilated additional change management responsibilities alongside their managerial, functional and professional roles, it was argued that there was only limited research into the process and the effects of this assimilation – organisationally, operationally and at a personal level. The aim of

this study therefore is to empirically explore this process and its effects in more depth and detail framed within two contrasting case studies.

This chapter begins by introducing and explaining the research paradigm that philosophically and methodologically underpinned the research approach. From within this paradigm, it then elucidates a research design strategy in which the case method featured prominently and framed a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis. Figure 3.1 shows a schematic diagram of the overall research plan that has methodologically framed the study.

Figure 3-1 Research Plan for the study



3.2 The research design paradigm

Framing an appropriate research design paradigm for this study was an important first step in explicating a valid “theory of method” or research strategy in which data collection and subsequent analysis can be structured and organised (Pettigrew, 2000). In this opening section, the researcher establishes the epistemological and ontological assumptions that framed the methodological approach used in this study as a precursor to explicating his research design and methods.

3.2.1 Competing paradigms?

Johnson and Duberley, (2000) argue that to explore and explain the metaphysical, philosophical assumptions and theories that surround social science research is to enter a world of epistemological contention where competing philosophical assumptions are seen to negate the possibility of a stable, secure and incontestable foundation to warrant our knowledge and from which to derive “irreducible epistemic standards” (p.4). According to them, the best we can hope for when considering epistemology (knowledge about knowledge) is to become more consciously reflexive in a way that makes us aware of the assumptions and values on which our claim to knowledge is based and be prepared to question and challenge those assumptions openly and reflexively. However, they contend that our degree of openness and reflexivity is qualified by each of us having our own claim to knowledge or truth about the world which is premised on a certain set of basic beliefs or axioms against which we base and test our thinking and action. In other words we each of us make references to certain paradigms that inform our understanding about the nature of social reality. It is through these paradigms or world-views that we are able to make sense of and to simplify, what would otherwise be a complex and at times inexplicable world. But an adherence to a particular paradigm while enabling, is also constraining in the sense that from a set of basic beliefs and values flow a certain pattern of theorising and action which risks becoming so parochial and entrenched that it ‘closes-off’ the possibility of entering and engaging with other paradigms – there is in effect paradigm incommensurability (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Hassard and Pym, 1990; Guba, 1990; Hatch 2006; Guba and Lincoln, 2005).

However, recent years have seen efforts to shift from what some might see as a singular paradigmatic posture focused around an exclusive set of theoretical assumptions towards one that is defined by a more eclectic, multi-philosophical, methodological frameworks that are willing to draw on assumptions from competing perspectives to create a composite, more pragmatic framework of social theory which can help to explain and understand the particularity of situations or events (Willmott, 1990; Guba, 1990; Watson, 1997; Gill and Johnson, 1997; Reed, 2000; Reed, 2005a).

Given the philosophical thrust of this study, the challenge was to find an epistemological position that was not constrained within in a framework of positivistic absolutism or post-modernist relativism – neither of which it was felt would serve the aims of the study in terms of theory development and practical improvement in understanding how the process of change management is understood and enacted. The challenge therefore was to avoid theoretical polarisation and fragmentation with the inherent risk of isolation and introspection when competing paradigmatic debates turn-in on themselves with a concomitant risk they become so esoteric, metaphysical and therefore devoid of meaning beyond a narrow academic constituency, that they are seen to be largely irrelevant and meaningless to the social structures and communities they purport ultimately to serve (Crandall, 1990; Watson, 1994b). For those who research in an effort to derive practical and meaningful solutions to the issues and problems that reside in those communities, such introspection can become a source of frustration as they fail to find practical solutions to seemingly intractable problems (Watson, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). As Crandall (1990:216) remarks when reflecting on the manner in which different social paradigms relate to practical implementation: “Presumably all of us, regardless of our view of the world and the process of inquiry we employ within it, hope that what we can learn can somehow make some tangible difference in an important aspect of our life or work.”

In sum, this study was searching for an epistemological and ontological foundation on which to fabricate and erect a research design and strategy – one that was theoretically robust in its quest, not for an absolute truth about how to manage change but one that furthered theoretical insight and understanding from a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, and held out the prospect of practical applications leading to improvement for those who face the very real challenge of implementing change. With this in mind,

the epistemological and ontological ideals of critical realism were felt to provide an appropriate research paradigm.

3.2.2 Critical realism: the quest for a middle way?

In part as a response to the paradigm incommensurability debates briefly described above, some theorists have sought to promote and advocate a philosophical ‘middle-way’ – one that seeks to find an accommodation between competing epistemological, ontological and methodological positions – in effect to search for some form of paradigmatic “rapprochement” and a “methodological pluralism” (Gill and Johnson, 1997:134). Such a paradigmatic rapprochement is suggested by a post-positivistic, critical realist epistemology and ontology.

The antecedents of critical realism lie in the post-positivistic critiques of logical positivism captured in Popperian falsification theories and Kuhnian notions of scientific revolution. Guba (1990) provides a useful overview of a post-positivist philosophy within which critical realism is considered an ontological cornerstone. Here, post-positivism is ontologically separated from the “naïve realism” of logical positivism because it is accepting that “although real world driven by natural causes exists, it is impossible for humans to truly to perceive it with their imperfect sensory and intellectual mechanism” (p. 20). Epistemologically, post-positivism asserts it is absurd to claim an absolute truth and that so-called “findings” from research emerge from the interactions “between the inquirer and the inquired into” (p.20) and are therefore always relative and tenuous and amenable to reinterpretation and revision.

Methodologically, Guba (1990) suggests that post-positivist researchers use multiple methods of inquiry and data collection to minimise distortion and misinterpretation with an emphasis on more qualitative approaches to redress the “imbalances” introduced by more positivistic, quantitative approaches. Post-positivistic social science is therefore a search for a philosophical middle way between the “over-determinism of positivism and the total relativism of constructionism” (Hatch, 2006:329); to find a “...third stream between naïve positivism and poststructuralism” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:13).

But advocating a pan-paradigmatic, middle way between the supposed extremes of law-giving, objective positivism and the ‘anything-goes’ relativism of post-modernism, does not mean rejecting either of those philosophical positions. On the contrary, this study acknowledged that in different research contexts these alternative paradigms have validity and in doing so, will frame different approaches to social inquiry and research (Guba, 1990; Gill and Johnson, 1997).

From within a post-positivistic philosophy and concurrent and consistent with the aims of this study, the main philosophical and methodological frame of reference for subsequent analysis and debate will be the “ontological commitments” that are represented in critical realism (Fleetwood 2005). The core ideals and axioms of critical realism are most closely identified and associated with the work of Bhaskar (Bhaskar, 1978; 1998; Archer, *et al.*, 1998). The adjective critical however, is not seen to be synonymous with a Habermasian, Marxist philosophy that underpins critical theory (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, 1996). Rather, *critical* is describing a form of realism that rejects claims to an absolute, factual, reality leading to an epistemic ‘truth’ in the social sciences such as that made by “empirical realists” where the facts speak for themselves (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:153). Instead critical realism argues that, while there is an acknowledgement of an objective, observable world ‘out there’, which is assumed to be real it is also indeterminate, and consequently, we can only come to know reality and therefore truth through the constructions and interpretations we place upon those real events and situations we observe and the explanations and models we generate as a consequence - which themselves are amenable to change (Groff, 2004; Fleetwood, 2005; Reed, 2005a, 2005b). As Denzin and Lincoln, (2005:13) observe:

“Critical realists reject a correspondence theory of truth. They believe that reality is arranged in levels and that scientific work must go beyond statements of regularity to analysis of the mechanism, processes and structures that account for the patterns that are observed.”

According to Bates (2006) the term ‘critical’ also carries methodological and political connotations. Methodologically, the adjective ‘critical’ is defined in terms of its “critical dialogue” with other social ontologies and the belief that structure and agency must be causally linked. Politically, ‘critical’ relates to its normative value; that understanding the relationship between structure and agency can progressively transform those entities

for the benefit of society. Therefore, according to its proponents, what makes critical realism, *critical* and distinguishes it from realism in a positivistic sense, is not a reliance on a predictive or law-making capacity, but how its explanatory power to generate *understanding* derived from and through an analysis of the interplay between an observed reality and the structures, processes that give rise to that observed reality - what Bhaskar refers to as *generative mechanisms*. Therefore, for critical realists, an entity becomes 'real' when it has the causal powers to have an effect, to make a difference but where social reality does not have to be considered in tangible, material terms. As Fleetwood (2005) asserts, "God may or may not be real, but the idea of God is as real as Mount Everest, because the idea of God makes a difference to peoples' actions" (p.199).

According to Bhaskar, reality is said to be stratified into three domains (Bhaskar, 1978; Groff, 2004; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2005). These are presented schematically in Table 3.1.

Table 3-1 Ontological assumptions

	Domain of real	Domain of the actual	Domain of the empirical
Mechanisms	*		
Events	*	*	
Experiences	*	*	*

(Source: Bhaskar, 1978)

The first domain is the *real* consisting of mechanisms – the deep, embedded structures, processes, rules, norms which have a pre-existence and are deemed to have causal powers that act to frame and define our social reality – manifested in Bhaskar's idea of *generative mechanisms*. In this study, this might refer to particular organisational contexts defined by certain structural, cultural, political and social systems; it might refer to evolving models of management hegemony inherent within top-down empowerment that both (paradoxically) encourage and constrain change management

dispersal and the scope for social action, e.g. constraining or enabling resistance to change.

The second domain is the *actual* which assumes that events occur whether we know them or not, e.g. there is an assumption that change management distribution is occurring whether we observe it or know about it, whether we are there or not to experience it.

The third domain is the *empirical*, made up our identification and experiences of events - what is fact, what has been experienced, what has occurred, what is real to us and what might be equated with what the change literature now refers to as the 'lived experience' (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Buchanan, 2003a). For example, in the context of this study, the research is aimed at uncovering and understanding the experiences of those managers and professionals who are finding change management distribution - whether it as a result of top-down empowering initiatives or through the bottom-up consequences of unilateral, independent action or the consequence of complex self-organising forces over which they have no control - there are real, felt effects on their individual roles and their personal lives, e.g. stress, advancement in their career.

What links these three domains of reality are the causal powers reflected through the interplay between determining structures and human agency. These causal powers (what Bhaskar refers to as generative mechanisms) are enabled or constrained by societal structures and institutions. They lead to events in the domain of the actual whether we know them or not. But those events only become experiences and reside in the domain of the empirical when they are identified and transformed through human agency – through interpretations of social reality that is enacted in the choices and intentionality of action of individuals, e.g. decisions to comply with or to resist management hegemony. The move from the real, to the actual and then the empirical is therefore a contingent phenomenon and depends on the set of circumstances in which it is being considered (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

Thus, what are seen to be fundamental within a critical realist ontology are the concepts of structure and agency and the relationships that exist between them. Following

Bhaskar, Reed (2000) succinctly describes this central tenet of critical realism when he asserts the separation between human action and social structures, “the properties possessed by the latter are fundamentally different from the former to the extent that that they pre-exist the social activities through which they are reproduced or transformed” (p. 53). In other words, structure and agency each possess distinct powers and properties in their own right, referred to as *sui generis* (unique) properties. Social structures, properties such as cultural artifacts rules and processes built up over time are “pre-existing features of the world into which we are born” and these properties are relatively enduring and can act to enable or constrain social action. Similarly, human agents are considered to be reflexive in their thinking and resultant behaviour: “People are the only inhabitants of the social world able to reflect upon, and to seek (individually and collectively) to alter, reinforce, the fitness of the social arrangements they encounter for the realisation of their own interests” (Carter and New, 2004:5). But as Carter and New also contend, people can act collectively to exert influence just through their numbers (what they refer to as demographic agency, e.g. the unemployed changing government fiscal and economic policies) or by exerting the causal powers they possess, e.g. to right to protest, which is sufficient to maintain or modify the world and produce explicable outcomes, e.g. a change in government policy towards the benefits system.

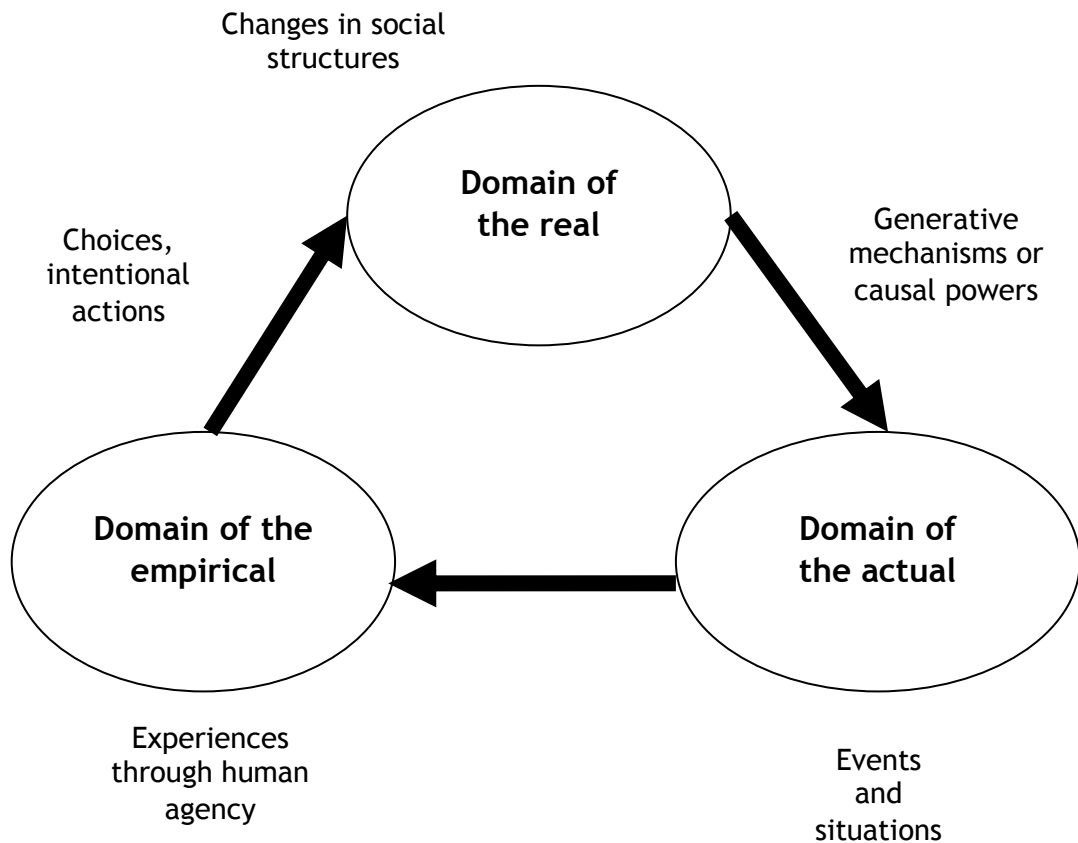
Following Archer (1995), Carter and New (2004) and Bates, (2006) what differentiates critical realism from a Giddensian conceptualisation of the interplay between structure and agency is its temporality. This is captured in Archer’s (1995) morphogenetic model of cyclical transformation which introduces the notion of ‘historicity’ – that the interplay between structure and human agency “is strung out over time” (Bates, 2006:146). Put another way, the interplay between structure and agency is cyclical and begins with a pre-existing structure or process that is non-determinate, but by being there, acts to enable or constrain social action. Social interaction occurs between social actors who are intent on realising particular needs or interests. This then sets in train a process of structural or processual transformation or adaptation – in other words what might be construed as the antecedents of organisational change. As Reed (2000) contends, “It is these underlying structures or generative mechanisms and their complex interplay with human agency, as it reproduces or transforms existing organisational

forms, that provide the explanatory focus and agenda for a realist organisation theory” (p, 58).

Thus in a critical realist ontology therefore, structure and agency are assumed to be real and separated, they are not conflated into a Giddensian dualism (Reed, 2005a; Fleetwood, 2005). Moreover, each entity is assumed to have causal powers which enable and constrain. For critical realists therefore, understanding the nature of this causal interplay is of central importance and forms the basis of their methodological approach to empirical research. The focus (as it is in this study) is therefore on a comprehensive analysis of the underlying regulatory structures or generative mechanisms and the social actions of individuals that produce relevant knowledge and the potential for theory building. As Bryman and Bell (2003:15) remark: “What makes critical realism *critical* is that the identification of generative mechanisms offers the prospect of introducing changes that can transform the status quo.” Johnson and Duberley (2000) capture the implications of critical realism for management researchers when they contend: “Central to this analysis is the location of micro-level ethnographic descriptions of members’ activities within the explanatory context of the complex interplay of macro-level structures which constrain and enable members’ activities” (p. 166).

With this notion of causal interplay to the fore, Figure 3.2 shows Bhaskar’s ontological domains of reality redefined and represented by the researcher in a more cyclical form. It suggests that generative events or the causal powers in structures lead to events, whether we know them or not. These events then translate into the empirical when they are experienced by human agency. But then the assumed causal powers that result from experiences (resistance, motivation etc) as seen to ‘*act back*’ on the domain of the real and the generative mechanisms residing there to bring about shifts and alterations in areas such as change management strategies, reappraisal of risks, change outcomes etc.

Figure 3-2 A re-definition and re-representation of Bhaskar's ontology



3.2.3 Critical realism and management theory

Having set out the core features of a critical realist ontology, to what extent has it influenced contemporary organisation and management theory? The epistemological and ontological arguments for a critical realist middle way representing a new framework for analysis and a reinterpretation of organisation and management theory have been propounded by a number of commentators as a challenge to what they see as the polarising influences of positivism and postmodernism (Groff, 1994; Fleetwood, 2005; Reed, (2000, 2005a). Reed (2000) sums up the central ontological stance held by proponents when he asserts that critical realism is:

“... a form of organisation analysis that is consistently attuned to the interplay between structure and agency at various levels of analytical abstraction as it

shapes the organisational forms through which social reproduction and transformation are realised.” (61).

Like others, he argues cogently for what he interprets as a ‘realist turn’ which he believes is now manifesting itself in organisational and management theory and research (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Groff, 2004; Carter and New, 2004; Fleetwood, 2005). Reed views this ‘turn’ as representing an epistemological and ontological backlash to a postmodernist agenda which, for him, was dominant in the 1970s and 1980s and came to envelope the social sciences to the extent that postmodernist, social constructionism experienced such a profound shift in philosophy that it pushed organisational theory towards the extremes, where social reality was denied beyond the realms of discursive practices and textual forms.

He presents his most recent arguments for a realist turn in Reed, (2005a). Here he contends that critical realism has had a major impact on the structure/agency debate which, according to him and other proponents of critical realism, has ontologically suffered from the weakness of not being able to prevent the constructs of structure and agency from collapsing or conflating into each other thereby preventing the interactions between the two constructs forming the theoretical foundation for investigation and the basis for practical action. Critical realism, he claims, asserts the analytical and conceptual ‘independence’ of these two constructs while rejecting the early Giddensian reductionism of agency into structure and vice versa. Reed concludes that “critical realism aspires to provide an overarching explanatory framework and logic that combines a sustained focus on the structural constraints that necessarily shape corporate agency and the dynamic potentialities for change that their complex interaction generates” (p. 1637).

Not surprisingly, given the polarisation and fragmentation that it is being claimed has occurred in organisation and management theory, a response was not slow in coming. In a rejoinder to Reed, (2005a), Contu and Willmott (2005) from an essentially relativist stance, ask rhetorically “Did we miss a turn?” In a thoughtful article, they challenge many of Reed’s claims and assertions about critical realism’s occupation of the middle ground somewhere between positivist and postmodernist perspectives. They base their challenge on ontological ground – “How do you know this is the way the world is?”

They are sceptical of a realist methodological focus on retrodution which, as an iterative process of deduction and induction, relates observed surface events to the nature of the underlying structures and processes that generate them which they assert is nothing more than reasonable inferences about what is occurring and lacks analytical rigour and explanatory power about the probability of events and why they occur.

In Reed's (2000b) own rejoinder he responds to these issues. First he does not accept Contu and Willmott's suggestion that critical realism does not have intellectual rigour or explanatory power and that it is merely reverting to the debates and traditions of classical theories. Instead he restates his position that critical realism can and does provide "a theory and model of scientific explanation" (p.1664). He also metaphorically 'shrugs his shoulders' at the more esoteric and meta-physical retort to him by Contu and Willmott "how do you know that this is the way the world is?" He does not provide an answer to this relativistic "killer question" Instead he restates his belief that critical realism represents a viable philosophy of science "based on the assumption that that reality, including social reality, *has an inherent nature or structure* (original emphasis) that we may hope and try to identify through various kinds of epistemological devices" (p. 1665). For Reed, critical realism does not have to fall into a relativist trap so long as it focuses on the "*creative interplay between the two over time*" (original emphasis).

This exchange between Reed and Contu and Wilmott is indicative of and reaffirms the central metaphysical issue that separates realists and anti-realists about the nature of ontological status of reality (see also Archer, *et al.*, 1998; Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000; Carter and New, 2004; Fleetwood, 2005). But it raises another important theoretical issue for consideration which relates to the interplay between structure and agency and how that is conceptualised and understood. While proponents of critical realism such as Reed, Archer and Fleetwood identify the interplay between structure and agency as a central focus for investigation and analysis, what is less evident are the philosophical and methodological 'tools' to explain how and why individuals take actions or make the choices they do and, in a sense this may be at the heart of Contu and Wilmott's "killer question." For instance, Groff (2004:132) identifies this lack of an essentially interpretivist orientation as a weakness in Bhaskar's thesis:

... critical naturalism is not well served by Bhaskar's cursory treatment of the philosophical issues related to interpretation. Here especially, I think there is more that remains to be learned from proponents of the hermeneutic approach. At the same time I do believe that it is not enough to understand *what* is happening in a given context; we also need to know *why* it is happening" (original emphasis).

Is there a case therefore of a realist and interpretivist ontological 'coming together' On the face of it, given the ontological separation between the two paradigms about the assumed reality of structure and agency, it is doubtful that interpretivists would be likely to accommodate the idea? However, Hay (2001) contends that the ontological debates surrounding the relationship between structure agency are in some senses a distraction, and what is important are the choices and intentional action that individuals and collective entities make in relation to the manner by which they come to rationalise and interpret their dynamic relationship with their environment.

According to Hay, social actors make "strategically selective" choices but those choices are spatially and temporally specific and context dependent. Context is defined by the actor's definition of the situation but that definition is always susceptible to the actor's own interventions, and the reactions and the interventions arising from enabling and constraining causal powers of the structures in which they are enacted. Hay's describes the interplay between structure and agency as "strategic-relational" and makes the significant point that social actors may act purposively or intuitively:

"Accordingly, in monitoring the consequences (both intended and unintended) of their actions, actors may come to modify, revise or reject their chosen means to realise their intentions as, indeed, they may also come to modify, revise or reject their original intentions and the conceptions of interest upon which they were predicated" (p. 8).

Therefore, whether social actions are deemed purposive or intuitive, Hay stresses that they are contingent upon perceptions and assumptions of the nature of the strategic context or *material circumstances* (emphasis added) in which social action is being considered and action conceived. And from a not dissimilar stance, Willmott (2000) also seeks a more commensurate theoretical and ontological position – one that bridges the gap between these different paradigms.

In his paper, he focuses on the interplay, the relationship between structure, culture and human agency. Rather than considering it from a Giddensian conflation of the constructs, he argues that structure and agency can be analytically separated and therefore; “The practical theorist’s task is to examine the relative interplay of culture, structure and agency: each interpenetrates the other, but each in nonetheless ontologically (and thus methodologically) distinguishable from the other (p.83). Examining the causal interplay between analytically separated constructs structures therefore represents the basis for practical understanding and action. As Willmott (2000) contends: “Agents resist – some more than others – and the overriding question for the practical analyst is how this results in a lack of change” (p. 83).

In closing this section, although the research design for this study is framed within a post positivistic, critical realist paradigm, there are suggestions that whatever their ontological differences, critical realist and relativist paradigms might be conceived as having overlapping philosophical interconnections which centre on the *interplay* between structure and agency. Whether social reality is defined within a post positivist assumption of a pre-existing social structures or arises from relativist interpretation where particular definitions of the situations are discursively manipulated and mediated, what is perhaps more significant (and certainly matters to this study) is to understand the dynamic relationship or processual interplay between structure and agency and more importantly, how to generate knowledge about the outputs of this process - judged and measured by the nature of the effects this produces - and furthermore, to understand how those effects act in a reciprocating, reinforcing manner to produce change to the status quo.

But echoing the earlier arguments, this requires a more commensurate approach where different perspectives of organisational change and change management are combined synergistically to yield greater insight and understanding, e.g. about the social and political dynamics of being involved in some aspect of change management.

Having fleshed out a research paradigm in the form of a post positivistic epistemology and critical realist ontology, the next section discusses and debates how critical realism framed the methodological approach to research design and strategy.

3.2.4 Framing a critical realist methodology

In framing a methodological approach, critical realists adopt a *retroductive* approach to research (Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Carter and New, 2004). This involves an iterative process of inductive-deductive reasoning where model building, theory development and testing are used to identify patterns, regularities, tendencies in events and situations and thereby provide insight and understanding but not in a law-creating, predictive capacity such as more positivistic research methodologies would claim to provide.

Research begins within the domain of an empirical reality (a reverse analytical ‘flow’ to that shown in figure 3.2 above) whereby events are observed, e.g. managers and professionals are increasingly finding themselves performing in the role of change agent. It then moves to the domain of the actual, e.g. it postulates the existence of structures and mechanisms which if they existed, would explain why this event is happening, e.g. evolving change strategies that seek more innovation, more control or personal change agendas concerned less with achieving change goals and more with political games playing and/or self-aggrandisement. It then moves to the domain of the real and seeks through model and theory building to demonstrate the existence of these causal mechanisms and the extent they can explain observed events through the experiences of those involved and affected, e.g. if there is evidence of professionals being asked to become more innovative and perform in the role of change agent, what are the motives and how effective are the outcomes? Equally, if there is evidence that some are taking the distribution of change management as an opportunity to advance their careers or using it as an excuse to block change which threatens their value system, what is the impact on the overall change process, e.g. the risk this induces. In other words, causally how does it affect and lead to change in those structures and the generative mechanisms they produce?

Furthermore, in seeking to methodologically frame this study within a critical realist ontology, the aim was to align it with previous empirical research studies into organisational change and the management of change. Although these studies may not have explicitly acknowledged their philosophical focus as being one that reflects a post positivist, critical realist epistemology and ontology, closer scrutiny does suggest that

they are philosophically and methodologically oriented in this direction. For example, a number of recent studies have focused on understanding the complex dynamics of change – especially the interplay between transforming structures and the subjective, lived experiences of those who are involved in both shaping those structures and/or are consequentially affected by their actions (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991, Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007b). Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001, reflecting on the challenges that confront those who theorise about change, assert: “Change explanations are no longer pared down to the relationship between independent and dependent variables but instead are viewed as an interaction between context and action” (p.699).

But while these important studies may have made a valuable contribution in understanding how the roles of managers and professionals are being transformed by their involvement in organisational change, it was felt that they have not reached far enough yet into understanding the dynamics of that involvement, and how the consequential effects on roles are causally related to the dynamics of the overall change process and the outcomes this produces. Nor do they fully identify the issues and implications that arise for both these individuals and their employing organisations or how greater insight and understanding translates into the development of practical strategies for improving the management of change. As Pettigrew *et al.*, (2001) point out:

“The pragmatic, temporal questions are also largely unstudied and inadequately understood. Where does one intervene first and why ... What sequence of change interventions might flow from initial moves? What pace of change is appropriate in different settings to meet local and company- wide objectives/And how do change agents maintain the momentum for change over time, given the now well understood tendency for change processes to run out of energy and momentum” (p. 704).

In a number of respects, this study will seek to add awareness and insight to these questions. The philosophical thrust of the study is the interplay between structure and agency and from the empirical findings, it is hoped that a greater awareness and clearer understanding about the dynamics inherent in the process of change management distribution, might pave the way for interventions that benefit all of those involved. Moreover, in addition to this study aiming to develop further and deeper understanding

about change management and the dynamics of distribution, it can do so in a comparative way. Unlike other studies which have, in the main, relied on single case studies or multiple case studies, but in a single context setting, e.g. the public sector; this study was an opportunity for a critical comparison of change between two distinctly different and contrasting case organisations – a large public sector organisation and a small private company.

Having sketched out the epistemological and methodological stance for research inquiry assumed by the study, the next step in the research design process was to produce a coherent research strategy which reflected that chosen epistemology.

3.3 Developing a Research Strategy

Mason (1996) argues that in relation to the planning of their research strategy, researchers need to be clear about their ontological position (their perspective on the nature of social reality) and their epistemological perspective (the rules by which they seek to understand phenomena and develop knowledge). Put another way, researchers have choices about their epistemological, ontological stance and that this in turn will shape and influence their methodological approach (Guba, 1990; Gill and Johnson, 1997; Creswell, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 2005). This study is framed within a post positivist epistemology and realist ontology and within this framework, a multi-strategy, multi-method approach utilising an overarching case study method was felt to be appropriate framework for conducting the empirical research (Punch, 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2003).

3.4 The case study method

3.4.1 Defining the case study method

The case study method can provide a strategic framework for social science research (Yin, 1994, 2003). But definitions about what constitutes the case method vary. For Hartley, (1994) the case study method or approach:

“Consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organisations, or groups within organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study. The phenomenon is not isolated from its context (as in, say, a laboratory research) but is of interest precisely because it is in relation to its context” (p. 209).

For Robson (1993):

“Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (p. 52).

And for Yin (1994):

“In other words, the case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method – with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis. In this sense, the case study is not either a data collection tactic or merely a design feature alone ... but a comprehensive research strategy” (p. 13).

The case study method as a strategy for research, is therefore a way of researching the particularity and uniqueness of phenomenon ‘in context’ where the interactions, interrelationships, interdependencies between entities under study become the prime focus and this (Stake 1995). In addition, when framing a research strategy around organisational case studies, the case study method becomes an opportunity for theory building and not just a way of providing an interesting account of events which however, interesting and fascinating, is not able to yield meaning and develop theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Mason, 1996; Yin 2003). Based upon these observations, the case study method fits well with the aims of this study where the main focus is on understanding change events and situations in different contexts but in a critically analytical and comparative way.

The strengths and weaknesses of using case studies in organisational research are well documented. For example, a number of commentators emphasise the ability to access and exploit the ‘richness’ of individual experience and meaning within unique organisational situations. It is argued that valuable insights can be gained from studying an organisation ‘in context’ where the experiential reality of social processes,

experiences and meanings become the main focus for investigation. They are also seen to be an important research strategy for studying organisational processes longitudinally over time; in unusual and atypical situations; where it is necessary to explore the informal, hidden or illicit dimensions of organisational life or where cross organisational comparisons are important in understanding how concepts and processes may be differently interpreted and understood. Researchers can immerse themselves in the study while at the same time making explicit their subjectivity and bias. These strengths are often contrasted with quantitatively based experimental or survey based methods which, while they may yield interesting correlations and causal relationships between variables, are unable to examine why these situations exist or have come about (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Robson, 1993; Yin, 1994; Hartley, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Case studies, may be criticised for their apparent lack of rigour and possible bias in data collection partly induced by the need to cope with a multiplicity of intervening variables which makes comparison between variables and the drawing of any concrete inferences about causal relationships and the ability to generalise from a unique set of circumstances to other case organisation contexts problematical (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; May, 1993; Robson, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Williams and May, 1996; Hammersley, *et al.*, 2000). In addition, in building theory from case studies, the very narrowness and idiosyncratic nature of the case context can result in “modest theory” as there is an inability to generalise sufficiently to a broader or grander theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

It is probably this last point – the inability to generalise from unique situations – that is widely debated across the social science literature. And yet it is a criticism that bears closer scrutiny and challenge. For example, Stake (1995) contends that “We do not choose case study design to optimise the production of generalisations. More traditional comparative and correlational studies do this better, but valid modification of generalisation can occur in case study... the real business of case study is particularisation not generalisation” (p.8). But Stake, like Lincoln and Guba (1985) makes the important observation that while “grand generalisation” may not be possible, fresh findings from particular case studies may prompt the search for a new or modified generalisation as it elaborates on a previous problem.

Flyvbjerg (2004) argues that even a single case study holds out the prospect of some potential to generalise and therefore make a contribution to theory development – it all depends on the circumstances under which the study is occurring. And Hartley (1994) agrees, arguing that an apparent inability to generalise could just as well apply to representative studies using quantitative, statistical methods, e.g. that certainty about the typicality of a sample in a more traditional study may be questioned or that the context is changing so rapidly that any snapshot statistical generalisation becomes rapidly out of date. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify what they term “fittingness” or congruence between contexts. In other words: “If context A and context B are sufficiently congruent, then working hypotheses from the originating context *may* be applicable in the receiving context” (p. 124, original emphasis). For the researcher, and others who might seek transferability, the issue therefore becomes one of making comparative judgements about contextual variation to assess the ability to transfer knowledge and practical actions.

Like Flyvbjerg (2004) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), Hartley (1994) argues that the advantage of qualitatively researching organisational case studies is that the focus is on the processes that shape behaviour not the variables that make them typical or untypical. It is therefore from studying these processes in their unique context that the researcher can make tentative theoretical propositions that may then be generalised to some extent. Gomm, *et al.*, (2000:111) state that generalisation “is not an issue that can be dismissed as irrelevant by case study researchers” They argue that by their very uniqueness, the ability of case studies to produce theoretical inferences where what happens in one context will always happen elsewhere may not be possible. But, and in a similar manner to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) idea of transferability and fittingness, they point out that if there is evidence of “relevant heterogeneity within the population” some empirical generalisation might be possible within and across cases. However, the extent that generalisation is possible will ultimately rest on the degree of methodological rigour in areas such as sampling and data collection.

The ability to add to the current body of knowledge through a multiple case approach in which the findings from the empirical research might transcend unique contexts was an important goal for this study. For instance, the findings from previous studies have

suggested that change management was being dispersed beyond traditional boundaries and consequently, this might be affecting managerial and professional roles in certain contexts (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007b). However, these effects are not just confined to the functional or professional aspects of the role but include the emotional and psychological effects as well – an area that has seemingly received little investigation in the mainstream change literature but which now presents further opportunities for new theory development. For example, prior research by the researcher and others suggests that some middle managers and professionals may be finding it difficult to assume and effectively exercise change responsibilities when they are dispersed to them for a range of functional and personal reasons (Hartley, *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, 2001; 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a). But do these effects vary across different change contexts? Do substantive and contextual variables in the change process influence the nature and scale of these effects and if so how? To what extent does the involvement and behaviours of those managers and professionals involved in change vary according to these other variables? How far might it be possible to generalise from the comparative findings and this develop practical lessons for improvement in change management?

If these comparative findings do indeed suggest evidence that change management distribution was having effects similar to those observed and reported elsewhere, might there be reasonable grounds for assuming that these effects might be found in other organisations having similar contextual backgrounds? In other words, on the basis that the research was conducted with appropriate methodological rigour, comparisons could be made to assess the ‘fittingness’ between the case studies and other contexts leading to judgements about the transferability of knowledge, translating into to practical actions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Having briefly explored the methodological issues surrounding the use of the case method to frame a research strategy, were they appropriate and justified for this study? To answer that question, the researcher examined the extent that case studies have been used previously as part of a research strategy to investigate research organisational change.

3.4.2 The use of case studies in researching organisational change

Within the domain of this study (organisational change and its implementation) case studies have been widely used both as a basis for offering normative and pragmatic advice and guidance to practitioners, but also as a research tool for theoretical development around an understanding of complex change processes (see for example: Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Storey, 1992; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan, *et al.*, 2007b).

Case examples are prominent in the mainstream change management literature where exemplars of how change should/should not be implemented are presented – often to give formulaic guidance to those managing change. The case study might relate to an organisation undergoing radical change or it might focus on particular individuals who, as change leaders are presented in a normative manner as role models for doing or leading change (for illustrative examples of the genre see: Peters and Waterman's, (1982), *In Search of Excellence* and Kanter's 1983; *The Change Masters* and more recently Burnes, (2000) *Managing Change: A Strategic Approach to Organisational Dynamics*).

Such case accounts of change analysed across different organisational contexts do have a certain utility and value in the way they describe and portray change but such 'recipe-driven' approaches often fail to take account of the emergent, messy, complex and uncertain nature of the process and view it 'in-context' (Dawson, 2003a, 2003b). Exemplar case studies may also lack analytical depth and tend to make broad and general assumptions about complex phenomena. For example, many of the organisational change case studies described above pay considerable attention to the role of 'the manager' who is seen to play a pivotal role in the change process. However, from the perspective of this study, and as the previous chapter suggested, the concept of 'the manager' as change agent and how this role manifests itself across different contexts and at different functional and status levels is likely to be over-simplified and under-researched.

A number of academic researchers have employed a longitudinal case study research strategy to capture the unfolding social, cultural and political processes and how they

are shaped by internal and external contextual variables over time (Pettigrew, 1985; 1987, 1988; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Dawson, 2003a). Such processual studies have involved the exploration of change through an intensive analysis of a single case organisation over time usually measured in months and years (Pettigrew, 1985; Dawson, 2003b). For example in his seminal study of change in ICI, Pettigrew (1985) explored the political dynamics of change. In other cases, the research has taken the form of a comparison between similarities and differences in organisational change processes across multiple case studies, over time. For example, in the case of Pettigrew and Whipp, (1991) their study explored pairs of organisations in four UK industrial sectors, each nominally similar but each exhibiting varying levels of performance. Their study was focused on answering the question “What are the factor(s) that account for these differences?”

From this cursory examination, it becomes clear that the case study method has been a central feature in the design of a research strategy in the field of organisational change but was it appropriate for this study?

3.4.3 So is the case method approach appropriate and justified for this study?

To what extent did this study fit with these comparative case study approaches to organisational change discussed above? Philosophically and methodologically, it appears to fit well. The study was concerned with analysing and understanding the complex dynamics of change management distribution expressed through the lived experiences of those involved and affected by change and the subsequent meanings they attribute to those experiences and the attitudes and behaviours that resulted. However, unlike these studies, this study was not longitudinal in the sense that it aimed to investigate and explore the process of organisational change over extended timelines to understand how it unfolds and the impact of contextual variables. While each case did take months to research, this was attributed to logistical and practical constraints. Therefore, rather than being a longitudinal study in the manner of Pettigrew and Whipp, (1991), Pettigrew *et al.*, (1992) who were studying strategic change at nominally similar organisations to explore how internal and external factors accounted for variations in managing change and competitiveness, this cross-sectoral study had more in common

with Storey (1992) in that it was a comparison of events in two significantly different organisational contexts. The broad aim was to investigate how the process of change management was distributed to managers and professionals in two contrasting organisations and how this affected their roles recounted through their individual and collective experiences. However, the analysis was derived from data that were gathered in a particular epoch not over an extended period. This has to be considered a significant limitation to the study and this will be discussed in more detail at the end of chapter five of this study.

3.5 A multi-method research approach to research design

3.5.1 A justification for using multiple methods

This study adopted a pluralistic, multi-method research design which combined quantitative and qualitative research approaches within an overarching case method. Within this multi-method design, the aim was not to suggest a particular methodology as being more or less appropriate in a research design but to explore, in a more eclectic way, the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and the extent they complemented the stated research aims while at the same time, fitted with the pragmatic reality of the research context (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Bryman, 2006). Bryman and Bell, (2003) outline a number of advantages to be gained from a multi-method research design which blends quantitative and qualitative methods. For instance, it presents the prospect of triangulating between different findings derived from different approaches. One approach can facilitate the other, e.g. using quantitative approaches to describe and analyse the structural configurations of social life and qualitative methods to explicate the processual aspects such as the interaction with those structural features. In this study, qualitative research aided the interpretation and comparisons of the relationships that exists between structural variables such as the substance and context of change, e.g. controlling bodies and agencies, the nature of the strategic environment.

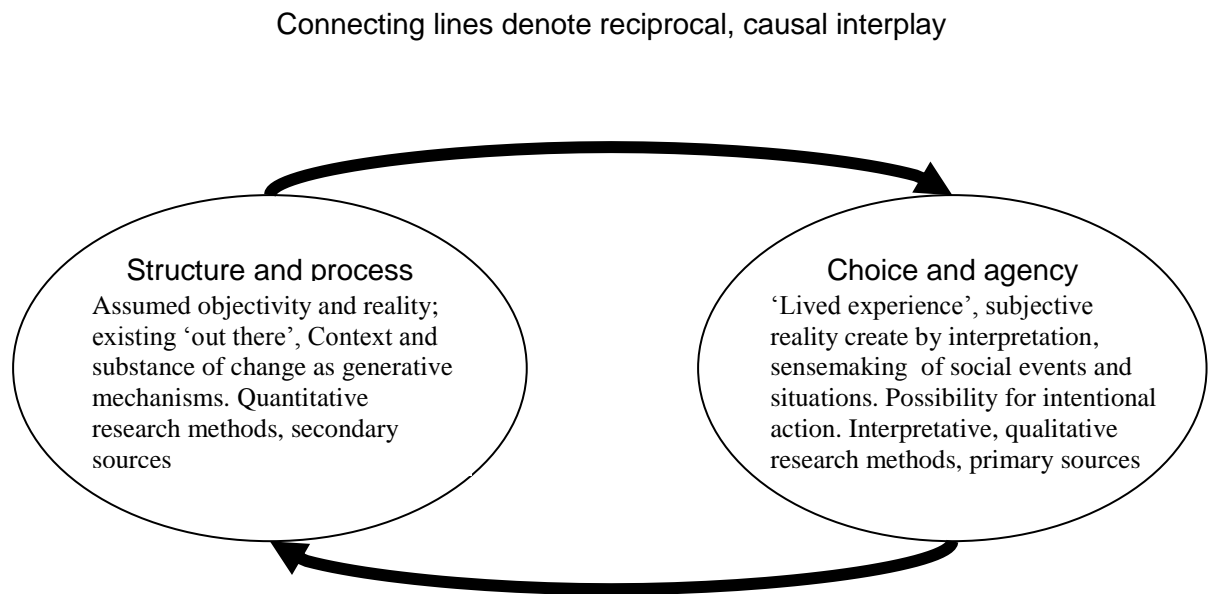
A multi-method also provides a way of making explicit the relationship between the macro and the micro variables, e.g. in this study, how individual roles might be affected by efforts to disperse change management and how the lived experiences of those

individuals shape the change process. In addition, a multi-method strategy helps to solve puzzles and paradoxes, e.g. quantitative data may identify issues but qualitative data increases understanding about why, for example, empowerment can, paradoxically lead to an undermining of management control.

However, there are criticisms of a multi-method approach to research design. It was identified earlier in this chapter that some researchers are entrenched in particular epistemologies and ontological commitments and take the view that the use of a multi-method “is not feasible or even desirable” (Bryman and Bell, 2003:480). In the case of this study for example, anti-positivist, post modernists may legitimately reject the tenets of critical realism that run counter to their “post empiricist, anti-foundational” beliefs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This view is echoed by Gill and Johnson (1997) who argue that “methodological pluralism” such as that suggested by critical realism, necessarily requires an acceptance of a realist ontology and the rejection of a nominalist assumptions about social reality i.e. assumptions about social reality that are relativist, inter-subjective and constructivist in nature and where there is a reification of constructs such as human agency. Researchers may stand accused of imposing their version of social reality on their subjects which places the researcher in a more privileged position relative to their subjects. These arguments were evident in the discussion of the debate between Reed (2005a and 2005b) and Contu and Willmott (2005) about the epistemological status of critical realism. However, as Hay (2001) suggested there may be room to ameliorate differences in ontological status to permit an investigation into the interplay between structure and agency.

These are all valid philosophical criticisms to make, but within the philosophical, theoretical and methodological aims of this study a multi-method research design was felt to be the most valid and appropriate basis on which to develop a research strategy approach. Figure 3.3 denotes how quantitative approaches were utilised to provide the descriptive, ‘factual’ accounts of the internal, external context and substance of the change processes in question – the source of generative mechanisms or causal powers which shape events.

Figure 3-3 Researching the interplay between structure and agency



This assumed objective, pre-existing reality of the two case contexts therefore became the basis for identifying and researching the effects of change management distribution, as a primary generative mechanism influencing the roles of key actors operating in a complex and ambiguous change situation, and how this was causally related to the nature, form and progression of the change processes under scrutiny. But within these structural configurations, qualitative approaches then became the means for obtaining data about these effects - a way of eliciting interpretive accounts of 'lived experience, e.g. how individuals made sense of their experiences and responded to the mechanisms by which change management was being distributed to them from within these defined structural configurations. The connecting lines in Figure 3.3. depict and suggest an iterative, inductive-deductive (retroductive) research process where one interpretation leads to or brings about a new or fresh reinterpretation of social reality and the context that frames it. For instance in this study, how efforts to distribute change management are received by those involved and how the effects or reactions might lead to a reinterpretation of the mechanism and processes by which change management is being dispersed, e.g. systems of management control are reviewed.

This multi-method blending of approaches therefore not only reflected the epistemological and ontological 'middle-way' suggested by a objective/subjective

duality of critical realism, but at the same time, was felt to offer a more pragmatic outlook in the sense that the choice and combination of approaches took account of the purposes, context and practicalities of the study (Punch, 1998; Johnson and Duberly, 2000; Bryman and Bell, 2003).

3.5.2 A qualitative research approach

One consideration in framing a multi-method research design strategy was what weighting to accord the different approaches (Punch, 1998)? In line with the main aims of the study and the research paradigm in which it was framed, quantitative approaches were used to establish the context and substance of the change processes under scrutiny which in effect could be said to comprise the ‘objective reality’ for those involved. But the aims and focus of the study is the lived experience and therefore primacy was given to the use of interpretative, qualitative approaches to elicit personal accounts from those individuals involved in change management – however that occurs. With the primacy accorded to qualitative approaches in this study, this section will explore in more depth what comprises the qualitative approach and why it is significant for this study.

In mapping out their framework for naturalistic inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) like other commentators have suggested that qualitative research is an appropriate and relevant way to research an increasingly pluralistic social world (Flick, 2002). However, at the same time it is recognised that there is no single or universal model or definitive version of what constitutes qualitative research – one which transcends all social science disciplines or contexts (Mason, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). On the contrary, what has evolved is a complex network of different approaches and multiple perspectives that reflect the philosophical traditions and disciplines from which they are derived and which take advantage of multiple methods of enquiry and data collection (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Mason, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The message therefore seems to be that for the researcher operating in what might be described as the qualitative ‘genre’ (Marshall and Rossman, 1999) there is no neat, prescriptive set of principles to frame their approach to qualitative research and as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert: “Qualitative research is inherently multi-method in

focus” (p. 5). In other words, researcher must “identify their own philosophies of research, and to work out how they might in practice conduct research which is consistent with these” (Mason, 1996:4).

So how might we understand what is meant by qualitative research? For Miles and Huberman (1994), the aim of qualitative research is to capture data from the interpretations and perceptions of local actors. Once captured data are analysed by reading through data to isolate certain themes that can be reviewed with informants but should be maintained in their original form throughout the study. The main aim of the analysis is to explicate how people in particular settings come to understand and account for their actions, and otherwise manage their day to day situations. But it is accepted that many interpretations of the data are possible and some may be more compelling for theoretical reasons or on the grounds of internal consistency. They conclude by emphasising the role of the researcher is essentially the main measurement device in any qualitative study.

Mason, (1996) is less specific in defining the characteristics of qualitative research than Creswell (1998) and Miles and Huberman (1994) but she does map out what she sees as the expectations or standards that qualitative research should adhere to: It should be systematic and rigorous not ad-hoc and casual; that it should be framed in a clear and consistent research strategy but be flexible and adaptable; that the researcher is an integral part of the research process and has to acknowledge that role; that an objective, neutral, unbiased position is not possible; that the assumptions, worldview that the researcher holds are influential in the interpretative process; that qualitative research should have some generalisability and wider applicability and that qualitative research raises ethical and political concerns which have to be considered.

In sum, methodologically, this study has adopted what it sees as a multi-method research design within an overarching case method. Reflecting the core tenets of a post positivist, critical realist epistemology and ontology, the study did not seek a correspondence theory of universal truth or fact redolent of positivism. Nor did it wish to be caught up in a subjectivist loop that a post modernist, relativist discourse was felt to represent and which the researcher believed constrained the study’s capacity to provide an understanding that could form the basis for practical action. Instead, the

choice was for a middle way between these two positions – one that provided a greater flexibility and eclecticism but at the same time, met the primary aim which was understanding and insight leading to practical action.

In this study, it was felt this could be best achieved by blending both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. However, in keeping with the focus on understanding the lived experiences of those whose role now involves them in some capacity in the management of change, primacy in weighting was towards the use of a qualitative approach to elicit individual and collective perceptions, interpretations of change management distribution in contrasting change scenarios and what they made sense of and defined as ‘real’ for them. But all the time conscious that researching such interpretations have to be seen within the limitations and biases that inevitably imposed by the nature of the study and the researcher’s own role in the designing the study in the first place.

Having explained the epistemological, ontological and methodological justifications for the research design and strategy, the next step was to translate the research design strategy into an ‘infrastructure of methods’ that could be deployed for data gathering and analysis leading to empirical findings for critical comparison between case studies. The infrastructure of research methods and the justification for their use will be detailed in the next chapter, but before that, to orientate the reader for the data collection and analysis, it was felt appropriate that this chapter closed with a brief description of the nature and context of the two case study organisations under investigation and critical analysis. The description that follows is not intended to provide a detailed, exhaustive analysis of the sites; that detail will emerge from the analysis of the findings in chapter five. Instead the description is aimed at orientating the reader as it outlines the organisational context and describes the substance of the change processes being experienced in both organisations.

3.6 The case study contexts

This introductory chapter gave a brief overview of the case contexts. Here both cases study sites are described in more depth so that the reader has an appreciation of the contextual similarities and differences and the forces driving change. Both cases have been anonymised to preserve confidentiality.

3.6.1 Case Study 1 – A Primary Care Trust (PCT) in the NHS

This Primary Care Trust (PCT) was formed in April 2002 as part of the new restructured NHS. As a PCT, it became a free standing, statutory body responsible and accountable for improving and delivering health care to the local population of 250,000 residents in the North West of England. The PCT region covers an area of 224 square miles and includes a mix of urban and rural populations. The PCT employs 1225 staff (as at May 2004). They are based in practices and clinics across the region. The main administrative headquarters is centrally located in the region. The published aims of the PCT are to: improve the health of the population and address health inequalities while providing community health services and developing and redesigning services across the primary and acute sectors.

The main source of funding for the PCT is through an income allocation from the Department of Health. The budget allocation for 03/04 was £225 million (Draft Annual Accounts, 2003/04). On most performance measures, the PCT is performing well and its NHS 'Star rating' shifted from one star in 02/03 to 2 stars for 03/04.

The PCT has a complex management structure (see Appendix 1). The core of the structure is centred on three Executive bodies:

PCT Main Board – Made up of PCT Executive Directors and co-opted Non-Executive directors. Its role is to establish and oversee the PCT's strategic agenda and to ensure public accountability, probity and good governance. Its decision-making processes take full account of public opinion and ensure compliance with governance frameworks.

Professional and Executive Committee (PEC) - The PEC is an internal multi-disciplinary Board comprising a mix of GPs, Allied Health Professionals and Senior managers from the PCT executive including the Chief Executive and Director of Finance. It serves as the main decision making body and driver for change. It acts as the forum for clinicians to agree and prioritise the work of the PCT and is accountable to the Main Board.

Management Team – Collectively, the management team comprises six separate teams or “Directorates” covering areas such as: service delivery and commissioning, clinical services, corporate development, human resources and learning and finance and information management. etc. Each team is led by a Director who is accountable to the Chief Executive for delivering the objectives of the PCT. In addition to making its recommendations to the Main Board and the PEC, the management team acts as a resource by providing specialist knowledge and skills to inform strategic decision-making.

Overseeing the strategy and direction of the PCT is the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) with a reporting and accountability pathway to the Department of Health at a national level. The formal strategic and operational management of the PCT is conducted largely through a complex web of meetings, subcommittees, cross-functional project teams and implementation teams involving a large number of standing and co-opted managers and clinical professionals from within and beyond the PCT. In terms of strategic leadership, the PCT is led by a cohesive and experienced “Triumvirate” consisting of: the Chief Executive, an experienced NHS manager; the Chair of the Main Board (who holds a professorial Chair at a local University) and the Chair of the PEC who is an experienced senior GP. The PCT has made strenuous efforts to communicate and involve staff in the day to day running of the organisation. For example, the 2003/04 Annual Report posted on the PCT’s website provides extensive evidence of action taken in promoting this ethos of communication, involvement and empowerment across staff and beyond to the patients and local community and how successful this has been.

During the period of the empirical research in 2004, the PCT, like other PCTs, was confronted by a daunting change agenda. Not only was it still implementing and

embedding the internal structural and cultural change since its inception in 2002, the environment in which it operated was in a state of considerable upheaval as nationally and locally, The NHS sought to introduce major planned changes as part of the NHS Plan. Changes that the PCT was required to implement included: Agenda for Change [a form of job evaluation affecting clinical grades]; the introduction of a new GP contract and related to this new contract, out-of-hours GP care provision; a series of initiatives under the National Service Framework (NSF) designed to improve standards and care in key medical areas such as cancer care, diabetes and maternity. These are just a few examples of the changes the PCT had to cope with during this period. With such a significant change agenda there was considerable pressure to formally devolve change management responsibility to particular individuals and collectives.

In summary, this PCT has had considerable success since its inception in 2002. It had responded positively to the challenges of the NHS Plan. But equally, it has had, and still has, to cope with patterns of organisational change that were inducing instability, complexity and ambiguity on a massive and in some cases, unprecedented scale. A lack of resources, dated technologies, rapid and constantly shifting of goals and performance targets emanating primarily from National and Regional NHS management was leading to initiative fatigue and work overload in some areas (Staff Survey 2003).

On a more positive note, the impression gained is of a highly motivated and hard working organisation led by a strong and committed management team that, despite its efforts, is under unrelenting pressure to achieve goals and meet targets that are challenging in the extreme. The attendant risk is that at some point in the future this may lead to a marked deterioration in performance, motivation and quality of life.

3.6.2 Case Study 2 – A Research and Technology (R&T) company

The second organisation in which primary research was conducted describes itself as a Research and Technology Centre and is located in the UK East Midlands. The organisation was founded in 1919 to provide research and technological support primarily to the footwear industry as the industry sought to move from a craft based industry to a modern factory based system.

In its literature, the company describes itself as “a not-for-profit, distributing membership based organisation.” Footwear and leather goods manufacturers paid an annual subscription and in return benefited from a comprehensive service that includes access to leading edge research, regular publications, advice and testing facilities. At the time of the research (May 2006), the company had 1,600 members in 70 countries.

In terms of its internal organisation, the company employs c.180 staff located in ten discrete business centres; each covering the main business and support services offered to members and customers (see Appendix 2). The Executive team of four Executive Directors is supported by Assistant Directors and Business Area Heads who together form a cohesive management team. Over the last 15 years the company has produced a surplus of 5% on revenue which has grown from £3.5m in 1990 to £7.7m in 2004 with a surplus for 2004 of £170K for reinvestment. This annual surplus has been reinvested into new buildings and laboratory facilities, new capital equipment for testing and into developing and rewarding the staff. The company regards one of its main strengths the fact that no individual member or customer accounts for more than 2% of its revenue.

In respect of the changes confronting the company, up until the late 1980s /early 1990s the company was heavily reliant upon research grants from UK Government, the European Union (EU) and income from membership subscriptions to support its core operations. However, a rapid decline in the footwear and leather goods industries in the face of lower-cost manufacturing operations, predominantly located in the Far East, had placed the future of the organisation in jeopardy. The organisation reacted swiftly to this global threat and the management team, aided by external business advisers, conducted a major strategic reorientation of the company and its operations. At the heart of its strategy was the recognition and acknowledgement that whilst the footwear manufacturing industry may have ‘gone global’, manufacturers would still require the service of a customer focused and responsive research organisation wherever they were located in the world.

Strategically, the company has sought to diversify out of its traditional area of operations and expertise and to explore new opportunities beyond the footwear and leather good industry. These new opportunities are still linked closely to the scientific

and technological expertise within the organisation but now expanded to serve new industrial sectors such as furniture, floor coverings, safety equipment and clothing, homewear and fabric care. Building from its solid base in the footwear industry, the company has become the leading testing and research centre in Europe. Non-footwear activities now account for 30% of the company's revenue and are still expanding to replace an increasingly maturing footwear testing sector.

Throughout its expansion into these new business areas, the company has displayed a strong, almost uncanny sense of commercial opportunism – willing to explore and develop new areas by building on expertise already gained in another. To accommodate this growth in new and traditional business areas, the company (in 2006) was in the final stages of an extended relocation (commenced in 1997) to a modern and technologically sophisticated site in which some £3million has already been invested. In tune with its growing reputation for innovation and business entrepreneurship, the old site will remain in ownership and is being developed as a small business innovation park. The company has also invested significant resources in technical, commercial and management development in recent years. For instance, within the personnel and training strategy there is shared emphasis on developing flexibility and commercial awareness amongst key personnel and many of the human resource policies and practices are geared to deliver this goal.

In comparison with the PCT therefore, the process of change has been a more gradual, measured and controlled process and very much on the company's terms. Change has seen to be generally positive in that company growth and profitability benefits all employees. But there was one change to its circumstances which was a cause of great concern and seen by many as a significant challenge for the company in the near future. This was the impending retirement of the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive. Both were long-serving employees of the company (The Chief Executive has been with the company for 37 years). Both individuals formed the basis of a strong and highly respected duo which has led the company through the changes described above. The Chief executive is highly regarded for his strategic vision and planning and the Assistant Chief Executive for his technical expertise and commercial acumen. At the time of the research in 2006, measures were being formulated to identify their successors. These were likely to be from within the company.

To conclude, some 20 years ago this organisation faced massive changes in its environment. A failure to react to these changes would have undoubtedly seen the demise of the company. Fortunately, under the leadership of a strong and experienced senior management team, the company has utilised its inherent strengths to respond with significant structural and cultural shifts. These have resulted in a successful transition and the prospect of steady growth in the future.

Having now explained the research design and research strategy, the next chapter describes and justifies the research methods that were deployed for data collection and analysis. It explains the sampling strategy – describes and justifies the choice of sample and its relevance to the study. It then explains how the data were collected and analysed. It closes with a discussion of the methodological, ethical and practical issues and limitations that emerged as the study evolved.

Chapter 4

Research methods for data collection and analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the ‘infrastructure’ of research methods that were selected for this study. It justifies the choice of method before explaining the sampling logic - how and why the sample was selected. It then explains how data were collected using the blend of methods and how the data were then analysed using a grounded theory approach. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the issues and limitations that arose during data collection and analysis and how these were taken into consideration and where applicable, were managed by the researcher to ensure that subsequent findings were credible, valid and reliable.

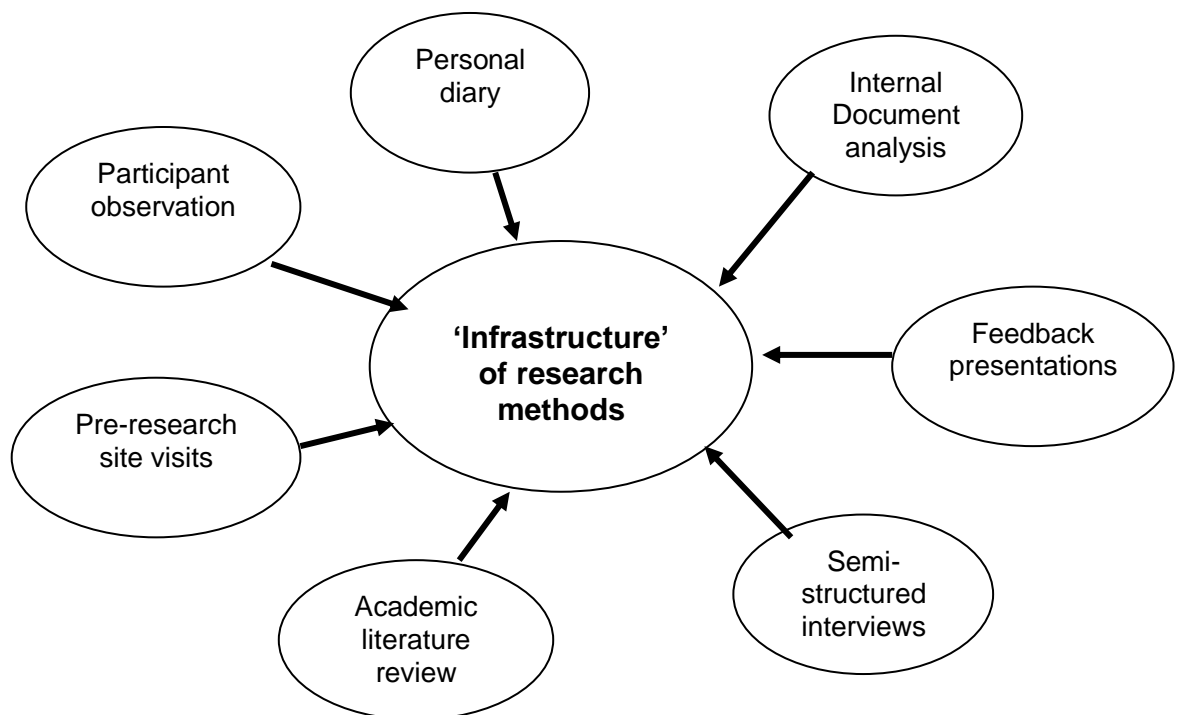
4.2 An infrastructure of research methods

The nature and composition (the blend) of research methods depends upon the epistemological and ontological stance that is taken by the researcher(s) (Mason, 1996). In chapter three, it was explained that this study was epistemologically embedded in a post positivist, critical realist paradigm and that the research design would therefore adopt a multi-method blend of quantitative and qualitative research approaches which it felt reflected the central tenets of post positivism and critical realism (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Williams and May, 1996; Johnson and Duberley, 2000; Bryman and Bell, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In this study, the multi-method approach was framed in an ‘infrastructure of research methods’ (see Figure 4.1). The decision to use a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods was explained and justified in chapter three. Quantitatively oriented data describing and defining the context and substance of the change process were obtained from mainly secondary sources, e.g. descriptive data relating to organisational

structures, finances, performance etc. But primacy in the choice of methods within this infrastructure was weighted towards those associated with a qualitative research approach – in this study, semi-structured interview transcripts and participant observation. Not only does this reflect the epistemology of critical realism framed in understanding and theory building from different interpretations of social reality, it was also consistent with many features of the research approaches used in previous cases studies of organisational change (see for example: Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et-al.*, 1992; Storey, 1992). In addition, as well as the choice of research methods reflecting a critical realist epistemology, it was also influenced by a certain reflexivity on the part of the researcher based on his knowledge and experiences of prior research studies and investigations into organisational change processes in which he was involved with colleagues.

Figure 4-1 An infrastructure of research methods



However, in configuring the research strategy within such an iterative process of inductive-deductive reasoning, the researcher may stand accused of pre-structuring his choice of research methods and how they will be used in data collection and analysis. Within some research paradigms such as those that inform ethnography and

phenomenology, this pre-configuring, pre-structuring of methods might be considered too constraining when the choice and use of methods is seen to be premised on certain philosophical and methodological judgements and assumptions, e.g. privileging the researcher's reality over that of the research subjects (May, 1993; Mason, 1996; Gill and Johnson, 1997).

But at the same time a pre-structuring of methods may offer a number of advantages. For example, it reduces the time taken for analysis as, in the case of interview responses to a semi-structured interview schedule, the researcher is coding thematically from pre-defined questions, rather than raw and unstructured field notes (Flick, 2002). According to Miles and Huberman, (1994:84) pre-structuring "takes on particular importance in multiple case studies where comparability across cases is critical for warranted conclusions." It ensures that there is a degree of congruency in the methods employed to enable valid comparisons between the two case organisations. A multi-method approach, also facilitates triangulation across a range of data collection methods, to compare the findings from different methods as a form of cross-checking mechanism to test the preliminary findings for consistency and variation and thus to provide new insights and the possibility of new areas for research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Within the over-arching infrastructure of methods, each data collection method will now be discussed with a view to explaining the rationale and justification for their employment in this study.

4.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviewing – especially in a semi-structured format – is widely used in qualitative research and tends to take the form of "encounters between a researcher and a respondent" (May, 1993) or as Mason (1996) citing Burgess calls them "conversations with a purpose" and Holstein and Gubrium (1997) describe them as "special forms of conversation." There were a number of reasons for selecting semi-structured interviews as a key research method in this study. The first relates to the critical realist positioning of this study with a focus on the lived experiences of managers and professionals whose roles were affected by change management distribution. This weighted the research towards an essentially sense-making, interpretative orientation where the attitudes, views understandings and experiences of individuals were to be viewed as meaningful

properties of the social reality that the research questions aimed to explore (May 1993; Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). Qualitative interviews are viewed as the means to explore these properties through talking and listening to individuals in a way that encourages them to share those experiences. But ontologically, it reflects a critical realist perspective as they are being recounted from within the context and situation in which they are being experienced – “to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand how and why he or she comes to have that particular perspective” (King, 1994:14). Put another way, they seek to provide social explanations and provide “depth and roundness to the data” (Mason, 1996).

Methodologically, the semi-structured interview is differentiated from other types of interview and methods of data collection where the quest is for tight structure, standardisation and the elimination of bias to aid formulaic and quantifiable comparisons between data. Instead, as the qualitative researcher seeks to understand how individuals give meaning to their unique social experiences through a dynamic, evolving interactive process of interviewing, any straightforward comparison or statistical representation of the data becomes difficult if not impossible to achieve. The search for meaning therefore cannot be premised a simple summing of instances that events were recounted from different participants. This does not eliminate the possibility of making valid comparisons but they are inductively derived from the data at a more conceptual, thematic level by a careful and considered process of analytical iteration (Mason, 1996). The analytical process that was employed to analysis the interview data in this study will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Despite their widespread use in qualitative research interviewing (and the focus here is on semi-structured interviewing in particular) there are issues and problems to contend with. At a practical level, there are a large number of issues connected with the planning, preparation and the conduct of the interview, e.g. what questions to ask, in what style, how to get the right structure and flow in the question, how much depth and breadth to cover; sequencing of questions etc. There is also the issue of the researcher feeling overwhelmed when analysing the vast amounts of rich data (King, 1994). As Mason (1996) points “taken together, these represent a formidable task for which a high degree of intellectual and social skill is required” (p. 45)

Issues of reliability and validity are significant considerations in the use of qualitatively based interviewing. Apart from the more practical concerns about the quality of recordings and accuracy of transcripts and an inability to capture non-verbal data (Perakyla, 1997), by their very nature, semi-structured interviews are subjective and open to interviewer bias – both during the interview and during analysis as the interviewer’s presuppositions, prejudices and prior expectations inevitably influence the process, e.g. the interpretation of meaning during coding (Mishler, 1986). Reliability is improved by recognising that these are unavoidable aspects of the process and making conscious methodological efforts to minimise their effect. In terms of validity, the researcher must ensure that the interview focus (through the questions presented) meets the aims of the research and that the interpretations placed on the data are seen to be valid in the context of the study, e.g. through the use of multiple feedback mechanisms (Mishler, 1986; King, 1994). In addition, Perakyla (1997) suggests that a central issue of validity in interview data is the influence of institutional context “what grounds does the researcher have for claiming that the talk he or she is focusing on is in anyway ‘connected to’ some institutional framework?” (p. 212). In this study this was an important consideration as the researcher was always sensitive to the influence of social and cultural influences. Put simply: “Was this person telling me what they wanted me to hear according to some cultural norm of professional code or is it what they really believed?” These and other factors were significant considerations in the design, implementation and analysis of the interviews that conducted in this study.

4.2.2 Participant observation

Participant observation has a long history in qualitative research with its epistemological roots in anthropology and ethnography and its research antecedents in the Chicago School (May, 1993). The essential philosophical characteristic of participant observation is that social lives are constantly being constructed and reconstructed and the only way to understand the process of social change and evolution is for the researcher to immerse themselves in the social context (pragmatism) but in way that does not disturb the social context (naturalism); “Participant observation is about engaging in a social scene, experiencing it and seeking to understand and explain it” (May 1993:131).

The main criticisms levelled and participant observation relate to the inevitability of contamination – that naturalism is an ideal that can never be realised as observations will always be subjective and open to observer interpretation. In other words, observers may ignore or subvert certain events which may not meet with or confirm their preconceptions or expectations. The very issue of uniqueness of context being observed also challenges the external validity and generalisability of observations (May, 1993).

In this study, participant observation was not used in the wider ethnographic sense but was more in keeping with the notion of the “*participant as observer*” who makes no secret of their intention to observe events (May 1993; Waddington, 1994).

Opportunities to observe some aspects of the social and cultural dynamics of both case organisations occurred as the researcher made regular visits over a period of c. six months to negotiate access, familiarisation with core activities, during the interviewing process, attended a range of formal and informal meetings with managers and professionals and gave feedback presentations to managers and staff. Data were gathered in the form of contemporaneous notes recorded and then transferred into a personal diary for later analysis.

Participant observation does raise a number of issues which impinge on this study. For example, as an infrequent visitor, the researcher was always faced with the issue that the scope and extent of the observation process was partial and incomplete. Similarly, as a relative ‘stranger’ to the organisation, he could never hope to fully comprehend the complexities of events he was observing and this relative unfamiliarity with the context meant he was always in danger of misunderstanding or misinterpreting what he observed.

4.2.3 Documentary records

Forster (1994) argues that the varied documentary records that reside in organisations:

“constitute a rich source of insights into employee and group interpretations of organisational life, because they are one of the principal by-products of the

interactions and communications of individuals and groups, at all levels in organisations” (p.148).

Following a similar line, Marshall and Rossman (1999) assert that: “the review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (p. 116).

Typically, the data reviewed would be in the form of documents such as: PR material, strategic documents, HR policies on rules and procedures, communication briefs, financial reports and indeed, these were the type of documents obtained and analysed in this study. Generally speaking, the collection of documentary data is relatively unproblematical as it already available and usually accessible to researchers but usually under conditions of confidentiality. However, in collecting documentary data, the researcher must have a clear purpose in mind – one that reflects the epistemological and ontological stance adopted by the researcher and this in turn is reflected in the ‘reading’ and analysis of the documents (Mason; 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

As sources of research data, documents both present a ‘factual’, objective picture of the case context and assist researchers to explore historical processes and developments over time and how different participants interpret those processes (May, 1993; Forster, 1994). But they also serve as cultural artefacts to inform the researcher about shifting attitudes and values over time, e.g. the image that the organisation may be striving to cultivate. Company documents are a useful source of triangulation with other data sources and serve as a way of revealing biases or corroborating claims. For example, in this study interview respondents in the PCT highlighted the strength of the senior management team and the effectiveness of communications processes and overall morale in the organisation. Such claims were borne out with reference to documentary evidence from a national NHS staff survey which revealed that the PCT was in the upper 20% of organisations surveyed. In the Research and Technology company independent feedback from an Investors in People survey confirmed the organisation’s claims about the effectiveness of communication processes and their investment in staff development suggested by the findings. However, company documentation by its nature is written for a purpose and for an audience (internal or external) and in that sense has to be treated as subjective and rhetorical devices which may be inaccurate or even

manipulated to serve certain goals or agenda (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997) As Forster (1994) remarks: “They should never be taken at face-value” (p.149) and Marshall and Rossman: “That they must viewed with scepticism” (p. 117).

From within the critical realist research paradigm framing this research design, documentary records were considered to be an important source of quantitative data in the sense that they were used as way of establishing the objective reality of context and substance within which change management distribution took place, e.g. structural hierarchies and bureaucracies, strategic and operational plans, financial and budgetary systems, formal descriptions and prescriptions of changes required and so on which represented generative mechanisms that gave rise to events and how they were construed by participants.

But while this documentary evidence was considered ‘objective’ in the sense that it exists as critical realists assert, ‘out there’ as factual evidence, understanding about what it represented can only come about when the documentary evidence is interpreted and reinterpreted by the social actors involved – including reflexive interpretations by the researcher. The nature and composition of those social actors was therefore an important consideration for this study and this added significance to the sampling choice.

4.3 Sample choice and selection

The focus of this study is on the roles of managers and non-manager professionals who are involved in change management distribution and how their roles are being hybridised by that involvement with effects and consequences for them and the organisational change process. It was therefore important for this study that the sample, while not representative in a statistical sense, was nevertheless robust in the sense that those participating in the research could ‘speak’ with a depth of feeling and authority about what they had and were experiencing and in their view why events and situations were as they were.

4.3.1 The sampling logic

To avoid the sample under investigation being judged as ad-hoc, it was vital that the sample strategy and selection was supported by a sustainable logic (Mason, 1996) The sampling logic employed in this study was one that was *non-probabilistic*, i.e. it was not premised on a probability through random selection leading to generalisation from the findings, typical of a positivistic logic and found in a quantitative approach that aimed to use evidence in a predictive manner (Henry, 1990; Padgett, 1998; Bryman and Bell 2003). In this multi-method study, seeking a representative sample from which to derive statistical and causal relationships leading to universal generalisations was not viewed as a theoretical or practical goal. Apart from the practical issues of constructing a representative sample (size, cost, time etc) the analytical logic was significantly different. For example, the patterns that may emerge from a statistical sample may be representative of what is occurring in the general population but they tell us little about the social processes that underpin such findings and in any case how can we be sure that the variables being measured are “sufficiently processual or conceptually rich” for the study in question (Mason, 1996)?

However, whilst expedient within the context of this research study, the choice of a non-probability sampling approach is not without its drawbacks and this presented a dilemma for the researcher. For some, its expedient and opportunistic nature does lay it open to accusations of bias and subjectivity in sample selection (Padgett, 1998). This in turn, may place the external validity and credibility of the findings at risk. But at the same time for many studies a non-probabilistic approach to sampling is the only practical and realistic way to obtain data (Henry, 1990). This was felt to be the case in this study and therefore the challenge facing the researcher was to develop a sampling strategy that would mitigate the unavoidable and inevitable effects of subjectivity and bias that would arise in a study of this nature, e.g. that the choice of sample constituency was always dependent upon a process of negotiation with senior managers.

Thus while the possibility of universal generalisation was not considered as being an appropriate logic base for this study, nevertheless, the sample strategy and selection of individuals to be sampled, needed to ensure as far as possible that they were considered sufficiently robust “to make key comparisons and to test and develop theoretical

propositions” (Mason, 1996:93). While not seeking to make universal generalisations that might be viewed as statistically significant in some way based on a random probability, some allusion to the possibility of linking the findings from the study that was based on a multiple case study, to wider scenarios was an important aim of the study.

To improve this possibility, it was therefore decided that a cross-case comparison between nominally similar individuals (in terms of their managerial and/or professional roles) operating in what were seen to be significantly different contextual settings (measured across a number of variables size, industry type) was the most appropriate way forward as it would provide the opportunities to apply a “replication logic” (Yin, 1994) with the possibility of comparing detectable similarities and differences. As already discussed in chapter three, the hope was that this would open up the possibility that some degree of generalisation leading to the development of transferable theory and practical action might be forthcoming. For instance, similarities in experiences of managers and professionals within and between case study contexts might allow reasonable inferences to be drawn about emergent issues and how to deal with them, e.g. the need for change skills development for managers and professionals emerging as a common theme.

4.3.2 The sampling strategy

The sampling strategy adopted in this study was premised on achieving a meaningful comparison between categories. However, such a comparison was liable to be constrained in the sense that each unit in the sample cannot be assumed to be exactly comparable in terms of their individual characteristics. So for example, while efforts were made to compare the effects of change management distribution on managers and professionals in two contrasting case studies who might share similarities and differences in the way they perceived and enacted their roles, they were at the same time differentiated by other variables (age, experience, gender, length of tenure etc). This placed further limits to the study and adds to the implausibility of making any direct, causal, comparisons leading to wider, universal generalisation across different organisational contexts. But returning to an earlier point, it did not necessarily preclude

the possibility of deriving some form of meaningful explanation and developing certain theoretical propositions, premised on individual accounts of lived experiences about how change management distribution might be shaping and influencing the roles of managers and professionals in these two contrasting contexts. Allowing for these variables therefore, it might be possible to make some sensible inferences which in turn might provide a certain levels of insight and practical ideas for action leading to ideas for improvement - but always conscious of the limited of applicability in wider contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995).

But while the sampling strategy was driven by a logic that argued the sample must be meaningful to the study in question and enable theoretical propositions to be developed, there were practical considerations too. Convenience sampling is an approach whereby cases are selected on the grounds of their being readily available to the researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe convenience sampling as a way of the researcher to “saving time, money and effort” and Bryman and Bell (2003) highlight the availability and the opportunistic nature of convenience sampling as important but also adding that for most researchers, issues of access, time, money etc also feature as important considerations and convenience must not be at the expense of rigour, credibility and the ability to derive some form of generalisability beyond individual case contexts (Henry, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Padgett; 1998).

4.3.3 Sample choice

There were two distinct choices to make in respect of the sample for data collection.

Selecting the case study sites

As discussed previously, it was felt that a measure of credibility and robustness could be achieved through a multiple case study approach involving a cross case comparison between sites to detect emergent patterns of similarity and difference in agent dispersal and its impact on managerial and professional roles (Yin, 1994, Miles and Huberman, 1994). The choice of case study sites was driven partly by the need to select sites that were as divergent as possible but also by more practical concerns and issues such as ease of access, logistical concerns such as time, travel, costs etc. A descriptive account

of the two case study organisations was provided at the end of chapter three to orientate the reader.

In the case of the PCT, the choice of site was based in part on the researcher's desire to extend his previous experience of researching change management in the NHS and in private sector organisations where he had already researched and published extensively; both independently and collectively with other academic colleagues. This prior research, had uncovered some important issues – especially in relation to managers and professionals who were managing change and this led him to develop certain propositions about how their roles were being shaped or hybridised by these new responsibilities but more significantly how, as individuals, they were affected both professionally and personally (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; 2002a; 2002b).

An opportunity to extend the research into change management arose through an association with larger NHS project team who in 2003 and 2004, were exploring the impact of change on managerial roles in the NHS. After negotiations with the project team (some of whom were his colleagues) it was agreed that there were mutual synergies and benefits to be obtained by linking his doctoral research aims to those of the main project. It was therefore agreed that the researcher would have access to one of the sites as a 'sub-contracted' field researcher to gather data for both the main project and his own research study but both to be viewed as independent exercises. This gave him ready access to a diverse population of managers and professionals in a large public sector institution which was consistent with the overall aims of his study.

However, access to the PCT case study site was only possible if the researcher met the strict governance requirements contained in NHS policies for conducting medical or social scientific research at NHS sites. The researcher was therefore required to submit a detailed research proposal to the Local Research Ethics Committee (LREC) for approval at the site. This was done and approval was granted in late 2003 for the research to proceed, but within the documented ethical policies and procedures set out in NHS guidelines supplied to him. These were adhered to throughout the data gathering and analysis.

The second site – the Research and Technology (R&T) company was selected in part because it fitted the aims of the study which was a cross-sectoral comparison of agency dispersal and provided a suitable contextual contrast with the PCT across a number of measures (size, industry sector, history etc) but also opportunistically through previous associations with the site. The researcher had worked on a consultancy assignment at the site some ten years previously and approached the Chief Executive for permission to access the site in early 2006. It was agreed that in return for permission to research at the site, meaningful feedback about change processes would be given to the organisation.

Selecting the respondents

The population to be sampled was informed by the evidence emerging from prior research in which the researcher was involved and the critical analysis of extant literature reported in chapter two. This was suggesting a shift away from traditional top-down models of change management distribution and towards more empowering, dispersalist models with wider implications for managerial and, increasingly for professional roles (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan 2003a).

The sample chosen at each site was a mixture of managers and professionals and to bolster credibility, efforts were made to ensure that the sample choice was a cross-cutting, diagonal slice through the different hierarchical levels and across different functional areas at each of the case study sites. But echoing earlier points, this desire for a cross-cutting sample such as this was not to yield some form of representativeness, but to add richness and depth to the data by eliciting views from different roles and levels in the respective organisations.

Following negotiations to obtain access at both sites, the researcher met with the senior managers to explain the background rationale, the aims of the study and the proposed data collection methods. He stressed his desire for diversity in the sample and following his explanation and acceptance by senior managers, the process of selection was driven via explanatory communications from senior management to an available population of

managers and professionals from whom a sample might be drawn, explaining the purpose of the study and seeking volunteer participants.

In terms of sample size, decisions about numbers was driven in part by attaining a sample that would yield meaningful data, but also by pragmatic considerations such as time, cost, effort, logistics related to both the process of interviewing (the PCT site was geographically some distance away for the researcher's base) and the likely number of participants who would eventually agree to be interviewed balanced against the organisation's desire to minimise disruption to its routines. As Henry (1990) states: "Choices of a sample size cannot be considered in a vacuum" (p.117). Sample size has to relate to time, resources and the availability and willingness of individuals to participate. At the same time, the sample has to comprise those who are felt to be "good informants" (Flick, 2002) or "key informants" (Padgett, 1998) - that is they have the requisite experience and knowledge and are deemed to be in a role of position from which they can speak with some degree of informed authority about the matter under investigation.

The researcher was confident that these requirements were reflected in the eventual sample constituency. The characteristics and role profile of the sample is shown in Table 4.1. It can be seen from job titles that there is a cross-cutting arrangement of managerial and professional roles evident in both case organisations.

Table 4-1 Profile of respondents in the case study organisations

Primary care trust	Research and technology Centre
Chair of PCT Chief Executive Chair of PEC Director of Corporate Development Director Service Development Assistant Director of Finance Clinical Governance Manager Assistant Director of Learning and Development Strategic Development Manager, Primary Care Deputy Head of Medicines Management Service Development and Re-design Manager Clinical Governance Lead (GP) Public Health Consultant Optometrist Diabetes Specialist Nurse (2) Podiatrist (2) Practice Nurse District Nursing Sister	Chief Executive Executive Director Business Centre Manager (Fabric Care) Membership Consultant Commercial Manager Quality Services Technologist Business Centre Manager (Chemistry) Business Centre Manager (Design and Print) Assistant Director (2) IT Manager Chief Accountant Business Centre Manager (Footwear Testing) Head of Personnel and Training Operations Supervisor Furniture Technologist Footwear Technologist Head of Safety Products Head of Manufacturing Homewear Technologist Floorcoverings Team Leader Research Consultants (2)
Total respondents – 21	Total respondents - 23

4.4 Collecting the data

As previously discussed, this study was configured as a pre-structured case study comparison between two contextually diverse organisational settings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It utilised a range of complementary, supportive research methods for data collection in the form of an ‘infrastructure’ of research methods. This section explains how data were collected using the different methods. It should be borne in mind that many of these processes occurred simultaneously and sometimes opportunistically throughout the study and reflected the dynamic and interactive nature of data collection.

4.4.1 Preliminary site visits

Preliminary site visits were made to both sites prior to the data gathering activity. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) site was visited in November 2003 and the Research and Technology Company (R&T) site in February 2006. After initial, informal approaches to both Chief Executives, the aim of these more formal meetings was to introduce the study to senior management and gain their support in sponsoring and facilitating the research. The researcher explained the aims of the research and provided a short written summary of the study. He also discussed the logistical requirements of the data collection process, e.g. who he would like to interview, how the interviews were to be conducted, assurances about confidentiality, that he would like to attend meetings as an observer etc. While at the two sites, the opportunity was taken for the researcher to tour the sites and meet various members of staff on an informal basis.

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

The interviews began at the PCT site in January 2004 and at the R&T company site in April 2006. For logistical and efficiency reasons, interviews were carried out over 2-3 day 'blocks' and respondents were interviewed in their own office or in a specially allocated interview room.

Appendix 3 shows the interview schedule. The main aim of the interview was to elicit from respondents perceptions about how their role has evolved within the substance and context of change experienced by their respective organisations. The opening questions collected data about present job title, brief overview of role, management training and qualifications, external position held outside the organisation and predictions about future role development. These questions provided useful insights into the way individuals perceived their role, their attitudes to their role in the context of the wider organisation; and the managerial and professional knowledge and expertise they possessed. More focused questions were then asked about aspects such as role priorities; who the respondents were interacting with in their role; how they achieved goals and got things done. The questions continued to converge more directly on the issue of change management distribution through an exploration of organisational change processes and the extent respondents were involved in those processes and how those

processes were being managed. The final questions converged more directly on the consequential effects of change management distribution on their managerial and professional roles and how they perceived themselves in the role of change agent. For example, how they understood the role of change agent, how they were integrating that role with other aspects of their managerial and/or professional role; what knowledge and skills did they perceive were required to perform in that role and the personal impact on them as individuals of change agency dispersal?

Normal social science ethical conventions were applied, i.e. gaining written agreement to be interviewed before the interviews commenced; permission to tape record the interview; providing assurances about confidentiality, secure storage of transcripts etc. (In the case of the PCT, this was dictated by the LREC governance requirements, see 4.3.3. above). Each interview lasted approximately 1.5 – 2 hours. In the PCT, 21 interviews were conducted and in the R&T, 23. All interviews were taped and transcribed at the researcher's own institution by a trained transcriber.

4.4.3 Observation at meetings

The bulk of the data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews but there were various opportunities to observe how managers and professionals were interacting – especially in meetings. In the PCT, the researcher negotiated with the relevant change projects and committees to attend their management meetings between April and June 2004 as an observer. Over this period, he was therefore able to observe the events and dynamics of interaction between managerial and clinical participants in a transforming organisational change context. During the meetings comprehensive notes were taken supplemented by various documents – agenda, minutes and papers. While primarily meeting the requirements of the larger NHS study, observation of these meetings provided a useful additional source of data to the researcher's study and the opportunity to triangulate with data from other sources – especially interviews.

The same opportunity to attend and observe management meetings was not forthcoming at the R&T company site. In part this was due to the lack of a discernible project management structure but also reflected the culture of the company which was to

confine meetings to short functional briefings about technical and coordinating issues. However, the researcher did meet with the senior management team on a number of occasions between February and May 2006 and the opportunity was taken to record observations of these discussions in his personal diary for later triangulation purposes.

4.4.4 Documentary sources

During his visits to the two sites, the opportunity was taken to collect a wide variety of literature. This included strategic documents; agenda and minutes from meetings; public relations and marketing documents; financial analyses; results from internal and external surveys. Access to documents was freely given by the respective organisations.

4.4.5 Feedback meetings

Both organisations were interested in the researcher's study – partially as a form of organisational 'health check' and also to learn lessons and do things better. Indeed access to both sites was partially provisional on the researcher agreeing to provide initial feedback based on a 'quick and dirty' analysis of the data. In the case of the PCT, he provided the senior management team with a summary report and met with them in July 2004 to discuss its content. The feedback might be described as a quasi-consultancy report making a series of recommendations about how to improve change management practices. In the R&T organisation the researcher agreed to make a series of presentations between December 2006 and February 2007 – first to the management team and then all the staff in the company. The presentations took as their theme: "What is it that we are doing right and what are we doing wrong in the way we manage and react to change?"

These feedback meetings were useful in that they presented the researcher with an opportunity to test reaction to aspects of the research revealed in the findings and these were recorded in his personal diary. For instance, in the meeting with the PCT managers, one aspect of feedback discussed was the personal pressures that certain managers and professionals who were operating as change agents were under. It became clear from the subsequent discussions that senior managers were unaware of these

pressures but anyway once they became aware, felt there was little they could do about it – given wider logistical and resource pressures. And in the R&T company some staff were sceptical about the feedback from the researcher which suggested that overall, the company was managing change effectively. During the presentations, some individuals suggested that in some cases, the perspectives of change presented at some interviews may have been open to possible bias and manipulation and for personal or political reasons.

4.4.6 Informal Observations

Through his involvement with the case organisations, the researcher also drew on his experience and tacit knowledge of organisational life and management to assimilate data gleaned from observations of everyday events and interactions and these were recorded in his personal diary for later analysis. For example, what certain individuals might reveal in unguarded moments over a cup of coffee; following an interview when the tape recorder was switched off or at the end of a meeting when other participants had left the room!

4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Interpreting the data

Chapter three explained the epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions and approaches that have framed this study. They described the research aims; the research paradigm that underpinned the research design; the research strategy that was defined by the case study method and how a multi-method research approach was justified. Earlier sections in this chapter have described an infrastructure of methods for data collection; the nature of the sample, its characteristics and the rationale supporting the selection of respondents; how research methods were administered to collect relevant data.

This section moves forward to describe and explain the assumptions and principles that were adopted to analyse the data that were collected. It describes the analytical

approaches and techniques that were used. It critically reviews the chosen approach and identifies the theoretical and practical limitations that were felt to be inherent within the analytical approach and how these might impact the overall findings and eventual conclusions.

In respect of the data collected, little analysis was required in a statistical sense. Instead, the data were presented ‘objectively’ to describe the structural reality, the context and substance of the change process and the environment in which change was occurring and out of which the issues surrounding change management distribution were held to emerge. So from within the critical research paradigm that has framed this study, the data were therefore used to describe the antecedents and form of the *generative mechanisms* which had the causal powers to drive and bring about change management distribution. These data were therefore analysed as a way of understanding events and situations that could then be compared across the two contexts and related to the interpretations placed on them by individuals.

In terms of qualitative data analysis Mason (1996) rhetorically asks the researcher “How do I wish to read the data?” She identifies three approaches:

Literally – the literal form of the data, the language that is used, the form and structure of the dialogue.

Interpretively – what can the researcher infer from the data, what are the data telling the researcher and how can they be used to make sense of social events?

Reflexively – what is the researcher’s role as part of the data, what part do they play in the collection and interpretation of the data?

She contends that the process of qualitative data analysis is focused on seeking social explanations leading to theory development. The process of seeking social explanation from the process of data analysis depends on the philosophical stance of the research approach. For qualitative researchers, theory development is mainly inductive and occurs simultaneously with data generation and data analysis but as Mason observes, elements of deductive reasoning are present too and this study an inductive-deductive

(retroductive) iterative process was characteristic of this study and highlights the central role of the researcher in the analytical process.

In this study, the data were ‘read’ in an interpretive and reflexive manner – the focus was on trying to understand the ‘lived experiences’ of those managers and professionals who were finding that in some form or capacity they were involved in the implementation of change. But the researcher was aware throughout the data collection process that he, in effect, had to be considered part of that process. His previous experiences as a change agent, as a researcher into change processes were always going to influence his role, his involvement in the data collection process. Indeed, this became apparent in the style and manner of his questioning during the interviews and this was accepted as being a “double-edged sword” in the research process. For instance, his tacit knowledge and personal experiences contributed to the richness of the data he was able to elicit (lines of questioning he was able to develop with interviewees) but equally, selectivity, subjectivity and bias were ever-present in both data collection and analysis.

In practical terms, there is no absolute right or wrong way to carry out qualitative data analysis but there are guiding principles and practices that are premised on good scholarship and ethical conduct. These principles are based around the need for data analysis to be reflective; the aim is categorisation and assembly of the data for comparison to aid conceptualisation; the process of analysis is not mechanistic but flexible, organic, dynamic and iterative; the outcome is a higher order synthesis and grounding of the data leading to propositions and eventual theory building. Marshal and Rossman (1999) argue that “data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous and time-consuming, creative and fascinating process” (p. 150). In this respect, grounded theory offers a structured framework to bring order to the data and to improve its validity and credibility.

4.5.2 Grounded theory

This study adopted many of the main principles and ideas from a grounded theory perspective to provide the underlying methodological framework for data analysis.

Before describing the process of data analysis, the core principles and research phases of grounded theory will therefore be explicated. Grounded theory is most closely associated with the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and continues to inform the analysis of qualitative data (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Two key features are identified: 1). that it is “concerned with the development of theory out of data and 2) The approach is iterative, or recursive...meaning that data collection and analysis proceed in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other” (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

However, a certain vagueness and ambiguity is detectable in the literature about what precisely grounded theory ‘is’. Punch (1998) identifies grounded theory “as not being a theory at all. It is a method, an approach, a strategy: “In my opinion, grounded theory is best defined as a research strategy whose purpose is to generate theory from data” (p.163). And Dey (2004) contends that “there is no such thing as grounded theory if we mean a single, unified methodology, tightly defined and clearly specified” (p. 80). This seems to fit with the views of other commentators who point out that grounded theory offers a methodological framework from which researchers can, in a sense, derive their own approach but drawing on some key principles and ideas about how to collect and analyse data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Flick, 2002).

In a grounded theory approach to analysing qualitative data, the process of analysis begins by carefully scrutinising on a line by line basis (what Strauss and Corbin (1998) later refer to as “micro-analysis”) the raw data (field notes, transcripts etc) to identify concepts that might be related to or fit with the data. The aim is to open up the data to further inquiry; to ground the data conceptually. During this process, the researcher is questioning or interrogating the data and making theoretical comparisons: searching for tentative relationships between concepts derived from the data to gain a better understanding by asking: “What are the data telling me, how does it link to/compare with existing theory in the field?”

Having begun to meticulously interrogate the data, the next stage is to categorise the data into what might be deemed conceptual clusters or categories through a process of what Glaser and Strauss refer to as “open coding.” This means searching for categories – common ground suggested by attributes, properties, dimensions, features or relationships in and between the conceptual clusters. During the process of conceptual

clustering they advise that it is useful to periodically summarise the analysis through a process of “memoing” – literally writing summarising memos about key concepts to make sense of the data and to aid analysis and understanding.

The next stage is what Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe as axial coding. This is described as coding “around the axis of a category to add depth and structure to it” (p.142). What they mean is sorting out the relationships between categories and sub-categories and in effect, to begin to build hypotheses leading to theory. There is further integration and refining of categories into core or central categories in what they term selective coding. At this point we have reached “theoretical saturation” and a form of explanatory theory has emerged inductively from the data. It is claimed by proponents that grounded theory provides a systematic and methodical approach to inductively analyse qualitative data. However, although widely used, the process is not immune from a number of criticisms.

At a more philosophical level, and returning to the earlier discussion in chapter three about epistemology and ontology, some anti-positivistic commentators are concerned that grounded theory might be viewed as being too positivistic and too objectivist and realist in its intent. In other words, there is an inherent risk of becoming too immersed in building theory at the expense of exploring social settings and at the same time, a risk of seeking to impose an external reality on the data that is independent of the researcher interactions with the data (Travers (2001; Charmaz, 2006). For instance, Charmaz (2006) argues for a more constructivist, less positivistic orientation in grounded theory: “Grounded theorists portray their understandings of research participants actions and meanings, offers abstract interpretations of empirical relationships, and create conditional statements about the implications of their analyses” (p. 508).

However, it is moot whether accusations of being more positivistic or scientific might be confused with being more methodical and systematic in devising an analytical process? For example, in the closing chapter of Strauss and Corbin (1998) where they respond to student questions, there is a suggestion that they are aware of the need for a more constructivist orientation that is sympathetic to the relationship between researcher and field: “As we said earlier, one must listen carefully to what various actors are

saying. Their words and expressions may provide in-vivo concepts ... revealing of the actor's perceptions, ideologies and unwitting assumptions" (Question 14, p. 291).

Methodologically, a grounded theory approach has to confront the challenge about how far researchers can lay aside or suspend their own conceptual awareness and in a sense approach the analysis of the data in a wholly objective and neutral manner? The way we interpret the data, how we code, categorise etc is inevitably the product of preconceptions and conditioning by the environment, discipline from which we are approaching the research, the nature of the study, and what the predetermined questions the researcher has assembled (Bryman and Bell, 2003). In other words, in practice, grounded theory rarely starts without some preconceptions, assumptions and partial theory development and is therefore rarely value free or without some inherent bias. In that regard, it is rarely purely inductive, generating new theory from data – there has to be some theory verification of existing theoretical perspectives. This fits with Mason (1996) argument that theory “rarely comes last” that it is naïve to assume that “research can be begun and continue in a theoretical vacuum” (p.142). Bryman and Bell (2003) also raise the issue of data fragmentation and the risk of separating data from its social context. And Flick (2002) is concerned about the extent that open coding is applied – that it could be ‘infinitesimal’ and there is little guidance on criteria that indicate when coding should cease. In other words, and echoing the earlier point about too narrow a focus - there is the risk that the researchers becomes absorbed with coding and loses a wider perspective: “Passages and cases could be endlessly be compared with each other” (p.185).

At a more practical level, grounded theory as an analytical process is complex and demanding and in turn is resource intensive and time consuming (although this has been helped by the aid of increasingly sophisticated computer software but these are not without some issues – see below). It also requires a degree of skill to handle and manipulate the large volumes of qualitative data in the manner described by proponents such as Strauss and Corbin and in that sense some form of structured training for researchers is required (Travers. 2001). However, as Flick (2002) observes, the process of grounded theory is difficult to communicate and teach and its advantages and strengths only become apparent when it is used. Bryman and Bell (2003) also observe that few studies follow all of the stages suggested by Strauss and Corbin. Each tends to

be adapted from the core ideas and principles of grounded theory to suit the requirements of individual research studies. And Eisenhardt (1989) argues, "... but their's [Glaser and Strauss, 1967] is a prescribed formula and new ideas have emerged from methodologists" (p.532).

Despite these issues, grounded theory became the philosophical and methodological basis for analysing qualitative data of the type that was collected in this study and appeared to fit within the overall philosophical tenets of critical realism that have informed the methodological approach to this study. However, the researcher was cognisant of the issues discussed above and sought to "adapt" the basic stages or features of grounded theory to provide a better 'fit' to theoretical and practical requirements of the study. The nature of the analytical process is now discussed in some detail in the subsequent sections.

4.5.3 The process of data analysis

How to describe the process of data analysis in this study? In overall structure and organisation, the process was felt to be essentially linear in the manner described by Marshal and Rossman (1999) above. But within that overarching linearity, it was dynamic, iterative and interactive in the sense that initial perceptions and propositions formed by one part of the data, were modified and adapted as the data analysis developed or as data sources were triangulated with each (Dey, 1993); Miles and Huberman, 1994). In effect what was produced in this study was a series of 'mini-circles' or 'whirlpools' of iteration within an essentially linear process. For example, as interviews progressed, new themes and insights emerged which, despite the pre-structuring of questions, inevitably shaped and influenced interpersonal and narrative exchanges – as the observations in one meeting or responses to an interview question provided cues for what to observe or ask in subsequent meetings. Therefore, as the researcher identified themes and concept, he found he was 'having a debate with himself': "Why is this individual saying this; what do they mean; how does this connect with what others are saying; how does this connect with other themes or concepts?" This 'debate' was captured for further analysis in a series of informal memos and notes that he made for himself as he analysed the data.

4.5.4 Computer or manual analysis?

One of the most significant decisions to be made prior to the data analysis stage was whether or not to use qualitative software programs such as NVivo to analyse the data. These programs are now widely available to researchers to store, sort, organise, edit and generally manage collected data. The many advantages of using these programs to analyse high volumes of textual data are becoming apparent and are well documented, e.g. the coding, indexing, searching and retrieval of data categories (Dey, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994, Mason, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Bryman and Bell 2003).

However, there are also a number of disadvantages to be considered. As with any computer program, they are designed by humans and in that sense they reflect the designer's assumptions about the nature of their research and how data are to be handled and interpreted (Mason, 1996). Welsh (2002) explains how, when she used NVivo software to analyse data from her qualitative study of local councillors, the search facility was unable to sense nuances between the use of terminology by respondents which meant essentially the same thing and she reverted to an additional manual search alongside her use of the software. And Tesch (1990) explains that while computers have many advantages in academic research "The lesson to learn is that you should not expect to sit down with a new program for academic work and immediately understand everything it says to you" (p.174).

At a more intellectual level, it might also be construed that the use of these packages imposes an artificial boundary and risks imposing a sense of neatness on what is often messy, ambiguous, contentious source material (Mason, 1996). In some senses it might also be considered that loading of qualitative data into the application of software brings to an end the researcher's role in the analytical process and the software 'takes over' control of the analysis - mechanistically dictating the terms on which the analysis is conducted and removing the prospect of further deconstruction and insight (Dey, 1993; Creswell, 1998; Flick 2002). Moreover, the prospect of making intuitive "thematic connections" and adopting a holistic perspective on the data is reduced (Creswell, 1998; Welsh, 2002). At the same time, any time saved by the use of these programs may be

lost as the researcher becomes seduced by what the software can do rather than by the analytical requirements of the study with the result that “if the computer cannot do it, then it no longer gets done” (Dey, 1993:61). Additionally, there is a possible risk of the study being reduced to a sophisticated coding and counting exercise rather than a search for meaning and insight (Dey, 1993; Mason, 1996; Welsh, 2002).

Having investigated and considered the benefits and drawbacks of computer aided analysis as identified in various accounts in the literature, the researcher took the decision to opt for a more ‘traditional’ manual approach. This decision was taken partly on the epistemological and methodological concerns and reservations described above, but it also reflected a more instrumental and personal consideration in the form of a simple cost-benefit equation. With his relative lack of familiarity in respect of these qualitative software technologies, did the investment in scarce time and effort in acquiring the knowledge and skill to use such technology (and possible risks related to inexperience) outweigh the investment in time and effort to analyse the transcripts using manual coding methods? In the researcher’s judgement and given the size of the study, the answer was a qualified no.

4.5.5 Designing a framework for data analysis within multiple case studies

Reviewing and comparing these different modes of analysis within the case method, it would seem that the combination that best suited this study and which was therefore followed by the researcher, was to combine “explanation-building” (which seems to revolve around inductive theory building in the manner of grounded theory) and “analysing embedded units” using a portfolio of research methods for data collection (Yin, 1994). Units of analysis were investigated within each case study and the findings interpreted at the single-case level and then the researcher engaged in explanation-building for that case. The explanations for each case then became the basis for cross-case comparison in effect, to search for similarities and differences between the experiences of managers and professionals in each case study. Following cross-case comparison, conclusions were then drawn for the overall study and a case study report formulated.

Having mapped out the broader framework for analysing data within a multiple case study setting, the following sections will now discuss the approaches to data analysis that were employed for each data collection method.

4.5.6 Analysing the interview and observational data

In line with the multi-method research design, the transcribed interview and observational data collected for this study were viewed as the primary focus for theory development. Having reviewed a range of analytical approaches it was decided that the most appropriate approach for analysing this rich data was *sequential analysis* as described by Miles and Huberman, (1994). This approach has its antecedents in grounded theory and displays many of the characteristics and parallels normally associated with the staged process of *open coding, axial coding and selective coding* described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) earlier in this chapter. But as previously discussed, many researchers have adapted the core principles of grounded theory to suit the exigencies of their study and this was the case in this study.

4.5.7 Sequential analysis

The central feature of sequential analysis is that it takes volumes of transcribed data through inductive iterations, to identify phrases that “cluster” the data around distinctly identified and labelled themes or propositions. From these propositions mini-theories or explanatory frameworks are derived which in turn form the basis for synthesis through cross-case comparison and subsequent critical comparison with relevant literature.

The following process of sequential analysis is based on the one described by Miles and Huberman (1994) which in turn is taken as an illustration from original research study by Chesler, (1987) and was employed to analyse the qualitative data in this study.

Step 1 – Take each transcript and observation notes in turn and systematically read and reread while underlining key terms and phrases.

Step 2 – Paraphrase/restate these terms in a summary, condensing phrases to code the data. (In practice this involved using summarising marginal notes as a coding statement (see Miles and Huberman, 1994:88).

Step 3 – Produce ‘clusters’ of phrases having similar meanings and tentative conceptual linkages.

Step 4 – Further condense the clusters to form meta-clusters (where this is necessary or required for clarity and meaning). Labels are then attached to these meta-clusters (in effect representing a form of pattern coding).

Step 5 – From an inductive examination of the meta-clusters, inferential linkages and associations are made to derive generalised propositions or core themes.

Step 6 – From these core themes, memos are produced that seek to interpret the essential meaning suggested by the core themes and pose conceptual explanations and in essence to build mini-theories which reflect the patterns of experiences, events and situations and that are contained within each case study.

Step 7 – These mini-theories are then integrated and critically compared to derive an explanatory framework of perceptions, interpretations of experiences and events and from these to seek insights and draw tentative conclusions.

Step 8 – Compare insights and draw tentative conclusions and propositions for critical comparison with relevant literature.

These steps became the methodological framework for the analytical process that was employed. However, because the semi-structured interviews were already pre-structured and therefore the data were partially categorised already, it was decided that the most appropriate way to approach data analysis of the transcripts was to condense it to a *three-stage process*:

Stage one - This involved the systematic application of steps 1-5 above to each interview question in turn – initially within each case study set of respondents. This

resulted in a series of core concepts and themes suggesting emergent patterns for each question in each case organisation.

Stage two – Reflecting step 6 above, as these themes and concepts emerged, initial draft memos were produced and then refined to facilitate an inductive interpretation of the essential meaning reflected in the perceptions and experiences described by each respondent within each case study about their role and the process of change. The memos were supplemented by data from observations and then compared across case studies searching for patterns of similarity and difference. A typical example of memoing which was used to integrate concepts is shown below:

Stage three - This process of ‘memoing’ was followed by an exploratory, integrating search across the summarising memos beginning to search for conceptual linkages through the similarities and differences that existed between the two case study contexts. This led into efforts to produce a tentative explanatory framework and to begin the process of theory building linked to the original research questions that framed the study. This modified three stages model is shown in Figure 4.2 below.

Example of a memo extracted from analysis of R&T company interview transcripts and supplemented with observational data and field notes

Hybridisation of roles

“Do I wear 3 hats now?”

There is a strong suggestion that this hybridisation is occurring. There is plenty of evidence of “three hats” being worn. Many individuals see their role more holistically and multi-dimensionally. Individuals have a blend of managerial, professional and what might be defined as change agency elements in their role. These elements sub-divide into a more expanded functional mix and innovative behaviours.

Roles are loosely defined in R&T. There are no job descriptions as such and individuals can configure their roles to a certain extent. For instance they can on their own initiative, generate new business, develop a business area. Their roles are becoming more flexible with scope for self definition of roles. Roles are not only being redefined in functional terms so the functional mix is changing and being expanded to reflect the changes the organisation is experiencing, but there is a change agency dimension in the form of more innovation and taking more responsibility as well

It seems as if some willingly accept and acknowledge this hybridisation and see their role in these 3 dimensions while others resist or struggle with the notion. But for some, their desire to expand their role may be thwarted by non-receptive factors such as autocratic boss, past cultural baggage and a desire to remain in the role they have always held as a professional. But notice how non-receptive factors stand out more, e.g. the old guard.

It seems as if the hybridisation of roles is occurring at all levels, senior managers are expected to be more flexible and become more innovative. However, this is not universal and it seems as if some roles lend themselves more than others to being hybridised because of role characteristics but this is a minor issue? For example, those in support roles such as IT, Personnel and Accounts see their role as supporting and facilitating innovation in others.

Suggestion that some individuals feel they are being pushed into accepting a hybridisation of their role

Issues and risks

There are however lots of issues to contend with

Role overload and stress induces resentment from those who are always being selected because they are willing

Divisive in the sense that the focus is on the willing and ambitious but it also identifies those who are apparently not ambitious?

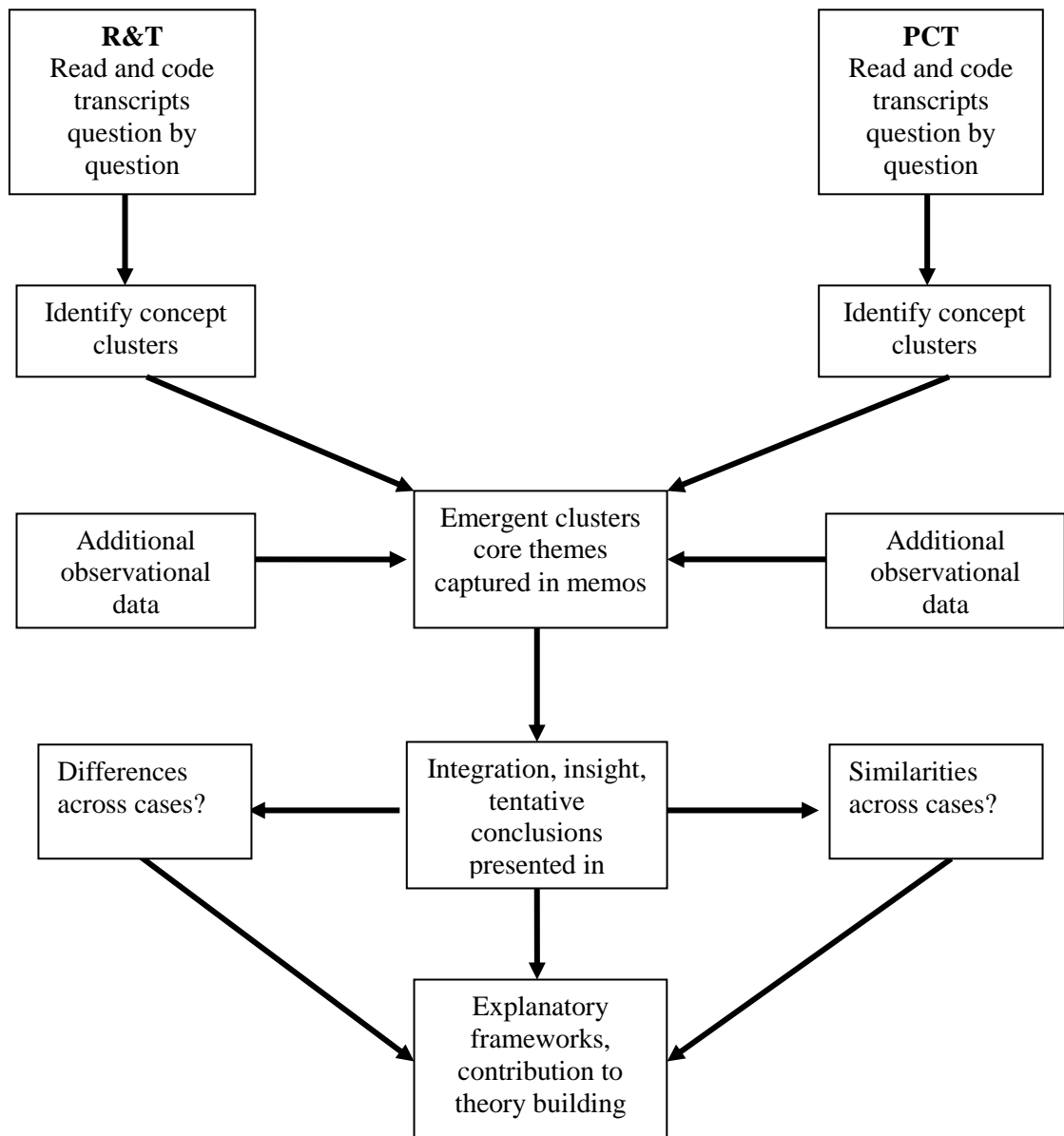
Some people appear to be taking on responsibilities without the requisite knowledge and skills to perform the role

Expectations may not be met, how to deal with paradox of empowerment?

Threats to senior managers as culture changes and they have to give up control

Is there evidence of too much multi-skilling diluting expertise?

Figure 4-2 Stages in sequential analysis of qualitative data



4.5.8 Analysing the documentary data

In this study, relevant internal and external documents were collected from both organisations. They included: strategic plans, organisation charts, policy documents, public relations materials, external survey data, financial reports etc. Echoing the philosophical framing of the research design, the documentary evidence was considered as a means of providing the essential factual and ‘objective’ reality which established the context and substance of the change process in which change management distribution was occurring. The documentary evidence was therefore analysed in the

sense that it was sifted, collated to provide the factual accounts of structures, systems and processes and described in terms of what critical realists would term the generative mechanisms – the structures, systems, processes within which social activity occurs and out of which understanding arises. Each document was labelled by type and then read once and notes were taken – both to provide a general ‘flavour’ of the document and also to build a ‘factual’ description of the case study context.

But the documentary evidence had a qualitative dimension to it as well. The documents, like the notes and diary entries made during observations were read and then cross referred and re-read simultaneously with the interview transcripts. Not only did the data embed the context and substance of the change process on a firm, objective foundation, additional data and explanation allowed for insightful comparisons between case studies. For example, in the PCT, the researcher had access to an unpublished paper written by the Chief Executive and the Chair which set out their views about the degree of political control exerted by external influences and how these were constraining the PCT. This paper was read at the same time as the transcripts for these individuals were analysed to compare what was said in the paper and what was being said at interview. In the R&T company a reading and re-reading of the company literature allowed comparisons between its tone, content and espoused values and the perspectives and views expressed by individuals during interview. For instance, there was a considerable volume of commercial literature extolling the professional status of the company and how that was used to provide customers with expert advice and assistance. Were such claims valid? Was it all rhetoric or did managers and professionals in the company genuinely live up to the claims being made? As in all empirical studies of this nature, there are limitations and issues to consider in respect of the research methods, the sampling logic, the data collection and the data analysis. These limitations and issues will be debated in more depth at the end of chapter five.

This chapter has discussed and debated the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative collected in this study. However, the primary focus was on collecting and analysing qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts and contemporaneous notes from observations at meetings which explored the lived experiences of managers and professionals as change management was assimilated into their roles. More factual and objective data, mainly from secondary source provided the contextual and substantive

‘backdrop’ to the change process from which causal powers generated the events and situations which were being experienced by individuals and collectives involved and implicated but at the same time were being reshaped and reconfigured by the choices and actions of those same managers and professionals.

The next chapter presents the findings from the data analysis - mainly in the form of rich narratives capturing the main emergent themes and issues, supplemented by and triangulated with descriptive, factual data about the case organisations involved.

Chapter 5

Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

Chapter two drew on the evidence from previous research into change management to argue that change management responsibilities were increasingly pervading the roles of managers and non-manager professionals (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle *et al.*, 2000). However, many of the models and assumptions that framed change management were premised on a dominating rational perspective of planned change which, while influential, only offered a constrained and partial route to understanding about what, why and how change management distribution was occurring. Moreover, it was contended that change management distribution, however it is occurring, was likely to produce consequential effects and these too, were hardly researched or understood – even when the effects were extended beyond functional roles and into personal lives, with implications for the wider organisational change process (Doyle, 2001; Doyle, 20002a, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a).

In chapters three and four, the research design for the study was justified within a post positivist epistemology and critical realist ontology where the interplay between structure and agency became a theoretical and philosophical focus. The research strategy took the form of a multiple, cross case comparison between two contrasting organisations. Quantitatively-oriented data were extracted from external and internal documentation and other sources to describe and ‘objectify’ a structural, processual reality; represented by the external and internal change context and as basis for explaining the nature and dynamics of the processes that were causally driving change management distribution in both organisations. However, reflecting the aims of the research, primacy was given to analysing and understanding how that reality was being interpreted from the vantage point of the different social actors involved and implicated in assimilating change management into their roles. To this end, qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews and observation techniques. These data were then analysed using a modified form of grounded theory approach.

This chapter now presents the findings from that process of data collection and analysis. It does so within a narrative format interspersed with a liberal number of quoted extracts from the interview transcripts and other sources to add richness to the findings and to reflect and illustrate particular themes e.g. the double-edged effect of assimilating change management into respondent roles; how change management has affected their personal lives. Throughout the discussion of the findings, comparisons and contrasts will be made between the similarities and differences in the two case organisations, a Primary Care Trust (PCT) and a small Research and Technology (R&T) company. Comparative tables will be presented to summarise perceived similarities and differences. These will form the basis for inductive reflection leading to discussion and conclusions in the final chapter where a number of propositions for future research and workplace recommendations for improving the management of change will be made.

5.2 The challenges of change

5.2.1 “External forces and how we coped (or did we?)”

The strategic challenges facing the PCT were set out in published strategic documents but a more interesting insight was gained from an internal, but unpublished paper drafted by the Chair of the PCT and the Chief Executive and made available to the researcher. This critical paper described the reconciliation of a new and more proactive role of designing and developing a broader range of primary care services within a framework of external relationships still blighted by the legacies of the purchaser/provider split and the political divisions caused by those seeking to protect traditional clinical and managerial interests. It highlighted the need for the PCT to find a way of balancing the commissioning of care services from traditional providers whilst at the same time integrating the services offered from a host of other sources and non-traditional locations such as patient’s homes. It argued that the PCT should follow a strategy that focused on the development of strategic partnerships with external providers and this is broadly the pathway that was followed but with mixed results. The indications were that some success has been achieved in relation to community, voluntary and local government bodies where good partnership relations have been

established but there were bureaucratic and political difficulties presented by current NHS structures that were proving more daunting to deal with. The difficulty was compounded, not only by the struggle for autonomy and flexibility in the provision of primary health care, but by the massive change agenda that was descending on the PCT during the period of the research study.

At the time of the main period of the research in 2004, the PCT was experiencing what might be described as a sustained ‘deluge’ of simultaneous, overlapping and at times contradictory change initiatives which were being imposed by regional and national agencies (Strategic Health Authority and Department of Health) and to which the PCT was expected to react. The mood in the management team was captured by this quotation:

“I think the development agenda has become a lot more, and I am sure everybody says this across the whole country, but the speed of the development agenda and the size of the development agenda across the whole NHS has gone into a completely different league to the one that it used to be in 3 or 4 years ago ... I think the NHS plan was the big one but just the sheer volume of new initiatives and incredibly radical new initiatives. Things like the choice agenda, things like the new GP contract and these things have really given a big shove to the way the services work basically. You didn’t seem to get things to quite that scale before, so the agenda seems to be a much bigger one and a much more fast moving one as well.” (Director of Service Development)

The list of planned changes to be implemented by the PCT was a long and daunting one: Agenda for Change [a form of job evaluation affecting clinical grades]; the introduction of a new GP contract and related to this new contract, out-of-hours GP care provision; a series of initiatives under the National Service Framework (NSF) designed to improve standards and care in key medical areas such as cancer care, diabetes and maternity are just a few examples of the changes the PCT had to cope with in 2004 and beyond.

For many of those involved the constant and unremitting regime of imposed change was proving to be challenging, frustrating and stressful and one that generated a certain degree of cynicism. The mood is captured in the following remark:

“Every 3 years we have major structural changes in the NHS. It’s a complete pain in the neck because everybody runs around being concerned with that rather than dealing with the stuff that matters. I hope I will do well out of whatever

structural change comes around next time” (Strategic Department Manager – Primary care).

Another respondent captures the almost philosophically resigned attitude to keeping going and seeking to preserve their professional ethos and integrity in their role during this period of profound change and instability:

“And at the same time you haven’t got to retire in post, you haven’t got just to sit back and say well I’ve seen it before I know what’s going to happen and well just let it ride. That isn’t me. I feel I have a job to do. I want to do it to the best of my ability. And so I suppose really it’s just having an overview, accepting that there are changes taking place and managing the changes, seeing why it is that those changes are necessary but also in the back of your head you’ve got to remember policies come, policies go. Different attitudes come and go. So you’ve got to actually bend and flow as well.” (Podiatrist 2)

But for some, change was seemingly less threatening and they felt they could be more upbeat:

“I mean positively, I mean the effect of my workplace is I actually, well because of our commitment to the service I would be bored to tears if it trundled on as it had done seven years ago. Things have got to evolve and change. Everything has to. You just have to look at your own home and how it’s evolved and changed over time. It’s just common sense. And things have to develop and you’ve got to pare things down and shake things up and it’s got to mould and to fit, it’s like a business, to fit the market you are serving at that point in time.” (Diabetes Nurse 2)

At the time of this externally imposed change agenda, the PCT was bringing into being its own internal structural and cultural changes as it sought to develop and establish itself following its creation in 2002:

“There are five or six organisations that come together every couple of months to look at how we work as a local health system to deliver these NHS planned targets. And that’s taken a while to sort of embed really but it’s beginning to take a bit more shape now. It’s about collective ownership and responsibility for these targets or whatever else we’ve got to deliver. And that’s really quite essential I think because there’s no other place that we do all come together to decide those things.” (Director of Corporate development)

While there was some scope to determine how these externally imposed changes were to be implemented, overall the content agenda and timing of the change process was

determined at a regional and national level and the PCT was expected to respond accordingly. This reactive stance, this lack of control and powerlessness was felt by some in the PCT and was seen to be at odds with the rhetoric about PCT's being locally accountable and responsible for commissioning care in their communities. This mood was captured in this quote from the Chair of the PEC (who is also a General Practitioner by profession). The Professional Executive Committee (PEC) is the main strategy and policy setting body for the PCT:

“The cynicism, and I can be as cynical as anybody, but really that just presents the service into the hands of people who don't know what they're doing, like politicians I'm afraid and my opinion of politicians deteriorates starting from a low base. One just cannot help but come to the conclusion that they are idiots who are full of bright ideas that they don't know what they're doing and then we get left like the troops in the trenches in the First World War having to implement the grand schemes and I just wish that they would look at things differently.” (Chair of PEC)

Similar sentiments about the frustrations of externally imposed control were echoed by his senior management colleague, the Chair of the PCT (who is also a senior academic)

“What I would do away with is Strategic Health Authorities I don't think they are making that much of a difference, they are trying to create jobs for themselves and put us through all sorts of formalised training in this that and the other and what has been much more helpful to learn from other chairs. All of that and all their complex systems of performance management, and you would know this much better than I coming from a business background, we shouldn't have all these targets, my job as a chair would be much easier if I could actually remember the targets, I have to look them up all the time. Commission health improvement targets, NHS Plan targets, I have god knows how many other things, I am so confused. That would make my job a damn sight easier if I could remember the targets.” (Chair of PCT)

The shared mood of frustration and cynicism suggested by these senior managers was confirmed in the individual and collective reactions and behaviours observed at localised internal meetings. For example, the researcher's diary records observed events at a PEC meeting on 21st April 2004. Representatives from the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) attended the meeting to detail an initiative for providing fast-track orthopaedic care through a private care provider. This was part of a NHS national initiative designed to purchase these services to improve waiting times. Following the presentation, there was an intense and at times emotional debate. Major concerns were

expressed by clinicians on the PEC who represented the existing provider (The local Acute Trust hospital) about issues relating to quality of treatment and post-operative care.

To the researcher, it appeared that underlying these concerns about quality and delivery of care, was a perception that this nationally driven initiative was an imposition that would clearly have an impact on the role of the Acute Trust, e.g. one member of the committee remarked in an emotional state that a private provider “was taking business away from them.” Additionally, the conflict may have been fuelled by the ambiguity that existed between the supposed autonomous role of the PEC in seeking a flexible and total care provision for its local population and the imposition of a centrally driven initiative that usurps that role, e.g. orthopaedic care provision did not fit with the PCT’s existing local strategies for this type of care. The tension was further exacerbated by some informal comments and asides during the meeting that alluded to motives that may have had more to do with national political goals than what was best for patient care in the local community. Suggestions about how this emerging dilemma was affecting individuals could be detected in the comments and body language of the PEC Chair during these tense and at times, emotional debates. He found himself acknowledging the concerns of his clinical colleagues but at the same time having to accept the imposition of the national initiative as a *fait accompli* “We are where we are” he commented in efforts to move the difficult debate on to a less emotional level.

What was interesting to note from these examples of observed reactions and behaviours was the way that groups of clinical and managerial professionals appeared to form professional and political alliances and ‘turn against’ those who were perceived as outsiders exerting unnecessary control over the manner in which they enacted their professional and managerial roles. They rejected supposedly rational reasons or motives if they were seen to interfere or subvert a professional ethos that was bolstered by the aims and vision of the PCT driven by both clinical and managerial leadership.

In sum, in many ways these findings may come as little surprise and indeed lend further support to those found elsewhere in studies of organisational change in the NHS and wider UK public sector (Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006) The findings demonstrate the environmental volatility and instability experienced in units of the NHS

and the massive change agenda these units were coping with. It also identifies a number of ambiguities and contradictions in established structures and processes such as the clash between the rhetoric of PCT autonomy over its strategic affairs and the centralising control of the Strategic Health Authority and other external stakeholders and how that is being interpreted and felt by those involved and affected – especially by those at a senior management level.

In contrast to the PCT, the change context of the Research and Technology (R&T) company was markedly different and this had a significant impact on the way change was being experienced and managed. External market forces (primarily the decline of the UK footwear industry) necessitated the company making major changes to its strategic direction. As a consequence, it has sought over the last 20 years to transform itself from a research funded organisation to one that has to become fully commercial in its orientation. No longer was it dependent on government research grants but instead now survives through the generation of sales revenue and profit from its commercial activities:

“We used to get our money from the UK government and then it shifted to Europe and it became harder and harder to get the money and in the end it just wasn’t worth chasing. So we were forced to become more self-reliant on what products and facilities we could sell and people were prepared to pay for. Rather than relying on government grants which were just hand outs for whatever blue sky research we wanted to do. So we have been forced to become more commercial and what the commercial market wants is testing and consultancy and not necessarily research.” (Footwear Technologist)

However, unlike the PCT, the company was able to exert a considerable degree of strategic choice and influence over the future direction of the organisation. Its dominant commercial position in the market built on its strong reputation allowed it to control the nature, form and impact of required and necessary changes impacting on the organisation. For example, it was able to use its strengths in research and technology and its growing commercial reputation for high levels of customer service to diversify into new markets - but on its terms:

“Yes, we have moved into lots of different areas since I first came here. Everybody else’s area has done something similar to mine. XXXXX’s area has gone from testing a few chairs to testing everything including trampolines and

poles for lap dancers or whatever it is they do. God knows what else that man tests now. It is always fascinating to find what XXXX has managed to bring into his scope.” (Business Area Manager – Fabric care and cleaning technology)

This control over the change process has enabled the company to plan a major restructuring and relocation of the company to a new purpose built site; but in a measured, phased way to suit its commercial development and available resources. To date the relocation has taken some eight years but will be completed in 2007. The company also took the opportunity to transform its internal structures and processes in light of the changes it was making:

“We have become more flexible as a place to work at. We have introduced flexible working hours progressively in an attempt to get more out of people and to get more flexible working arrangements. Because I have got machinery that sometimes needs to be started at 6 o’clock in the morning so clearly I can’t operate that on 9 to 5 day shifts. So flexible working has brought its advantages.” (Business Area Manager – Furniture and floor coverings)

It might therefore be concluded that rather than the process of change being characterised by the sudden shifts and radical transformations experienced by the PCT, the historical pattern of change in the R&T company was much more gradual and incremental. Interestingly, this gradualism has led to illusions of relative stability with little apparent change taking place:

“Not really, we’ve not really got any, there are the odd things obviously that have been developed, but in essence no I don’t think, that was why I was amazed when I saw this was to do with change. I have been in companies where things have changed dramatically but everything here just tends to move very gradually. There have been changes but they have been so gradual that it is a job to actually notice.” (Membership Recruitment Manager)

But some are aware that over time, significant changes have occurred:

“No it evolves rather than anything else. It is quite steady; almost creeps up on you and you don’t even notice it. It’s only when you think, oh five years ago we were doing this and now look at us and its something completely different, and you haven’t even realised it has changed.” (Chief Accountant)

Others however appear to disagree with this impression of gradualism:

“As an individual it is very noticeable. I think the move towards the more commercial organisation is noticeable, but I don’t know if that is because I am more aware of it now than I was 5 years ago. Because my priorities have changed and whether it is because I am more aware of it now than I was 5 years ago because I didn’t have that to worry about. And the continual expansion, the drive to find new markets, new areas, new products to go into it. It doesn’t seem to lessen, it does almost to be gaining pace rather than slowing down as there is a desire to move into other markets and to drive into new areas.” (Business Area Head for Chemistry)

This gradualism and a sense of being in control of the change process was closely associated with the capability of the long-serving Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who, supported by his executive colleagues, was a key driver in making appropriate strategic choices and determining the vision and direction of the organisation. Some fifteen years ago, with help from external agencies, he was able to map out the strategic vision and direction of the organisation and sustain that control to the present day:

“It is so simple today but at that stage, from an old Research Association position it wasn’t because they had never needed to do it, do it in the sense that the business had gone on in terms of that, government funding had been there which again had disappeared, it was a clear role year on year as to what you did, you didn’t actually need a business plan to do it, but of course it was a time of change and in fairness that is what we did. We spent a lot of time in groups, and he helped the thing, he [the external consultant] held some working groups for staff and a few things together, getting the feelings of staff. And we looked through every part of the business really and we came out with this plan knowing that it was going to have to be a selling plan to the stakeholders at that time.” (Chief Executive)

It would appear that planning and implementing the required changes to transform the company was a less onerous process than that experienced by the PCT. The company was not confronted by a complex network of competing external stakeholder interests and agendas over which it had limited control and to which it had to react. Instead, the CEO and his executive colleagues were able to define the nature of the external context and create a new strategic vision. With apparent sound communication skills and political acumen, the CEO and his executive colleagues were able to employ a range of tactics to gradually win over the Membership [to whom the Executive reported] to a more commercial orientation:

“They made major concessions, we won it through, and it was nearly a champagne reception at the end because we won it. And we got a council

virtually who were a unanimous vote, there was one union chap who voted against it but it was a unanimous vote apart from that. So in a sense we felt we had done it well, we had taken the industry with us. The interesting thing was it was timed beautifully because the Director General of the Federation, as they called it then, changed during that period. Now I don't think we would have ever got it with the old chap, but the new chap coming in, who was a bit of an oddity, but he thought he was doing the right thing in supporting it.” (Chief Executive)

The success of the senior management team in bringing about and controlling the process of change was acknowledged by respondents:

“The management of change I think is managed well bearing in mind the diversity of the business and the fact that the industry has changed and forced XXXX to adapt.” (Business Area Manager – Furniture and floor coverings)

“There have been some very good strategic decisions. Like moving to the Far East, becoming global, again it was absolutely essential to do that and that is where our business is now, China.” (Research Consultant)

However, other expressed some reservations and mixed feelings about how well the change process was being managed:

“I think the decisions have been very good, the decisions are rather autocratic, a little bit of a take it or leave it. I can think of a few members of staff that it just didn't click with them so they are not here anymore.” (Research Consultant)

“So I have got mixed feelings about how we are managed. I am sure the grass always looks greener and I am sure we are no better or worse than many other organisations, it all depends on the management skills and the personalities and the people involved.” (Footwear Technologist)

5.2.2 “Transforming ourselves”

In terms of its organisational structure, the findings revealed, not unexpectedly, that the PCT was functionally and hierarchically representative of a large mechanistic bureaucracy. The organisation chart in Appendix 1 shows the reporting structure in 2004. Within this organisational structure, managers and professionals communicated and coordinated their work and efforts through a complex network of functional and professional roles and relationships. Considerable attention was paid to adhering to an externally defined framework of NHS standards, rules and procedures themselves

located within an overarching framework of clinical governance and professional codes of conduct.

However, the findings suggested that while individuals accepted the need for good governance and professional behaviour, a number of respondents experienced a growing frustration and expressed a resentment at the perceived constraints imposed by external agencies and the bureaucracy they imposed on the PCT which they saw as preventing them from engaging in their professional roles – especially where it had a direct bearing on patient care. Their frustration was captured in the following extract:

“You are constantly having to justify what you are doing and send returns in and provide information and all of that work isn’t adding any value, it’s about feeding the beast. And it has happened an awful lot with the contract and there are all sorts of things still bubbling on about the contract because they want you to fill a return in every other week about what you have done. We are spending so much time doing that when there is so much to do in terms of getting the work done and right, so it does feel like that.” (Strategic Development Manager, Primary Care)

Culturally, the PCT might be described as being professional and collegiate in nature. It had a strong sense of strategic purpose and a cultural vision which it promulgated and disseminated through its widely disseminated REACH principles.

R	Right service in the right place at the right time
E	Effective use of resources
A	Achieving national and local targets
C	Creating an organisation that people want to work with and for
H	Health improvement

The PCT has made strenuous efforts to communicate and involve staff in the day to day running of the organisation. For example, the primary role of the Director of Corporate and Strategic Development was to develop systems and mechanisms that sought to involve, empower and value staff and patients. The PCT has its own website and an examination of content and layout revealed a lot of attention was given to the “people

dimension.” For example, the 2003/04 Annual Report posted on the PCT’s website provided extensive evidence of action taken to promote an ethos of two-way communication and the involvement and empowerment staff, patients and local community in decision making.

The PCT was led by an experienced “triumvirate” consisting of the Chief Executive, an experienced NHS manager; the Chair of the Main Board (who holds a professorial Chair at a local University) and the Chair of the PEC who is an experienced senior GP. This trio viewed themselves as a close knit and cohesive team:

“So the role of the chair in terms of leading the organisation is one very much of negotiation between the three people at the centre. So my relationship with XXXX, who is the CEO, and XXXX as the chair of the PEC is something we actively work on and we have weekly get togethers and try not to have meetings between two and not with the third one. You know what it is like, playground sort of stuff, two against one and different allegiances, so we try to be very open between the three of us. I hope we have been successful.” (Chair of PCT)

Collectively, this trio have sought to establish and communicate a clear vision for the PCT. This is evident from the wealth of literature, publications and other media communicating the vision, role and strategy to all internal and external stakeholders that can be found throughout the main headquarters complex and beyond. The following statement by the CEO captures the claims about leadership style and the cultural philosophy that appear to predominate in the PCT:

“My chosen method of actually achieving that change is to try and share a vision, hopefully a patient centred vision, of what we’re trying to create. So therefore my approach is in a theory called a systems theory which is you create a clear and common purpose of what they’re doing it for and then you enable those delivering the services to shape and to deliver those services. So we don’t have a hierarchical, this is what must be done; this is how it must be done, all the way down the chain. You work with people delivering the services to say, what would you want, what service would you want, we define that service to create a vision about what we should be providing and then you enable people to go ahead and do that.” (Chief Executive)

This style and philosophy appears to have filtered down to managers at an operational level, as this quote from a Service Development Manager [an internal change consultant] suggests:

“I think you said it before in that they do redesign their own system, we aren’t telling them. I wouldn’t go in to a group of people and say this is how you’re going to do it. It would be about actually facilitating them to redesign their own service. So it’s that bit. You facilitate, it’s about like you said before, it is about the change management. You’re facilitating the change you’re not actually saying, this is how you will do it.” (Service Development Manager)

This consensual, involving and empowering thread appears to be woven through individual clinical experiences as well:

“And it’s so nice to be able to discuss things and they understand your difficulties, or anything particular you want to work on, whatever, and they’ve actually said, if you need any support, anything you need, just come to us, we can discuss it with you. And I know that, because we’re mature enough to know that the resources are not always there and we can’t just go and ask for ridiculous things but it’s nice to know that you can just discuss things with them and maybe we can look at things in a different way.” (Diabetes Specialist Nurse 1)

It appears therefore that while the PCT could be described as hierarchical and somewhat mechanistic in respect of its structure, it has made a considerable efforts to develop a more organic and flexible culture. Led by a seemingly strong and visionary senior management team, it has placed a strong emphasis on seeking cooperation across functions, two-way communication, staff involvement etc. However, at the same time, tensions were being generated as the task-based cultural orientation established by senior management clashed with the more mechanistic structure shaped by the constraining and disempowering external influences of regional and national NHS and other agencies.

But was this impression of a professional and collegiate culture with a visionary, open and empowering leadership style merely rhetorical and illusory? How was it shaping the lived experience of staff in the PCT and how were they responding? Documentary evidence obtained by the researcher from the latest (at that time) National NHS Staff Survey conducted in 2003 involving the PCT suggested that there was a close match between the espoused culture and the leadership style and how staff felt they were being managed. On most of the key measures (quality of working life, teamworking, leadership, staff involvement, support from supervisors, positive feeling within the

organisation, intention to leave job etc.) the PCT has scored favourably - and in some cases very favourably. In comparison with national ratings for PCTs, this PCT is overwhelmingly in the top 20% (NHS national staff survey 2003: Summary of results from XXXX PCT website).

In terms of its structure the R&T company, like the PCT, was functionally organised into a number of Business Areas each having a conventional hierarchical structure of reporting relationship (see the organisation chart shown in Appendix 2). Like the PCT, it adhered and conformed to required external standards and procedures for research, testing and accreditation. Similarly, work was organised through a network of interlocking professional roles and relationships and comprehensive communication systems but more notably, conducted in a more formal, top down and less consultative manner than that suggested by the PCT, e.g. through formal periodic management meetings to coordinate the implementation of strategy and to monitor and review its strategic and operational performance rather than more informal ‘get-togethers’:

“It probably wouldn’t actually have changed greatly because I think what we have tried to do is to build a fairly solid management team so that most of the operational issues in terms of servicing the members or customers or clients are actually done by the operational managers, and that is true today. So that bit hasn’t particularly changed. I have tended to concentrate my activities on the broader strategy, the investment that we have put into the building, the new areas of development that we have tried to set up and motor with, perhaps some of the new appointments that we have made. We do have a series of monitoring everything that is going on through various reviews and project reviews and special meetings, and I keep fairly close to that.” (Chief Executive)

However, unlike the PCT, the nature and form of its structure owed far less to external influences and an imposed bureaucracy and instead was dictated by the exigencies of commercial opportunity, e.g. the number of business areas was directly related to the opportunity to diversify into different market areas. In respect of cultural orientation and leadership styles, superficially, there were similarities between the R&T company and the PCT. Like the PCT, R&T company has evolved a more organic and flexible culture to reflect its profit making commercial orientation and the need to become and remain competitive:

“It is a change, it is a cultural change, we have moved on. We have moved on from a business which was focused on the footwear industry, which was heavily governed by procedures and forms and paperwork, to one where we had to diversify into other areas like furniture, toys, sports goods, floor coverings, where we need a degree of entrepreneurship.” (Business Area Head – Furniture and floor Coverings)

“But at the same time we have to be competitive, we have to change in a very changing world, it is a cruel world and it doesn’t allow us very much leeway. We have got to compete, we have got to be seen to be sharp, and we have got to have people who can do that. So they have got to be technical and they have got to be sharp as well. It is hard.” (Assistant Director 1)

But this cultural transition from its pre-existence as public sector oriented organisation has left a legacy in the sense that some employees have struggled and were still struggling to come to terms with this new commercial orientation. They have responded by trying to retain the psychological comfort and safety of a previous research culture. This is creating challenges for the company as this response suggests:

“Some people have taken to certain changes quicker and they have moved there, and there are other people who are - and we acknowledge - more suitable in certain other areas and we have left them there. We have moved a particular chap, he has moved to two or three places and it hasn’t quite worked but we have now found him a place where he has settled in very comfortably. He is an ex-research guy but he certainly couldn’t carry on, he couldn’t test because he just couldn’t cope with it. But he has a great deal of knowledge and he is a very valuable resource and we have managed to place him somewhere and we do our best to do that.” (Assistant Director 1)

Besides the apparent existence of an ‘old guard’, who were seemingly resistant to or unable to shift to a more commercial reorientation, further evidence of this apparent cultural ‘segmentation’ was evident between those individuals and Business Areas who were displaying ambition, drive and enthusiasm to pursue opportunities and those who were apparently less ambitious and/or who may not have had the knowledge, skills and experience to perform as intrapreneurs and/or entrepreneurs.

But although there was evidence of what might be termed cultural segmentation (or old guard/new guard), there was a strong individual and collective pride expressed by respondents in the company and in the professional roles that individuals performed as technicians or support staff. The majority of respondents had representative positions on

external professional bodies and agencies influencing the setting of national and European testing standards and this contributed significantly to their dominant market position and ability to control the process of change on their terms:

“No we don’t cut corners. I think people like me who have been here for a long time we were brought up the old fashioned way where we do things properly. And I think a very important part of XXXX’s reputation is our integrity and attention to detail and not cheating or doing things improperly.” (Footwear Technologist)

But it was interesting to note how that pride, now driven by a commercial orientation, is now being combined with a desire to provide effective levels of customer service:

“Some customers they just want their test reports and they know what they are doing, they pay their money, they go away, they are fine and happy no problem. But in other instances they don’t understand what is being asked of them, it could be that the work is being requested of them by somebody else, so they have been told they have got to get this work done and they don’t understand what it is or why they are having to do it. They may not really understand what it is they have got to do because the person asking it of them is vague or isn’t clear. And they need guidance and help on what it is they should be doing.” (Business Area Head – Chemistry)

In a number of ways, professional pride could be seen to parallel the overarching ethos of patient care found in the PCT and which was driving clinical and operational priorities and professional standards. While the company was shifting to a more commercial orientation, it was seemingly not prepared to compromise its image and status in the testing field for commercial expediency.

In terms of its strategic leadership, like the PCT, the R&T company was led by a strong and experienced senior management team who as the CEO recalls, in the past when there were three executives, were labelled the “Holy Trinity” by external consultants reflecting (he felt) the powerful influence and control the senior management exerted over the organisation. There was considerable respect expressed for the strategic vision, leadership and expertise of the senior management by respondents captured in this extract:

“XXX [the CEO] and the directorate as a whole have made some very good strategic decisions which is why we are still here.” (Research Consultant)

However, unlike the PCT, there was a less consistent sense of a collegiality manifested in a more collective leadership style. Of the four senior managers who comprised the Executive Board, each had strengths and weaknesses, e.g. the CEO was admired for his consensual style and strategic skills while his deputy was admired for his technical abilities but somewhat criticised for his autocratic and interfering style. During the interviews, there were concerns expressed by a number of respondents about one of the senior managers identified as a strong contender to replace the CEO when he retired in summer 2007 (and followed 18 months later by the current Deputy CEO). The concerns revolved around the managerial competency and leadership style of this individual and whether this change of personnel at the top would destabilise the organisation and herald a radical change of direction. An extract from his interview captures a flavour of these concerns:

“It will be interesting if you have got some confidentiality from the other people who you have seen, but I wouldn’t think I would be the most popular guy in XXXX but I would like to think that it is the velvet glove in the iron fist really because I think we have had to change people’s approaches. Some people have been very comfortable if they have been here for 20, 30 years so in order not to be complacent and to make sure that we are always competitive in the roundest kind of way, not necessarily financially but certainly response wise, then you have got to motivate people in a number of ways. I do try and encourage but occasionally then we have to get the stick out unfortunately. But there are carrots as well because there is potential for a bonus if we actually meet the targets but individuals if they work well, we have our own accelerated promotional programme for them as well.” (Assistant Director 1)

[Note: Concerns about this individual were identified by the CEO and his Deputy and efforts were made to ‘interrogate’ the researcher about his interview with this individual and the views he expressed. The researcher was subsequently invited to informally discuss how the organisation should handle this succession issue. On another occasion following one of the staff presentations, a member of staff also approached the researcher ‘for a chat’ about this issue. For the record, the researcher managed to extricate himself from these ethically difficult positions without too much damage but it does beg the question if there was some hidden agenda when this individual was included in the sample of respondents!]

In sum, there were some similarities between the R&T company and the PCT in terms of their cultural orientation and leadership styles. They both demonstrated characteristics that resonated with a task-based culture operating within a traditional hierarchical structure. They were both led by a strong and visionary senior management team but in the case of the R&T company, there was a greater mix of leadership styles amongst the four senior executives. The R&T company also suggested a 'fit' between structure and culture that was a more benign, congenial and balanced one reflecting a more stable change environment that that being experienced by the PCT where the culture was almost one of 'us against them'; characterised by conflict and political tensions with key external stakeholders. This culture is reflected in the nature of the relationships that existed between managers and professionals in both organisations.

5.2.3 "Working together for change"

In terms of how people were functioning in the face of change captured in their roles and relationships, within the PCT there was compelling evidence of clinical professionals and clinical managers operating within a tight-knit world of like minded and committed individuals where professional pride and credibility united them into a cohesive and supportive team:

“As I say, a little group of us who are the diabetes mafia for want of a better term, I think we're all quite vociferous, strong minded individuals who a) work well together and b) aren't afraid to push when push is needed.” (Podiatrist 1)

But at the same time they were operating across a broad and complex network of other health professionals in both primary and acute sectors as well as other non-medical professionals, e.g. internally, managers and externally social workers. Additionally they interacted with non-clinical stakeholders such as patient groups, Borough Council officials, etc.

This capacity to interact and relate to others appears to depend on a shared ethos of care and vocation and this has to be displayed and obvious to others as the following comment from suggests:

“The nature of the work we do means that we have to be interested in what we do as individuals and that if I came to work with no interest in what I do then I don’t think that I would succeed as much. I’m very fortunate that the people I work with most closely have nearly as much an interest or have as much of an interest as I have in keeping feet on the end of legs.” (Podiatrist 2)

Relating to and influencing others was based heavily on formal and informal meetings to raise issues, problems and concerns with fellow professionals. Debate and persuasion were the main approaches – presenting the facts and requiring the other person to agree or present counter arguments. In other words, there was a heavy reliance on being strong-minded and believing that what you were doing was the right thing to do. The expectation was that fellow professionals would always respect your point of view and trust the motives that lay behind your arguments. There were other means of influencing evident. For instance being credible as a role model or clinical expert was identified as invaluable in certain situations. For example, one of the Diabetes Specialist Nurses cites a GP who appeared to be resisting a new initiative in diabetes care in connection with insulin management. After investigation it was found he didn’t understand certain specialist requirements and therefore re-education was required which solved the problem.

Interestingly, amongst all of the clinical professionals none of them pointed explicitly to any overt form of political, status-linked or coercive form of influence – even when prompted by the researcher (“How would you influence those who do not agree or resist your motives”). However, a number recognised that there would be different interests to accommodate. The best approach was to talk to the other party and try to find out ‘where they were coming from’ and then see how you could meet their requirements through force of argument leading to an acceptable and pragmatic compromise:

“So if I take the question as a, from that sort of how I behave type way rather than what I’m personally going to achieve in relation to specific improvements in health population, you know, because I’ve learnt over my twenty odd years in public health practice, you know, you don’t get anything done unless it’s done in an orchestrated way and organised through others. And trying to be part of a multi disciplinary team is an important aspect of it, from my point of view, and for us to spot our opportunities.” (Public Health Consultant)

Another interesting dimension to relationship building that became evident from the interviews and observations was the extent that professionals and managers displayed

patterns of sympathy and empathy with their colleagues who were experiencing problems or pressures:

“I think what I try to do is put myself in their shoes when I am doing whatever I am doing with them. So if I am talking to the practice managers about a new whatever I think it is really important for them to know that I understand what the impact of that will be on them and their jobs and I do the same with the GPs.” (Strategic Development Manager, Primary Care)

“Well I mean you’ve got to talk to them first of all. You’ve got to talk to them, you’ve got to know what they want, you’ve got to understand what their requirements are and then you’ve got to decide how do you negotiate through the minefield of, well we need to do this but you want that so where’s the compromise then. And I think that it’s understanding where other people are coming from because if you don’t, it doesn’t work.” (Podiatrist 2)

There was more than a hint of “Sisters and Brothers” in adversity” and the need to give a sympathetic recognition to the problems and issues that others face and take those into account when seeking solutions. However, it was noticeable that this sympathy did not extend to those external NHS agencies that were seeking to control the PCT. Here the relationship was likely to be more one of enmity – founded on an antagonistic and distrustful relationship where the concern was to “keep them off our backs” and this antipathy was reflected, both in the main PEC meetings, but also at more specific project meetings attended by the researcher.

In the R&T company, perceptions of roles and relationships were somewhat different to those found in the PCT. Whereas managers and professionals in the PCT were part of a complex web of internal and external relationships centred around professional collegiality driven by a strong ethos of patient care, in the R&T company the pattern of relationships were characteristically more parochial – due largely it would appear to the company’s shift from a research to a more commercially driven orientation.

Relationships revolved around a concern by individuals and Business Areas to interact primarily to meet revenue and budgetary targets. As a consequence they were more instrumental in their perceptions of relations which were expressed as a network of dependencies between functional areas, i.e. relationships characterised less by professional discussion and debate and more by “this is what I want or need you to do for me so that I achieve my objectives” as the following respondent views suggest:

“They are all on individual bonus arrangements so they have a vested interest in what goes on in their department, both financially and for their own career progression and well being etc, but they are limited to going back to the executive all the time if they want to do anything. So more autonomy to the managers but I would temper that with somehow getting the bigger picture across to them as well. Because some of them have a silo mentality and that is my bit and that is what I am going for and, you know, bugger the rest of the company. If I am not busy I will be finding ways to get busy rather than is there anybody else that I can help in the business. So a bit more autonomy; getting the bigger picture across.” (Head of Personnel)

External relationships with stakeholders were far less antagonistic reflecting the commercial orientation and the dominant position of the company in the field of accreditation. Its relations were driven by the need to support existing Members through testing and advice and to develop commercial opportunities through the provision of a comprehensive service to existing and new customers:

“He gives that baton to me and lets me run with it ... I go out to customers and go to their factories.” (Furniture Technologist)

“I think that the key priorities are customer service in its broadest sense. So I think trying to do the job right and quickly. This is what we are here to do. Do the job to a defined quality level and at a speed, in a timescale that satisfied the customer.” (Assistant Director 2)

While many respondents at all levels had also developed external relationships with other professionals and managers through their representation as perceived ‘experts’ on a myriad of professional bodies, they also viewed those relationships as an opportunity to promote the company and its services:

“It is encouraged [participation in external professional bodies] because it keeps us involved in these business areas, it keep us understanding what is going on and also puts our name out. Its part of my marketing role to get my name out and known in these areas.” (Floor Coverings Team Leader)

Like the PCT, all of the respondents in the R&T company, including those in a managerial role, had a professional background in the sense that they had undertaken professional training leading to qualifications, e.g. they were scientists, technologists or in a support profession e.g. personnel or accountant. A number of the respondents ‘wore two hats’ in that they were both a professional and had managerial responsibilities but this was not always apparent in the job title, e.g. Furniture Technologist who was

combining a first line managerial role with a role as professional expert on footwear technology. This was a common feature across the sample group. However, unlike the PCT where few managers and professionals have experienced any significant management training, most of the managers and professional in the R&T company had attended internal management programmes and some had gained external management qualifications.

In terms of relating to and influencing others, there were similarities between the PCT and the R&T company in the sense that while there was less apparent collegiality, nevertheless, there was still a desire for consensual discussion and cooperation and the avoidance of confrontation with little evidence suggested of overt 'politicking':

“I don't tend to get angry and start shouting at people, because it doesn't really work, it just pisses people off really. I usually get my point across by just stressing the importance of meeting deadlines and if we want repeat business from customers, and you want to keep your job at the end of the day, we have to keep them happy. I think people generally know if I am annoyed and if I am getting stressed that a product must be finished by a certain date because I will tell them, not in a blunt manner but in a forceful manner.” (Furniture Technologist)

5.2.4 “Systems and processes to do the job”

In terms of its operating technologies and available resources, the PCT could be described as suffering just like other areas of the National Health Service with insufficient resources and technologies which were often incompatible and outdated:

“People say right well you've got to think outside the box, and I hate every time I hear that, think outside the box, because a lot of the times it's you haven't got the resources so how are you going to manage with what you have got, come up with an idea and sometimes it's just well you come up with an idea but is it really a compromise.” (Podiatrist 2)

In terms of its human resources policies and practices, the PCT had conventional framework of job definitions, performance management through appraisal and clinical supervision. Training and development were functionally administered by a Learning and Development department following a systematic identification of needs and a conventional course driven approach.

However, within these HR systems, respondents reported differences in approaches. For some, jobs were clearly defined (Assistant Director, Learning and Development) but others were flexible in the way they defined their job (Strategic Development Manager – Primary Care).

The measuring and monitoring of individual performance tended to be informal and at times ad-hoc in both its administration and operation:

Respondent: “We do have an appraisal system which has been developed and worked on, but in all honesty in the one and a half years I have been here it hasn’t really come to light yet. Certainly as a group we monitor ourselves, we do have a set of objectives that we all work to and the board watches and the PEC watches and we report to, so we do have a direction and an understanding. But in terms of a personal appraisal it is not something that is really taken off yet.” (Director Service Development)

Researcher: “Let me ask you another question about your own role, how’s your performance measured, how is it monitored your performance as senior podiatrist?”

Respondent: “The glib answer is to say it isn’t, provided nobody complains, end of story. We all have a PDP, IPR, whatever we want to call it.” (Podiatrist 1)

Not unexpectedly, as a research and technology organisation, the R&T company was able to fully avail itself and take advantage of new forms of technology, indeed in a number of areas it was in the forefront of designing and developing those technologies and had a small subsidiary company building specialist, state-of-the-art testing equipment. In respect of available resources, the company has consistently made a profit on its operations but being non-profit making, has been able to reinvest these profits back into the business.

Like the PCT, the R&T company has implemented a well established set of HR policies and systems but unlike the PCT, its HR infrastructure was seen to be more directly related to the commercial goals of the company and less just ‘going through the motions’ that was indicative in some areas of the PCT, e.g. performance appraisal. It operated a comprehensive performance management system centred on an effective appraisal system that was focused on setting clear business objectives and targets and a

performance related bonus system based on the performance of the whole company. Staff development was funded from its profits through in-house and external training courses for professional and management development. But do these performance-based systems work? According to a 2004 review by Investors in People assessors, the answer is that they do. In a feedback report, the company was commended for its “examples of good practice” and the improvements it has made in its training and performance management systems. Further investment in these and other HR systems features prominently in the 2006-2010 Business Plan.

But one of the most striking features to emerge from the analysis was the absence of job descriptions throughout the company. HR orthodoxy suggests that job descriptions should be used to define and specify individual duties and responsibilities which in turn, aid understanding of roles but also play a part in grading and recruitment. At the beginning of the data collection, the researcher thought the absence of job descriptions was an administrative oversight but as the interviews progressed it became apparent that there was a deliberate policy not to develop and implement job descriptions. Instead, roles were only loosely defined with objectives and targets to be achieved and the detail was ‘filled in’ by the individual as they developed their role:

“No there are no Job Descriptions in XXXX I think that many years before I joined, they realised that they could be too constrictive [sic] and we didn’t want anybody turning around saying that’s not in my job description. We knew there were going to be lots of changes to jobs, structures and people and terms and conditions as well so we didn’t want to restrict ourselves.” (Head of Personnel)

“It gives me flexibility to address the needs of the business as I see them from my perspective. I have to rely on feedback from the other business managers if we are approaching it in the right direction. It gives us a lot of flexibility.” (IT manager)

This lack of job definition captures effectively the mood of innovation and improvement – of intrapreneurship - that seems to have proliferated in the company and is an example of one of a number of facilitating interventions made by senior manager to promote innovation and to encourage managers and professionals to respond to change management challenges – primarily it would seem to take the responsibility for managing change themselves.

However in some areas of the company, there is an impression that this has led to divisive tensions between those managers and professionals who are struggling to come to terms with this cultural shift to a commercial orientation. Some have responded enthusiastically to this new-found freedom to initiate and lead change in their area of responsibility while at the same time expanding that responsibility as well, while a minority appear to have struggled to come to terms with this shift and prefer to remain in the comfort zone of their previous role.

In sum, in terms of outer and inner context, (Pettigrew, 1987, 1988) there were strong similarities across a number of variables and parameters but at the same time, there were some clear differences between the two organisations. The similarities and differences are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5-1 Similarities and differences in outer and inner context and dealing with the challenges of change

Similarities	Differences
<p>Conventionally structured, hierarchical bureaucracies</p> <p>Visionary senior management team that is strategically focused and cohesive</p> <p>Communicating, involving and empowering culture</p> <p>Managerial and professional roles combined</p> <p>Strong professional ethos and pride in achieving goals and maintaining high personal standards</p> <p>Motivated workforce and performing to high standards</p> <p>Roles flexibly interpreted</p> <p>Little evidence of conflict between departments and individuals</p>	<p>Stability of external environment</p> <p>Volume, scale and pace of change</p> <p>Level of control over environmental forces and degree of management choice over strategic direction</p> <p>Complexity of stakeholders interest and influence</p> <p>Level of tension in relationships with external stakeholders</p> <p>Cohesiveness of sub-cultures and internal relationships</p> <p>Degree of bureaucracy and complexity of systems and processes</p> <p>Availability of resources and new technologies</p> <p>Scope and ability to innovate and initiate change</p> <p>Effectiveness of, human resource policies and practices</p>

Table 5.1 points up some important similarities between two nominally different and contrasting organisations on the basis of the challenges they face. Critically, a strong and cohesive senior management team is evident and this is complemented by a culture that is built on professional pride and high standards; and a flexible interpretation about who does what and why. Together these characteristics allow both organisations to manage change effectively. But there are important differences which partly reflect the nature of the organisation and its central strategic purpose, but are also connected to the environment in which they operate and the degree of control they can bring to bear. How far these similarities and difference were influential in shaping change management distribution will be debated in the next chapter.

Having analysed the data to reveal similarities and differences in outer and inner context and how determining structures and processes are being interpreted by individuals in each case organisation, the next section investigates how change management is pervading and re-configuring the roles of managers and professionals.

5.3 Distributing change management

The analysis and debates in chapter two argued that the process of distributing change management to managers and professionals may be far more complicated than current rational theories and models of change leadership suggest. In this section of the findings the views of managers and professionals in both case organisations about how they have become involved in change management and how they have assimilated change management responsibilities into their roles will be explored.

5.3.1 “Its part of your job”

In terms of planning how to implement the plethora of large scale change projects that had descended on the PCT, formal responsibilities were devolved to the Service Development Department. Here, a team of internal change consultants from a variety of clinical and non-clinical backgrounds were charged with coordinating the process of change. Across the PCT, the roles for managers and professionals were therefore hybridised as they found themselves being pulled into this formal network of projects -

they were obliged to work as a project lead or as part of a project team to implement change in their own and other areas:

“I think certainly the clinical governance lead role is expanding and I’ve found it increasingly difficult to carry out that role and continue to be a full time practitioner. About the last 12 months I’ve actually negotiated that the PCT now puts a salaried doctor into my practice for one day a week to free me up to do that.” (PEC General Practitioner)

It was clear that a powerful visionary leadership was creating and shaping a cultural environment where change management was becoming the natural order for managers and professionals as this quotation from the Chief Executive suggests:

“We had a very good discussion around the ways we could actually deliver what they wanted to and deliver the targets and within a month they achieved 100 percent and they’ve achieved 100 percent sustainable since then because actually the GPs and their colleagues understand why it’s important that we do that. And therefore they’re no longer feeling that it’s a government target and the PCT is an arm of the government making them do something which they don’t think is important. They’ve had that discussion about actually where it fits, why we’re doing it, why it’s best to get the government off our backs and not be worried about that, and to use our resources for things we do best. So actually having that debate, having an open discussion around what it was that we were trying to do, making sure that we all spoke our minds and we told it as it was, leads you into saying well this is how you need to change.” (Chief Executive)

And his colleague in the senior management team appears to concur:

“I want an organisation where the staff and all networks feel they can make a contribution to the agenda. So they can say, we see this particular need, and staff should feel they can actually influence the agenda because they feel there is so much that is centrally driven and I want to keep that space for staff to say, it has to be a local service And they don’t talk about staff influence and I think unless you can influence staff your patient and public influence won’t work, because staff will not want to listen to people if they challenge them. So it is trying to create the organisations that will allow challenge, in a sense, from different levels. Challenge from outside, communities, from patients, from interest groups as well as challenge from within.” (Chair of PCT)

Alongside this impetus from ongoing evolutionary development, there was a sense that taking a responsibility for introducing change should now be considered an integral part to the professional role – in part to overcome the bureaucratic constraints impinging on the PCT - but it also provided the opportunity to act independently and unilaterally and

thereby to make a difference at a local level. In part this involved adapting the major change initiatives to fit with local requirements and to make them work. But is also reflected a desire to initiate change locally and independently for vocational and possibly ethical reasons:

“We’ve got a responsibility as a change agent, that’s a key responsibility. You know, we are seen as leaders and we are seen as perhaps being, generally, and our team, and I think we’re all quite charismatic and I think that’s important to act as a role model, you know, to inspire and motivate others. We’re quite visionary. And I suppose we’re constantly keeping up to date with changes and developments, research, things are changing all the time.” (Diabetes Specialist Nurse 1)

Individuals were also influenced by the complex professional networks and informal relationships in which they performed their roles. Here, expectations were that colleagues would involve themselves and work cooperatively and cohesively to implement change – especially when it was associated with improvement to patient care:

“I love work, I love to see things happen and I love to see new things and I like to see things change. I get very frustrated with people who don’t want to change. That’s another one of my downs – I can’t understand why people would not want to change if it’s about improving things for patients.” (Service Development Manager)

Unless you actually involve other people, get them to take some ownership, because that’s how it works. You know, I’ve run a ward, when I wasn’t there I wanted to know that the care would be the same whether I was there or not. And yes, you get other people to embrace change by making them feel as though they’re part of the change.” (Diabetes Specialist Nurse 1)

For some, this was providing opportunities for managerial and professional roles to be flexibly interpreted:

“One has always to some extent had to try and synthesise the major elements of that role within the setting for oneself I guess. So in terms of formal, central laying down of that obviously there are certain responsibilities that go with it but actually what it really means in practice within a health community is, I’ve certainly viewed it as being elements of it are given I guess but a lot of it is up to you to make what you can or will of it.” (Chair of PEC)

“Well it’s not; it’s something that’s sort of evolved over time rather than anything else. I’m actually a chartered accountant by profession and I started off

within a finance function. They decided to take the element of my work and bring it in to commissioning. I was also very interested in doing commissioning, so I actually was the lead for diabetes and various other things, within the commissioning team, as well as doing the performance and the contracting. But that's sort of like grown and I've had to give up the other sort of areas, like diabetes and other people have taken that on. So yes, it's a constantly changing role, it's very dynamic." (Assistant Director Finance)

In a similar manner to the PCT, the hybridisation of manager and professional roles in the R&T company was driven by a combination of external and internal forces.

However, as the previous section suggested, the nature of these forces were significantly different. Whereas the PCT was in the main having to react to externally imposed government policies and plans, change in the R&T company which was historically reactive, was now proactively seizing opportunities to diversify into new markets and initiating the required internal structural and cultural changes to facilitate that. In that sense, there were some similarities to the PCT as the integration of change management responsibilities with managerial and professional facets of an individual's role had to somehow be communicated and embedded as a strategic imperative if both organisations were to succeed. There was an overt recognition by senior managers that the business had to diversify but that to do that successfully could only be achieved with the support of employees through their innovative behaviours and systems for performance management and training and development reflected this goal.

But while there was some evidence of minor project working in the form of what might be described as continuous improvement teams to explore minor improvements to systems and processes, there was nothing on the scale of the formalised project management structures evident in the PCT through their dedicated project management team of Service Development Managers [N.B. These were individuals from a variety of clinical and other backgrounds who decided as a career change, to move into full time change management and were operating as internal change consultants with a formal responsibility for a major project, e.g. GP contract]. The focus was on encouragement and facilitation being cascaded downwards from the Executive, through the Business Area heads, to the junior managers and professionals who were then sent cultural cues telling them that innovative, change-creating behaviours were desired and those willing to participate would somehow be 'rewarded':

“The Chief Executive puts forward three different projects for us to split into groups and have discussions about. That might be something like how would we change the salary scale or it might be how do we encourage entrepreneurs and people like that. The management team then is split into groups and we discuss those points and then the executive move round from the groups so they have spent half of it with us and then half of it with somebody else. And those groups then stay together as working groups for that year and we put together the plans. And we have developed all kinds of bits and pieces from that.”
(Business Area Manager – Fabric care and cleaning technology)

There was at the same time, an apparent tacit recognition by senior managers that such interventions should not be micro-managed from the top. They had to make less formal and direct, second-order interventions to create the right structural and cultural conditions for individuals and collective groups to participate and become involved in a responsibility for implementing the necessary changes in their area:

“It’s too many cups full. I have had conversations with the CEO, and I am pleased that he said this to me, we are so broad here, there are so many things; you cannot have one person who is an expert in every area that XXXX deals with. So you can have a strategic leadership and then you have managers that you empower, they are the experts in those areas so leave them alone. That is starting now and it is to do with our diversification.” (Research Consultant)

The findings suggest that a dynamic of change creating behaviours was being established across the company. As change was assimilated into managerial and professionals roles, further facilitation and encouragement by bosses and others embedded and enhanced the assimilation of change management into their roles:

“**Respondent:** They knew I had got experience of managing big groups of people and obviously with a production background ... so he asked me to look at the department and see what it was about. So I took a few weeks and wrote a lengthy report. ... and suggested some restructuring and some changes. And they implemented the majority of what I suggested and then they asked me to manage it. I was really pleased and last year income grew by 10%. Then I suppose the other bit, I think, when they see you are successful with one thing they will challenge you with something else.” (Business Area Manager - Footwear testing)

Researcher: Yes, I am getting the impression that there is a lot of scope for you to go for it. If you want to go for it, you can go for it as far as and as much as you want. If you don’t, well fine, but you have got objectives to meet, it is up to you.

Respondent: “If I suddenly decided well what I want to do next week is test carpet cleaning machines then I would put forward a proposal for how I was going to do that and how much it would cost.”

Researcher: And you would do that formally?

Respondent: “Yes I would do that formally to Richard and suggest that. I would put that forward and they would probably say, yes, ok then can go for it, and that would be it. It is more or less entirely up to us how we bring it forward, bring the businesses forward.” (Business Centre Manager – fabric care)

And other respondents demonstrated how this sense of a ‘go for it’, ‘can-do’ culture might be contributing to a dynamic pattern of innovative behaviour; a kind of positive reinforcing effect that is created as one innovation contributes or leads to another:

“Yes it means you end up getting a lot more different types of jobs, we don’t just take on furniture, I will fish for jobs we can get from the industry. So recently we have been getting strange things like barbecues, trampolines, medical devices as well wheelchairs and commodes and things” So I might do a test for them and say are there any other areas you would like us to look at while I am at their factory. Or while I am looking at their catalogue, I will say what about this area, do you want us to look at this.” (Furniture Technologist)

What was interesting to note was how one innovation was having a knock-on effect as it led to other innovations - that innovative behaviour by one area or individual would also generate a dynamic of innovative behaviour and a willingness to accept or take change responsibility for initiating and managing change in other areas:

Respondent: “I think some of it is driven from the top, possibly the initial bit was driven from the top but then once the initial drive is there then certainly it is very much a case of ... XXXXX is a very good example because they started off very small and they have just grown and grown, and that is XXXX driving it.”

Researcher: Are you looking to emulate that in some respects?

Respondent: “I don’t know whether I am looking to emulate it but I certainly would like to see our department flourish. I don’t think I would run it the same as XXXX.”

Researcher: In a commercial sense, going out and looking for business and looking for opportunities?

Respondent: “Yes, but I think in terms of the new areas it is very much a case that there are a lot of people in the company who are willing to take on new jobs.” (Business Area Head – Chemistry)

As the previous section has suggested, in terms of how change is being assimilated into the roles of managers and professionals, there are clear similarities and differences which are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5-2 Similarities and difference in the dynamics and mechanisms of change management distribution

Similarities	Differences
<p>Involvement in change management has now to be considered as an integral feature of all manager and professional roles and a strategic imperative for organisational survival</p> <p>Trusting, empowering and facilitating leadership encouraging support for change and innovative change-creating behaviours creates self-sustaining dynamic of positive reinforcement</p> <p>Change management distribution driven by strong professional culture and networks aimed at improving and ‘adding value’ in terms of patient care and customer service</p> <p>Change management reliant mainly on internal expertise and resources</p> <p>Opportunities for unilateral and independent action to initiate and implement change to counter complexity, to meet unique local needs and to make it easier to perform in designated role</p>	<p>The extent that change management distribution can be considered as a reactive or proactive response to external forces</p> <p>The extent that formalised project management structures are used to plan and implement change rather than more autonomous mini-projects controlled and managed locally</p> <p>Degree of management control exerted over initiatives linked to systems of financial and budgetary control</p>

Table 5.2 suggests there are some notable similarities between the two case organisations. A key similarity is the role of a small and cohesive senior management team who are inspiring their managers and professionals to become involved in change management and willingly accept or take that responsibility. But while formal project management teams are used in the PCT as part of the change management process, overall, both leadership teams rely on the motivation, enthusiasm and professionalism of individuals and collective groups to improve and transform their organisations. However, differences emerge in the systems of control which are more explicit in the R&T company but linked more overtly to performance measures rather than direct

intervention by senior managers. Another notable difference is how a willingness or unwillingness to involve oneself in change management is used to culturally demarcate the workforce.

Having explored the dynamics of change management distribution, attention will now turn to the effects that change management assimilation is having on manager and professional roles.

5.4 The effects of change management distribution

5.4.1 “It’s swings and roundabouts, ups and downs”

There were indications from the findings that assimilating change management into manager and professionals roles was having a number of effects with wider implications for the strategic management of change. Some of these effects might be deemed to be positive while others were seen to be negative in their impact. Equally, some of the effects were specifically directed at individuals while other effects were felt more widely across the organisation.

The findings suggest that for some in the PCT, their involvement in change management might be having beneficial effects when it was focused on ambition and opportunities for career development:

“And within that role I led on initiatives within primary care so I worked with GP practices and the practice nurses. So I did the PMS project, you know, we implemented a lot of the PMS pilots locally, I worked with them. And I left that in October so I’m very new into service development. So it’s been a very quick change of roles. It doesn’t sound quick when it’s over 5 years but it actually has for me, it’s been a huge shift of responsibilities and change really.” (Service Development Manager)

“I suppose the other thing is that it has expanded and provided me with opportunities beyond the job that I’m employed to do...I suppose added experiences and richness of work in the health world.” (Director of Corporate Development)

However, for others, the opportunities were recognised but there were some reservations and uncertainties about how their role might unfold in the future:

“I’d still like to be in district nursing but if I’m honest, in five years time, I don’t know because there’s so much change going on, I really don’t know how things will be structured. I’d like to think that I will still be doing nursing, I enjoy my job and I haven’t got great ambitions to go up management wise, I’m quite happy as I am. Having said that, I’m not the sort of person that can just sit there and do nothing, which is why I’ve taken on this nurse practitioner, so I probably will do other things. I think the role of district nurse will, I think it will expand but I don’t know exactly where I’ll be because I think there’s so much change going on. So I doubt if it will be as it is now.” (District Nursing Team Leader)

The findings suggest that for those in the PCT, an assimilation of change management into their roles was leading to a more demanding and pressurised existence. Because these individuals had important change skills and experiences, or were enthusiastic about their involvement, they were ‘targeted’ for change responsibility by senior managers who had confidence in their ability to deliver but which led to greater stress for them. This was summed up in this honest expression by an individual who was a highly experienced change leader:

“Because I am so busy at the moment that is why I get so stressed out because things shouldn’t be taking me as long as they are taking me but they are because of the volume of work I am having to deal with so that is a source of stress for me Today on the PEC we have got early draft of primary care strategy and I have been saying for ages I will write one but it has just been one of those things that has gone to the bottom of the pile. So I have done an early first draft and I know there is great holes in it and it needs pinning down.” (Strategic Development Manager – Primary care)

[N.B. The researcher subsequently observed this manager presenting her “early draft” at the PEC meeting and the embarrassment she suffered when she was questioned about her strategy by other members and could not provide coherent answers].

Other individuals also expressed their concerns about how increased workloads spills over into private lives creating negative effects such as stress and ill-health with implications for performance as it ‘acts back’ to affect their roles as managers and professional with responsibilities to manage change successfully:

“But I am aware that last year when we just worked constantly and it seemed to just come home with you, I mean taking stuff home constantly at the weekend. I wouldn’t want that for a long period...I was aware that you know, bits start getting a bit flaky, you start getting sore throats and colds and bits start to drop off and stuff.” (Diabetes Specialist Nurse 2)

“My wife isn’t best pleased with this. There are lots of meetings in the evenings and nights you may be away. You can become a bore as well because you rabbit on about things you believe in so passionately and you wonder why peoples’ eyes glaze over.” (Chair of PEC)

“I have found life very stressful in the last 2-3 years. Part of that is an inability to say no.” (GP Clinical Governance Lead)

In the R&T company there was similar evidence that while change management distribution was cascading downwards and outwards and being positively reinforced by a facilitating and supportive management culture, the effect was to create a powerful bottom-up dynamic as some individuals viewed a positive attitude to assimilating change management into their roles as an opportunity to independently and unilaterally promote career ambition and fulfil other personal motives. These extracts capture the mood of ambition and motivation expressed by a number of respondents:

“I set myself a target that I have not managed yet and I am determined I am going to get there before I do retire. I would like to be able to leave having built the area and left it in a sustainable position with good prospects for the team who are staying beyond my going, there are a couple who are younger than me But we need to leave the company with something that will run after we have gone.” (Business Area Head – Fabric and cleaning)

“And it was people identifying me as somebody who could have success, irrespective of me fitting the bill of the nodding employee, seeing somebody with more guts and more drive, and understanding me more, and giving me more opportunities. Now we do things now that are not in the rule book.” (Homewear Technologist)

This willingness to assimilate change in a proactive and enthusiastic manner into their roles was viewed as an opportunity to advance their personal career and/or for them to be considered for promotion. In other words, a willingness to accept change management as part of a managerial or professional role was a way of ‘flagging’ to senior management that they were ambitious and wished to advance their career:

“It takes your own drive really and you need to be interested in that area or want to succeed. I want to go further, I have always wanted to go to the next level and I see if you sit back and just do what is expected of you then you won’t really progress, you will just stay at the same level. Whereas if you do what is expected of you plus additional things on top of that, that is the only way you are going to gain more knowledge yourself and make the business expand.”
(Furniture Technologist)

Furthermore, as this extract suggests, the ambition, motivation and enthusiasm displayed by some individuals was used by senior managers, intentionally or otherwise, as a means to identify those who were favourably disposed towards change as part of their role and therefore became a ‘marker’ for talent spotting and possible future promotion:

Respondent: “While we are managing the people there will be one or two of the technicians, or maybe a technologist or somebody, who will show an aptitude for doing this and one of our Business Area Managers has picked out somebody with an aptitude for looking forward and moving things forward. And I think we have all sort of earmarked him as a potential, and I have said he would be much better off working in my area than yours because he is brilliant and he is going to go somewhere this lad.”

Researcher: So he needs to be nurtured?

Respondent: “Yes, and he has been given various projects to deal with and he is responding brilliantly to them. He is always looking forward and looking for what else he can do and managing things. It is funny because we have all picked him out, there is a lot that you think, right well they will only ever do what they are doing, they will never manage anything because of the way they are, no matter how many management training courses you put that person on you will never make him into a manager because it is not within him.” (Business Area Manager – Fabric care and cleaning technology)

However, just as in the PCT, the process of cascading change management downwards and outwards was having positive and negative effects, and was raising a number of issues. One of the most striking effects was the demarcation of individuals and even departments into those who were willing and compliant in assimilating added change responsibilities and those who, for different reasons were seen not to be favourably disposed or even resistant to efforts to involve them or their departments:

“The ones who seem more willing and work harder are the ones who worked outside of this organisation....some of the people who have only ever worked here don’t seem to have much go about them at all to be honest One of the

senior managers calls them pockets of inflexibility.” (Business Area Manager, Footwear testing).

“I have got a colleague who talks to me who is a technician. Now he started within 3 months of me starting and he is still a technician after 13 years whereas I have moved up. He is his own worst enemy because he will not put in over and above.” (Homewear Technologist)

“There are some people who would see their role as just making sure the day to day running is there. So they would just manage a division and just make sure the work is being carried out and as long as that work is going through, I can see a lot of people saying that that’s their job done. I could see a lot of people, I know a lot of people, who get comfortable just doing that and they are happy because potentially they are doing their work, the work is going through the system but they are not interested in looking to progress the business anywhere. They just want to keep the work that is already coming through, just keep that going.” (Furniture Technologist)

But for those who were favourably disposed to assimilating change management, their enthusiasm could backfire when they found themselves, like a number of respondents in the PCT, the first choice candidate (or target?) for more responsibility. This led to many of them become overloaded and a feeling under pressure to perform:

“I think that the other way you end up with extra jobs here is when there is a group meeting and they are asking for suggestions of what we could do, how we could do it. Whoever comes up with the idea tends to get the job. So consequently, the people who have been here the longest and don’t want the job anymore just don’t say anything.Some weeks I am so tired and there is too much on and I think I wish I had kept my mouth shut. And you will actually hear some of the others say, well I am not going to suggest anything because they will only give it to me.” (Business Area Manager - Footwear Testing)

“Some people would say I was at the wrong place at the wrong time or the right place or whether someone is looking out. Someone obviously is doing something and I feel quite, it is a nice feeling to have someone believe in you but it is also quite hard knowing, I don’t want to let them down in return.” (Business Area Head – Chemistry)

The consequential and unintended effect of this demarcation was the apparent resentment that built up against those colleagues who were not prepared to their enthusiasm and take their share of the workload:

“I consider myself to be very hard working and I take on a lot of extra things, if we have got project groups going, or if the CEO wants any particular subject

looking at, nine times out of ten I am one of the people he asks to do it. I sometimes wonder if he asks me to do it because he knows I won't cause a fuss and I will do it whether he actually wants ... There seems to be a handful of willing work horses and then some people who don't seem to put much in.”
(Business Area Manager – Footwear testing)

And for those who would not or could not assimilate change management into their roles, the effect was to highlight their unwillingness and expose them as underperforming and uncooperative with a risk that the company would take actions against those who were not participating and therefore somehow were failing in their existing role, even if their performance in that role might be adequate and acceptable:

“We have had to address that and there are people within the group who can not do that, people who were important before in these other areas haven't been able to make the change because they can't work that quickly, they can't multi-task, they can't hold 10 jobs, remember all about them and chase them up and follow them through. They are not used to having to give an answer every day if people phone them up and say, I want the answer now. They are just not used to it.” (Assistant Director 1)

But you end up then doing 5 jobs at once and they are very, very different and not everyone is happy in that situation. Some people relish it but I am finding more and more you can't have an inflexible team, you do need specialist people because they don't seem to be around anymore. People specialise and they get very worried if you ask them to start drilling holes in something, oh what's a drill it's dangerous! (Research Consultant)

“But I think XXX are getting more commercial across all areas. Perhaps historically they were happy to let departments run because they would get something out of them. I think now if they don't pay for themselves they take a hard nosed decision.” (Head of Manufacture)

[N.B. according to the respondent, this department was not very innovative or productive and the respondent announced in the interview that he was leaving the company as he was unhappy at the way he was being treated and the commercial pressures that were placed on him]

There was an impression obtained that the minority who were being judged as unwilling in their response to measures aimed at involving them more fully in change management were doing so because they felt incapable of absorbing a more commercially focused culture and wanted to retain the old scientific culture, or they may have lacked the confidence an/or skills to make the necessary transition. There were indications that this 'new-guard/old-guard' demarcation was in danger of

becoming a self fulfilling prophecy as the focus of attention was towards those who displayed a willingness to involve themselves and those who did not were labelled as blockers or resisters and were being ostracised.

5.4.2 “It hurts but we like it”

Whilst change may be having a significant impact on managers and professionals – both functionally and in their private lives - at the same time there was evidence that some felt it was a ‘price worth paying’. There was the impression of an apparent cost/benefit trade-off in the sense that, despite the pressures, an involvement in change management would deliver psychological rewards and create personal opportunities. The issue therefore became the extent that individuals might have control over the trade-off and whether the price might be too high if it led to stress or personal risks to their career if they somehow are seen to have failed to bring change about:

“I suppose it changes you relative to your partners and people that you work with as well. There’s this view of what we do and I suppose it does make you tougher. As I frequently say, I’ll just have to cry myself to sleep again tonight won’t I. It does change you and you do have to pay a price. But currently the feeling that I have is that it’s a price worth paying because the interest level and the opportunity level I think makes the price worth paying.” (Chair of PEC)

“It’s a roller coaster ride meaning the highs and lows. I guess because of my personality I see my role as challenging and I think I can look for opportunities then it is exciting and if you don’t like change you wouldn’t be in the job would you?” (Clinical Governance Manager)

And in the R&T company, the double-edged effect of having a change management dimension assimilated into your role was even more evident as the positive benefits brought added pressures:

“In some cases I think personally it has improved me, although I said earlier I would like to have more confidence I have certainly improved on my confidence a lot from being here. Occasionally I do find it quite stressful with the changes and frustrating.” (Operations Supervisor – footwear testing)

“I think my professionalism in the role has increased, I take more pride in my role. The stress has increased; it has gone along with the professionalism which I have needed to cope with the greater areas I am involved with. So yes the

stress has increased with the role. We have always done a good job so far so everything is coming together and everything is manageable.” (IT manager)

What was interesting to note about these accounts of being involved in change management, is that despite contextual differences between the two organisations, especially in relation to the pace, scale and degree of control over the change process, there are apparent similarities in the way change responsibility is being experienced. In both organisations, respondents reported they experienced higher levels of stress but this was being offset, compensated for by the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards that involvement brought them. For some individuals, the impression formed that having a responsibility for change is linked to certain personality characteristics. Some described their experience in metaphorical terms as being associated with the ‘buzz’ gained from drugs-taking or from being on a thrill ride such as a roller coaster. But equally (and at risk of maybe stretching the metaphor too far) they suggested there were low-points in the experience when their involvement, for whatever reason, did not meet with their expectations. Linking a propensity or desire to become involved may therefore have implications for the criteria and mechanisms by which those becoming involved in some form of change management responsibility are selected for the role or choose to become involved. This issue will be debated in the next chapter.

5.4.3 “How am I coping?”

One of the aims of the research was to explore the extent that the pressures of being involved in change management - however that came about - was spilling over to affect personal, private lives. Some individuals in the PCT described the effects that their strategic change role has had on their private lives and the conscious measures they have to take to deal with that – especially the importance of maintaining a work/life balance. Some appeared to be able to take it in their stride while others struggled to cope:

“In my personal life I don’t really know. My family and my job are completely separated in the sense that I don’t try to go home and talk too much about what I do. I do work at home but keep a strong focus on my family.” (The Director of Corporate Development)

“And I suppose the ability to feel like you’re driving it, you’re ability to feel the positive effect in your home life is very much about your ability to be seen to be changing things. If you’re here and nothing’s changing then undoubtedly it will get to you.” (Chief Executive)

“Well thankfully this PCT is a very good place to work and they’re very flexible and they are very keen that you an outside life, a family life. If I’m sat there at 6pm and XXXX [The Chief Executive] comes in he will say “Will you go home” and yes I’ll go home ... It is quite a nice place to work.” (The Assistant Director of Finance)

In the R&T company, the picture was similar. Some were coping while others were not. However, overall, the pressures and effects seemed to be less amongst managers and professionals which probably reflected the nature of the external environment and scale and pace of change impinging on individuals putting them under pressure to become involved:

“Positively it has helped me grow in the business and be promoted into the level I am now. Negatively, it means I do more hours than I am contracted to do without any additional benefits or payments or anything. Every week I always do well above my contracted hours.” (Furniture technologist)

“So when I am late or when I am messing her about some evening when I say I am coming back and I don’t, or I am half an hour late, she understands from it and that isn’t too much of an issue. No, I don’t think there has been a lot of personal pain. Sure, there have been times when there are difficulties on and you are a bit stressed, it hasn’t actually from a health point of view affected me, it hasn’t actually happened that many times that you think, well Christ I want to give up this particular job and indeed I probably could have gone for retirement earlier if I had wished but I have chosen not to.” (Chief Executive)

Others however, reported they were feeling the pain more acutely:

“I have found it very tiring, yes I have to be honest, particularly from January through to the end of March, because not only was this project just going live and going out throughout the building it was also the financial year end. So I was doing the year end accounts everything was happening at once. From a personal point of view I just felt I needed to split myself into about 2 or 3 different people and there just wasn’t enough hours in the day, so I found it extremely tiring.” (Chief Accountant)

“I have been really tired because it is probably the hardest I have worked for a long time and because I have had to learn a lot of new things I have found it is physically quite draining. Over the last year I lost my father so the two together

has been tiring and I think I am ready for a holiday. But just recently I can't see with the resource that is available to me to support me, I need more support from my middle managers under me otherwise I can't see how I can progress.”
(Business Area Manager, Footwear testing)

Here again, there are suggestions that personality and other individually related factors and characteristics are significant in the ability to cope and deal with the pressure of having some involvement in the management of change in their respective organisations and again, suggests issues and implications for the mechanism by which individuals become involved in change management – whether that is through some formal process of delegation or informally by taking, capturing a responsibility to meet personal motives.

5.4.4 “From novice to expert: becoming an effective change agent”

Another aim of the research was to explore the extent that individuals considered the knowledge and skills to management change as being similar to or different from other managerial and professional knowledge. Respondents were therefore asked to identify what they interpreted as the knowledge, skills and personal qualities to effectively manage change.

In the PCT, in terms of change management knowledge and skills, there was little apparent distinction to be made between specific change skills and more general professional and managerial skills. So development tended to be couched in terms of broader professional development and experience rather than the specific training or developmental needs created by a discrete change role:

“And the first ward I was on I had somebody who was older but really very supportive with staff under her. So I learnt that way. I learnt the theories in class really and then when I went on to do my Sisters' training, we did more academically (sic) about change and then I've been on the management course.”
(District Nursing Sister)

“I think that experience goes a long way even if it's experience of life and people and as I say organisations.” (Podiatrist 2)

But individuals appeared to acknowledge that many of the mechanisms for development of change knowledge and skills are best developed in informal ways:

“I think there are [mechanisms for development and support] but we’re not too formal. We try through the appraisal system when you’re working with people and identify gaps and those needs and then try and point people in the direction of any formalised or informal arrangements that may actually help them and learn some of the things that will help. We could do better with that I think.”
(Chair of PEC)

I think there are always projects or parts of projects that we could say to someone “Okay well would you like to lead that.” We do this in our team quite a lot, we will say, there is this waste project coming up does anyone want to volunteer?” (Deputy Head of Medicine’s Management).

“Well no one’s trained me ... You learn by watching other people and seeing how other people do things.” (GP Clinical Governance Lead).

In the R&T company making the distinction between managerial and professional roles and their roles as a change agent produced a similar set of responses. When respondents were asked to express their views about the effects on their ability to perform as change agents captured in the knowledge, skills and personal qualities to manage change, the responses like the PCT, were rather vague and generalised:

“I think they need to be a good people person, understand people’s reluctance to change and be able to explain the positives, explain where you are trying to go. I must admit I don’t particularly like change, being an engineer you get something working, you get everything detailed, you don’t really want to change it because when you change it goes wrong again. You need to have a clear vision of what life is going to be when the change is implemented. And you also need to be sure of your facts that it is going to be better if you change something. You need to be strong willed because there will be a lot of obstacles put in your way about changing things. You need to be a fairly strong person to keep change on track. That is it really.” (Head of Manufacture)

“Personal knowledge and experience I think is the biggest thing. I would say knowing and understanding particular areas and where that could be improved will help it.” (Operations Supervisor – Footwear testing)

“I don’t think it is something you can be trained to do. I think it is something that is quite intuitive. I think a lot of the skills that I have, I have developed intuitively rather than been trained them. But I am quite a people watcher and I tend to learn by example and that can be good or bad can’t it. I think bad

examples are even better than good examples, a note to yourself, don't do it like that type of thing.” (Homewear Technologist)

“I have no idea. I think it is down to personality more than taught skills. Yes I think you have got to be open to change and forward looking. You have got to be willing to help the people that you work with develop and help them to change and help with them to work through change. It is no good being dogmatic or anything like that, and I am not sure whether you can teach these skills or whether they are inbred.” (Business Area Manager – Fabric care and cleaning technology)

The picture emerging from these respondents in the two case organisations is interesting and it raises a number of issues. First they appear to link change capability or competency to personal attributes and characteristics and less to specific skills. Second, it suggests that individuals do not interpret the skills and knowledge to manage change as somehow different or discrete from their managerial and professional knowledge and skills – the two are synonymous. Third, there is little evidence of formal training for change competency, which is not surprising if it is synonymous with general management training. Gaining the experience and expertise to manage change appears to be an ad-hoc process and mainly confined to experiential learning on the job.

5.4.5 “Managing the change managers”

Towards the end of the interview the researcher sought to elicit from the respondents how supportive they felt their organisation was towards them as they assimilated change management into their roles.

For those leading the overall change process in the PCT, it was seen as vital that they work together as a cohesive and supportive unit. It was also important that the management team itself views itself as being supportive to each other. But the role of formal and informal networks and personal relationships were seen as vital in giving support:

“The Chair of the Strategic Health Authority has been very supportive. I get on well with him. I have my girls’ network there are quite a few friends who are Chairs of PCTs or Trusts.” (Chair of the PCT)

“I am involved in informal networks with colleagues that I used to work with before we were scattered throughout XXXXX. We do get together and swap notes occasionally....Actually there’s a couple of discussion groups on the Web. You can look at what other people are asking. You know people are sending copies of policies and action plans... I think that there is an openness in the NHS that people acknowledge that they’re all in it together and they will share things like that.” (Clinical Governance Manager)

The role of strategic change leaders in terms of development and support for those who are tasked with bringing change about is couched in terms of facilitative techniques such as establishing the ‘right’ type of culture, coaching mentoring, shadowing etc. For example, The Chief Executive describes his approach in more general terms of supporting all staff affected by change by involving them in the change process:

“Now unless you manage that change effectively then they’re going to rail against it or they’ll resist it however you want to change it. And that’s what makes a difference, actually getting staff involved. If you were changing that by bullying them rather than involving them, it could actually go in the wrong direction.” (Chief Executive)

“To provide solutions, move some of those boulders out of the way and particularly some of the really big ones that they just can’t see a way of moving. Either because it involves too many different parties outside of their particular sphere or because it is an area that they have not been involved in before.” (Director of Service Development)

“I guess in terms of practical things, and it is difficult there, but you try to make sure that you’ve got enough people who have got enough time or have got access to supporting people to take other roles off them to give them the breathing space and time to do this. Often being there and actually spending time with people – almost mentoring people or coaching people in terms of when they are having a difficult time whether it be being there for them, listening to what they’ve got to say.” (Chair of the PEC)

The need to enthuse and give those who manage change recognition and praise is seen to be important:

“I go around trying to enthuse people or give them pats on their backs and saying what you are doing is great and going around and being seen to do so.” (Chair of PCT)

“There’s a lot of support and there’s a team of us. This is a job which the team has to get done. And if I see colleagues that are struggling I’ll say look I’ll do

that bit and you do that and they'll do the same for me.” (Clinical Governance Manager)

But the lack of development in change implementation skills was also apparent. The Service Development Manager [N.B. full time project manager, internal consultant who was from a nursing background] who is relatively new into a change leadership role managing major projects captures the issue of the novice change agent who is ill-prepared for their role and has to seek support from more experienced colleagues and learn on the job:

“Because I've come into a completely new role, I didn't really know what I needed until I started and they are like management. I have done leadership and done process mapping and access and capacity and I've done things like that but not actual management skills. And I think sometimes I go the long way around things when I could have done it quicker. That's where I learn from my colleagues and I have very good support from my colleagues.”

There was evidence that whilst senior managers were required to offer support to change 'novices', the problem was the lack of time to do this:

“I'm not sure we spend enough time or we have enough time but the agenda is so mad that the senior managers just haven't got the time to support middle managers through some of the insecurities and anxieties that they are experiencing. I have a bit of a worry about this because I do think we haven't got enough capacity and time because of the agenda for senior managers to really go out and support people.” (Chair of PCT)

This issue is interesting in the sense that it might suggest the threat of a vicious circle forming. Change 'novices' in the organisation who are implementing change are struggling to do so because they lack the support from senior managers to help they implement change. Senior managers recognise the need to give support but are powerless to do so because of the 'mad agenda' that they feel they have to cope with. Is this generating frustration and sense of powerlessness in senior managers?

“That is why when I go to staff meetings and think we are hitting heads against a brick wall because that is what they are concerned with [how to implement change] and it is a justifiable concern. But we are not moving on with the agenda until we sort those things out. That is why I feel we should do more and be seen to be doing more.” (Chair of the PCT)

The Chair of the PCT points to a recent leadership programme but again highlights the problem of creating space for those who participate:

“... are given the means to implement those new ideas. That comes back to the fundamental difficulty of saying how do you create a space within the PCT with such a set agenda, to say we want you a bit of leeway to maybe hang loose on a few targets or free up some people.”

This problem of creating space and time is further highlighted by the Assistant Director of Finance through her attitude to “change management courses that are advertised.” Further probing reveals this was a two-day in house management course.

“But again it was a two day thing you know and what you need is something that is two hours, very intensive and will give you the key things that you need to know.”

These views suggest that a more experiential approach to change skills development might be preferred. As the Strategic Development Manager, Primary Care observes “giving them small change projects that you can help them through.” But then she argues that:

“This creates a whole workload problem. Most of my managers are running around doing huge pieces of work on their own and I have hardly time to sit down with them and see where they are up to and give them a bit of guidance and a bit of direction.”

In the same vein, the Director of Corporate Development confirms that there is a lack of specific and co-ordinated strategy aimed at developing those who manage change:

“Not much in this organisations but approaches that are based not in classroom talks stuff but grounded in real work but with a development focus and a shift from A to B.”

She goes on to describe her experience of action learning but overall she argues there is little evidence that such techniques are being applied to change skills development. And the Assistant Director of Finance reveals that she has joined an action learning set

which is part of this national leadership course; again suggesting it is a preferred way to develop skills:

“I have to go down to London but that has advantages as well because you get four hours on the train to do your reading, its really cool as far as I’m concerned. I don’t have to do anything at the other end, just get back on the train and come back that’s the great thing. But that’s really good. It’s like a sort of peer support mechanism.”

Asked if this philosophy might be used in the PCT she seems to think it would:

“Yes that would be useful. It would be helpful if that was something closer.”

In the R&T company, despite their large-scale investment in management training, senior management awareness about the need to manage and provide support those who found themselves involved in change management appeared to be almost non-existent:

“I don’t think there is much support, I think it is a bit of a battle. They are there to put you right if you go wrong but there is not proactive support, they don’t come and say well let’s explore how we can sit down together and tackle new customers or new markets.” (Business Area Manager – Furniture and floor coverings)

“I know I can go and ask questions, I think the support is quite good in the fact that I can ask the questions but I think the reverse is poor [sic]. The information is not available up front as much so it’s not given to people. Its proactive on our behalf rather than on their behalf to a certain degree. We go and find it rather than them giving it. I don’t feel vulnerable, as a business area head now I don’t feel much different to how I felt last year as a team leader. I don’t feel that someone has said whoosh that is it, I don’t feel as if someone has taken the stabilisers off and just let me go off on my own.” (Business Area Head – Chemistry)

“Well the changes that have happened to me I have really enjoyed because they have given me a lot more responsibility. I feel a lot of job satisfaction out of that and that has pleased me. I have been really tired because it is probably the hardest I have worked for a long time and because I have had to learn a lot of new things I have found it is physically quite draining. Over the last year I lost my father so the two together has been tiring and I think I am ready for a holiday. But just recently I can’t see with the resource that is available to me to support me, I need more support from my middle managers under me otherwise I can’t see how I can progress.” (Business Area Manager - Footwear testing)

The researcher was left with the impression that it was only when the subject of skills development was broached in the interviews with senior managers that they had begun to think of their role in developing change capable individuals as these responses from the Chief executive and the Head of Personnel suggest:

“I think the answer is yes. Having raised it, particularly the younger people on these teams, is actually we probably should be introducing them into wider strategic and change management, as you call it, training and courses for want of a better, and a more structured way than we are. I think that is a fair point.”
(Chief Executive)

“I wouldn’t see it as distinct, it is an essential part of a manager’s tool kit because if you are not changing then you are standing still and you die basically. So they have got to be used to change regularly. Whether some of them have got that sufficiently, in sufficient depth to do the job; that is the bit that I am not sure about. And maybe that is one of the areas for me to address with the training plan this year because there is so much change going on.” (Head of Personnel)

These views and evidence from other documentary sources indicated that while the company may have invested heavily in management training for both managers and professionals, paradoxically, it would seem that there is an awareness that support is lacking to the very resource in which so much responsibility has been invested. This suggests that a more focused approach centred on developing change management skills and providing support in both organisations may be required to meet future strategic goals.

Reviewing the findings in respect of the mechanism and motives that drive change management distribution, there are some strong similarities between the two organisations but there are important differences too. The findings are summarised in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5-3 Similarities and differences in the individual and organisational effects of change management distribution to managers and non-manager-professionals

Similarities	Differences
<p>Double-edged effect of willingness to be involved provides material and psychological rewards but contributes to stress.</p> <p>Some individuals had difficulties integrating change management with other professional and managerial duties due to work pressures.</p> <p>Having a responsibility for change management has a significant impact on personal lives and well being for some key people</p> <p>Demonstrated willingness be certain individuals to assimilate/accept change management as part of role carries risks for those individuals and the organisation, e.g. certain individuals seen to be willing therefore become targets for more change responsibility leading to work overload</p> <p>Support is offered mainly through sympathy and creating a supportive culture and bosses 'being there' for those who require support rather than proactive measures</p> <p>Change management knowledge and skills not considered as different from mainstream managerial or professional knowledge</p> <p>General lack of awareness about the need to manage the change managers and an overall lack of a strategic perspective about development and support, e.g. lack of time and resources to develop novices</p>	<p>The degree that a willingness to assimilate change management responsibilities into role is linked to systems of reward and promotion</p> <p>How far an apparent unwillingness or inability to assimilate additional change management into role exposes individuals and department to critical scrutiny e.g. alienation of those who prefer to remain in existing role and those who object, resist or are not interested in participating in change creating behaviours</p> <p>In the PCT some were uncertain about the clarity or roles and how an involvement in change management might reconfigure their roles in the future</p>

Table 5.3 demonstrates many similarities between the two organisations in terms of how they view the required skills for change management, the necessary levels of support and the need to place the management of these important individuals on the strategic agenda

To summarise, this chapter has presented the empirical findings which emerged from a thematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected during the course of this

study. Factual, objective data from secondary documentary sources established the context and substance of the change processes as they affected change management distribution in both organisations. Interview and observational data were used to provide rich narratives about how individuals were finding their manager and professional roles being hybridised by their involvement in change management and the effects this was producing. Similarities and differences between the two case organisations were identified and presented in a tabulated format for ease of cross case comparison.

5.5 Some philosophical and methodological considerations and limitations in this study

Before moving to discuss the findings and the main theoretical and practical themes to emerge, this chapter will close with a consideration of a number of philosophical, theoretical and methodological issues and limitations which need to be considered when evaluating and judging the findings and engaging in any exploratory debates or drawing any conclusions on the part of the reader(s).

5.5.1 Issues of reliability and validity

Philosophically, any exploration of the limitations inherent within this study has to begin by asking the question: As an empirical piece of research into the dispersal of change management responsibility to managers and professionals, how reliable and valid were the findings it produced and therefore, how credible is the study to be judged by those who read it?"

It was explained in the opening sections of this chapter that this empirical study was framed in a critical realist paradigm which sought to weave a middle way between positivistic and post-modernist/structuralist assumptions and perspectives or to put it another way, to find a form of "methodological pluralism" or "rapprochement" (Gill and Johnson, 1997). However, in seeking a philosophical, epistemological and ontological middle way, the researcher was always aware that judgements about reliability (is the researcher consistent in their approach and how far can the study be replicated) and validity (do the methods measure what they say they will measure in a

way that supports the findings) would be open to debate by those who may not share similar epistemological and ontological assumptions and perspectives (Silverman, 2001).

For those commentators who are philosophically located in the positivistic camp, there may be a challenge to the lack of a working hypothesis; they may be critical of the lack of scientific rigour, the lack of quantification from which direct cause and effect patterns can be discerned; the inability to generalise and transfer the findings with predictive certainty. On the other hand, those who occupy or reside in a postmodernist, relativist camp may be critical of what they see as a quasi-positivistic approach to the study which seeks to 'privilege' the researcher's perspective through his biases and prejudices and imposing his view of social reality over the participants he was studying (Marshall and Rossman 1999). They may criticise what they see as the tendency to objectify, reify constructs such as individuals having causal powers to influence and transform structures reflected in choices and decisions they may or may not take in relation to an involvement in change management. They may also be critical of the more "pragmatic" stance adopted by the researcher who, while accepting that managers and professionals construct for themselves their version of social reality, those versions of social reality "constitute a practical order which acts independently of these constructions so as to constrain or enable our practical actions and interventions" (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:166). All of these criticisms have validity but only insofar as they may reflect the paradigmatic positioning of the reader over which the researcher has no control. All he can do is state clearly his own paradigmatic position as a pragmatic-critical realist and that his epistemological ontological and methodological approach to this study reflects that position and that the reader is able to make judgements about its reliability and validity from that position.

Punch (1998) relates reliability in research terms to the standardisation and consistency of measurement over time and that different items used for measurements are all aimed at measuring the same thing. If there is consistency there is the possibility of replication to other contexts. However, other commentators point to the difficulties associated with qualitative research where measurement is not in the form of relatively straightforward, standardised tests but has to measure the complexity of the social setting (Mason, 1996; Bryman and Bell, 2003). According to Mason (1996:146) the important test for a

qualitative researcher is that of validity – “are you ‘measuring’ or explaining what you claim to be measuring or explaining?”

As with all research studies of this nature, having explicated his philosophical stance, the researcher has to convince his (sceptical) readers that the study is both sound and trustworthy; that is both reliable and valid in the context which it was undertaken. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) put it succinctly, “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” They also identify a number of criteria which they argue allows the reader to make judgements about the soundness and trustworthiness of the research and therefore provided a useful framework for evaluating this study. When these criteria are taken into consideration, the researcher is confident that, despite some limitations identified and discussed below, that overall, the study attained the level of philosophical and methodological robustness and rigour demanded at this level of theoretical investigation.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba’s first criterion is credibility. Credibility is enhanced if the researcher can demonstrate a prolonged engagement which ensures that the researcher was fully immersed in the multiple realities and complexities of the study. One of the limitations of this study was a lack of prolonged engagement. It was explained earlier when reviewing the work of researchers such as Pettigrew *et al.*, (1992) and Dawson, (2003a 2003b) and other commentators who have researched organisational change; adopting a longitudinal approach in which the unfolding of change over time was the central focus. Contrary to this approach, this study took a ‘snapshot’ of change events at certain moments which opens the findings to critical review about how far the data collected were open to distortion, e.g. perceptions of the researcher as a ‘stranger’ or that the researcher, was unable to detect more subtle sources of data that could only come about over a prolonged period of time (Silverman, 1997, 2001).

According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985) to be credible, it is important that the researcher collects data from different sources using multiple methods and is able to triangulate between those sources and methods. In this regard the study was felt to stand up to the

test of credibility fairly robustly. Using a multiple case study strategy employing a range of methods, triangulation was possible both within and between case studies to yield important questions and insights. The study was linking and integrating the lived experience of change agency dispersal with the structures and processes that give rise to those dynamics and from that to develop tentative theoretical propositions - a form of methodological triangulation through an infrastructure of research methods. The aim was to offset the bias inherent in any single approach (Gill and Johnson, 1997). However, triangulating data which are derived from fundamentally different social contexts and situations is not without difficulties, e.g. if researchers try to “adjudicate” between different sources of data (Silverman, 2001).

And May (1993) is also conscious of the limitations that arise when making cross-case comparisons. Although debating comparative research in a cross-cultural context, his reservations are pertinent here. He argues that “comparative research is clearly a two-edged sword having both potential and problems” (p.163). The potential he argues rests with the prospect of identifying similarities and difference and asking what are the external and internal factors accounting for these similarities and differences and how can these lead to lead theory development? But he argues there are also problems in comparative research which he relates to the researcher as an ‘outsider’ fully comprehending and understanding the complexities and nuances of the case organisation such as the politics and culture and how meanings and definitions may vary across contexts. For example, in this study, how the meanings attributed to the concept of ‘change management’ might be interpreted differently between large public sector and small private sector organisations. However, such problems are to some extent unavoidable and, while they limit the ability to generalise, within these limitations there are real prospects for advancing theory and practical action.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also argue that credibility is further reinforced through the use of multiple investigators, peer debriefing and stakeholder feedback of the findings for verification and amendment if required. The use of multiple investigators was not considered appropriate within the research design of the study as it was an independent doctoral thesis. In terms of peer debriefing this did occur as colleagues and supervisors commented on the initial findings. However, one major limitation was imposed by the lack of “member checks” or “respondent validation” (Silverman, 2001) where the

findings were tested and checked with the stakeholder groups. For practical and logistical reasons it was not possible to review the findings at an individual participant level, e.g. providing draft interview transcripts for validation. However, in both case organisations, the findings were reviewed with groups of stakeholders (senior manager feedback sessions and staff presentations) and this provided valuable insights which were fed into the inductive reasoning process of the researcher.

Transferability

It is around the issue of transferability or external validity that competing philosophical assumptions become apparent in a significant way. For positivists, the extent that generalised predictions can be made from findings to other contexts is a key test. For postmodernists, the issue of generalisability does not arise. The findings remain embedded and are valid within the context from which they are derived. They have little or no relevance beyond that context.

But as previously argued, this study has sought a philosophical and methodological ‘middle way’ that held out the possibility of some generalisability; but accepted that generalisability depended on the differing philosophical assumptions of those considering the findings. By explicitly and systematically describing the case contexts, stating the qualitative research design parameters and methods utilised, these limitations were offset to some extent by the provision of a “thick description” which enabled other researchers to make judgements about how far findings might transferable to other contexts displaying similar characteristics. In addition (and a key aim of the research) it was important that practitioners too equated transferability with the ability to learn and transfer any lessons suggested by the findings to other situations with the possibility of improving the overall management of change (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001). It is believed that the study has met this aim in that similarities and differences were detected which transcend the contrasting contexts of the case organisations and suggested insights and lessons leading to theoretical and practical outcomes.

Dependability, confirmability and authenticity

In essence what these constructs relate to are the extent that the reader can trust the researcher having employed rigorous standards throughout the study. According to

Lincoln and Guba (1985), this involves auditing procedures and keeping adequate records which enable peers and assessors to view the techniques and methods employed at all stages of the research process; to see that the researchers has acted in good faith throughout; that they have minimised where possible personal bias, they have acknowledged weaknesses and theoretical limitations such as the impact of vested interests on the findings; they have sought to make the research authentic, that is relevant in the field of organisational change – at both a theoretical and practical level (Marshall and Rossman, 1999; Bryman and Bell, 2003). The researcher believes he met these criteria.

In terms of sample selection, it was recognised that the process of choosing the constituency of the initial target population may have introduced a sampling bias (Henry 1990). Despite a full briefing by the researcher to senior managers in both case organisations, about the criteria for selection, there was never any possibility of a completely unbiased sample. For instance, certain individuals may have been included in the population by senior managers because they displayed certain characteristics which senior managers felt were appropriate to the study or others who were excluded from consideration as participants either for innocent or more manipulative reasons. Equally, asking for volunteers from the population of managers and professionals - while ethically supportable - may have contributed to a bias in the sample as it becomes distorted by participant motives to become involved or not involved in the study. Or more pragmatically, certain individuals who might have had important input to the study were not included because of their non-availability for operational reasons.

Again, efforts were also made to offset the limitations by employing a number of different data collection methods to aid triangulation and testing of findings. For example, observing meetings, informal discussions with individuals, testing findings thorough various feedback mechanisms. But as Henry (1990) concludes, “The challenge of practical sample design is making trade-offs to reduce total error while keeping the study goals and resources in mind.” (p. 58)

5.5.2 Possible methodological limitations in research design, data collection and analysis

Methodologically, the decision to conduct a mixed method research study centred on two contrasting organisational contexts was informed by a desire on the part of the researcher to further cross-case comparison in the empirical research associated with the study of change management. The study anticipated that such a comparison across two organisations differentiated significantly by a range of criteria (size, ownership, nature of work etc) would provide constructive new insights about the dynamics and effects of change management distribution. For example how the dynamics of change management distribution might lead to similarities that transcended significant differences in context and thereby opened up the possibility of wider generalisation to other contexts, or where contextual differences emphasising the need for a contingent approach to agency dispersal and the manner in which those with change responsibilities are managed by their organisational strategists and sponsors. However, there were a number of issues relating to the research design, sampling and data gathering which merited consideration as possible limitations to the findings and how they are evaluated and judged.

First, any judgement about the validity of the findings has to be tempered by the fact that the data collected from the two case study sites represented snapshots of the change process rather than longitudinal studies of change unfolding over time (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 19991; Dawson 2003a, 2003b). There was also an issue concerning the time elapsed between the collection of data and the analysis of the findings which has to be taken into consideration in judging conclusions and any theory development. The contexts of the two organisations were and are continually evolving and in the case of the Primary Care Trust (PCT), there has been a continuing radical change agenda to contend with. However, while the empirical research in the PCT was conducted in the first half of 2004 and in the research organisation, in the first half of 2006, more recent research evidence suggests that it is unlikely that the fundamental propositions revealed in the findings are significantly at odds with current theorising and compare favourably with the findings from very recent research in the field (Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b).

Second, in respect of the size and scope of the sample, the pragmatic aim was to obtain what could be judged to be a reasonable cross-section of manager and non-manager professionals for semi-structured interviews about their involvement in the change process and the effects on their role. However, as with many empirical studies of this nature, a range of cost, time, access and other constraints were a significant consideration. While not ideal, and conscious of the limitations it imposed on the findings, a non-probability, purposive, convenience sampling approach was therefore adopted (Robson, 1993; Bryman and Bell, 2003). The researcher defined the broad criteria, e.g. a blend of manager and professional roles spanning the organisation and defined by level and functionality in the organisation. However, as already observed, the differentiation between managerial and professional roles is far from clear cut as the roles overlap and meld into one another, e.g. job titles such as footwear technologist or diabetes nurse specialist suggest a professional role when, it was revealed during the data collection and analysis that these and other respondents had managerial responsibilities as well. It is also acknowledged that other actors beyond the managerial and professional cadres have a role to play in the change process and not extending the empirical research to encompass them, while meeting the aims of this study, was also felt to be a limitation on the findings. However, it also becomes an opportunity for further research and critical comparison.

Third, collection and analysis of the data imposed necessary and acknowledge limitations and constraints. For instance, the reader of this study has to consider that in presenting particular extracts, the researcher is unavoidably introducing a certain level of selective bias into the findings, e.g. decisions about which extracts to include or not include. Pragmatically, the researcher has had to make choices about what to include and what to leave out have to be made, and unavoidably, those choices will have been influenced by the researcher's own interpretation and past experience. Equally, choices about what to present in the findings may have been influenced by the quality of the interviews which varied in terms of the ability or willingness of the respondents to articulate their views about particular topics, e.g. if they were inhibited by their knowledge or involvement in the change process and thereby may have felt they were unable to contribute to the study. This may have unintentionally biased the presentation of findings towards the more cooperative and informative individuals who expressed their views openly and with eloquence or the sample might have been overly weighted

towards those who were ambitious about assimilating change or where individuals were less ambitious and therefore may have been more inhibited about expressing their views to the researcher because of the cultural implications. However, a certain amount of triangulation was possible, e.g. observation at meetings, informal ‘chats’ which served to offset some of the unintended bias.

Clearly with these methodological qualifications and reservations in mind, there are implications for the validity of the subsequent conclusions and propositions that may arise which the researcher acknowledges and the reader must judge for themselves how the findings can or should be interpreted (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Mason, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1999) However, within these limitations, it was felt important to allow the richness of respondents experience to be presented and for respondents to ‘speak for themselves’. In part, this helped to offset bias by presenting the data as verbatim quotes direct from tape transcripts and other sources without researcher ‘interference’, allowing the reader to make their own judgements and interpretations. But more significantly, as well as reinforcing the themes identified in the analysis, it conveyed to the reader the emotion and feeling that was present in those experiential accounts which the researcher could never communicate in his own words.

From a more practical stance, it was also important to the researcher that the study adopted a research-into-action position – one that not only identified areas for theoretical development but how theory development might be translated into practical knowledge and how that knowledge might be used to improve the overall management of the process and addressed some of the psychological and ethical issues that arose as a consequence (Watson, 1994b, 1997; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001). It was felt that in the main this was achieved and a number of important insights were obtained.

5.5.3 Ethical and political concerns

May (1993) highlights the duality that exists in research ethics between just principles and expediency and contrasts the conflicting decisions that have to be taken which “are not so different from those we all face in everyday life.” He argues that:

“Ethical decisions will therefore depend on the values of the researchers and their communities and will inform the negotiations that take place between the researcher, sponsors, research participants and those who control access to the information the researcher seeks (the gatekeepers).” (p.42)

For May, the importance is not to impose a set of rigorous and inviolate rules nor is it to adopt a system of “anything goes.” Instead, the researcher adopts a posture of ‘good research practice’ and opens up to critical gaze their particular stance in relation to the research study, the context in which it is being conducted and the methods being used for data collection and analysis.

With this in mind, Mason (1996) presents a number of considerations in terms of ethical practice. She emphasises for instance, the need for the qualitative researcher to be more aware that the nature of the data collected (which may be personal and idiosyncratic) brings the need to preserve issues of confidentiality into relief. This was a significant concern in this study and the researcher adhered to a code of good research practice in ensuring that:

- The organisation and participants were made fully aware of the aims of the research.
- That all participants were volunteers; they were invited to be interviewed.
- Permission was sought to tape record interviews and written assurances were made about the confidentiality of all data collected.
- Permission was requested to observe meetings and the researcher’s presence was explained to those attending.

As discussed earlier, in the case of the PCT, the researcher adhered to the ethical policies and practices contained in the governance requirements of the Local Research Ethics Committee (LREC) and these were also transferred to the research approach adopted in the R&T company.

Mason also emphasises the need for researchers to take a responsible stance politically and not to make false generalisations or draw inappropriate conclusions to meet some political agenda or vested interest, e.g. advance some special interest. In this study, the researcher was conscious of the possibility that his prior research and experiences would

introduce a bias and that would unavoidably permeate all aspects of the research – even subconsciously – and that this would have to be a consideration in judging the findings and subsequent analysis.

In terms of political ‘games’ on the part of stakeholders, there were suggestions at different points in the research process that his study was being viewed by others as an opportunity for manipulation to promote a particular agenda or cause or that the data gathered would be used to promote a wider agenda, e.g. the interests of the sponsor (May 1993). For example, in the PCT, there were indications that the findings would be used by the senior management team as way of corroborating their perception that the organisation was managing change effectively. What they wanted was independent verification to reinforce this perception amongst wider and influential stakeholders for political and public relations purposes.

In the R&T company, politics and ethical concerns became an issue for the researcher. For instance, the researcher was contacted after the interviews and ‘informally’ questioned by the CEO about the personality and management skills of one senior manager who was in line to succeed the CEO and whom he had doubts about! The researcher diplomatically explained that he could not divulge this information. It was also suggested by some staff during the feedback presentations that those whom the researcher interviewed were selected to present a favourable picture of the company (some did but, some did not!). These and other examples did present ethical and political challenges to the researcher and emphasised the need to think carefully about his ethical and political responsibilities and to maintain the independence and ‘neutrality’ of the researcher at all times.

5.5.4 Limitations imposed by practical, logistical and personal circumstances

Like all research projects on this scale and over this (unforeseen) timescale, there will be limitations imposed by all sorts of practical and logistical issues and this study was no different. What was important was that the researcher was able to adapt to these pressures and sustain the academic rigour over an extended timeframe. For example, there were difficulties in gaining access to an appropriate private sector site, having

endured a number of unmet promises. These were compounded by significant personal difficulties. As a consequence, the whole process of data collection and analysis took some four years and this has to be considered when judging the relevance of the data to contemporary change events.

For instance, in the case of the PCT the disruption meant that the data collected not only became dated, but that events in the NHS (another major restructuring involving a drastic reduction in the number of PCTs through amalgamation in 2006) may have robbed the data of some of its relevance and validity. The whole research process was therefore not as neat and structured as perhaps other studies and was subject to more iterative loops of induction-deduction as new knowledge, understanding and insight emerged which made the analytical process more dynamic and complex than perhaps was originally envisaged. Equally, the body of emergent knowledge in the field of change management has continued to evolve and refine itself and new issues have added a dynamic, evolutionary, inductive 'edge' to the critical analysis. However, the researcher remains confident that even over this extended timeframe, he has managed to preserve and sustain the fundamental aims of the study.

Academic researchers, like everybody else, are not immune from the pressures, instabilities and tragedies that befall us all at some point in our lives and this researcher was no exception. Apart from their personal impact, such events will inevitably impinge upon and affect the research process. Commencing in 2001, this study stalled in 2002/03 due to significant personal difficulties. It then recommenced in late 2003 but was then seriously disrupted at a critical stage in mid/late 2004 following a series of deep personal tragedies. These events have not only delayed the research beyond what might be seen as a reasonable duration, they affected the researcher emotionally with a consequent loss of motivation, enthusiasm and intellectual continuity as he recovered from bereavement.

The next chapter will seek to take the findings identified and explicated in this chapter and expose them to a further iteration of inductive reasoning to identify the issues and implications for theory development and practical application. During this process of enquiry and reasoning, critical comparisons will be made with extant literature and research evidence to elicit and then elaborate the extent that the findings add to, support,

give credence to or contradict or refute existing knowledge and assumptions in the field of change management.

Chapter 6

Discussion and conclusions

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five presented the findings from an empirical study into change management dispersal within two contrasting case organisations – one a large public sector organisation in the UK National Health Service, the other a small private sector company in the field of research and technology development. The focus of the findings was an analysis of how change management responsibilities were being distributed to managers and professionals, how they were being assimilated and how they were affecting their functional roles and personal lives in radical change contexts.

This chapter now moves inductively and creatively to analyse the findings and identify significant themes related to the issues and research questions identified in chapter two. It embarks on a critical comparison of the findings from this study with current literature and recent empirical research evidence to understand the extent that the findings support, add credence to, refute, disagree with or contradict current thinking. It considers what new perspectives, issues, arguments, areas of understanding might be opened up for further investigation and debate.

To begin the discussion the central research question identified at the end of chapter two is restated here:

What are the dynamics of change management distribution and how are change management responsibilities being assimilated into middle and junior manager and non-manager professional roles within transformational change contexts? More specifically, what issues and debates arise as a consequence and what challenges and opportunities do they present for theoretical development and practical application?

This central question generated a number of more specific sub-questions therefore the discussion and conclusions in this chapter will be located within each sub-question which will act as a framework for analysis and debate.

6.2 How is change management being interpreted and how are responsibilities for managing change being assimilated into the roles of managers and professionals?

6.2.1 The significance of strong leadership interventions

The findings have indicated that both case organisations were undergoing significant shifts in their strategies, structures and cultures as the consequence of radical change in environmental forces. This pattern has a close fit with the change processes being experienced and measures being taken by many UK public and private sector organisations and revealed in recent empirical studies of change and change management (see for example: Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Dawson, 2003a, 2003b; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a).

It was noteworthy that despite some profound differences in the scale, pace and nature of the change processes being experienced by the two case study organisations, there were some interesting similarities which became evident. Both organisations were able to cope with their change agenda because of the strong strategic leadership exerted by the senior management team which itself was linked to the cohesiveness and trust between the personalities involved. The strength of this cohesiveness should not be underestimated for, as we shall see shortly, it was fundamental to the way change management was dispersed and the effects and outcomes that came about as a consequence.

For instance, it was clear that the senior managers in both organisations operating in their role as change strategists, were complementing their first-order, directive interventions such as a centralised, formalised project management or detailed performance management systems to facilitate change management distribution, with second-order, indirect interventions such as the adoption of certain patterns of

leadership behaviour and sound communications. In other words, it was their cohesive and complementary relationships and personalities that were a significant shaping influence in creating the receptive structural and cultural conditions for those who were acting in a more operational, front-line change implementation role.

What was not clear from the findings was the extent to which this ‘mix’ of first and second order interventions could be considered a deliberate, planned and proactive strategy on the part of these senior managers. In the PCT there appeared to be a greater level of awareness and understanding that the route to dealing with a radical change agenda was through the creation of the ‘right’, receptive conditions for managers and professionals to assimilate and accommodate change responsibilities. However, the impression was gained that this was the result of an intuitive, instinctive feeling that this was the right way to behave on the part of the senior management rather than a deliberate, planned intervention on their part. In the R&T company, a similar pattern was observed but here, but there was also the impression that the senior management were being influenced by the independent actions of certain key individuals at middle manager (Business Area Head) level, who were highly experienced; both commercially and managerially. Interestingly, many of these individuals had developed their experience in other organisations and that external experience was seen as a valuable resource by the company. In other words, senior managers in the R&T company were intervening to create receptive conditions for performance and innovation, but their subsequent strategic decisions and actions were then influenced by the choices and behaviours exhibited by key managers and professionals in response to the conditions they set.

6.2.2 “Relationships matter in change management”

Arguments were made in chapter two that change management is less about directive and controlling forms of leadership and more about ‘having a responsibility’ for change management. The findings suggest that the nature of that responsibility – how it manifested itself and how it was enacted – was in part influenced by the networks and patterns of relationships that were formed and sustained between manager and

professional groups and it was here that clear differences emerged between the two case organisations.

While it was apparent that while the PCT undoubtedly faced a more dramatic and radical change agenda, its ability to cope effectively was in large measure due to powerful collegiate forces that were present and manifested in the intricate pattern of formal and informal networks and overarching value system which was focused on delivering high levels of patient care. Despite the outdated systems and technologies; a lack of resources; an unrealistic timeframe to implement change and the enmity it felt from external agencies, the cohesiveness and trust exhibited by middle, junior level managers and professionals to engage and implement those changes in a supportive and collegiate way was impressive and the findings support the proposition that this was a fundamental reason they were able to sustain such a challenging change agenda. In this context, change leadership was therefore interpreted and more closely associated with, 'having a responsibility', which itself was borne out of collegiality and cooperation linked to a powerful value system that binds individuals to a common cause – whether that is a professional, moral cause such as delivering high levels of patient care or a political cause such as retaining some autonomy in the face of overwhelming interference by external forces such as Strategic Health Authorities. So for example, a clinician may, decide that the NHS changes, such as the introduction of the National Standards Framework for diabetes is a progressive step forward. However, it can only work at a local level if they take a professional decision to, say, establish a network of interested parties and agencies which they establish and co-ordinate. That individual takes that responsibility and in effect distributes it amongst others who share their same moral code and value system.

In the R&T company, the pressures were less radical but nonetheless had to be managed if the company was to sustain the constant stream of innovations on which it depended for its commercial survival. There was a greater adherence to a more directive style of change leadership, one that was couched in what one senior manager respondent described as the "iron fist in the velvet glove" [N.B. This senior manager was also the individual who had been identified as the successor to the CEO and who so many in the company appeared to have reservations about in terms of his personality and his leadership abilities to become that successor]. The company was apparently content to

empower its middle and junior managers and its professional staff to deliver new innovations but did so from within a comprehensive and efficient performance management framework of targets, budgets and personal objectives which, while not ruthless was nevertheless had high expectations and where staff did not perform, this was dealt with 'efficiently'.

Nevertheless, even within this tight performance management regime, the cultural conditions were generated to enable individuals, particularly those who were enthusiastic and ambitious, to take or create their own responsibility. So for instance, a technician might be speaking to a customer about a test result. The customer queries whether they could test another range of products. The technician knows they currently do not have the appropriate facilities but identifies a commercial opportunity and pursues this enthusiastically with the customer. He then makes a proposal to the senior management to establish a new business venture.

Thus while the cohesiveness in the senior management team had contributed to an empowering culture that was able to identify and exploit the ambition and enthusiasm of middle and junior managers and professionals, unlike the PCT, the collegiality and cross-functional teamworking was less evident and only manifested itself when commercial considerations were to be taken account of. This may have been appropriate in a more benign change context, but one might speculate about the effects on the company if external conditions changed.

6.2.3 "Pushing or pulling to become involved"

In chapters two and three, it was argued that a change agency orientation shifts the emphasis away from leadership perceived as an exercise in directive power and control by key individuals, towards the notion of an individual or collective group having some measure of *responsibility* for managing an aspect(s) of the change process (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001; Landrum *et al.*, 2000; Caldwell, 2003a; 2005). In this conceptualisation it was argued that responsibility may be formally or informally allocated. In other words, it may be 'given' or 'pushed' towards, individuals or collective groups through various structural mechanisms such as performance management systems. They are then

encouraged and expected to accept that responsibility and exercise it to deliver the organisation's change goals.

At the same time it was argued that there has to be an acknowledgment that some individuals will be able to exert a degree of freedom through the powers conferred on them by status or expertise to exercise choices about whether to accept that responsibility or not. In other words, depending on the nature of the responsibility and the structural, cultural, political and social context in which it is being considered, individuals may resist or reject that responsibility, or change the terms on which the responsibility is received, with consequences for them and the change process. Interventions by change strategists may therefore include measures to deal with that 'resistance' or what might be classified as deviant behaviour to ensure greater conformity to the formal goals of the change process.

But the findings also suggest that change management distribution can be interpreted as the creation and exercising of a responsibility without any action or sanction on the part of change strategists. In other words, a responsibility may arise because of the *unilateral* choices and decisions on the part of individuals and collectives who are not only willing to 'take' or 'pull' responsibility into their role, but will seek to create a responsibility for some aspect of the change process. This may relate to the need to adapt the change process to local realities, or to meet some intrinsic or personal need which may or may not be related to, or coincide with, the overall goals of the organisation (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Doyle 2001).

Therefore one of the issues facing change strategists, especially it seems where professionals are concerned, is how to reconcile measures to deal with what they have interpreted as 'deviant' behaviour where unilateral actions threaten their overall change goals, and the capacity for individuals and collective groups to generate innovations and to ameliorate the contradictions in the change process by the unilateral choices they make. In other words, change strategists need to confront the paradox of control.

6.2.4 “To empower or not empower: Resolving the paradox of control”

The distribution of change management through empowering and delegating mechanisms presents change strategists with a ‘paradox of control’. This means that they have to balance and reconcile the burdens of a radical change agenda or the commercial pressures to develop and sustain a successful business, while at the same time, having to maintain some semblance of control over the change management process to avoid what for them might be construed as an anarchic or chaotic situation. In other words, they face the challenge of avoiding the risk of runaway empowerment as confidence grows and managers and professionals seek to capitalise on their new-found freedom by seeking to extent their remit or scope for action even further (Di Bella, 1992; Hopfl and Dawes, 1995; Claydon and Doyle, 1996; Beeson and Davis, 2000; Doyle, 2001).

To what extent were change strategists in the two case organisations confronted by this paradox of control when they sought to disperse change agency, and did the challenge they faced vary according to the substance and context of the change process? The findings suggest that the dilemmas generated by the paradox were more evident in the R&T company than the PCT. While concerned to control and limit the taking of responsibility by individuals keen to diversify and improve the company through financial, budgetary and performance mechanisms, the impression was that the company was moving to a position where control over the burgeoning motivation and ambition of key individuals was likely to be more problematical and this was only now becoming apparent to senior managers. Not only were they at risk of letting the empowerment ‘genie out of the bottle’ by generating the expectation that having a responsibility for change was desired and desirable, they were creating expectations that individuals could exploit their freedom to innovate and improve the current situation, and receive the requisite material and non-material rewards. In other words, while the R&T company was apparently content to empower key ambitious and enthusiastic individuals to further their commercial opportunism, there was little evidence that they had thought through the consequences of their actions, e.g. having in place a comprehensive career management, talent management strategy. It seemed as if the commercial benefits gained from greater freedom to innovate were masking potential

future problems in terms of motivation, work related stress and possibly, the retention of high-performing individuals.

In the PCT the paradox of control appeared to be less of an issue. The senior management team relied heavily on individuals and collectives taking responsibility to manage the radical change agenda. Its plethora of management and governance committees, and networks of clinical professionals driven by a strong patient care ethos within a collegiate rather than individualised environment, appeared to be sufficient to act as a suppressive force on the prospect of runaway empowerment leading to some form of anarchic situation.

6.2.5 “We are all wearing three hats now”

In chapter two, it was suggested that couching the role of manager in terms of heroic, charismatic change leader was too simplistic – certainly where it encompassed middle and junior levels of management. In change management terms, it was argued that the concept of ‘the manager’ had to be delineated and disaggregated from within its different contextual, functional and status-related dimensions. On top of this, it was argued that there was considerable overlapping and blurring between the roles of managers and professionals which made it difficult to sustain a rigid boundary demarcation between the roles. This lends support to Buchanan and Storey, (1997) and others who argue that individuals may occupy multiplicity of roles and the fluidity by which they can switch between those roles. Not only do individuals ‘wear two hats’ simultaneously, as manager and professional, e.g. a HR managers is also a HR professional, a teacher is an educational professional and some perform as a manager (Head of department), but as change responsibilities pervade their roles they are increasingly required to or chose to ‘wear three hats’. How far did the empirical evidence in this study support the shift towards the wearing of three hats with its implications for the overall change process?

In both organisations, there was evidence of an apparently more ‘relaxed’ attitude to the boundaries between manager and professional roles which would appear to give some credence to earlier arguments by the researcher that the demarcation between these two

role sets is becoming less evident in radical change environments. Neither organisation appeared to make rigid distinctions between manager and non-manager professional roles in respect of change management responsibility being dispersed in their organisation. What appeared to be of greater concern to senior managers in both organisations was not the preservation of traditional distinctions between the two groups in terms of demarcating criteria such as hierarchy, status or control, but how to deploy the human capital at their disposal to gain maximum advantage in meeting the challenges they faced. For them to adopt a rigid position that argued only managers manage change would seem to make little sense when confronted with a radical change agenda or a commercial opportunity to diversify the business. What mattered was for them to explicitly or tacitly to manipulate the contextual conditions (cultural, supportive and developmental) in a way that enabled individual and collective skills and contributions to become a resource to transform the organisation.

One example which captures this apparent lack of concern about role demarcation (and perhaps an example of a deliberate effort not to make these traditional distinctions) was observed by the researcher in the PCT at a number of PEC meetings he attended. The Professional Executive Committee (PEC) is the main strategic decision making body of the PCT. Its constituency is deliberately broad and is made up of some twenty managers and professionals drawn from all areas of the organisation. The cultural climate and the interpersonal dynamics observed by the researcher during those meetings were strongly indicative of a collegiate, democratic environment alluded to earlier. Efforts were made by the Chair (himself a GP and a senior manager) to promote an egalitarian ethos where knowledge, expertise and the ability to contribute to dealing with a radical change agenda was what mattered. Indeed during those meeting, the researcher had little sense of who were managers and who were non-manager professionals and had to consult the published minutes to clarify this.

In the R&T company, similar patterns of a blurring, overlapping and fluidity of roles emerged. Less attention was given to manager/professional differentiation as the basis for a change management role. One example of this was the deliberate decision not to produce formal job descriptions. This permitted a degree of flexibility in how job roles were to be interpreted and was largely supported by staff. It was also evident in the desire by senior managers to afford those individuals who were prepared to proactively

and enthusiastically involve themselves in the change process every opportunity to do so and not to confine the ability to generate ideas and innovations just to the managerial role or allow formal upwards reporting systems to necessarily act as a constraining influence. What appeared to matter was the innovative idea, not your position in the organisation's hierarchy. This adds further weight to research suggesting that the orthodox models of manager-as-change leader/agent and the practices that attend them, may have to be reconsidered (Higgs and Rowland, 2001, 2005).

6.2.6 Receptive contexts for change management distribution

What has emerged from the findings is a strong indication that certain patterns of interplay between key variables were responsible for generating positive and negatively reinforcing effects that in turn were dictating the degree of *receptivity* to assimilate change management into a role. The receptivity can be considered on two levels – developing a receptive context that encourages and supports change management dispersal while at the same time developing individuals who were receptive or otherwise to change management dispersal.

The significance of receptivity of context as a concept in change and change management has been a feature of the work of processual researchers (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 1992; Dawson, 2003a, 2003b). One of the eight factors identified by Pettigrew *et al.*, (1992) was the availability of “*key people leading change.*” They contended that the process of change may be more effective at delivering desired outcomes when it is not confined within small elites who try to exert top-down, direct control over the process but is shared or distributed across the organisation. As the earlier discussion suggested their findings are supported by this study. However, the findings of this study suggest an additional dimension not encompassed in these studies.

The findings from this study suggest that while strong leadership is important and that leadership has to be dispersed, the process of distribution has to rest on the willingness or otherwise of individuals and collectives to accept or take that responsibility and assimilate it into their managerial or professional role. Equally it will also rest with the

desire of individuals to generate responsibility through their independent choices and actions. Therefore the indications are that a key element in defining change capability is the capacity for change strategist to generate a degree of receptivity for a change management role amongst individuals and collective groups.

In the PCT, it was apparent that, given the scale and pace of the change agenda, there was a sense that the senior management team had to develop a culture in which responsibility was dissipated across the wider organisations if the change agenda was to be delivered in the very tight timescales that were being imposed on it. This cultural orientation had to include an acceptance that there would be localised interpretations of what was required with adaptations and adjustments to meet local needs by the operational managers and clinical professionals involved. Enthused by particular cultural norms, cues and communications processes, individuals and collectives within clinical and managerial communities therefore found they had greater freedom to work as independent networks; using their own initiative and collaborating with others to improve the delivery of health care to meet local needs. This more collaborative and informal model of dispersed change management fits closely with that offered by Buchanan *et al.*, (2007b) who argued that “leadership transmission” may be far more fluid and informal than conventional models of change leadership have suggested and was being generated by the contextual conditions that prevailed or were being initiated by those driving change at a strategic level.

In the R&T company, the change environment was significantly more benign and this allowed the senior management team to maintain significant control over the strategic direction the company was taking. Change management dispersal was a means to react opportunistically to market signals, driven by an effective performance management structure of targets, budgets and reward systems. But there were some similarities with the PCT. Whether it was intentional or not, senior managers, through the adoption of similar patterns of behaviours to those in the PCT, were able to generate the cultural conditions for commercial opportunities and continuous improvements to occur. At the same time, individuals were innovating in their roles – partly because of their professional commitment to maintaining the high technical standards associated with the image and reputation of the company - but also to meet personal objectives such as

career enhancement and intrinsic reward through achievement and recognition of their efforts.

It would appear therefore that despite significant differences in the context and substance of the change processes confronting the two organisations, both case organisations were able to cope with the forces impinging upon them and avoid to a large extent chaos and anarchy that could have overtaken them by creating the receptive conditions for change management distribution to occur in a way that suited the context and substance of the change agenda they were experiencing. However, what was not clear from the findings was the extent this was an overt and explicit decision on the part of those senior managers in both organisations to develop and implement these new forms of structures, cultures and communication processes with the intent of enabling and facilitating change distribution, or whether they were adhering to a more progressive style of collective management gleaned perhaps from mainstream management literature or training, that argued this was the ‘right’ way to manage change. The evidence points in that direction; that there was no overt strategy to intervene and manipulate the dynamics of change management distribution and therefore the patterns that emerged may have had as much due to coincidence and serendipity as they were to any intentional action on the part of change strategists. If this is the case, then clearly there are implied strategic risks in not considering receptivity as part of an overall change plan.

6.2.7 “Do I want to be involved?”

Arguments were made in chapter two that considerations about individual choice, and how it might be exercised in a positive or negative manner, should occupy a more elevated and central position in the theoretical debates about organisational change and its management than has perhaps hitherto been the case (Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001; Hay, 2001). Furthermore, it becomes hard to conceive of an interpretation of change management distribution which can only be understood from within the deterministic and controlling structures and mechanisms that disperse responsibility, e.g. formalised project management or performance management. As the findings have suggested, consideration has not only to be given to the second-order

interventions by change strategists, but to include the independent decisions and choices available to individuals and collectives to involve themselves willingly or otherwise to engage in the process (Crouch *et al.*, 1992; Clarke and Meldrum, 1998; Saka 2002). In other words, if there is an emergent debate about receptivity it may have to be extended beyond debates about receptive contexts to include a more developed focus on the *receptivity of individuals* (which here includes collective entities) to having that responsibility for change management assimilated as a feature of their role – however that is brought about. Attention is therefore refocused on the embedded assumptions, attitudes, behaviours, motivations etc of individuals and collective entities and the interplay between those assumptions and the dynamics of change management distribution (Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

For instance, the findings from the two case organisations have indicated that a strong, visionary and cohesive pattern of leadership exhibited by senior manager was important in creating the right conditions for change management dispersal, but by itself, was unlikely to be sufficient in effectively promoting the dispersal and assimilation of change management into middle and junior manager and professional roles. Rather than just creating conditions that ‘push’ responsibility towards individuals and groups with a tacit expectation they will willingly accept that delegated responsibility, there is a need to intervene proactively in the structures and processes driving and shaping change to create the conditions that motivate and enable individuals and collective groups to willingly ‘pull’ or take a responsibility into their individual roles and collective networks to make change happen: to make a difference, to make it all work.

But with echoes of the paradox of control, how far can this push/pull mix be controlled? Put another way, how far is any emergent push/pull ‘mix’ influenced by strategic control in the change process and how far is it subject to mechanisms and motives that lie outside of that control? For example, the evidence in this study suggests that organisations may need to consider that individuals and collectives may not just ‘pull’ change management responsibility into their roles for reasons connected with meeting formal change goals strategy or even professional pride or meeting targets; they may do so to fulfil wider motives, needs, ambitions and agendas that are local and personal to them.

As the R&T company clearly indicated, ‘pulling’ or ‘taking’ change management responsibility into your role may be associated with motives and needs such as: impression management; placing oneself ‘in the frame’ for promotion and career development consideration; gaining more experience and a sense of achievement; making the change work and thereby making life easier and a more acceptable experience than it otherwise would be if formal change implementation plans were followed (Crouch *et al.*, 1992; Clarke and Meldrum, 1998). Similarly, in the PCT, individuals and collective entities such as professional networks would willingly or reluctantly, ‘pull’ responsibility for some aspects of change management into their role if it was seen to be the most effective and least painful way of implementing the change agenda imposed upon it by external forces. But, as the researcher’s observations of PCT management meetings revealed, at the same time, individuals and collective groups were prepared to resist or reject efforts to push responsibility into their roles if it challenged fundamental values and their freedom to make decisions and choices that reflected those values.

Having discussed some of the issues that surround the dynamics of change management distribution, the discussion now shifts to examine the effects that this distribution has had on the roles and personal interests of those involved and affected.

6.3 What are effects of change management being assimilated into managerial and professional roles?

Previous sections have explored and analysed the nature and form of change management and how it was being assimilated in the roles of manager and non-manager professionals. The findings have presented challenges to more orthodox models of change management premised on traditional notions of directive leadership. It has contrasted these models with alternative perspectives framed in a devolved responsibility for some aspect of change, which may or may not incorporate a change leadership role as it is conventionally conceived. It has argued that responsibility may be willingly or unwillingly pushed or pulled into managerial and professional roles, or rejected, as a consequence of the interplay between enabling or constraining structures and the intentional and unilateral choices of social actors.

In this section, the findings from the two case organisations will be discussed and debated to explore the intended and unintended consequential effects of having or not having some degree of responsibility for change management assimilated into your managerial or professional role or of rejecting efforts at assimilation. It will contend that the findings are consistent with and supportive of earlier studies which have argued that the ‘lived experiences’ of those who find themselves involved in some capacity in the management of change is hardly understood – which, as indicated earlier, appears paradoxical given the strategic importance of middle managers and professionals to the overall change process (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a; Herzig and Jimmieson, 2006).

The discussion which follows will be broadly comparative, assessing the similarities and differences between effects on individuals and collectives in the two organisations and how they might be accounted for by variations in the context and substance of the change process. It will consider the effects in terms of their impact on functional, operational or strategic activities but also how they are affecting personal lives and well.

6.3.1 “Everyone’s a winner”

Theoretically, and echoing the earlier arguments about the need to achieve a deeper understanding about the interplay between structure and agency, the findings of this study reveal that there are functional, professional and personal effects on individuals, and that these effects cannot be considered in isolation from the wider change context and the substance of the change processes in which they are being enacted and experienced. Depending therefore on the nature and timing of the individual choices about their role in change management and the evolving context in which those choices and decisions are being exercised, these effects can ‘act back’ to influence the structures that are instrumental in distributing change management into their roles (strategic goals, performance management systems, national standards etc) and in reconfiguring these determining structures and processes, to exert and influence over eventual change outcomes. The message is therefore clear – that actions have consequences and these will not only present risks to individuals but also the change process they are part of

(Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Buchanan and Storey, 1997; Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Clarke and Meldrum, 1998; Buchanan and Badham, 1999). So what were the effects for individuals as they accepted or rejected efforts to assimilate change management into their roles and how were individuals responding to those effects?

For a number of individuals in both organisations, it was apparent from the findings that a key effect of being prepared to assimilate change into your role – to wear three hats instead of two – did produce considerable positive benefits in terms of career enhancement, self-development and personal esteem. Individuals expressed their “love” of being involved in change, having the opportunity to make a difference, but at the same time they graphically told of the pressures that being involved, having a responsibility for change management brought upon them (Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a).

This was particularly evident in the R&T company where a number of individuals, with the encouragement and facilitative support of their bosses and the senior management teams, had taken the opportunity to demonstrate their enthusiasm and commitment to the company (and to themselves) by seizing opportunities to contribute to the commercial development of their business area, which was being facilitated by the more benign change conditions that impinged on the company. Some individuals reported they were under pressure but acknowledged that this was often self-inflicted as they were presenting themselves as targets for greater responsibility.

In the PCT, individuals took or pulled a responsibility for change management into their roles but their involvement was apparently much less instrumental and driven by more altruistic, even ethical reasons, e.g. seeking to promote and make a difference to the quality and outcomes of patient care. In the same manner as the R&T company, a number of individuals reported the positive benefits of being involved in change management in terms of recognition and esteem it afforded them. They enjoyed the challenges they faced and the sense that they felt they were making a real difference. This was reflected through the strong bonds and relationship they developed with colleagues across the PCT and being part of a strong collegiate ethos that ‘everybody would do their bit for the cause’, underpinned by the amity generated by hostile external forces. Consequently, there was far less evidence of the divisiveness seen in the R&T,

although this did not preclude anxiety and resentment being felt by some as they were pushed into accepting change management responsibility which they may not have wanted or felt they were ill-equipped to handle in terms of change competency.

6.3.2 “There’s always a downside”

However, while there were clearly positive effects of having a change management responsibility which, at first glance, were producing a win-win situation, the evidence pointed to a number of individual consequences which suggested that issues and problems might emerge without some form of mitigating action by them, their boss and the senior management team.

First, in providing the facilitative and supportive conditions for assimilation, senior managers were at risk of unintentionally reconfiguring, even violating, the existing psychological contract which had previously defined the relationship between the organisation and these individuals. For example, creating levels of expectation within some of these individuals about their future career prospects which were unlikely to be met, with consequences for future relationships, levels of satisfaction and motivation and possibly labour retention. This was most noticeable in the R&T company where a number of individuals expressed the expectation that their enthusiasm in taking and creating a responsibility for change would advance their career in some capacity but at the same time, others who were less enthusiastic felt alienated from the company. In the PCT, this was less of an issue with a less tangible link between performance outcomes and career prospect, probably reflecting the non-commercial nature of the organisation.

Secondly, having identified this cadre of seemingly willing managers and professionals, the findings suggested that in some cases there was the potential risk of over-loading them with responsibilities. Also, there was evidence that some individuals did not have the necessary levels of competency to manage additional change responsibilities. This presents the possibility that their enthusiasm might run ahead of their level of competency and without additional support, could generate a strategic risk for the organisation. The risk might be compounded if it became masked by ambition and self-seeking opportunism on the part of the individual or the fear of failure on their part.

Another concomitant effect, suggested by the findings is that individuals could become so overloaded that it stifles their willingness to take or seek more responsibility and they are physically and emotionally ‘damaged’ by work overload and stress – again with strategic risks for the organisation, given the dependency it is placing on the performance of these individuals and collective groups.

Thirdly, at the same time, by focusing attention on individuals who expressed a strong willingness to assimilate change responsibility into their roles, there may be risks of neglecting and alienating other individuals who, while not showing the same level of enthusiasm and commitment for a change driving role, were nevertheless, performing to a required standard but somehow were now finding themselves labelled as ‘not-one-of-us’ – again with concomitant risks to morale and retention. This was most noticeable in the R&T company and less so in the PCT which may reflect its more collegiate rather than performance oriented culture.

6.3.3 “All together now” – shared leadership for complex change environments.

In terms of the collective effects of change management being assimilated into managerial and professional roles, the findings suggested there were some similarities but some significant contrasts between the two organisations. The findings supported an argument that in response to complex change environments, there may be emerging a growing shift from traditional models of singular leadership to new perspectives and models that are premised on what Gronn (2002) refers to as “conjoint agency” where agents engage in forms of collaborative, “concertive action” and act to meet both their individual motives and needs but take account of the needs and expectations of others in a reciprocal way. Gronn’s notion of concertive action is a useful heuristic for understanding new forms of change management and he presents it in three forms: It may be spontaneous and informal to meet local contingencies and opportunities; it may develop from close bonds that have emerged in collaborative groupings; or it may be driven by dissatisfaction with particular structures and institutional arrangements leading to a search for new, more workable arrangements.

Supporting this emergent model of change leadership, Denis *et al.*, (2001) draw similar conclusions when they argue that change is more effective in pluralistic organisations when “leadership constellations” are working collectively and harmoniously to effect change but that such arrangements are always “fragile” and dependent on the dynamics of the context and the fit with individual aspirations. Landrum *et al.*, (2000) argue that collective entities can become substitutes for singular models of leadership and that they can mediate the risks that singular forms of leadership induce in the change process, e.g. an over-dependency on single change leaders. But they can also complement a change leader’s role by acting as champions of particular value systems and cultures. And Buchanan *et al.*, (2007a) concur in their research when they stress the significance on change capability through change management responsibilities being dispersed to collective which lessens the dependence on individual change experts and indeed a strategy of having “nobody is in charge” might be wilfully encouraged.

The findings are consistent with and lend strong support to these emergent forms of shared, collective models of change leadership. The evidence indicated that change management responsibilities were being shared within collective groups in both organisations as a way of mitigating the rigidities and inflexibilities of current structures and processes and to deal with change contingencies. However, there were marked differences between the scale and form of this collective collaboration which reflected to a large extent the teleology of the organisation, the stability of the change environment they were operating in and the internal operational structure and processes.

In the R&T company, the level of collective collaboration, where it occurred, was less spontaneous and more deliberate and instrumental – possibly reflecting a structural configuration of competing business units and a performance-oriented culture. Business Areas as commercial groups did collaborate with each other; but in a much more formal manner to achieve business goals and meet performance targets. If there was no clear commercial outcome for them or their department, individuals were less likely to engage in a collaborative relationship beyond their functional area. However, within departments and commercial groups, the level of collaboration to initiate change and support those who were involved was high. Some efforts were made by senior management to initiate cross-functional collective projects amongst the management team - looking at specific issues that had organisation-wide implications, e.g. improving

the performance management systems, but again, this was done within the formality of a commercial management structure and appeared to be subordinated to departmental collaboration. And despite efforts to reduce formality and encourage innovation within the Business Areas with some success, these were at times impeded by the personalities of individual senior managers who, despite espousing less formality and a first-amongst-equal culture, could not resist interfering in collaborative arrangements to manage change.

The contrast with the PCT could not have been greater. In the PCT, there was a strong sense of intuitive, informal working relations with trusted colleagues across the PCT and beyond. Close working relations were built up through a plethora of formal and informal professional networks and localised arrangements with stakeholders. The phenomenon of close working relations was exemplified in the cohesiveness of the senior management team and there were suggestions that these strong bonds may have acted as an exemplar to the rest of the organisation and indeed in the case of this particular PCT, were seen to be an exemplar of NHS leadership amongst a wider population of PCTs (Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006).

Interestingly, it is unlikely that the radical change agenda could have been managed as effectively without these collaborative arrangements being in place and acting as a significant ameliorating force in dealing with the contradictions and ambiguities induced by the radical change agenda, and the restrictions imposed by a rigid bureaucracy. Culturally, efforts were made to reduce the formality of existing hierarchies and take advantage of a pooling of professional knowledge to deal with urgent and immediate change issues, e.g. in PEC meetings where the Chair encouraged a sense of trust and equality amongst members irrespective of status.

6.3.4 “Has our performance improved?”

Chapter two rehearsed the argument that change had now become so complex that it could only be successfully implemented if middle and junior managers and non-manager professionals were persuaded to assimilate an involvement, a responsibility for some aspect of change management into their roles. Strategically, therefore, persuading

them to assimilate change management into their roles could be judged to be a strategic imperative. The previous section considered the individual and collective effects of change management being assimilated into manager and professional roles but what effect is the assimilation of change management into manager and professional roles having at a strategic, organisational level? In this section, the effects are considered in terms of how they may have influenced the performance of the two case organisations.

The organisational effects of change management being assimilated into the roles of managers and professionals could be judged to be positive and beneficial in terms of its contribution to overall performance, measured against the attainment of the respective organisation's goals. Analysis of the secondary, documentary evidence reveals that both organisations were performing successfully in their particular domains prior to and during the period of the research. For instance, financially, the PCT was in control of its budgets producing a small surplus in the 2003/04 financial year when other comparable PCTs were in deficit and apparently struggling with the prospect of Department of Health sanctions being applied to rectify their budget deficits. Morale and general levels of motivation and satisfaction recorded in the most recent national NHS Staff Survey placed the PCT in the upper quartile. Additionally, it had just been awarded a nationally recognised two-star rating for its overall performance. And despite the deluge of change initiatives, it was successfully implementing them in line with national timescales and National Service Framework standards.

In the R&T company, the picture was similar in a number of respects. Performance data showed continuing commercial success with year-on-year surpluses funding the relocation, investment in business growth and bonus packages and investments in development for staff and this was supported by independent reports from agencies such as Investors in People.

In sum, there is some evidence to suggest that successful performance could be attributed to the dynamics of change management distribution captured in the willingness or otherwise for managers and professionals to accept or take a responsibility for being involved in change. Whether it is through the harnessing of the energy and commitment of clinical professionals to adapt and cope with a challenging change agenda or permitting and enabling innovative and creative commercial

opportunism to flourish, the findings appear to indicate that creating receptive contexts through first and second order interventions on the part of change strategists for change management dispersal might be a pre-condition for successfully dealing with the challenges, both proactively and reactively, presented by radical change situations and events. Furthermore, if change management distribution is afforded some measure of correlation with organisational performance, it could usefully become the basis on which to measure and evaluate the level of change capability that resides in a particular organisation.

6.3.5 “Are we more change capable?”

Structurally and culturally, the growing involvement of managers and professionals in change management has been seen as a way for organisations to cope with the uncertainty and ambiguity engendered by unstable and even hostile external environments and reinforces the significance of having robust HR and HRD policies and practices integrated into the overall business or corporate strategy – especially those related to greater innovation, knowledge management and talent management (Stewart, 1996; Landrum *et al.*, 2000; Hamlin *et al.*, 2001; Stewart and Tansley, 2002).

Strategically, the aim of directly or indirectly dispersing change management is to produce a greater degree of flexibility and adaptiveness across the organisation to meet and confront the challenges of change. In other words, change management dispersal is one of the mechanisms by which the organisation finds ways to develop the mindsets and learning capacities out of which they become a more change capable organisation to meet the challenges of a global, knowledge-based economy and society (Beer *et al.*, 1990; Schaffer and Thomson, 1992; Kanter, 1999; Dunphy *et al.*, 2003; Tushman and Anderson, 2004; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2006).

But as this study has argued, change management cannot be considered exclusively within a top-down, empowering framework that ‘pushes’ responsibility towards individuals and collective groups. It has to include consideration of how the unilateral and intentional choices of individuals and collectives (for motives that may or may not be congruent with the strategic goals of the organisation) can shape and reconfigure the

change process by pulling responsibility into their roles. In that sense, the effects on the organisation of change management being assimilated into the roles of managers and non-manager professionals may be beneficial, but they may also be unintended and undesired. Therefore, to understand the effects on the organisation, once again there is a need to focus on and appreciate the significance of the interplay between the context, the substance and the generative mechanisms that give rise to change management dispersal and this mean understanding the complexity of the dynamics that link and shape intervening variable. Arguably, it is those organisations that understand this interplay and can manage it through carefully considered intervention who are deemed to be more or less change capable (Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001; Dawson 2003a, 2003b).

In the PCT the degree of ambiguity and some animosity in the relationship with certain stakeholders in the external environment (Strategic Health Authorities and the Department of Health) combined with the perceived imposition of a radical change agenda over which there was little influence or choice other than how to implement the changes, had a powerful effect of culturally ‘bonding’ the organisation leading to improved relationships between different sub-groups. But the antecedents of this cultural bonding can be linked to the personalities and behaviours residing within the senior management team who were making indirect, second-order interventions through their management style and manipulation of the communication processes to facilitate this cultural development. This in turn, had the positively reinforcing effect of energising individuals and sub-groups to push the change process forward to achieve the change agenda in the face of adversity; even when it meant that some individuals were putting themselves under intense personal stress. The effects then cascaded outwards and downwards as this cultural bonding evolved a greater sense of cooperation and purpose and how to find novel ways of dealing with the structural impediments of the NHS bureaucracy. Individuals and collective groups therefore became more amenable to the notion of ‘pulling’ change responsibility into their roles as a way of overcoming resource constraints and introducing flexibility into rigid and imposed rules and procedures to make them work. The underlying effect was that the PCT was able to adapt and learn and in that sense, to become a more change capable organisation (Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991; Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992; Iles and Sutherland, 2001; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006).

In the R&T company, the change context and agenda was significantly different and this influenced the nature of organisational effects and the outcomes they produced.

Facilitating change management dispersal to middle, junior managers and non-manager professionals was a critical component in the commercial success of the company. The senior management team achieved this through structural arrangements which centred on clear business development teams; each with their own targets and budgets, underpinned by a robust performance management system and a continuous investment in training and development to engender a 'can-do' culture where innovation and ideas could develop organically at all levels but within a clear cost/benefit structure. But the process was proving to be self-selecting in the sense that a particular group of middle and junior managers and technologists identified themselves through their enthusiasm and motivation for extrinsic and intrinsic reward and thus becoming instrumental in driving the business forward. This had a number of effects which carried potential risks for the future and how it might develop or not as a more change capable organisation.

There was also some evidence that the company was becoming culturally fragmented into broadly two categories: those who through their behaviours were willing to be involved in taking or creating a responsibility for some aspect of the change process and those who, for different reasons, preferred not to participate or to do so reluctantly. Senior managers therefore focused their strategic development activity on these more willing individuals. However, in doing so, there were signs that they might be creating unrealistic expectations in terms of career and reward and overloading this important resource. At the same time, there were at risk of alienating some individuals who were not participating and in doing so, creating a more culturally divided company with less cooperation. While this might not be an issue in the current benign change conditions, it might become a future issue if those change conditions turned commercially more hostile. Then, when the resources and commitment of the whole organisation would be required, they might not be forthcoming. So in terms of evolving change capability, it appeared to be doing so but only within a certain cadre of individuals.

6.3.6 “Giving it all away”: change management distribution as a reconfiguration of power and control?

Another effect of a more dispersed change management relates to its impact on existing structures of power and control. As the debates in chapter two have indicated, in the mainstream, practitioner-focused literature, change management has traditionally been premised on a top-down, leader-centric model. However, arguments were made that with a growing complexity in the context and substance of the change process, there has evolved a more empowering, de-centred model of change leadership that is more concerned with ‘having a responsibility’ for some aspects of the change process. But more complex change contexts also be heralding a shift of power and control away from strategic decisions taken by a small elite and towards the unilateral and independent choices and actions taken by individuals and collectives about whether or not to become involved in taking or creating a change responsibility to meet local and personal needs and contingencies.

This presents clear challenges to change strategists who have to find a balance between too much strategic control being exercised by senior managers, whose remoteness from the everyday realities of change management could result in poor planning and implementation, and enabling or permitting individuals and collectives to engage in forms of unilateralism that are focused on meeting their personal or local needs while denying or subverting strategic goals and ultimately destabilising the change process (the paradox of control referred to in earlier sections).

The evidence suggests that in both organisations, those involved and/or implicated in a dispersal of change management responsibility at strategic and local levels had broadly got the balance right. Why was this? It would appear that the ability to balance control in the change process strategically and locally, was strongly correlated with the nature of that senior management group defined in characteristics such as: their level of management experience; their sense of cohesiveness and the level of trust and respect they have for each other and the relationships they built up with internal and external stakeholders. This lends further support to Pettigrew *et al.*, (1992) who in defining the notion of a receptive context, identified “key people leading change” as one of the eight a determining factor.

It was also apparent in both organisations that directive control was being supplanted by forms of second-order intervention which manipulated the forces producing change outcomes, e.g. deploying resources and developing a level of change capability that generates a receptive context and receptivity within individuals to cope with the challenges of change (Pettigrew *et al.*, 1992; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2001; Higgs and Rowland, 2005). The implications of this more radical perspective of management control in the change process are significant if they suggest that future adaptive success is now dependent upon the capacity of individuals and collective groups at all levels having a responsible for change strategy at a senior level shifting fundamentally their mindsets and their behaviours about what is meant – both philosophically and in practice – by the term change management.

Do the findings lend support to this proposition? In the two case organisations, there was little evidence of chaotic conditions in an anarchic sense; although the PCT might have been coming close to such a scenario at times! Through their interventions, the senior managers in both organisations were able to mitigate the risks of chaos overtaking their organisations by adopting appropriate non-directive and facilitative strategies for managing change by involving the majority of their manager and professional groups. This concurs with Higgs and Rowland (2006) who see contemporary change leadership behaviour as one of “framing change”, that is making sense of the context and threats and communicating this to others, and “building capacity” in the organisation by developing the required levels of change capability to adapt and survive rather than trying to “shape behaviour” through top-down, direct control which is likely to be less effective.

6.3.7 “Or did we just get lucky?”

One interesting conundrum that emerges from the issue of how to achieve the right balance in controlling the management of change was trying to answer the question yet again: To what extent was this part of any overt plan or decision making process on the part of senior managers or was it mere coincidence and an outcome of serendipity and happenstance? It is difficult to be categorical about this but a number of cues and the

instinctive judgement of the researcher suggests that there was no specific plan to balance control over how change management was being dispersed in the way that it was. It would appear that despite the difference in change contexts, it may well have been a fortuitous blend of personalities and qualities in both senior manager teams which acted to balance the way control was exercised.

If this was the case, then it may have been that both organisations just 'got lucky' in having in place the combination of senior managers that proved a significant resource in managing the organisation through the possibly devastating effects of radical change. The inference therefore could be drawn that on another occasion, and in another context, both organisations might not be so lucky.

The corollary of this line of reasoning is to raise the strategic profile of senior managers as change strategists and set in train a further HR debate around issues such as senior management selection, development and retention *within the context of change management* which are arguably as significant as other strategic consideration such as financial and operational management. Reasoning this way also now helps to explain to the researcher why, in the R&T company he was confronted with such a high degree of anxiety during interviews and in corridor meetings about the impending retirement of the CEO and his Deputy within the near future. Logically, if these two were seen to be instrumental in steering the company through a period of major transition and their loss heralded a new phase uncertainty and insecurity in the company's history, then there should be concern both in terms of the successor and their personality but also at the risks induced by the organisation unwittingly allowing itself to have this heavy dependency on these two individuals (Landrum *et al.*, 2000).

In summary, there are indications that the dispersal of change management responsibility and its assimilation into the roles of middle and junior managers and non-manager professionals is having a number of direct and indirect effects at individual, collective and organisational level. Broadly, the effects might be judged as positive and beneficial in both case organisation, but the nature of the effects reflecting the contrast in contexts. However, a number of issues have emerged. In analysing the evidence, there was little suggestion of an overt, planned and considered strategy to disperse change management responsibility to managers and professionals. Senior managers in

both organisations, through their experience, personality and behaviours individually and collectively had fortuitously created the conditions for it to occur but without any obvious intent on their part – although this may have occurred at a more sub-conscious level as middle and junior managers and professionals exhibited desired behaviours which gave an impetus to senior managers to facilitate change management dispersal even further.

But if they were leaving the process of distribution and assimilation largely to happenstance, were senior managers at risk of inducing risk in the change process and the potential of unintended outcomes that could undermine their strategic efforts to adapt and transform, e.g. too heavy a reliance on a cadre of the willing and enthusiastic who were becoming overloaded and stressed or ceding too much control to individuals who are permitted to take unilateral action to meet self-serving ends? Some of these issues are now debated in the final chapter which analyses and evaluates the theoretical and practical implications of change management dispersal and its effects, leading to some concluding ideas, suggestions and proposals for further research and practical improvement.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and implications for change management theory and practice

The philosophical, theoretical challenge that has underpinned this study was premised upon the argument that a more synergistic and integrative blending or melding of different perspectives on change and change management into theoretical composites or frameworks could become the basis for new theory development, and this could lead to improvements in change management practice (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995, 2005; Pettigrew, *et al.*, 2001; Palmer and Dunford, 2008). Put another way, there was a felt need by the researcher for a more commensurate stance in paradigmatic positioning where the empirical research in the field of change management reflected arguments that any single perspective of organisational change and change management, however, theoretically valid, could only ever produce a partial and incomplete interpretation of the way change was being distributed. But does this commensurate positioning open the researcher to accusations of intellectual shallowness and opportunism – being prepared to capitalise on different epistemologies and methodologies without any allegiance to a particular paradigm or theory from which to argue and debate with conviction and commitment?

The researcher's response to this challenge has to be seen as similar to that of Reed (2005b) when faced with a similar "killer question" from Contu and Willmott, (2005) about his intellectual positioning in relation to critical realism as representing a philosophical 'turn' in organisation and management theory. The researcher, like Reed has to metaphorically 'shrug his shoulders'. His argument is that a more commensurate paradigmatic position is no more or less valid than that adopted by any other researcher.

The researcher also shares the sentiments of Darwin *et al.*, (2002:334) who argue that for "reflexive realists there are interesting issues." Reflecting with a group of senior managers about the philosophical positioning of research into change management, they state:

“In any organisation where to go for a modernist or post modernist design are a situational matter. Then we realised that what might well be important in achieving the maximal design features might be the local knowledge of the organisational members themselves.” (p. 334)

It is contended that in this study, “local knowledge” is captured and reflected in its investigations of the lived experiences of those involved in change management and in that sense, this has been the central focus. Furthermore, if understanding and managing organisational change still has a long way to go in delivering the tangible benefits claimed, on the one hand by rational positivists, or the less tangible outcomes such as emancipation that change brings about for critical theorists, then it has to be worth exploring - especially when it is linked to a quest for practical improvement (Crandall, 1990; Watson, 1994b, 1997).

Therefore, it was from within this more commensurate, reflexive philosophical stance, that the researcher was concerned to develop his analytical frameworks for exploring change management distribution and its effects. From his inductive review of extant literature and recent empirical evidence, he was able to identify a number of issues in the form of various paradoxes, ambiguities, unanswered questions in the field of change management. These then became the basis for the central research question and for subsequently developing the aims of the study which revolved around exploring the following areas: understanding different interpretations and the dynamics of distributing change management responsibility; how responsibility was being assimilated into the roles of middle and junior manager and non- manager professionals, and the consequential effects this was having individually, collectively and organisationally.

This closing chapter therefore draws on the findings of this study presented in chapter five and the ensuing analytical discussion in chapter six, to elicit a number of emergent theoretical and practical themes and implications from which to make a number of theoretical propositions, not only to add insight, but to identify areas for further research and practical improvement. The theoretical implications are considered first.

7.1 Possible implications of this study for change management theory?

In this section, the theoretical implications arising from the main empirical themes and issues are discussed, debated and assessed as a concluding commentary on the study, but also to point the way forward to a future research agenda and framework for practical improvement.

7.1.1 An agency based perspective for conceptualising change management distribution?

The challenge facing this study was to find a suitable and appropriate epistemological, ontological and methodological approach from within which to explore change management distribution. As previous chapters have suggested, there is considerable philosophical debate surrounding the interplay between structure and agency, e.g. the realist interpretations such as those propounded by Reed (2000, 2005a) and more constructivist interpretations propounded by commentators such as Giddens (1984). Reflecting the main aims of this study, a critical realist ontology was adopted by the researcher as a philosophical and methodological ‘middle way’ between what some have argued are the ontological ‘extremes’ of positivism and relativism (Willmott, 2000; Reed 2000, 2005a). It was felt neither of these philosophies would have adequately addressed the aims of this study; especially its stated intention that theoretical insight through explanatory models of inquiry must lead to the development of practical improvements in the field of change management (Fox, 1986; Crandall, 1990; Watson, 1994b, 1997).

It is also important to note that while other recent studies in the field of organisational change management appear to be orientated in this direction, it could be claimed that this study was one of the few empirical studies in the field of change management that have explicitly operationalised the assumptions and ideals of critical realism and change agency and demonstrated its applicability as a valid epistemology and ontology for empirical research into the management of change. Has it succeeded?

In a small way, it is felt that this study has demonstrated and lent support to the proponents of critical realism who have argued for an ontological ‘middle way’ in organisational and management theory (Archer, 1995; Archer, *et al.*, 1998; Reed, 2000; 2005; Willmott, 2000). Critical realism can serve and be sustained as a valid conceptual framework to analyse the interplay between the context and substance of change and the generative mechanisms (causal powers) that emanate from the structures and processes that create and drive change in organisations.

More significantly though, this study has identified and made explicit the nature of the causal powers that are embodied in the intentional choices and decisions, independently and unilaterally made by individual actors and collectives to influence and shape the change process. In this sense, the findings have added insight and credence to the work of commentators such as Hartley *et al.*, (1997) and Buchanan and Storey (1997) who have explored the “behavioural repertoires” of change agents as they react to change events and circumstances, but who, through their reactions, seek to influence, intentionally or otherwise, those same events by moving and shifting between different roles. However, this cautions the need for change strategists to appreciate and acknowledge the ability and capacity of change agents to shift and switch between roles and how the motives for role switching may or may not be congruent with different aims and goals of the change process.

This study has therefore complemented the work of these researchers and others working along a similar trajectory by adding an important empirical dimension to this field of research. It has specifically addressed multiple roles and role switching within the framework of managers and professionals who are persuaded to assimilate and integrate change agency, for whatever motive or reason, into their functional and professional duties. It has demonstrated empirically, the dynamic processes by which role switching is induced and enacted. Additionally, it has added to these other studies by elaborating the effects and issues that multiple roles have for them and their organisation (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Buchanan, 2003a).

7.1.2 More or less determinism in change management?

It has also addressed some of the criticisms levelled at different perspectives of change management - especially those that attach to processual perspectives of change (Dawson, 2003a, 2003b; Caldwell, 2005). A number of commentators have argued that processualists or contextualists, place too much focus and emphasis on the environmental context and its deterministic influence on the change process, and give too little attention to the freedom of choice and intentionality of action that can be exerted to influence and shape the change process. It has demonstrated that these individual actions have consequences such as inducing strategic risk into the change process (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Wilson, 1992; Buchanan and Storey; 1997; Collins, 1998; Caldwell, 2005, 2006).

Moreover, this study has elaborated on this voluntaristic argument, to demonstrate that while there are causal powers residing in the intentional actions of individuals and collectives, these powers to influence change context and substance do not just reside at a strategic level. Individuals at a localised level have causal powers invested in them; whether through their influential position in relation to the complexity of the change process, their professional expertise or their personal motives, they can shape and influence the change process. For example, the study has shown that there are positive benefits when local initiatives become the means to make otherwise complex change agenda fit local contingencies. However, in certain contexts, personal motives and ambitions or collective agendas driven by professional interests, can diverge from central strategic goals which may be beneficial if they act to correct error or risk. But equally, they may also serve to create risk as those who take change management responsibility use them to usurp anticipated change outcomes for personal outcomes.

In other words, ontologically and methodologically, critical realism as a research paradigm framing this study has enabled the researcher to produce valid and useful insights into the nature and interplay of these causal powers and how they manifest themselves and are exercised empirically in real social settings.

7.1.3 Time for a new interpretation of change leadership?

Echoing the last point above, this study sought to extend the debate surrounding assumptions about the degree of influence and control that senior management, acting in a strategic capacity, can actually exert over the way change is now managed – especially in radical, complex and politicised change contexts. Traditional change management theory suggests that control largely remains in the hands of change strategists; even when it is being delegated or devolved through empowering initiatives, e.g. through performance management systems or cultural mechanisms. This study does not refute this interpretation - the evidence does indicate that control in the change process can be sustained by change strategists in sometimes very unstable conditions; but equally, it cannot be done in an exclusively centralising, directive manner. The study therefore lends support to other commentators who contend, that while a centralised interpretation of change management may be desirable and espoused in the literature, it may now no longer be an accurate portrayal of the way change management is being enacted in more chaotic and complex contexts (Denis, *et al.*, 2001; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b).

In part, the need for a reinterpretation of change management is connected to a certain conceptual ‘looseness’ and a number of gaps in the way change management is conceived and enacted. In respect of identifying and defining those who were involved in managing change, the terminology was extensive but often conflated and used interchangeably. Change leaders, change drivers, change implementers, change agents are all ascribed with change leadership roles but understanding the nature and meaning of these descriptors and how they might relate to different functional, status and professional characteristics is partial and incomplete. For example, the literature exhorts managers to become change agents but the relationships and characteristics that exist in and between different hierarchical and functional levels in management and how they differentiate a change management role is hardly explored. And merely stating that professionals have a critical, innovative role in change without specifying how that role is integrated with other duties and priorities and how conflict between these priorities and values might be reconciled revealed a simplistic interpretation of their role in change. For example, the confusion and contradictions that exists in relation to HR and educational professionals about their perceived role in managing change debated earlier.

Similarly, in terms of the dynamics of distribution, confusion and ambiguity were evident across much of the literature. For example, for senior managers, change management means operating as change strategists - exerting top-down leadership and the retention of centralised control. But for others who were possibly imbued with an empowering rhetoric, the assumption was one of freedom to manage change in their way and on their terms. The researcher therefore found himself having to spend some time conceptually 'unpacking' change management as a construct before investigating its impact on the roles of managers and professionals.

The empirical evidence from this study therefore supports the contention made by other commentators (Gronn, 2002; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b). Conceiving change management as 'having a responsibility' in a number of ways, reflects the complicated dynamics of dispersal beyond top-down empowerment – especially a more informal, fluid and transient dynamic where leadership revolves around and emerges from the formal and informal relationships at a localised level in which directive leadership hardly features or reaches. It makes explicit that having a responsibility has also to be linked to the unilateral actions of an individual who may decide to reinterpret the formal change process to suit local conditions, or seek to introduce some aspect of change in their area of current responsibility to fulfil personal motives. In taking that responsibility for initiating and managing that aspect of the change process they are not necessarily dependent on, or waiting for, formal leadership directives to progress the change process but instead view change management as an exercising of their own initiative.

What is therefore important is to consider the motives and behaviours that lie behind these unilateral decisions and choices. With this in mind, this study has argued that a future research agenda has to delve more deeply into the aspirations, emotions, motives and needs that frame the way change management responsibility is interpreted by managers and professionals and how these interpretations inform and guide their thinking and behaviour in relation to their responsibility, and how at the same time, they shape and reconfigure the psychological and emotional relationships between the individual and their organisation (Blackler, 1992; Di Bella, 1992; Taylor, 1999; Ford, 1999; Buchanan, 2003a).

7.1.4 “Thinking in loops not lines”: Intervening to create more receptive contexts

With a more synergistic and commensurate view of change management in mind, a number of commentators have argued the efficacy of change strategists understanding the theoretical and practical implications of the non-linearity in organisational systems and processes (Senge, 1990; Morgan, 1997; Beeson and Davis, 2000; Abel and Sementelli, 2004). This affords change strategists the potential to be proactive by making strategic choices about when and where to make interventions to facilitate change management distribution in a way that fits with the context and substance of the change process. In other words, using an awareness and insight gained from an understanding of non-linear modelling of causal forces, they are in a position to influence the receptivity to change management dispersal - what Tosey (1993:188) refers to as “interfering with the interference” and what Stacey (1996:78) refers to as “extraordinary management.” This opens up the possibility of change strategists introducing second-order interventions that may indirectly influence and facilitate favourable conditions for a dispersal of responsibility, while at the same time making interventions to negate or remove limitations and constraints that may inhibit dispersal such as excessive workload and stress or a lack of career direction.

But to achieve these second-order changes requires a more considered analysis of the mutually causal interactions and interdependencies between the intervening variables which is unlikely to be achieved from within a rational-linear mode of thinking. As Morgan (1997:274) argues, it requires “thinking in loops not lines.” Here, the aim is to map causal variables and bring into relief the consequential intended and unintended effects that particular patterns of interaction might produce and which can therefore be ameliorated by intervention (Senge, 1990).

The benefits of thinking in a non-linear fashion and the efficacy of analysing different patterns of causal relations interlinked through positively or negatively reinforcing loops became evident in this study. For instance, in both organisations there was evidence that positive causal loops emerged when the centrality of the interrelationship that existed between a cohesive senior management team and relationships with peers and a supportive culture became evident. This took the form of a positive feedback loop

where the dynamics positively influenced other variables e.g. how external forces produced a sense of cultural amity that led to a determination to successfully deal with a radical change agenda in the PCT or in the R&T company, how a supportive culture sent cues to certain individuals that a willingness to take change management responsibility into their role would possibly enhance career prospects.

But negatively reinforcing effects can emerge as well. For instance in the R&T company what was seen by some as a supportive culture may be seen by others as a coercive culture that is forcing them to become involved and accept change responsibility into their roles which they see as exploiting them or undermining their professionalism in some way. For some individuals, this may lead to patterns of resistance and alienation, causing managers to refocus their attention on a particular cadre of enthusiasts who, in turn, then become overloaded, with the concomitant possibility that they too began to resist efforts to involve them in further change management roles by keeping a low profile. And so an emergent downward spiral of negativity for them and the organisation was produced as a consequence.

In both case study organisations, there was little evidence to suggest that senior managers, in their capacity as change strategists, were fully comprehending or understanding what the consequences of their actions might be. In other words, there was little evidence in the findings that their second-order, indirect interventions were in actuality, linked to or formed part of a formal change strategy. There were indications that while senior managers were making facilitative interventions in respect of performance management, cultural and communication processes, these interventions could have been fortuitous, and more the result of serendipity, rather than arising from any organised pre-planning or proactive decision making on the part of the senior management. A sense of this was gained by the researcher during interviews and subsequent meetings with senior manager in both organisations when they were asked to articulate their strategy for managing and supporting those to whom change responsibility, and therefore strategic risk, was invested. In a sort of post-hoc review of their position following that question, the response was a universal consensus that some strategic consideration should be given to those who were assimilating change management into their roles, but at the same time indicating that this had never previously been considered as a strategic issue; which might be considered as somewhat

paradoxical when the possibility of negative effects and risks outlined earlier is taken into account.

For the researcher, this implied two things. One, there was a low level of intellectual awareness and understanding about the assimilation of change management into the roles of middle, junior managers and professionals and consequently it was hardly an 'item' for consideration on the strategic change agenda. Second, senior managers operating as change strategists, did not have a strategy for coping with and effectively managing those in whom they had invested so much responsibility and trust, and were thereby, unintentionally placing risks over the whole change process. For instance, there were real risks that in the future, their ignorance might generate unsustainable expectations and levels of motivation amongst key individuals, which if not met, could result in negative outcomes in terms of demotivation and even possible issues of staff retention.

The theoretical (and consequentially the practical) implications therefore to be drawn would suggest that if change strategists were to adopt a non-linear interpretation of change management dynamics, they have the potential to develop a rich and insightful picture of complexity between variables out of which points of intervention or interference can be deduced and enacted to reinforce positive relations and to minimise or eliminate those that are negative in orientation. If done with insight, small interventions can produce lasting effects that outweigh the effort originally invested. Moreover, if a deeper understanding of mutual causality opens the possibility of making second-order, facilitative interventions in the way change management is dispersed, then it connotes the potential of developing a more explicit and proactive strategy for developing greater change capability in the organisation. In other words, from a more practical perspective, if change leaders are prepared to view dispersal of change management in a less directive and controlling way and take measures in their change strategy to nurture, facilitate and enable the knowledge, skills and commitment of managers and professionals, then organisational responses to the challenges of change may be more adaptive and flexible and therefore less fraught for all concerned (Palmer and Dunford, 2008).

7.1.5 Increasingly hybridised roles for middle managers and professionals

The findings from this study lend ready support to recent and emergent research that middle and junior managers and professionals are assimilating a change responsibility into their role (Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b). The majority of respondents in the two case organisations had variously assimilated some element of change responsibility into their role. However, the way that responsibility was interpreted and enacted, reflected the context and the substance of the change processes being encountered. In the PCT, responsibility was underpinned by a heavy commitment to make change work for professional and moral reasons. In the R&T company, it was seen as a vehicle to meet personal ambitions but also to deliver commercial opportunities to the company.

But one of the implications that stands out from the findings and somewhat lost in rational models of change leadership, are the causal powers that individuals and collectives have to exploit those change events to meet individual and collective motives and needs (Buchanan and Storey, 1997). This suggests that there is possible scope for empirical research to be extended to analyse in greater depth, the role ambiguities, conflicts, tensions and contradictions that are related to and influence individuals as they have to juggle and balance the requirements and priorities of the different elements of their ‘three-hat’, hybridised manager or professional role over time and across unfolding contexts. For example how might the ‘juggling’ of different aspects of role vary according to the nature of the organisation; the level of management, or the nature of the professional role? Equally, what are the psycho-emotional dynamics or logics of assimilating change agency into an existing manager/professional roles; what enables and constrains the dynamics, and what positive and negative effects does it produce (Abel and Sementelli, 2004; Howard, 2006; Boyatzis, 2006)?

7.1.6 The issue of power and control over change management dispersal

Related to the hybridisation of manager and professional roles, another theoretical implication emerges and relates to the previous discussion in chapter six when reference

was made to the “paradox of control.” Here, change strategists may be driven by the complex, radical and unstable change agenda to cede change management responsibilities to their managers and professionals, enthusiastically, reluctantly or even without knowing they are doing so. They are then confronted with the challenge of how to balance and reconcile this ceding of responsibility with a perceived need to maintain overall control in the change process. As Doyle (2001) has suggested there are inherent risks if an appropriate balance is not maintained or the wrong techniques are used. Too little control and the whole change process may become chaotic as individuals and collectives take or create responsibility and use it in ways that are inefficient and unfocused in terms of resource utilisation or their actions are contrary to strategic goals. Efforts to correct the imbalance such as draconian control systems, if not handled competently, may set in train a negatively reinforcing loop in which a tightening or wresting back of control causes conflict or resistance leading to more control and so on. Moreover, it may set back the process of innovative thinking and change-creating behaviours that organisations rely on to enable them to respond effectively to the challenges they face.

Here again, an area for further research presents itself. Developing a deeper understanding on the part of change strategists about the interplay between generative mechanisms they set in train through their structural and cultural interventions and the consequential effects that they produce would seem to be an area that merits further examination both theoretically and practically.

7.1.7 Generalising from diverse contexts

In chapter three the case study method as a strategy for empirical research investigation was described and justified (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994, 2003; Hartley, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994). One of the contentious issues surrounding the use of the case study method was a debate about the ability of researchers to generalise from the findings. Some commentators argue that the idiosyncratic and narrow focus of a case study produces only “modest theory” (Eisenhardt, 1989). However, this is countered by others commentators who assert that, while a form of universal or grand generalisation in a positivistic, scientific sense may not be sensibly sought, some generalisability may

be possible from case-based research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hartley, 1994), Stake, 1995; Flybjerg, 2004). For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledge the limitations that “local conditions” impose on any universal generalisation. However, they argue that if there is some evidence of congruency across context, then the events observed in one context may be applicable in another, similar context.

In relation to this study, there was evidence to suggest that some generalisability about the dynamics of change management and its effects on the roles of managers and professionals might indeed be possible. The two groups of respondents showed similar characteristics in their roles and patterns of behaviours, but operating in significantly contrasting contexts. For example, there were patterns of commonality in the strategic leadership behaviours displayed by the senior management teams in both organisations, despite considerable differences in external change environment and the nature of their respective organisations. Their ability to intervene structurally and culturally and to generate the dynamic conditions for change management dispersal could be considered an intervening variable whose influence could be generalised to other contrasting contexts and become a strategic consideration in building change capability. Similarly, other variables such as an acceptance and acknowledgement of what might be described as professional behaviour or standards would appear to transcend and be sustained across these two contrasting contexts. Clinical professionals in a public sector PCT and technologists in a commercial company might differ considerably in their role but both adhere to a sense of commitment, duty and professional pride associated with their educational and ethical background and which in this study, neither population was apparently willing to compromise on, and which became an important influencing variable in the dispersal of change management.

Therefore, if such patterns were found in seemingly diverse contexts such as those suggested in this study, it would seem to lend credence to Gomm *et al.*, (2000) who claim that where “there is relevant heterogeneity within populations” some empirical generalisation across diverse contexts may be possible and contributing some theoretical and practical implications. For instance, if, as this study is suggesting, groups of professionals are assimilating change management responsibility into their roles, there are important consequential messages for those involved in developing policies and

techniques associated with inculcating change agent skills – perhaps as a feature of professional training and ongoing development on a broader scale.

7.1.8 From change management theory into effective practice?

A central aim of this study was to find a way of transforming theories of change and change management into practical guidance to inform and support those who, for whatever reason, find themselves with change responsibility and to cope and deal with the risks and issues this raises. In some senses, the anxious, concerned, confused and (increasingly) stressed professional or management practitioner searching for guidance and assistance from change theory might take a rather jaundiced view of esoteric debates about critical realism or the interplay between structure and agency. For them the concern is whether theory can translate into meaningful solutions to practical problems which affect their work or personal lives.

However, the prevailing impression is that current change theory is failing to provide that support beyond offering over-simplified models and theories and universal prescriptive advice that often fails to address the unique and dynamic contexts they are confronted with. As Fox, (1986) cautions:

“These are not simply theoretical ivory-tower issues; most managers must wonder at some point in their career whether they manage events or events manage them, and must know and fear what it means to be “*overtaken* by events.” In order to understand the interplay between individuals and wider events, we need to refine our theoretical and conceptual tools without losing touch with the concrete issues and practical problems” (p. 8, original emphasis).

Watson (1994b) expresses this unease at the apparent gulf that exists between organisation theory and its application in management practice when he points to the closed nature of organisation theory and the lack of contact and application to organisational contexts and everyday work situations. He invites organisational theorists:

“to consider the extent to which organisational theory might be in danger of becoming an end in itself rather than a resource to be used by members of their

societies towards a better understanding of organisations so that they can use the organisations rather than be used by them” (p. 213).

Watson (1997) addresses this dilemma by urging what he describes as a “pragmatic pluralist” approach. With echoes of the commensurate philosophical stance towards theorising organisational change taken by commentators such as Van De Ven and Poole (1995, 2005) and Palmer and Dunford (2008), Watson argues that organisation and management theory must engage the different social science disciplines in a way that aids “the understanding of the complex activity of management.” However, this must preserve conceptual and methodological integrity and avoid the “anything goes” approach (p. 4). The important point that Watson is making (similar in nature to Fox, 1986 above) is that “Management is a practical activity and those engaged in it have to be persuaded hard that ‘theory’ can have any value at all” (p.7).

The researcher believes that on the basis of the findings from this study a pragmatic pluralist perspective - which resonates with the pragmatic critical realist stance of Johnson and Duberley (2000) - offers an intellectually robust position and a theoretical foundation from which more applied knowledge may be derived as a precursor to informed action. In that sense, it is likely to resonate more fully with change management practitioners who – having often been seduced by reductionist, formulaic, prescriptive, idealised approaches to managing change – are left confused, frustrated and vulnerable by their seeming failure to address or resolve the complex and chaotic situations they find themselves in.

The challenge for further research is therefore to find a way of bridging the theory and practice gap that exists in change management. To elicit answers to questions such as: How do you persuade middle and junior managers and professionals to engage with the social sciences; to intellectually consider viewing change management practice through different lenses; to understand and acknowledge the radical ideas and implications propounded by complexity and chaos theory which suggest they relinquish aspects of their leadership and control to self-organising forces (Stacey *et al.*, 2001)?

Having debated some of the theoretical implications suggested by the findings of this study, the next section considers some of the more practical implications.

7.2 Implications for change management practice

7.2.1 'Managing the change managers': a new imperative for change strategists?

Central to any strategic imperative developed by change strategists has to be the provision of the knowledge, skills and personal support to allow individuals to assimilate these additional responsibilities into their role and then to perform that role to meet the challenges of radical change contexts; to meet the diverse expectations of stakeholders and to meet their own personal ambition and intrinsic needs (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Stewart, 1996; Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a).

However, while the mainstream organisational change literature recognises the need for change management skills development, it does so from within an essentially rational-functional model that revolves around the identification and prescribing of lists of competences and qualities that those in a change role should (or should not) possess (Ottaway, 1979; Kanter, 1983; Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Cockerill, 1994; Eccles, 1994; Hutton, 1994; Hamlin *et al.*, 2001; Higgs and Rowland, 2001). These prescriptions do have some practical validity, but the evidence from this study suggests that an overly prescriptive view of change competency would be ambiguous and simplistic in its orientation and would be unlikely to fully address individual or organisational needs or requirements as a core element in any strategy that seeks to develop individual and collective change competency and capability.

One of the key findings from this study, and one which corroborates and elaborates evidence from other studies (Doyle, *et al.*, 2000; Doyle, 2001), has been the absence of any real sense that the senior management in both case organisations had devised or developed a coherent, proactive strategy for creating the conditions and providing the knowledge, skills, and support to those in whom they invested change responsibility and/or to those who unilaterally took that responsibility for themselves. And yet, paradoxically at the same time, success in both organisations in coping with change and

meeting organisational goals was attributable in no small measure to the innovative, change-creating actions and behaviours of the managers and professionals who were taking or creating a responsibility for change.

So what practical implications might be drawn from the evidence of this empirical study? Do change strategists need to proactively and explicitly develop, as part of their strategic plan, a strategy to manage the change managers? On the face of the evidence from these two organisations, the answer would seem to be: no they do not. The evidence suggests that their second-order interventions to push and pull change management responsibility by creating the receptive contexts and promoting receptivity amongst individuals and collective entities were having the desired effect.

But upon closer inspection, there are indications that these second order interventions mask a number of issues and risks and that the development of change knowledge and skills to manage change may be the result of serendipity and luck rather than the design of an effective change strategy. The practical implications therefore revolve around the need for those in positions of strategic change leadership to develop an awareness and an understanding of the consequential effects of their actions and to adopt a more proactive and forward-thinking approach to managing those in whom they place so much responsibility. So for example, consideration might be given to developing the human resources policies that explicitly confront issues such as recruitment and selection, career progression, reward, training in respect of those who are increasingly assimilating a significant change responsibility into their roles. But such awareness has to be underpinned by the recognition by these same change strategists, that having an added responsibility for change management adds a new dimension to an individual's role and presents challenges to current levels of professional and/or managerial competency and expertise which they may not be equipped to handle (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, 2001; 2002b).

7.2.2 Having the competency and expertise to perform in the role of change agent

This study has confirmed other recent research studies which have argued that there is an apparent lack of detail and precision about defining: who are the change agents; how has change management pervaded their role; what effects has it had; what their needs are in terms of developing change management knowledge and skills that fit with the unique features of their roles and the context in which those roles are being enacted (Buchanan, *et al.*, 1999; Doyle *et al.*, 2000; Hamlin *et al.*, 2001; Burnes 2003; Woodward and Hendry, 2004)? As this study has already debated, change management is often synonymous with ‘the manager’ role and as such lacks detail about the inherent functional, power and social complexity that are contained within that role. At the same time, it fails to acknowledge the growing dispersal of responsibility beyond the remit of that role, e.g. to non-manager professionals. This has implications for the design and implementation of any approach to develop change management knowledge and skills, e.g. that development activity must now be seen to extend beyond exclusive management development programmes and include those aimed at professional development. In both case organisations, some individuals who were not formally designated to be in a manager role and/or who were assimilating change management into their role were at risk of being bypassed by these formal management programmes and therefore reliant on more informal development or even performing in a role without having had any development invested in them whatsoever.

7.2.3 Developing more awareness about change competency and expertise

Part of the problem associated with developing change competences is the apparent vagueness and ambiguity about how to differentiate between and integrate the knowledge and skills required to assume and discharge a change management responsibility alongside the functional and professional aspects of the role. While the managerial literature is heavily prescriptive, and describes packages and portfolios of knowledge, skills and personal qualities which are required to perform as an effective change agent, upon closer inspection, they appear to differ only marginally from those required in an operational or professional role. As Doyle (2002b:480) remarks:

“The evidence suggests that with one or two exceptions, existing change theory and practice are aligned behind a set of unchallenged assumptions about the nature of contemporary organisational change and the way it should be managed. Despite the emergence of new, empowering structures, cultures and working practices, there appears to be a general lack of awareness that managing change might represent a substantively and qualitatively different experience from that contained in an existing operational management or technical/professional role.”

The suggestion is that while individuals in an operational or professional capacity have to be competent in areas such as the ability to communicate or to apply some form of political intelligence to given situation, when they assimilate wider change management responsibilities into their roles, they may find that similar skills which were previously adequate with their role domain, may no longer be sufficient, e.g. as they grapple with having to communicate with and influence a more diverse population of internal and external stakeholders who may present challenges hitherto not encountered.

This claim by Doyle and others was supported by the evidence in both case organisations. There were suggestions for instance, that some individuals felt that when they extended the remit of their role by assimilating change management responsibility (whether formally or informally) they were presented with challenges to their overall level of competency to perform effectively in their role. The corollary of this, is that as they are then judged as ‘incompetent’ in their capacity to cope with the change management responsibility component of their new role, it reflects on their overall competency in their role as a manager or professional with possible implications for their career and indeed, in the R&T company, it heralded the end of career for a small minority. Practically, this gave added impetus to again having the human resources and management policies which pay specific attention to helping those who have recently found themselves assimilating change into their role, and assists them to move from being novices to competent performers (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Doyle, 2001; Buchanan, 2003a).

7.2.4 “Too much prescription?”

But in developing change competency, is there a seeming over-reliance on generalised prescriptive lists about how to develop the knowledge and skills for change

management which hardly reflects the complexity faced by these managers and professionals? The findings from this study lend credence to earlier studies which indicate the answer to this rhetorical statement is yes. Many of these prescriptive lists are often couched in so-called ‘models of competency’ which are premised on many of the rational-functional, managerialist assumptions that underpinned the planned change models debated in chapter two.

As previously argued, such models do not appear to recognise or where they do, they do not take full account of the complex dynamics surrounding dispersed change agency – especially when it manifests itself as an integral feature of middle and junior manager and non manager professional roles. There is also the risk that such generic prescriptions for change management suffer the some of the general criticisms that have been levelled at competency-based approaches used in executive management development, where they fail to take account of contextual variation and diversity. The practical implications therefore fit with the claims by commentators that rather than adhere to generic blueprints of competency, change competences should be developed and implemented in the context in which they are relevant and applicable or indeed, to shift away from the notion of specific competences and towards the development of higher order diagnostic and sense-making skills (Stewart and Hamlin, 1992a and 1992b; Currie and Darby, 1995; Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald, 1996).

7.2.5 Moving from change novice to change expert

With a few exceptions, the development of change management knowledge, skills and expertise is noticeably underplayed in most mainstream management development programmes as an issue requiring specific attention – which may in part, reflect a tendency not to see it as a discrete feature of a managerial or professional role requiring different skills and personal abilities, and that required skills should be congruent with the context and substance of the change process being experienced (Burnes, 2003). But there is another practical implication revealed by this study which hardly receives attention and where it does, it is usually in an ad-hoc and fragmented manner – how to develop change *expertise*. Buchanan and Boddy, (1992) define change expertise as not just in terms of attaining the knowledge and skills to perform in a change management

role, but how to select and deploy appropriate skills to suit contingent circumstances. In other words, how to develop the diagnostic, sense-making, intellectual and problem-solving expertise which tells you what to do in particular change environments and situations and which skills are needed to resolve the issues associated with managing change.

This study lends support to the notion of developing change expertise. It has indicated that, while both case organisations did have management development programmes, and these appeared to encompass management training for certain professionals as well, there was little attention to the development of change management skills and expertise as a discrete activity with evidence at all levels of a vagueness about what change knowledge and skills were required beyond generalised statements such as the need to be a “good communicator.” This vagueness and ambiguity about what change management means in terms of knowledge and skills supports the findings from other empirical studies (Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle *et al.*, 2000; Doyle 2002b).

Moreover, in both organisations management training and development was confined to in-house and external courses with little reference to identifying and developing specific change management skills ‘in context’. In other words, developing change knowledge and expertise that fits with the context in which it is being enacted. While there was some evidence of wider experiential approaches such as coaching, mentoring and action learning, this could have been more widely utilised to, not only develop change competency ‘in context’ but to provide the requisite opportunities to develop change expertise and to provide levels of support – especially to those who are seen to be ‘novices’ in the change management component of their role (Hartley *et al.*, 1997; Hamlin *et al.*, 2001; Doyle, 2002b; Burnes, 2003).

Where development and support was forthcoming, it was often through informal relationships with peers and networks which did provide some development and support. However, this was dependent for success on the quality of those relationships but also on the time that so-called change experts could devote to coaching and mentoring their novice colleagues – a real issue for the PCT.

When the topic of change competency development and the risk that ‘incompetent’ individuals might present was broached at interview with senior managers, it was interesting to see their reaction as the ‘light went on’ and they did begin to recognise that this was deserving of greater consideration and were somewhat uncomfortable and displayed some slight embarrassment that they had not thought about or done something about it previously. This highlights the significance of senior and middle managers developing an awareness of their role in change management distribution and the part they must play in developing individual and collective capability (Woodward and Mabey, 2004).

7.2.6 Some messages and lessons for human resource policies and practice?

While this study has argued that the central core of any strategy to manage the change managers revolves around how to make first and second order interventions that disperse responsibility and reconcile issues of control and develop change management competency, there are two further issues that the findings have suggested require active consideration as part of strategy development and implementation but which, until fairly recently, were far less obvious in the literature: Firsts, what is the process by which individuals are identified or selected for change management responsibility and second, how to mitigate the negative effects of being in a stressful change role by providing them with adequate support arrangements (Doyle, 2001, 2002a, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a)?

Without some formal methodology or facility for identifying and selecting those who should or should not be assimilating change management responsibility, there is always the attendant risk that unsuitable individuals might assimilate that responsibility into their role and subsequently fail in their task or conversely, are enabled to pursue motives which may or may not be congruent with organisational goals. For instance, in the PCT, there were suggestions that some individuals were operating at the limit of their capability, and in one case an individual who had moved from a clinical role into a service development role (internal change consultant) was patently ill at ease with her competency in the new role and in danger of failing to come to terms with the challenges of that role (Cripe, 1993).

In the R&T company, individuals were encouraged and incentivised to assimilate change management into their roles to meet commercial goals and in some senses there was evidence that the more able and competent were self-selecting themselves into a change management role though their enthusiasm and ambition (Doyle, 2002a). On the face of it this willingness to become involved could be viewed by senior managers as an encouraging cultural and performance related development. But it does raise certain questions. For example, apart from presenting the possibility of a paradox of control discussed earlier, is a display of enthusiasm and motivation a sufficient basis for enabling or permitting individuals to become involved in change management if they do not possess the required competencies to perform that aspect of their roles? How does the company ensure that the enthusiasm and motivation it is engendering is focused on delivering the company's goals rather than individuals self-selecting themselves for self-serving motives?

The evidence from this study therefore lends credence and concurs with other studies which have argued the need for a more explicit process of selection for change management responsibility as part of any strategy to manage the change managers (Flude, 1992; Bott and Hill, 1994; Cockerill, 1994; Doyle, 2002a; Buchanan, 2003a). This points to the need for an embedded selection process as part of a change management strategy. However, that may be difficult to implement in a more liberal, dispersed change management context than it is for more formal, mandated roles such as project managers or internal consultants. The practical implication therefore is of added risk to the change process as individuals are self selecting themselves into the change process.

In not acknowledging the substantive and qualitative difference that an assimilation of change management brings to a role and the lived experience of performing in that role, there is a risk that individuals and groups may not receive the level of practical and moral support they require. For example, attention in the literature is often focused on the wider effects of implementing change such as resistance and political games playing or the psychosocial effects on the part of those seen as 'victims' of change activities and less on the consequential effects on those who are responsible for planning and implementing the change process. This lacuna in the literature may be connected with

more rational, goal-seeking models of management which have yet to find room to consider the emotional, psychological dimensions of assimilating change management into a role. This may be due to the unchallenged assumptions about the personal resilience and emotional capacities of individuals who perform in these roles derived from models of heroic and unflinching leadership.

But what the findings from this study have demonstrated is that if change management responsibility is being dispersed more widely, then logically such assumptions about these psychosocial consequential effects may have to be reconsidered. There is a need, not only to put in place at the input end of a change management strategy, the systems and processes that to extend responsibility and control in a change management role and ensuring that individuals have the requisite skills, but at the same time attending to the output end where HR interventions such as career planning and appropriate systems of reward, explicitly acknowledge change management responsibility and seek to provide the social and moral support that is needed to deal with the added pressures individuals and teams are likely to encounter (Doyle, 2002b; Buchanan, 2003a; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2006).

7.3 Summary of the study and perceived contributions to existing knowledge and practical improvement in the field of change management

The genesis of this study lies in the prior empirical research carried out by the researcher, both independently and in collaboration with other colleagues, in the field of change management over the last 10 years. This previous research agenda was focused on an exploration of the ‘lived experiences’ of managers and professionals who were involved, in some capacity, in the management of organisational change in both public and private sector organisations (Buchanan *et al.*, 1999; Doyle, *et al.*, 2000). It was the findings from these two studies in particular, which identified a number of oversimplified and untested assumptions about the nature and dynamics of change management responsibility – how it was being dispersed and assimilated into the roles of managers (especially at middle and junior levels) and non-manager professionals. The findings from these two studies also suggested that the effects on managers and

professionals as they became involved and implicated, willingly or unwillingly, in a change management role were perhaps more complicated than orthodox, mainstream theories implied, or indeed were prepared to acknowledge and accept.

The researcher identified and gained access to a group of managers and professionals in two contrasting case study organisations – one a large public sector organisation, the other a small private sector company. From within these two organisations, he was able to research at close quarters and in considerable depth, how change management was being interpreted, how it was being distributed and assimilated into their roles, and what the effects were for them and their organisation. His research methodology was framed within a critical realist epistemology and ontology where the focus was on the interplay between determining structures and human agency which provided the most appropriate fit with the theoretical and practical aims of the study. Data were collected using an infrastructure of research methods, and analysed within a grounded theory framework to present a number of themes and issues having theoretical and practical implications. The findings were analysed and cross-case comparisons were made between these two very different organisations to identify similarities and differences which were then debated to identify themes and issues and possible implications for ongoing theory development and practice.

So what contribution does the researcher feel he has made to a greater understanding and awareness in the field of change management? In brief, the researcher believes this study complements and builds upon a body of enquiring, challenging and critical analyses that is emerging from recent empirical research into interpretations of change leadership and the dynamics of its dispersal (see for example: Denis *et al.*, 2001; Gronn, 2002; Buchanan *et al.*, 2007a, 2007b; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2006). His findings concur with many of the debates and the conclusions arrived by these and other studies which are suggesting that existing interpretations of change management might be more relevant if they were extended beyond more formal, rational, top-down leadership models to include a less formal, more dispersed, shared and fluid conception where '*having a responsibility*' for some aspect of change management rather than a formal leadership role might be a more appropriate perspective to adopt; especially where it involves middle managers and professionals acting in a change agent capacity. Through its focus on the interplay between structure and agency, it becomes clear that change

management distribution should not be confined to conceptualisations that revolve exclusively around directive or empowering mechanisms aimed at ‘pushing’ responsibility towards individuals and collective entities, but where strategic control is retained by change strategists supported by external consultants. In more taxing, chaotic and complex change environments, it may be the case that a dispersal of change management responsibility to managers and professionals has to include the recognition that there is the growing potential for individuals and collectives to ‘pull’ or take responsibility into their roles through the exercising of independent, unilateral human choices and decisions they make about change agency. The focus on this interplay also brought into relief a need to understand the complex patterns of positive and negative causality that influence and shape events. Moreover, factoring this consideration of causality into strategic planning also brought to the fore the issue of generating receptivity in terms of both context and individual action through strategists making first and second order interventions in both external and internal variables shaping the change process; but at the same time, acknowledging the inherent limitations and constraints on their actions that complexity in the process imposes, e.g. the paradox of control.

The study has also made a contribution to furthering an understanding about the consequential effects of change management dispersal on the roles of middle managers and non-manager professionals – an area that hitherto has, and to some extent still remains, poorly understood. It has brought to light a tendency in the literature to over-simplify and, on occasions, create somewhat idealised conceptions of ‘the manager’ and the ‘professional’ in the role of change agent. It has highlighted the complexity and ambiguity that surrounds perceptions of managers and professional cast in the role of change agent and how a tendency to over-simplify may be leading to assumptions about the nature and requirements of their roles which are not supported nor corroborated by the empirical evidence such as that produced in this study.

Furthermore, the findings from this study have added more weight to recent arguments which claim, that as a growing number of individuals willingly or unwillingly find themselves wearing ‘three hats’ often simultaneously (as manager, professional, change agent), there has to be a greater appreciation of the effects that an involvement in change management might be having on them as individuals. Not only does the study

continue to alert the reader, as other studies have done (see for example Doyle, 2001; Buchanan 2003a), to the emotional and psychological effects of having a responsibility for change management as part of your role, but it has drawn attention to issues such as individuals having the required capability and competency to perform in that role to minimise risk to the organisation and the individual involved.

In this regard, the findings point firmly towards the need for organisations to review their strategic human resource policies and practices. For example, there is a need to pay closer attention to the manner by which individuals find themselves involved or implicated in a change role or the consequences of not being involved. There is a need to further explore mechanisms to develop the knowledge, skills and expertise for a change management role that is premised on the argument made from the findings in this study, that the exercising of change agency requires a qualitative and substantive shift in capability and performance. And more broadly for change strategists, the study urges them to develop a greater level of awareness and understanding about how to 'manage the change managers' - how to manage the individuals and teams on whom they rely upon as a strategic resource and how to involve and integrate them into the overall change process to improve efficacy, achieve outcomes and reduce risk. This means recognising that the roles of managers and professionals are changing and organisations in both public and private sectors will have to put in place, as part of an overall change strategy, an adequate support and resource infrastructure for these individuals and collective groups to deliver anticipated change outcomes and to avoid producing risks and negative outcomes that may undermine the overall change process.

Finally, this research study took the form of a cross-case comparison of change management dispersal within two distinctly contrasting organisational contexts. Methodologically, it sought to make a number of analytical comparisons between the two case organisations from which it could then identify similarities and differences and utilise these as the basis from which to seek to explain and speculate about why these similarities and differences might exist and what the implications might be for theory and practice. The findings suggest that while there might be differences between the dynamics of change management dispersal which could be attributed to differences in the context and substance of the change processes under scrutiny, there were a surprising number of apparent similarities evident – especially in the patterns of

causality - and that these appeared to transcend the apparent differences in change context and substance, e.g. the significance of 'strong' leadership at a strategic level making appropriate interventions; how different forms of change leadership can be shaped by personal and collective motivations and values; how these in turn, demand the development of new HR policies and practices that incorporate a greater appreciation of the psychological and emotional effects that having a change responsibility has for individuals and organisations alike. In this regard, this study suggests there may be the potential for developing theoretical messages and practical lessons that could be taken and applied more generally across the field of change management and in that sense fulfil, what was for this researcher, the central aim of this study.

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Appendices

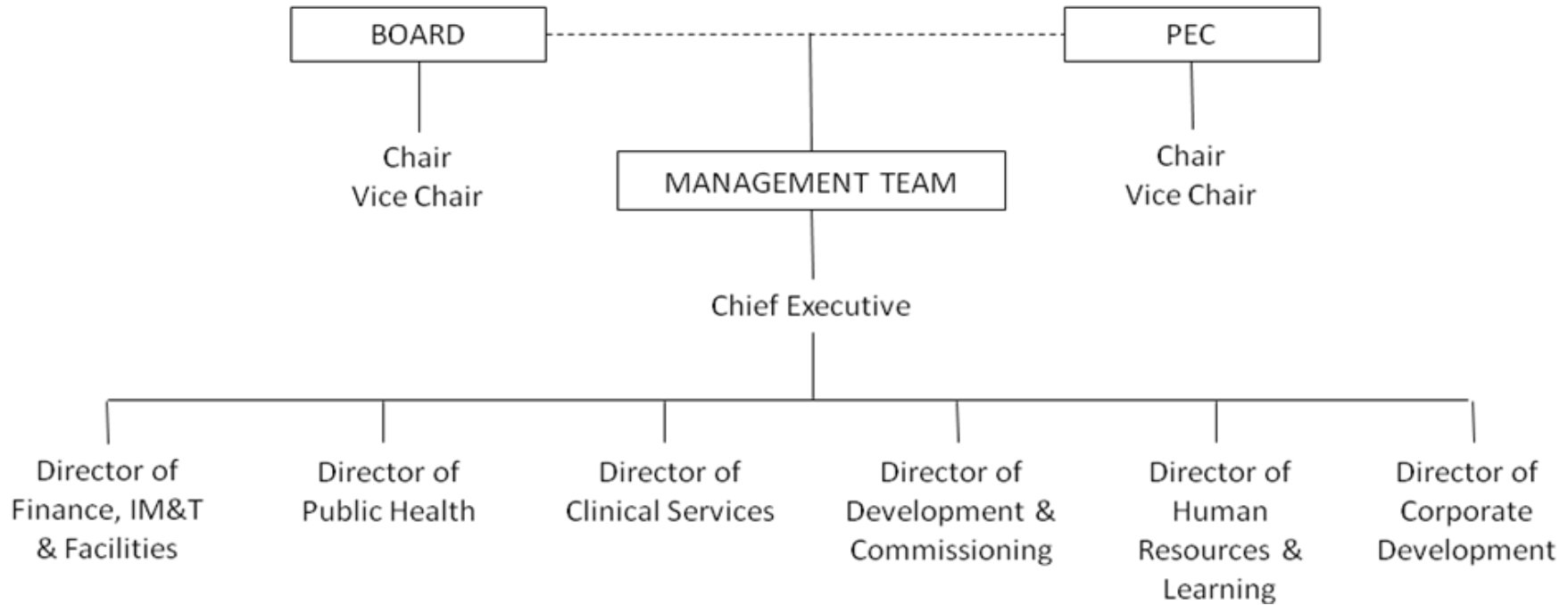
Appendix 1 – Organisation chart, PCT

Appendix 2 – Organisation chart, R&T Company

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule

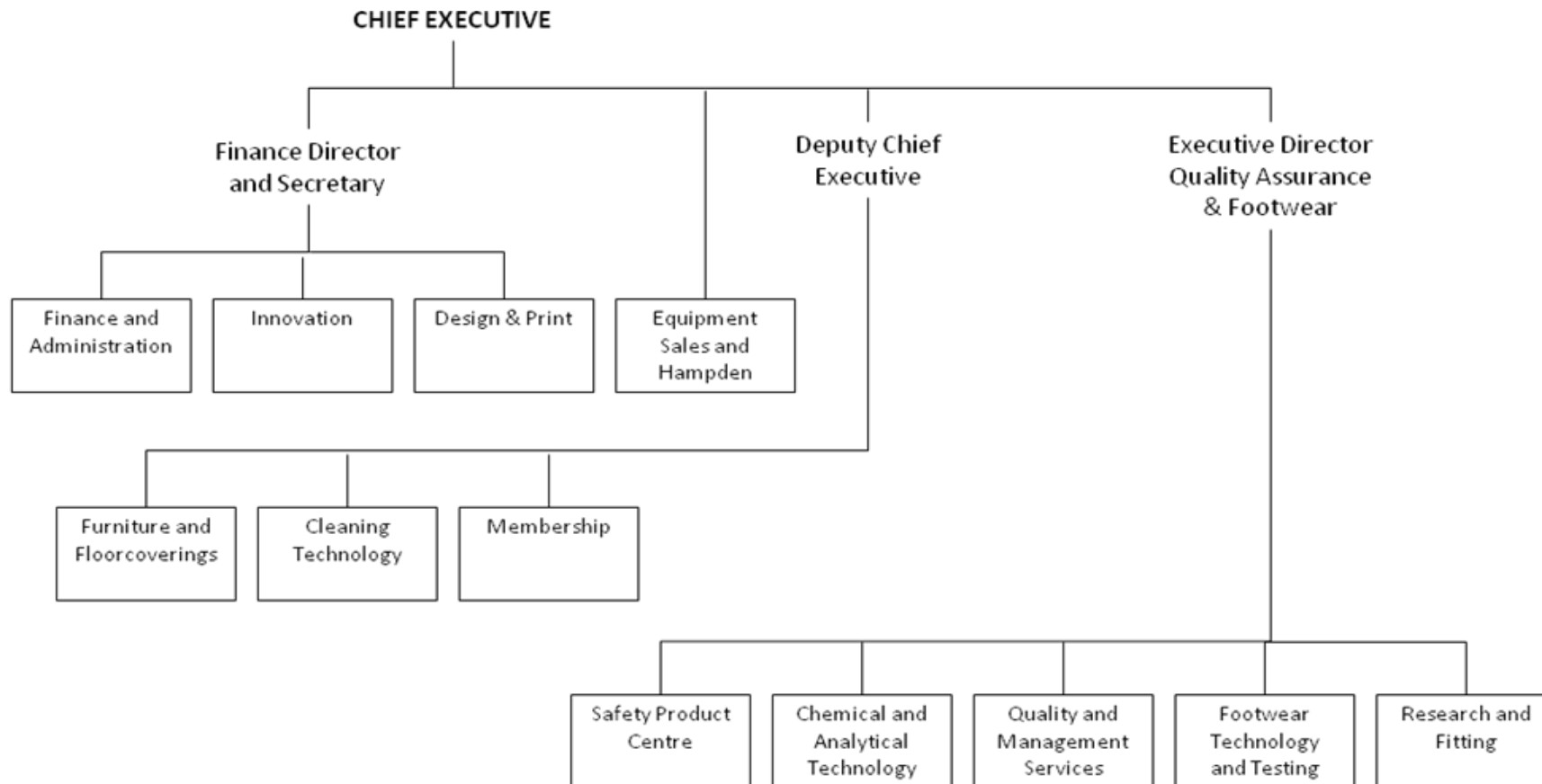
Appendix 1 - Organisation chart, PCT

PCT ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – MAY 2003



Appendix 2 - Organisation chart, R&T Company

EXECUTIVE & BUSINESS CENTRES (January 2006)



Appendix 3 - Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Background

What role(s) do you currently hold in XXXX (full job title and brief overview)?

What external positions do you hold outside of XXXX?

How clearly defined is your role(s) (job description, responsibilities etc)?

In what way has your role(s) changed over the last 5 years?

How is your performance in your role(s) monitored/assessed?

What management/professional training have you received that is relevant to your current position/roles?

What managerial/professional qualifications do you hold?

Where do you expect to be in five years time?

Role Interpretation

In relation to your role(s), what do you see as your key priorities (support with examples)? For those in management positions, what are your key management priorities?)

Who are the key individuals with whom you have a relationship/interaction with through your work role?

How do you influence these individuals to get things done?

What is distinctive about the way in which you work compared with colleagues in a similar position?

If you could make three changes that would allow you to perform your role more effectively what would they be?

The process of change in the organisation

From your perspective, what have been the most significant changes in your area in the last 5 years?

How would you describe the way these changes were/are being implemented/managed by you/others?

If you could go back and do it all again what would you do differently?

Implementing and managing change

In respect of your role, what is/has been your personal involvement in implementing/managing change (refer to those changes identified above or others)?

What do you believe are the most important knowledge and skills required to implement/manage the changes you have described?

How far do the knowledge and skills required to implement/manage change overlap with or differ from those required in a normal professional/managerial role?

In what way has your involvement in implementing/managing change affected you as an individual – both in the workplace and in your personal life?

What support does the company offer to those who are involved in implementing/managing change (dealing with stress, training etc)

How would you describe the company's approach to organising and managing those managers and professionals who have a responsibility for implementing and managing change on its behalf (this question is aimed at Senior managers only)?