



# **Understanding employees' experience of organisational transformation in an academic institution**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> . . . . .	I
<b>SUMMARY</b> . . . . .	III
<b>OPSOMMING</b> . . . . .	V
 <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT</b>	
1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
2 MANAGING CHANGE OR TRANSFORMATION . . . . .	2
3 CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES . . . . .	3
4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY . . . . .	6
5 ACADEMIC CONTEXT FOR THE EMPIRICAL STUDY . . . . .	6
6 BACKGROUND TO THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA. . . . .	7
7 PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY . . . . .	8
 <b>CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHOD</b>	
1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	10
2 EPISTEMOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH . . . . .	10
2.1 Qualitative approach . . . . .	10
2.2 Epistemological framework. . . . .	11
3 RESEARCH STRATEGY . . . . .	12
3.1 Unit of analysis . . . . .	13
3.2 Sampling . . . . .	14
3.3 Data gathering . . . . .	15
3.4 Process of data coding, analysis and interpretation. . . . .	16
4 GENERALISATION, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY . . . . .	18
4.1 Reliability . . . . .	19
4.2 Validity . . . . .	19
4.3 Generalisation . . . . .	20
5 CONCLUSION . . . . .	20
 <b>CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION</b>	
1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	22
2 SAMPLE REALISATION . . . . .	22

3	THE FRAMEWORK APPLIED IN THE ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION . . . . .	22
3.1	Comments on the nature of a transformation process and the management of the process . . . . .	24
3.2	Clarification of terminology . . . . .	24
4	SYMPTOMATIC ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION . . . . .	25
4.1	Participant 1: Drohan (fictitious name) . . . . .	25
4.2	Participant 2: Stephan (fictitious name) . . . . .	34
4.3	Participant 3: Soonja (fictitious name) . . . . .	43
4.4	Participant 4: Anja (fictitious name) . . . . .	54
4.5	Participant 5: Ute (fictitious name) . . . . .	64
4.6	Participant 6: Heike (fictitious name) . . . . .	70
4.7	Participant 7: Leslie (fictitious name) . . . . .	82
4.8	Participant 8: Delianne (fictitious name) . . . . .	86
4.9	Participant 9: William (fictitious name) . . . . .	97
4.10	Participant 10: Pedro (fictitious name) . . . . .	106
4.11	Participant 11: Robert (fictitious name) . . . . .	116
5	CONCLUSION . . . . .	125
 <b>CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA IN AND BETWEEN CATEGORIES</b>		
1	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	126
2	PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF IDENTIFIED THEMES OR CATEGORIES . . . . .	126
2.1	Phase 1: The pre-transformation period . . . . .	127
2.2	Phase 3 : The post-transformation period . . . . .	137
2.3	Phase 2: The process of transformation . . . . .	146
2.4	Participation in the process: collaboration and resistance . . . . .	171
3	CONCLUSION . . . . .	176
 <b>CHAPTER 5: THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES</b>		
1	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	177
2	TRANSFORMATION AS A PROCESS OF IDENTIFIABLE STAGES AND DIMENSIONS . . . . .	177
2.1	Stages of a transformation process . . . . .	177
3	DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PROPOSED TRANSFORMATION . . . . .	182
3.1	Influence of organisation-employee relationship on the development of an understanding of change . . . . .	182
3.2	The influence of individual histories and characteristics on the development of an understanding of the proposed transformation . . . . .	183
3.3	Open membership of employees as contributing factor to the development of an understanding of the proposed change . . . . .	184
3.4	The role of collegial relationships in the development of an understanding of the proposed transformation . . . . .	185
4	MULTIPLE CONCEPTS OF CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS . . . . .	186
4.1	Bridging the gap between the organisational concept of transformation and the various individually held concepts of transformation . . . . .	188



4.2	The context. . . . .	189
5	EXPERIENCES OF THE POST-TRANSFORMATION PERIOD (INCLUDING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION) . . . . .	192
5.1	Congruence between the end-state of a transformation and an employee's concept of transformation . . . . .	193
5.2	Impact of the completed process (desired end-state of the organisation) on employees' personal situation . . . . .	193
5.3	The role of personal characteristics in facilitating experiences of transformation . . . . .	194
5.4	Individual constituents, circumstances, conditions and relations that can determine experiences of transformation under specific conditions. . . . .	195
6	A MODEL FOR DESCRIBING AND UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES OF A TRANSFORMATION PROCESS . . . . .	196
6.1	Level of employee participation in the organisation — the vertical axis . . . . .	196
6.2	Underlying psychological needs — the horizontal axis. . . . .	197
6.3	The contextual dimension . . . . .	202
6.4	Model entailing a context, level of organisational involvement and psychological needs . . . . .	204
6.5	Conditions for the unlearning of old and relearning of new behaviour . . . . .	206
6.6	Mitigating factors . . . . .	208
7	REVISITING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS . . . . .	213
8	THE NATURE OF RESISTANCE . . . . .	214
9	CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH . . . . .	216
10	CONCLUSION . . . . .	217
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .</b>	<b>218</b>



**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 4.1 Various views on the meaning of transformation . . . . . 134

Figure 4.2 Communicating the meaning of transformation to employees . . . . . 135

Figure 4.3 A shared understanding of transformation. . . . . 136

Figure 5.1 Stages and dimensions of a transformation process . . . . . 181

Figure 5.2 Development of individual concepts of transformation . . . . . 187

Figure 5.3 Context in which transformation is implemented . . . . . 191

Figure 5.4 Two axes model . . . . . 203

Figure 5.5 Proposed model for understanding employee experiences of transformation . . . . . 205

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3.1 Demographic information of participants . . . . . 22

Table 3.2 Framework applied in the analysis of the data . . . . . 23

Table 4.1 Themes identified by participants as significant issues of the process . . . . . 127

Table 4.2 Areas in the organisation in need of change identified by participants . . . . . 129

Table 4.3 Perceptions of the need for change and the decision to change . . . . . 132

Table 4.4 General experiences of the process and experiences of the nature and extent of the process . . . . . 139

Table 4.5 Experiences of the current work situation . . . . . 143

Table 4.6 Experiences of the interpersonal dynamics and the interpersonal relationships . . . . . 148

Table 4.7 New ideas and new opportunities as a result of the process . . . . . 154

Table 4.8 Perceptions and experiences of the management of the transformation process. . . . . 159

Table 4.9 Introduction of uncertainties . . . . . 162

Table 4.10 Opportunity for re-assessing personal, product and organisational relevance . . . . . 164

Table 4.11 Perceptions about the workload . . . . . 164

Table 4.12 Changing the way of doing things . . . . . 167

Table 4.13 Perceived outcomes of the process . . . . . 170

Table 4.14 Increased diversity in the staff and committee profiles . . . . . 170

Table 4.15 Motivation for participation in the process . . . . . 173

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## SUMMARY

The environment in which organisations operate has become increasingly complex and uncertain due to various factors, such as technological innovations, economic and social restructuring, the changing nature of the workforce and the ecological dilemma. The nature and extent of these environmental changes require organisations to respond by instituting large-scale, fundamental or transformational change. For organisations to maintain the competitive edge in the changing environment, managing change needs to be a core competency in which managers are skilled. However, it seems that the success rate of effective large-scale change is rather moderate. The management perspective dominates the literature on organisational transformation. Given the increasing awareness of people as the most important resource of an organisation and the increased involvement of employees in decisions affecting their work lives, it seems important to explore organisational transformation not only from the managerial perspective but also from an employee perspective. The objective of this study was therefore to explore organisational transformation from the perspective of employees in view of developing a conceptual framework for understanding these experiences.

A qualitative approach with due reference to the role of the context in which human actions, experiences and meanings are situated (contextualism), was applied in exploring the retrospective experiences of employees of an academic institution who had recently gone through transformation. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 voluntary participants from the various departments and ranks. The transcriptions were analysed for each participant individually according to identified themes. This was followed by a comparison of data in and between themes to explore similarities and differences in experiences.

Experienced transformation is multifaceted, consisting of various stages, dimensions and practical outcomes. An employee may agree with the change in paradigm but disagree with the way in which it is done. To understand and deal with the impact of transformation on employees, it is thus critical to differentiate which stage or dimension of the process or decision elicited a particular response as it might require quite different strategies. When transformation is introduced, it happens in the context of a web of existing relationships between employees and the organisation and employees mutually and against a background of histories of experiences involving perceptions of trust, support, honesty and integrity. These relationships and experiences are mitigating factors in employees' experiences and opinions regarding transformation. Employees do not enter a transformation process as clean pages but develop their own meanings of transformation based on their individual histories and characteristics, the nature of their relationships with the organisation and with colleagues and their interaction with the external environment. When a transformation process is started many diverse concepts or meanings of transformation are active. It is thus postulated that employees' experiences and opinions of such a process are influenced by the extent to which their individual concepts of transformation are congruent with the organisation's concept of transformation. A conceptual tool is proposed that explains employees' experience of transformation as depending amongst other things on the way their psychological well-being is affected during the process. This is based on the extent of contextual support experienced for the psychological needs of feeling





competent (self- efficacy), related (being connected to others) and autonomous (having a voice or control). Individual employees do not necessarily experience a particular process and organisational context as equally supportive. Experiences of a process are mitigated by the extent to which employees participate in the process, obtain trustworthy information on the process and their emotions and feelings regarding the process are acknowledged and discussed. Finally, employee experiences of transformation depend also on the impact of the process on them personally and the degree of discrepancy between their expectations of the outcome of the process and the actual outcome of the process.

## Keywords

Experience of transformation  
Large-scale change  
Diverse meanings of transformation  
Shared understanding of transformation  
Psychological well-being  
Competence  
Connectedness to others  
Perceived control  
Prosocial behaviour  
Qualitative research

## OPSOMMING

Organisasies funksioneer in 'n omgewing wat toenemend kompleks en onseker word as gevolg van tegnologiese innovasie, ekonomiese en sosiale herstrukturering, demografiese verandering van werknemers en die ekologiese dilemma. Ten einde tred te hou met die aard en die omvang van die omgewingsveranderinge moet organisasies grootskaalse of transformasionele verandering aanbring. Om kompetend te bly binne 'n snelveranderende omgewing behoort die bestuur van verandering 'n kritiese vaardigheid van organisasies te wees waarin alle bestuurders gespesialiseer is. Gegewe die toenemende bewuswording dat werknemers die belangrikste bate van 'n organisasie is asook die toenemende betrokkenheid van werknemers in besluite wat hulle persoonlike raak, is dit van belang om transformasie ook vanuit die werknemersperspektief te bestudeer. Die doel van hierdie studie was om ondersoek in te stel na werknemers se belewenis van organisasie transformasie met die oog op die ontwikkeling van 'n konseptuele model om hierdie belewenisse te verstaan.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering, waar aandag gegee is aan die konteks waarbinne menslike handeling, ervaringe en betekenis gesitueer is, is aangewend om werknemers van 'n akademiese instelling se retrospektiewe belewenis van 'n onlangs afgelope transformasieproses te bestudeer. Semi-gestruktureerde, in-diepte onderhoude is met 11 werknemers van verskillende departemente en range gevoer. Transkripsies van die onderhoude is eerstens individueel aan die hand van bepaalde geïdentifiseerde temas ontleed. Daarna is die data binne temas en tussen verskillende temas met mekaar vergelyk ten einde ooreenkomste en verskille in ervaringe te bepaal.

Transformasie word beleef as bestaande uit verskillende fases, dimensies en praktiese uitkomst. 'n Werknemer mag met die paradigmaskuif saamstem maar met die wyse waarop dit gedoen of geïmplementeer word, verskil. Dit is gevolglik nodig om die fase of dimensie van die proses te identifiseer wat tot 'n bepaalde reaksie aanleiding gee aangesien dit verskillende hanteringsmeganismes mag verg. Transformasie word in 'n organisasie geïmplementeer binne die konteks van 'n delikate web van bestaande verhoudinge tussen werknemers en die organisasie en tussen werknemers onderling. Dit geskied ook teen die agtergrond van 'n geskiedenis van vorige ervaringe wat persepsies ten opsigte van vertroue, ondersteuning, eerlikheid en integriteit insluit. Hierdie bestaande verhoudinge en ervaringe het 'n invloed op werknemers se ervaringe en persepsies van transformasie. Wanneer werknemers met transformasie in die werkomgewing gekonfronteer word, ontwikkel hulle 'n eie, unieke begrip of persepsie van wat die voorgestelde transformasie behels op grond van hulle persoonlike geskiedenis en eienskappe, die aard van hulle verhoudinge met die organisasie en kollegas en van hulle interaksie met die eksterne omgewing. Die gevolg is dat met die aanvang van sodanige proses, daar verskeie, unieke persepsies van die wat, hoe en hoekom van die voorgestelde transformasie in die organisasie aanwesig is. Die ervaringe en opinies van werknemers word dus beïnvloed deur die mate waartoe die individu se persepsie van transformasie met die organisasie se persepsie ooreenstem. 'n Konseptuele raamwerk word voorgestel waarin werknemers se ervaringe verduidelik word aan die hand van die mate waartoe hulle psigologiese welsyn deur die proses ondersteun word. Dit is gebaseer op die



mate waarin werknemers ervaar dat die organisasiekonteks aan hulle psigologiese behoeftes aan “self-effektiwiteit”, “verbondenheid aan andere” en “waargenome kontrole”, ondersteuning verskaf. 'n Organisasiekonteks word nie noodwendig deur alle werknemers as ewe ondersteunend beleef nie. Ervaringe van die proses word verder beïnvloed (of verlig) deur die mate van deelname van werknemers aan die proses, die beskikbaarheid van betroubare inligting en die mate waartoe hulle emosies en gevoelens oor die proses erken en bespreek word. In die laaste instansie kan ervaringe van 'n transformasieproses beïnvloed word deur die mate waarin die werknemers se verwagtinge van die uitkoms van die proses met die werklike uitkoms ooreenstem.

## Sleutel terme

Ervaringe van transformasie  
Grootskaalse verandering  
Uiteenlopende persepsies van transformasie  
Gedeelde persepsies van transformasie  
Psigologiese welsyn  
Self-effektiwiteit  
Verbondenheid aan ander  
Waargenome kontrole  
Pro-sosiale gedrag  
Kwalitatiewe navorsing

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The environment in which organisations operate has become increasingly complex, turbulent, and uncertain (Veldsman, 1995). Changes in this environment are due to various factors such as increased global competition and competitors, technological innovations, new or different government and international regulations, economic and social restructuring, growth (as a product of success), the changing nature of the workforce, the ecological dilemma with increased attention on the environmental impact of organisational practices and shifts in client and stakeholder expectations (Mohrman, Mohrman, et al., 1989; Goodstein & Burke, 1991; Welford & Gouldson, 1993; Nadler, Shaw, Walton & Associates, 1995; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Only organisations able to respond quickly and effectively to changing environmental conditions will be able to survive (Nadler, et al., 1995). For organisations to remain in business, they have to change to keep in balance with the environment. At the broadest level, two types of change can be distinguished which are "sufficiently pervasive in recent work and sufficiently central in the conceptualization of change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362). The one type is described as first-order, incremental, continuous and evolving aimed at the regular fine-tuning and making of adjustments and modifications in the regular process of the organisation to improve itself (Levy, 1986; Goodstein, et al., 1991; Nadler, et al., 1995). The existing understanding or schemata (based on beliefs and values) of organisational members and how the organisation is understood, is usually reinforced during incremental, continuous change (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). The basic assumption of continuous change is that everything changes all the time (Weick, et al., 1999).

The other type of change is episodic, discontinuous and intermittent (Weick, et al., 1999; Nadler, et al., 1995). Concepts such as second-order, radical, fundamental, revolutionary and transformational are also used to describe discontinuous change. It is understood to be pervasive, permeating the whole organisation, strategic in intent, disruptive because programmes are replaced rather than altered, and aimed at changing the "core" of an organisation (Goodstein, et al., 1991; Levy, 1986; Forssell & Jansson, 1996; Weick, et al., 1999). In this process of change, the organisation is not trying to improve fit, "but rather to build a whole new configuration, with a new strategy, new work, new formal organization arrangements" (Nadler, et al., 1995, p. 22). A crucial aspect of episodic change is the shift in paradigm<sup>1</sup>, the modification or rather replacement of the shared understanding, values and beliefs of organisational members and the way in

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1. Mohrman et al (1989) identify three main characteristics of a paradigm, namely (1) a social matrix consisting of people who share a particular way of looking at the world and behave in a way that corresponds with their world-view; (2) a world-view that is the cognitive approaches and affective responses of the social matrix, and (3) a particular way of doing things.



which the organisation is understood (Bartunek, et al., 1987; Mohrman, et al., 1989). It can also include a shift in the perceptions and beliefs in the organisation regarding their employees, customers, competitors and products (Nadler & Tushman, 1989).

The nature, extent and rapidness of the changes currently faced by organisations have effectively "rewritten the game of business", bringing new meaning to the Darwinian theory of "survival of the fittest" (Harper, 1998, p. 25), thus requiring companies to respond to competitive pressures by instituting large-scale, fundamental or episodic change (Eby, Adams, Russel & Gaby, 2000; Mohrman, et al., 1989).

## 2 MANAGING CHANGE OR TRANSFORMATION

Understanding the different approaches to and challenges of the types of change is important. However, applying the appropriate type of change when required by the challenges of the environment is really the crux for the long-term sustainability of organisations (Nadler, et al., 1995). Furthermore, for organisations to maintain its viability and competitive edge, managing change effectively needs to be a core competency in which managers are skilled (Veldsman, 1995; Tampoe, 1990).

Veldsman (1995, p. 5) describes an organisational reality as a "dynamic network of dynamically interrelated elements", namely the environment, strategic intent, architecture, people and outcomes<sup>2</sup>. Based on this understanding of the organisational reality, successful change is described as "a permanent change in the content of the organisational elements and a reconstituted dynamic balance amongst the various elements, giving the organisation a different overall strategic configuration and trajectory (or track)" (Veldsman, 1995, p. 9). Blumenthal and Haspeslagh (1994, p. 105) define successful transformation as "one in which management has succeeded in institutionalizing the behavioral change required for long-term financial success". Change is thus a complex process, involving the redefinition and reconstitution of the various elements for a new direction which is sustained or made durable by the actions or behaviour of the "people" element of the organisation. Because people are the life line of an organisation (Brockner, 1988), successful change should also be measured by the legacy it leaves in its wake: does it promote a healthy organisation (with healthy people and relationships) or "does it leave behind bruised feelings, mistrust, and animosity" (Jurow, 1999, p. 60) or decreased employee moral, motivation and commitment in the longer term (Tampoe, 1990).

Managing change and especially second-order or transformational change effectively is not easy. "Whatever their frequency, it is apparent that large-scale system changes are risky, hard,

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2. Veldsman (1995) discusses the dynamic network of the elements in detail. He describes the environment as the micro and macro environment, and strategic intent as the mission, values, vision, strategy and strategic objectives of the organisation. Architecture refers to the technology, and the formal organisational structures, processes and culture. The element of people also includes the interactions among them while the outcome refers to individual, group and organisational results. Nadler and Tushman (1989) and Nadler et. al (1995) describe an organisation as consisting of various interacting components, namely work, the people who perform the tasks, formal organisational arrangements and informal arrangements.

Rather than argue and discuss the similarities and differences between elements and components, the point here is simply to indicate that an organisation consists of various intricably interrelated elements and components that (1) need to be addressed in a large-scale change, and (2) contribute to the complexity of a process of change.



complex, unpredictable and emotionally intense" (Mohrman, et al., 1989, p. 27). It is often bewildering and unsettling to the organisation's members, and sometimes even to the suppliers and customers as well (Tampoe, 1990). The success rate of effective large-scale change or transformation is rather moderate. Hennestad (2000) is of the opinion that attempts at major change often fail or are characterised by underachievement. Levine (2001) gives the success rate of redesign efforts at 30%, Farias (2000) refers to an average of about 50% and according to Hamilton-Attwell (1997) the success rate is between 20% and 50%. Kotter (1995) observed more than 100 companies trying to make themselves better under various banners such as TQM, reengineering, right sizing, restructuring, cultural change and turnaround aimed at coping with new markets. However, he remarks (Kotter, 1995, p. 59) that few of the efforts have been successful, few have been utter failures, "with most of them falling somewhere in between with a distinct tilt toward the lower end of the scale". What is furthermore significant is that organisations seem to portray or regard "change" (and in this respect, the process of staying in business) in predominantly negative terms (Kabanoff, Waldersee & Cohen, 1995; Nelson, 1995).

Given the dynamic nature of the environment in which organisations have to operate, it is therefore a real concern that organisations do not seem to be responding successfully to the change. Unsuccessful efforts to manage change or transformation, not only jeopardies an organisation's chances of remaining in business or maintaining a competitive advantage, but may leave managers frustrated and employees cynical, adding to the difficulty of the next round of change (Schneider, Brief & Guzzo, 1996). As people are at the crux of the process of change (Wheatley, 1992) and given the increased stress levels resulting from a change process (Mohrman, et al., 1989; Nadler, et al., 1995; Hamilton-Attwell, 1997), it seems even more crucial to consider the human and social cost of a failed process. The effort, hardship, disillusion and burned fingers resulting from an unsuccessful change cannot simply be erased from the memories of employees and will thus be carried forward to the next process.

The ability to manage change will be more important in the years ahead than at any time before. While the future may be uncertain, it is clear that organisations (and leaders) without the ability to respond successfully to the accelerating rate and breadth of change will have no future (Harper, 1998). As the management of change is regarded as an essential core competency of companies who wish to remain part of the economy and the future (Veldsman, 1995; Nadler, et al., 1995), concerted efforts are necessary to improve performance in this respect.

### **3 CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGE MANAGEMENT FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES**

Farias (2000) argues that in order to increase the number of successful transformations, a better understanding of the factors leading to successful change is necessary. However, it is argued that organisational change is something that is "managed", but it is also something that is "experienced". Blau (in Rousseau, 1999, p.524) argues that, in contributing to or building organisational competency in managing change, "distinct frames of references are necessary to evaluate actions and accountabilities, and the managerial perspective is one of many".

Viewing organisations from the older Newtonian perspective of a *well-behaved machine*, implies that the process of change would rely on the belief in linearity and predictability. Implementing a new order would be imposed from above resulting in top-down, command-and-control leader-



ship expecting employees to adhere to decisions reliably and passively (Tetenbaum, 1998, p. 21). However, the new understanding of organisations as living systems, having the ability to learn and the capacity to renew themselves has, among other things, a new perspective on the role of managers or management and the role of employees (Wheatley, 1992; Tetenbaum, 1998). Managing an organisation is seen less as ensuring stability where a choice is made between "either/or" but increasingly as the ability or necessity to manage contradictions, to fuse or to reconcile polarities with "both/and" thinking (Tetenbaum, 1998; Veldsman, 1994). From this perspective it is thus argued that with respect to change, managers need to fuse the perspectives of management and employees; have to manage the process **both** as managers **and** as employees. This fusion can be facilitated by a body of knowledge on employee perspectives on and of change. Employees are increasingly regarded as the most important asset of an organisation. It is acknowledged that "every employee has the energy to contribute and "there are no unimportant players" (Wheatley, 1992, p. 56). Employees' participation in decisions affecting their work lives is encouraged, and their contribution in improving the functioning of the organisation is increasingly realised. Various organisations are developing practices to increase employee involvement, motivation and commitment (Mohrman & Cummings, 1989). Ownership, described as employees' emotional investment in the work, is now regarded as more important than ever because it enhances commitment and people support what they create (Wheatley, 1992). It is thus argued that an appreciation of the constructive, participatory role of employees in the competitiveness of organisations necessitates an in-depth understanding of how they experience change, how they are affected by such a process and in what way their participation in or co-ownership of the process can be facilitated.

Having argued for and justified the necessity and benefits of a multiple perspective on change management, it is significant that the dominant perspective in the literature is that of management. "To a great extent, research on change has focused on management's perspective" (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999, p. 524). In an article Ashford (1988, p. 20) remarks that literature on change is "curiously silent about the impact of major organizational transitions on employees or the way employees attempt to cope with these situations" (Ashford, 1988, p. 20). Several years later Nelson and Cooper (1995, p. 57) argue that little progress had been made in this regard and conclude that "relatively little attention has been paid to the consequences for individual well-being of large-scale organisational change". Focusing on research in this regard, they conclude further that this endeavour has rarely focused on how large-scale change within organisations affects employees and "which characteristics of either the environment or the individual mediate these reactions" (Nelson, 1995, p. 58). In the process of developing a best practice model for change management (tapping into existing literature and surveying companies), Clarke and Garside (Clarke & Garside, 1997) refer to the historical tendency of excluding the human and cultural side of change management (and thus also employee experiences). Both Rousseau and Tijoriwala (Rousseau, et al., 1999) and Eby, Adams, Russel and Gaby (2000) remark that little is known about and little empirical research has focused on how employees understand and interpret the decision to change. This lack of comprehensive information prompted their respective research projects. It is thus concluded that comprehensive research information on employee experiences of transformation and the impact of such processes on the well-being of employees other than from a management perspective (both conceptual and empirical) is fairly limited.



The lack of information on the impact of a process on employees generally and on their well-being does not mean that there is no information on change. What does seem to be prominent in management and organisational psychology literature is people's tendency to resist change (Gagne, Koestner & Zuckerman, 2000; Mohrman, et al., 1989) with the result that much debate and advice is directed at overcoming resistance to change, motivating people to participate in the process of change or overcoming fear of change (Lawrence, 1991; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1991). However, little empirical information is available on why people resist change and what elements or aspects of a process of change specifically, if any, elicit resistance and whether all people (employees) resist change. It is also unclear what role, if any, particular characteristics of the context or the process play in eliciting responses of resistance. Moreover, it seems important to know "who" identified or interpreted certain conduct as resistance. Did employees express their resistance to the process of change or did members of management brand certain behaviours such as asking difficult questions or commenting on potential mishaps as resistance? How does the general tendency to resist change relate to employees' creative and innovative abilities that in some organisations are the reason for their success (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby & Herron, 1996)? How does resistance relate to people's leadership abilities or should it be accepted that those qualities belong only to people in managerial positions (Guastello, 1995)?<sup>3</sup>

It is also general knowledge that people experience change as stressful possibly due to increased uncertainty and that such a process elicit a wide variety of positive and negative experiences and emotions (Mossholder, 2000). However, little empirical information is available on what employees experience as positive and/or negative and why they experience it as such. Furthermore, increased participation right from the start of a process of change is seen as a solution to the "people problem" (Nadler, et al., 1989; Lawrence, 1991), but how does that relate to information that not all employees necessarily view participation in a positive light (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999) or wish to involve themselves in organisational activities (Argyris, 1998). The question can also be raised as to why increased participation is regarded as a solution? Does it increase employee commitment, contribute to the feeling of being valued by the company or increase the possibility of obtaining information about the process? Moreover, what organisational or other characteristics facilitate or inhibit the positive effect of participation?

Failure to bring about change is often blamed on an inability to change people or to institutionalise new behavioural patterns (Cooper & Markus, 1995). The question arises whether we know how to achieve change in behaviour or institutionalise new behaviour in the organisational context? What are the underlying psychological processes of relearning and then performing new behaviour of one's own free will? Is it any different, for instance to changing smoking into non-smoking behaviour? Schein (1993) refers to the relearning of behaviour in a psychologically safe environment, but what are the qualities of such an environment and why would it facilitate successful learning? Many questions regarding behavioural changes during transformation still need to be answered.

It is thus argued that a conceptual tool or framework, proposing a more integrative and holistic perspective on employee experiences and behaviour during transformation processes can

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3. Resistance to change is used here as an example to illustrate the various unanswered questions that still exist despite the clear and dominant belief that people resist change. However, the focus of the study is not on resistance per se.





facilitate an understanding of employees and thereby contribute to the more effective management of change. From the management perspective several frameworks are already available eg, Clark and Garside's (1997) best practice model or Veldsman's (1995)<sup>4</sup> change management logic, to assist organisations in obtaining a holistic view of change management through the identification of the key components of a management logic. It also facilitates decision making on the area or component of the organisation that needs attention or that may perhaps be responsible for the lack of success. Focusing on the people in a process of change (behavioural issues), there is still a need for an integrative perspective that can facilitate understanding employee experiences and conduct in change.

Finally, Hennestad (1998) argues that before an organisation can implement tools to increase the level of empowerment of employees, it needs to know what de-powers employees. Veldsman (1994, p. 15) argues that organisations need a "compass" that can assist them in making informed choices between all the "magic potions" that are supposed to improve competitiveness. In the same way it may be argued that an integrative framework for employee experiences (behavioural issues) is necessary to assist organisations in evaluating and choosing viable and applicable remedies or magical potions to overcome, inhibit or rectify the negative consequences or impacts of a process of change on employees.

#### **4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study proposed to obtain information on the experiences of employees in an academic institution during a period of organisational transformation, from the employee perspective.

Grounded in the experiences of employees and having reviewed existing literature, this study then proposed to develop a conceptual framework or tool for understanding employee experiences during a process of transformation which could facilitate practice and at the same time contribute to theory in this regard.

For the purpose of this study, transformation or change is understood as episodic, discontinuous and disruptive (as defined in 1.1). It is further understood to involve a shift in paradigm where the shared understanding, values and beliefs of organisational members are replaced rather than reinforced.

#### **5 ACADEMIC CONTEXT FOR THE EMPIRICAL STUDY**

The selection of an academic institution for studying employee experiences of change had to do with accessibility rather than with the intention to explore the nature of transformation in the higher education sector. That the higher education sector and academic institutions in general in South Africa are also exposed to the challenges and changes in the external environment, demanding rapid, episodic or revolutionary change instead of evolutionary change is clear (Vorster, 1998; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The demographic profile of students at universities, technicons and colleges is changing from predominantly White or Black (at historically disadvantaged universities) to multiracial and multicultural requiring, among other things, a

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4. Veldsman (1995, p. 10) argues that organisations learn to manage change in a certain way which provides the organisation with a certain change management logic. Change management logic is defined as "a fundamental way in which the organisation believes change must be managed". Veldsman discusses the components of the change management logic in detail.



reevaluation of cultural fairness and applicability of course content. The demand for the Africanisation of academic institutions versus a so-called Eurocentric approach contributes to the revisiting of various previously assumed non-negotiables. Financial assistance provided by Government is decreasing, which necessitates the adoption of business principles in the management of academic institutions. The intrinsic value of education is challenged by issues such as the potential income it can generate and whether or not the education deals with the needs and problems of the South African public (Vorster, 1998)<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, new government policies, such as the White Paper on Education and Training (1995), challenge the established ways of doing business, requiring the adoption of new ways (The Faculty, 1995). Thus, due to the transformation taking place in academic institutions at large, institutions in this sector can thus be seen as potential study areas of large-scale change.

Mohrman et al (1989) explain that one of the reasons for the little research on large-scale organisational change is the limited opportunities to do so. Not many organisations regard large-scale change as something to be researched and furthermore can such an investigation be very close to the heart of the organisation. Managers may fear that the right information will end up in the wrong hands or being used against them. Thus, knowing that a particular faculty in the academic environment was in the process of major, revolutionary change and that they would at least consider a proposal to explore the experiences of the organisational members motivated the researcher to formally request the Faculty for permission to do so. Their understanding of the value of research and the potential opportunity for learning that such an endeavour could offer the institution, led them to allow access to organisational members.

Thus, the selected faculty is regarded as an institution undergoing transformation rather than an example of change in the higher education sector. However, it must be stated clearly that this study did not propose to investigate change in the higher education sector per se. Specifying the organisation under investigation as an academic institution simply identified or described it as a particular type of organisation, namely a knowledge-based environment (Drucker, 1988), so as to differentiate it from organisations in other sectors, such as mining or manufacturing. Specifying the nature of the organisation thus provided a context in which to interpret the findings of the study. Providing a description of the type of organisation should place readers of the study in a better position to judge its applicability to other contexts.

## **6 BACKGROUND TO THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

In the document *Entering Tomorrow's World*, the official beginning of the process of transformation in The Faculty of Education, is introduced as follows:

The 1990s are characterised worldwide as a period of accelerated change, transformation and innovation which stimulate critical analysis, restructuring and even paradigm changes. This is also the case in higher education and UNISA is at the forefront of these trends. The process of change, transformation and innovation within The Faculty at the University of South Africa be understood against this background (The Faculty, 1995, p. 3).

In October 1994, prior to the announcement of the process of change in the Faculty, the Principal of the University of South Africa appointed a Commission of Enquiry, assisted by the

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5. Whether one necessarily agrees with the nature of the changes, is a totally different matter and outside the scope of this study.



Executive Management Committee of the Faculty, to investigate its operations and capacity to deliver nationally within the changed socio-political context. Stakeholders from inside and outside the faculty concerned with teacher training were invited to raise concerns, air their opinions, make suggestions in terms of the current practices as well as aspects that needed to be investigated.

After hearing 64 individuals and representatives of various bodies, the Commission set up nineteen task groups to investigate the issues and problems raised during the hearings over a period of two months. Most members of the faculty as well as interested persons from other faculties participated in the research process, including literature studies, discussions, group work, consultation with experts in the field, and interviews with a large body of clients and policy makers. The findings of the task groups were released at the end of January 1995 during an open meeting, followed shortly by the formal report of the Commission with final conclusions and 15 recommendations. After issuing the final report the Commission was dissolved.

The Executive Management of the faculty produced a document, *Implementation of the recommendations for transformation*, and appointed sixteen task groups to assist management in the process. A Transformation Coordinating Committee was established, comprising the Executive Committee and the Chairs of the task groups. Their main tasks were to ensure consultation of all role players and utilisation of expertise within and outside the university. The transformation process involved seven phases over a period of several years. Briefly, the transformation process involved the following issues/aspects:

- (1) a different/revised understanding of and approach to students (clients)
- (2) the phasing out of several existing courses and the development of new courses, which resulted in some expertise being rendered unnecessary and expertise required in new areas
- (3) thorough revision of all other courses, with specific reference to their relevance and applicability to the African context
- (4) changing the way in which course material is developed from an individual, single-disciplinary approach to a multidisciplinary, team approach
- (5) development of a new structure of the organisation in view of the new multidisciplinary, team organising of work
- (6) implementation of a staff development programme for increased performance.

The change thus involved the whole faculty and a clear shift in paradigm regarding the way things were done, the way of looking at the external environment and the way they see the organisation.

## **7 PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 2 describes the researcher's epistemological assumptions and discusses the method followed in arriving at the findings of the study. Chapter 3 deals with the first level of the data analysis. Each participant is introduced with reference to some demographic information, followed by a detailed description of the individual experiences of transformation, structured according to themes identified during the coding process. In chapter 4 the initial data is abstracted from the original individual context and presented in themes as opposed to the individual perspective presented in chapter 3. The chapter mainly discusses of the differences and similarities in experiences of transformation by comparing data in and between themes. Chapter 5 links and compares participants' experiences to what has been written on the



phenomenon of “experienced transformation”. Iterating between the experiences and existing literature, a conceptual tool or framework is proposed to understand or make sense of employees’ experience of transformation. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of possible research questions or areas for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

# RESEARCH METHOD

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the research methodology applied in the exploration of employee experiences of a transformation process. The epistemological framework that guided the study is discussed as well as the research strategy and techniques employed.

### 2 EPISTEMOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH

#### 2.1 Qualitative approach

A research study may typically or traditionally be described as qualitative or quantitative research. Quantitative research is generally understood as the traditional, positivist, hypothetico-deductive or experimental paradigm (Creswell, 1994; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992). It may also be described as an approach "emphasizing the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b, p. 4). Quantitative enquiry is purported to take place within a value-free framework.. By contrast, qualitative research is referred to as the naturalistic, contextual or interpretative approach (Creswell, 1994). This means that researchers "stress the socially structured nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry" (Denzin, et al., 1994b, p. 4). Qualitative research therefore deals with "meanings" in participants' life-world (Dey, 1993). Given the preceding understanding of qualitative and quantitative research, this study of people's experiences of the process of organisational transformation is defined as qualitative.

However, defining a study as qualitative or following a qualitative research approach is still vague. The reason for this vagueness is that the concept "qualitative research" does not have a one-dimensional meaning or definition. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions surrounds it (Denzin, et al., 1994b). It is complicated by the fact that it cross-cuts various historical moments (traditional, modernist, blurred genres, crisis of representation, post-modern) and is applied in various disciplines (eg, nursing, anthropology, sociology and psychology) and accommodates many theoretical paradigms and perspectives, such as constructivism, feminism, positivism and postpositivism (Denzin, et al., 1994b; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994). Various research strategies (eg, ethnography, biographical method) and research methods (eg, interviews, participant observation, textual analysis) are applied in qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Creswell, 1998; Jacobs, 1988; Atkinson, Delamont & Hammersley, 1988). Approaches in the qualitative paradigm are also distinguished, based on the objective of the process, such as whether it is aimed at describing or interpreting a phenomenon or is orientated towards the building of theory (Dey, 1993). Given the multidimensionality and multiplicity of qualitative research tradition, it is necessary to clarify the particular approach applied in this research study in more detail.

## 2.2 Epistemological framework

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), Creswell (1994; 1998) and Henwood and Pidgeon (1994), the choice of and motivation for a particular research approach should be explicated from an epistemological perspective. Epistemology is understood to be “assumptions about the bases or possibilities for knowledge” (Henwood, et al., 1994, p. 228).

Various epistemologies can be distinguished in the practice of qualitative research but it is not possible to separate the various paradigms or epistemologies into water tight compartments with clear-cut definitions. Gage (1989), for example, distinguishes between the objectivist, the interpretivist and the critical theory paradigms. Denzin and Lincoln (1994b, p. 13) identify four interpretative paradigms in qualitative research, namely positivism, postpositivism, constructivist-interpretative and critical theory et al<sup>1</sup>. Among the various definitions of and distinctions between epistemologies or paradigms, the epistemology guiding this study may best be described by strand II of Henwood & Pidgeon (1994). These authors identify three strands of qualitative psychology in particular. Strand I is described as reliability and/or validity with an empiricist epistemology. Strand II refers to generativity and grounding and has a contextualist epistemology. Finally, strand III is described as discursive and reflexive with a constructivist epistemology.

The epistemology of contextualism (strand II: generativity and grounding) may be described as “an epistemological concern with the context specificity of meanings” (Henwood, et al., 1994, p. 231). Contextualism emphasises “that human activity does not develop in a social vacuum but is rigorously situated within a sociohistorical and cultural milieu of meanings and relationships” (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988, p. 66). In other words, human actions, experiences and meanings are situated in a specific context of time, space, culture and a way of doing things. The implication of this dimension of the epistemology for the research process is that it acknowledges and actively seeks to incorporate the contexts or life-worlds of participants in the research process. The research process (or researcher) engages in the life-world of the participant and creates a forum for the participant to discuss or describe a particular phenomenon and the meaning it has in his or her life-world. The subject matter is therefore not “objective data”, but rather personal or personalized and subjective accounts by participants about a particular phenomenon and the meaning it has in their lives (Kvale, 1996).

The researcher’s attempt (through the process of qualitative analysis) to understand and give an account of the complexities of the participants’ contexts (experiences) is also embedded in his or her own context of time, space and culture. The researcher’s particular context is further construed by his or her training, research experience, theory and own/personal biases and prejudices regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

A consequence of this epistemology is the simultaneous commitment to “on the one hand, realism (and inductively reflecting participants’ accounts and naturalistic contexts) and on the other, constructivism, which includes amongst other things, actively encouraging the researcher in the creative and interpretative process of generating new understandings and theory” (Henwood, et al., 1994, p. 232).

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1. Denzin & Lincoln (1994b) use “Critical theory et al” as a blanket term for several paradigms namely neo-marxism, feminism, materialism and participatory inquiry.

For this reason the epistemology may also be described as subjectivist (Denzin, et al., 1994b; Guba, et al., 1994; Henwood, et al., 1994). The value-laden nature of the contextualist epistemology is acknowledged as part and parcel of the process. Wolcott (1994) is of the opinion that a researcher deliberately chooses subjectivity as it is a strength of the qualitative approaches. However, this subjectivity or value-laden nature is not an *a priori* excuse for or a validation of the performance of unscientific, irresponsible (sloppy) research. By acknowledging the subjectivity of the epistemology, the researcher or enquirer takes responsibility for the biases (in analysis and interpretation) caused by his or her own context (assumptions, values, knowledge, experience) that are taken into the research process. This is done by forthrightly communicating values and biases that are carried into the study (Creswell, 1998). A researcher is therefore not simply reflecting the "truth" uncovered during the research process but is communicating a personal understanding or interpretation of the meaning of a phenomenon in the life-world of the participant. Acknowledging the personal (or subjective) involvement of the researcher in the research process is not an attempt to decrease the subjective involvement. It is rather aimed at shedding light on the creative role of the researcher in the process, making it more transparent for readers and evaluators of the study. Communicating the values and assumptions at the onset of the study will (hopefully) also alert the researcher to his or her own biased point of departure.

### 3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A research strategy may be described as analytic principles and procedures that are applied in the process of executing a research project. Within the qualitative paradigm various strategies are available to researchers such as Miles and Huberman's (1984) quasi-experimental approach, the grounded theory approach (Strauss, et al., 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), ethnography and the biographical method. Researchers or methodologists do not necessarily agree on the procedures that constitute a particular strategy and differences in opinion exist on the "right" application of a particular procedure (Dey, 1993). So, for example, Stern (1994) argues that two schools can be differentiated in the practice of grounded theory namely, the Strauss and the Glaser schools. According to Stern (1994, p.220), "Strauss brings to bear every possible contingency that could relate to the data" whereas Glaser "focuses on the data to allow the data to tell their own story". However, Dey (1993) argues that whatever the differences in approach and language, the common emphasis is on how data is categorised and how connections between categories are made.

The choice of a particular strategy has to do with various aspects, such as the epistemological framework of the researcher, the objective of the study, the phenomenon under investigation and the researcher's skills and training.

It should be noted, however, that there is not necessarily agreement on the logic for or the process involved in the selection of a particular paradigm. Creswell (1994), for example, argues that several criteria need to inform a researcher's choice of a particular approach. These criteria are the researcher's world-view, training, experience and psychological attributes, the nature of the problem, and the targeted audience of the study. Guba and Lincoln (1994) are of the opinion that the researcher's epistemological stance is the determining factor in the choice of an approach and that methodological aspects or pragmatic issues are secondary in this decision.

As it is not in the ambit of this study to debate how and when a particular approach is chosen, suffice it to indicate the sentiments visible in this study. The researcher's position is that all these criteria are interdependent or bound up together. As a combined entity they play a role in the selection of a research approach and not as individual, independent criteria. In other words, then, if we take the criteria mentioned by Creswell, it is argued that the researcher's training, experience and psychological attributes play an influential role in the development of a particular world-view. At the same time, a particular world-view may sensitise a researcher to be susceptible to specific training issues and experiences. Henwood and Pigeon's (1994) argument that a particular epistemological or theoretical belief necessarily links with a particular strategy, method and/or technical issue(s) is thus supported. It is furthermore logical that the choice of a particular strategy and/or method has implications for what will be understood or acceptable as data, how the data will be analysed and what will be considered a reliable and valid account or representation of the data. Whatever method, strategy or approach is applied, it is important to have consistency or compatibility between the various dimensions constituting the research process. In addition, whatever strategy is applied, the processes of analysis and interpretation should be made explicit.

In discussing the epistemological framework, this study has clearly been situated within the interpretative paradigm, acknowledging the importance of the participants' life-world (context) and the creative involvement of the research. In an interpretative paradigm a grounded theory approach is followed. The grounded theory approach is commonly applied in the interpretative paradigm and is regarded as consistent with a contextual epistemology (Henwood, et al., 1994). This approach insists that the perspectives and the voices of the participants be heard thus allowing the context to be told or constructed by their experiences. In the second instance, grounded theory approach acknowledges to the interpretative role of the researcher during the research process. The researcher is seen as an active, thinking co-participant in the process and not merely as a mirror who is reflecting the reality. Furthermore, the grounded theory approach emphasises the development of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The process of theory building does not start with a preconceived idea or theory which is then tested or proved via the investigation. It is rather a process "where one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge" (Strauss, et al., 1994, p. 23). This study proposes as one of its objectives, the generation of theory without an *a priori* theory or hypotheses.

The research strategy applied in this study is discussed below with reference to (1) the unit of analysis, (2) data gathering, (3) sampling, (4) data analysis and interpretation, and (5) validity and reliability.

### 3.1 Unit of analysis

Generally, four units of analysis may be differentiated in a social sciences study, namely, an individual, a group, an organisation and a social artefact (Mouton & Marais, 1985). This study focuses on people's (employees') experience of organisational transformation and therefore the first and primary unit of analysis is the individual employee. As the experiences relate to the process of transformation, the second (and secondary) level of analysis is thus a social artefact, namely transformation as an experienced process. The phenomenon of organisational transformation cannot be experienced other than within the context of an organisation. Although the



organisation cannot be indicated as a unit of analysis, cognisance is taken of the organisation as providing the context for the experiences of transformation.

### 3.2 Sampling

As the subject matter of the study is not objective data, but personal accounts of the experience of transformation (Kvale, 1996), any person in the Faculty who had experienced the transformation, qualified as a potential participant in the study. Individuals were sampled because of their potential to contribute to the development of an understanding of employee experiences of transformation. The focus of sampling in the qualitative (interpretative) paradigm is on the collection of incidents or experiences, rather than on the number of people per se, data is collected or people are sampled until the saturation of themes occurs (Creswell, 1998; Strauss, et al., 1990). Thus, people are sampled until a point where the researcher hears no more new experiences or nuances but a repetition of previous stories.

The most important criterion for faculty members to qualify as potential participants, was thus having experienced the transformation process in the faculty. For the purpose of this study, a homogeneous accessible population was defined by the application of a time criterion. Seeing that the study incorporated the first four phases of the proposed transformation process, which took approximately three to four years, it was essential to include only those employees who went through the process from the beginning until the point of interviewing. It was furthermore deemed necessary to identify people who were familiar with the faculty as an academic institution prior to the transformation process as that would allow for possible comparisons between before and after. The accessible population was therefore constituted by those people who had been in the employ of the faculty for four or more years at the time of the data gathering.

Once this homogeneous group was identified, purposeful sampling was applied (Strauss, et al., 1990). The reason for purposeful sampling was to allow for as much diversity in experiences as possible. As it was suspected that experiences might differ as a result of contextual differences, such as the respective departmental cultures, the styles of management and as a result of dispositional factors, such as level of seniority (Nelson, 1995), it was decided to sample participants purposefully from (1) all five departments, and (2) from three job levels (Level A: lecturer and senior lecturer, Level B: associate professor and professor; Level C: managerial positions, ie, heads of departments and deans).

The third phase in the sampling process aimed at uncovering differences within the homogeneous sample. This process is referred to as systematic sampling and has the advantage of allowing "maintenance of greater consistency in data gathering" (Strauss, et al., 1990, p. 184). The result was therefore that a heterogeneous sample (within the homogeneous accessible population) (Creswell, 1998) was drawn by systematically selecting male and female respondents from three different language groupings. It should be highlighted that the focus of the sampling was on uncovering differences and not on the representation of the language and gender profile of the faculty in the sample.

Working from the official list of faculty members, potential participants were telephonically approached to involve themselves in the study. Not all the employees approached, had knowledge of the study and in such cases (and whenever it was requested), the letter submitted to the Management Committee was provided as background information. Some employees

requested a personal discussion before deciding to involve themselves. As the most important criterion throughout the sampling process was the willingness to participate, potential participants were not pressurised to take part in the study. Three employees turned down the request to participate. Two motivated the decision due to their resignation that was to come in effect fairly soon while a third employee felt that “experiences” were not within the ambit of the work environment and therefore a non-discussable issue.

### **3.3 Data gathering**

As little information is available on employees’ experience of transformation and the study aimed at understanding (describing and interpreting) employees’ experience of this phenomenon, the qualitative interview is an appropriate and valid method of gathering data in a study of this nature (Kvale, 1996; Fontana & Frey, 1994). The interview can be applied to describe and interpret a particular theme or phenomenon in the life-world of a participant and the way they relate to it (Kvale, 1996). Given the exploratory nature of the study, a less rather than more restricted manner of discussing transformation was considered appropriate and an in-depth interview contributed to this sharing of information. “Interviews can be explorative and hypothesis testing: An explorative interview is open and has little structure” (Kvale, 1996, p. 97).

The recent transformation process in the faculty and the employees’ experience of the process were introduced as the topic of the conversation. To ensure comparability between the individual participants, the transformation process was clearly demarcated as having started with the inquiry and ended with the implementation of the new organisational structure.

Given the potential sensitivity of the topic of discussion, and in an attempt to “adapt to the world of the individuals studied” (Fontana, et al., 1994, p. 371), it was left to the participants to determine the place (at home, at the office, in a cafeteria) for the interview. Interviews took a minimum of one hour and a maximum of three hours. Except for one, all interviews took place in the participants’ offices. One interview was conducted in the private home. In each case the interview was introduced by (1) an explanation of the aim/objective of the particular study, (2) an explanation of the sampling process (and how the participant was identified), and (3) a commitment to total confidentiality.

Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans or English, depending on the participants’ mother tongue. Before the actual interviewing started, participants were informed of the conversational nature of the interview as opposed to a formal inquiry. Issues or themes to be covered were mentioned before the interview started so as to put participants at ease about the expected nature of the interview and reduce the level of uncertainty. Participants had the opportunity to raise questions or to ask for more information about the study or any other issue deemed important. Permission was asked to audio-tape the interview as that would allow the interviewer more freedom to be attentive to the individual and participate in the process. One participant felt uncomfortable with the audio-taping of the interview despite his initial consent. After the first interview and after switching off the tape recorder, the actual discussion started.

As indicated, the theme for the interview was the participants’ experience of the transformation process. Participants were first asked to indicate what changes in their work situations took place as a result of the transformation. It was made clear that the focus was on tangible outcomes (eg, move in office, new subjects, etc) and not on the emotional impact of the process.

This information contributed to understanding the participants' context. The other sub-themes introduced during the interview were:

- (1) what they knew of colleagues' experiences (positive and negative) of the process;
- (2) personal experience of the process in general;
- (3) particular positive and/or negative experiences of the process (this theme was elaborated on quite extensively);
- (4) discussion of the reasons or motivation for participating in or resisting the process.

The logic in asking participants about colleagues' experiences was to provide time for conversation to establish rapport between interviewer and interviewee before shifting the focus to the participants' personal experiences. However, although the interview had to cover particular sub-themes and the interviewer anticipated a particular order from the general to the specific, participants did not necessarily share their experiences of the process in that order. A fairly flexible approach was followed where participants shared their experiences and covered the sub-themes in the way they felt comfortable. The interviewer interacted with the participants in the course of the interview by asking them to clarify or elaborate on specific remarks. At points in the interview, the interviewer's understanding of specific experiences was communicated to the participant to validate the correctness of the interviewer's perspective. This flexible approach followed in the data-gathering phase is in line with the new thinking on interviews in the interpretative paradigm where "the 'other' is no longer a distant, aseptic, quantified, sterilized, measured, categorized, and cataloged faceless respondents, but has become a living human being" (Fontana, et al., 1994, p. 373).

Participants therefore gave a retrospective account of their experiences of the recently completed transformation process. A potential disadvantage of a retrospective account is that participants might have forgotten some of the earlier experiences or the intensity of feelings related to a particular event (Weldon, 2000). However, Nelson and Cooper (1995) argues that individual implications of a process of change (which obviously also involves certain experiences) can hardly be realised until the change has bedded in.

Literature on the themes of organisational transformation, organisational theory, creativity, leadership and learning organisations were also explored. It was not the objective of the literature study to refine any of the concepts but rather to develop a conceptual framework for understanding individual conduct/behaviour during transformation (and thus a framework for interpreting the results of the empirical study).

### **3.4 Process of data coding, analysis and interpretation**

#### **3.4.1 Transcription of interviews**

The researcher transcribed all the interviews to allow for maximum familiarity with the data. After completion of the transcriptions, a second shorter interview was held with the participants. As verification of a research project should be addressed throughout the entire research process (Kvale, 1996), the objective of the second interview was to give the participants an opportunity to assess whether the transcript was a reliable reflection of the interview. Participants received the transcriptions at least one day before the second encounter to give them the time and privacy to reflect on the content. However, two participants could not be reached for verification. The second interview was further utilised to clarify ambiguous remarks and to verify a particular

understanding of parts of the transcripts. Participants' corrections and additions were included in the final transcripts. In essence, the second interaction between researcher and participant to reach agreement on the data set, was based on the necessity for the research process to remain true to its participants.

#### 3.4.2 The process of making sense

As stated earlier, the procedures followed in coding, analysing and interpreting the data, were based on Dey's (1993) approach. However, in spite of the careful explication of the process followed in the analysis and interpretation of the data, it should be realised that each process is eventually a very personal and individual one. According to Marshall (1981, p. 399);

Because my feeling of rightness is important, my feeling that this is what I can do, it's my translation, what I have found and interpreted from the data. My bias is something I appreciate, it's part of me as a researcher. And while it is important for me and for others to recognize my bias, it really is what I can give as a researcher, it is my contribution, and it's coherent and it's felt and it has all these other qualities which make me value it more than a detached attempt to be objective. I work from a particular position: I appreciate other positions, and I feel that each has its own integrity and its own validity.

(1) The coding process was started by selecting five diverse interviews from the group. This was not difficult to do due to the high level of familiarity with the content of interviews as a result of the transcription process.

(2) The process of reading and annotating (Dey, 1993) followed during which themes were rather freely identified and comments made on experiences, the process per se, intrapersonal issues or any aspect that seemed to be noteworthy.<sup>2</sup>

(3) A preliminary coding list (theme/category list) was developed by looking for similarities and differences in these interviews.

(4) After the preliminary list was compiled, four more interviews were added to the initial five for reading and annotating.

(5) The preliminary coding list was adjusted to include changes and additions resulting from the analysis of the latter four interviews. Clarifying notes were added to the identified themes to distinguish them clearly from other categories or to clarify some of the characteristics of the themes to facilitate a conceptually clear and reliable coding process.

(6) The process as described in (4) was repeated by adding the remaining interviews. At the end of this process a fairly stable code/theme list was developed with notes clarifying themes or criteria for selecting the particular theme. The researcher decided not to divide a particular theme into too many sub-themes as this would increase the difficulty of the coding process and

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2. During the interview respondents were required to give their impressions or perceptions of how colleagues experienced the transformation. After carefully reading the transcripts, it was decided not to code the parts where participants gave their opinions on how colleagues experienced the transformation. These opinions were regarded as background information because (1) the study focused mainly on their experiences of the transformation and not on their perceptions of other people's experiences, (2) some of the participants generalised their own and colleagues' experiences with the result that little difference (if any) was apparent between the two, and (3) adding the dimension of participants' opinions on colleagues' experiences (given the diversity in response to the question) would have made the data set very difficult to manage.



maintaining conceptual clarity. It was also decided that the detailed analysis of themes should be done later in the analysis process.

(7) The coding or categorising process then followed where data bits were actually selected and ascribed to specific themes for each of the eleven transcribed interviews. As the study dealt with meanings, the criterion in selecting a particular piece as a data bit was whether it conveyed a particular meaning. It was also guided by the bias "toward letting informants speak for themselves" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 350), thus leading to larger verbatim texts rather than interpreted versions. For this reason, it was therefore considered irrelevant to use the data bit size as criterion (Dey, 1993).

(8) The transcribed interviews were then transformed by subtracting the selected data bits and re-organising them according to the themes. Apart from structuring the data according to the identified themes, an impression was also gained of the relative dominance of a particular theme in participants' experiences. The two versions of each interview (the transcription and the re-organised version) were electronically managed, allowing for quick and easy cross-referencing between the two versions.

(9) The individual experiences of transformation were then described in a detailed discussion of each participant according to the identified themes (see ch 3). This was regarded as a symptomatic reading of participants' experiences where each account is regarded as a valid description of the specific relation to the phenomenon (Kvale, 1996). At the end of each of the individual descriptions comments, interpretations and/or questions were raised regarding the management of a transformation process and the nature of a transformation process (either from the participant or researcher's perspective) for possible use later in the interpretative process.

(10) In the next step of analysis, the data was abstracted from the original individual context and presented in the themes as identified earlier in the process. The objective of decontextualising the data was to allow for a different view on the data by comparing data in and between themes (Dey, 1993) (see ch 4). Comparing data in and between themes (categories) resulted in a re-organisation of some of the themes. Themes initially identified as independent in the individual experiences seemed to belong to a broader theme when a group perspective was taken. Presenting experiences in themes gave an impression of the weight or dominance of a particular theme and allowed for a better understanding of the nature and complexity of an experienced issue (theme).

(11) Finally, the contextualised and decontextualised data were conceptually compared to existing literature on this topic leading to a conceptual and theoretical discussion or understanding of experiences of transformation. This process of conceptualising and contributing to theory building may typically be described as "iterative, cyclical and nonlinear" (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 588).

#### **4 GENERALISATION, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

"There is considerable debate over what constitutes good interpretation in qualitative research" (Hammersley in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 479). Some social scientists argue that the same criteria should be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research while others, like the post-positivists, argue for criteria unique to qualitative research although they disagree on what these criteria should be. Supporters of the constructivist paradigm argue for the translation of validity

and reliability into trustworthiness and authenticity whereas another position holds that the character of qualitative research is such that no criteria can be applied (Denzin, et al., 1994a, p. 480). Defining the study within the interpretative paradigm, would concur with Denzin (1994, p. 501) that a “value-free social science appears to be over” and thus necessitates the reinterpretation of the criteria for research in a value-laden context.

#### **4.1 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research findings (Dey, 1993; Kvale, 1996). It thus pertains to all the stages of the research process from interviewing to analysis. In this context, reliability does not refer to the verification of research findings through the replication(s) of the study. It involves the conscious revealing of the decisions and procedures followed in the various stages of the study. Reliability is therefore not merely something to be reported at the end of the study, but serves as guidelines throughout the research process, reminding the researcher of his/her creative involvement in construing the findings to counteract haphazard subjectivity (Kvale, 1996). Moreover, the explanation of the procedures followed in obtaining the results gives the reader the opportunity to scrutinize the procedures and decide in principle on their reliability (Dey, 1993).

Thus, to allow the reader to follow and evaluate the reliability of the study, this chapter describes the procedures followed in the interviewing phase, transcription of interviews and analysis and interpretation of data. In the analysis and interpretation of the data, participants' verbatim comments are provided quite extensively as motivation for the various decisions and interpretations.

#### **4.2 Validity**

Dey (1993, p. 253) defines a valid account in the interpretative paradigm as “one which can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically”. As the thrust of qualitative analysis is to ground accounts empirically in the data, validity thus has to do with the craftsmanship of the researcher in the process of obtaining the data and making sense of it and demonstrating how the concepts were identified and connections made (Dey, 1993). It involves a process of “continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1996, p. 241). Maxwell (1996, p. 87) describes validity as the correctness or credibility of a conclusion, explanation or interpretation, but argues that using the term validity “does not imply the existence of an objective truth to which an account can be compared”. Researcher bias is often regarded as a threat to validity. This concerns the influence of the researcher's own theories, preconceptions or values on the research process. The issue is not to eliminate these biases but to know what these assumptions or frame of reference were; in other words, to state them openly as far as possible. For this reason, the first part of chapter 2 discussed the epistemological framework that guided the study.

Judging the validity of a study inevitably includes an evaluation of the researcher's credibility and moral integrity as well as an evaluation of the credibility, neatness and transparency in building the arguments from the empirical data to the final theory (Kvale, 1996). Validity in a qualitative study is therefore “not the result of indifference, but of integrity” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 91). Wolcott (1994) argues that in the end labour about validity returns to the concern with “understanding” and “making sense”. A study may be constructed according to and adhere to all the rules of validity, but be without meaning. Finally, as Wolcott (1994, p. 347) says, “to get

somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion ... that you are not quite getting it right. But I also go to considerable pains not to get it all wrong”.

#### **4.3 Generalisation**

In the qualitative or interpretative paradigm, a distinction needs to be made between internal and external generalisation. Internal generalisation involves the extent to which conclusions, descriptions or interpretations are generalisable to the setting or the people studied (Maxwell, 1996). Kvale (1996, p. 232) refers to the concept of internal generalisation as contextualisation and describes it as “an emphasis on the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge, with a shift from generalization to contextualization”. It thus refers to the inductive process whereby concepts, interpretations and general propositions are based or grounded in the diversity or full range of participants’ experiences (Dey, 1993). The particular research strategy followed in making sense of the diversity of experiences allowed for maximum accounts of the participants’ experiences both by the continuous referrals to the initial individual context and by exploring similarities and differences in experiences as they pertained to a particular theme.

External generalisation, where findings or “laws of human behaviour” can be generalised to the larger population or even universally, is not a crucial issue in qualitative studies (Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 1996). However, this does not mean that the findings of such a study can never be generalised beyond the particular setting that was investigated. Generalisation in the qualitative or interpretative context has more to do with how the understanding gained or the theory developed can be extended to other cases (Maxwell, 1996). Kvale (1996) describes this process as analytical generalisation based on assertational logic whereby the applicability of the findings/theory of one study to another situation is argued, clarified and judged. To be able to judge whether a particular theory can be applied to another or a wider population, it is thus paramount that the researcher provides sufficient information regarding the context of the study and decision-making during the process (Dey, 1993; Kvale, 1996). Although this study did not aim to generate knowledge or information that could be applied generally to all employees in all organisations going through transformation, it did intend to provide a conceptual model that could be applied to comparable situations or contexts. For this reason, the change process has been described and defined as large-scale, happening in a knowledge-based environment at a South African university. The contexts of individual participants are also provided to facilitate the process of judging applicability to other contexts.

### **5 CONCLUSION**

Gioia and Pitre (1990, p. 584) maintain that the functionalist approach to organisations, which adheres to an objectivist view of the organisational world and dominated research for a long time, contributed to a too narrow view on the “multifaceted nature of organisational reality”. However, the general appropriateness of the dominant “normal science” is currently called into question (Gioia, et al., 1990, p. 587) Wheatley (1992, pp. 63, 64) describes it as follows:

We are addicted to numbers, taking frequent pulses of our organizations in surveys, monthly progress checks, quarterly reports, yearly evaluations. It is difficult to develop a new sensitivity to the fact that no form of measurement is neutral. Physicists call this awareness contextualism, a sensitivity to the interdependency between how things appear and the environment which causes them to appear.... We still believe in objectivity, in hard data, in firm



numbers. We have avoided the murky, fuzzy world of non-objectivity that contextualism brings to the surface.

This study is thus in the final instance an attempt to contribute to a "more comprehensive view of organizational phenomena" (Gioia, et al., 1990, p. 585) from a non-functionalist interpretative paradigm by trying to subjectively understand the fuzzy world of non-objective experiences of transformation.

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## CHAPTER 3

# PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses and presents the data from the interviews. First, the sample is presented by means of demographical information. As this study did not aim at any level of representation of the Faculty, this information serves purely as a way of introducing the spectrum of participants in the study. The profile of the participants is followed by a discussion of the framework used in the data analysis. Finally, each participant's experiences and opinions of the transformation are analysed and presented individually in the format of the framework.

### 2 SAMPLE REALISATION

**Table 3.1 Demographic information of participants**

GENDER		JOB LEVEL			LANGUAGE			YEARS OF SERVICE			AGE GROUP				
Male	Female	Management	Full-Prof/ Associate	Lecturer	Afrikaans	English	African	4.5 - 10	11 - 15	16+	35 - 40	41 - 45	46 - 50	51 - 55	56 - 60
6	5	1	3	7	7	2	1	7	3	1	2	2	4	-	3
					1*										
	11			11			11			11					11

\* Bilingual

### 3 THE FRAMEWORK APPLIED IN THE ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION

Participants' descriptions and discussions of their experiences of the transformation process were accounts of a historical event that was recently concluded. However, in their accounts they referred to different time periods of this historical event. So, for example, participants referred to situations prior to the transformation or to experiences or results after the completion of the process. These referrals to "then", "before" and "now" offered a useful key to understand and interpret their experiences. It thus seemed appropriate to apply a framework in the analysis of the data that would structure the experiences in terms of various periods or intervals during the transformation process.



Two comments have to be made at this point. First, although three periods have been identified, this does not mean that these periods were regarded as water-tight compartments. It is true that at times the boundaries between periods were rather vague or artificial especially with respect to phases 2 and 3. It is acknowledged that reality is more complex than a conceptual model. Secondly, although themes are described as part of a particular phase, this does not imply that a theme was restricted to a certain period only.

### **3.1 Comments on the nature of a transformation process and the management of the process**

During the interviews, participants reflected on their understanding of the nature and management of a process of transformation. As these reflections were slightly different to their direct experiences of the process (although they cannot be separated from each other), it seemed worthwhile to differentiate this dimension from the personal experiences. Thus, the discussion of themes as they relate to the three periods is followed by data bits and comments referring to the nature and management of such process. This dimension is explored in more detail in the second-order analysis where comparisons within and between categories (themes) are made.

### **3.2 Clarification of terminology**

For the sake of clarity, the following terms are used in chapters 3 and 4:

**Organisation** refers to the total institution or faculty that underwent the process of transformation.

**Transformation process/process of transformation** refers to the total/complete process of changing from one paradigm or mental model (the existing or previous model) to a new paradigm in the organisation. It includes all the changes (eg, new subject areas, management structures) that occurred during the process of transformation.

**Change(s)** has no uniform meaning. However, when used in the context of the transformation process, change(s) may not refer to the encompassing process of transformation but also to elements of change as a result of the transformation.

**Management** refers to the Heads of Departments, the Vice-Deans and the Dean of the faculty. This term is used because participants referred to management and it is argued in chapter 1 that the faculty is explored as a type of knowledge-based organisation.



Three periods can be distinguished in participants' description of their experiences of the process, namely a pre-transformation period, the time during which transformation took place and the stage where the process was completed and employees experienced the outcome of the transformation.

**Phase 1: The pre-transformation phase**

This phase refers to the period when the decision was taken to transform the organisation and this decision was made known to employees. The proposed transformation process was announced but the actual implementation of the process was not yet started. Issues of concern in this phase include participants' understanding of the need for the organisation to transform and the perception of where the impetus for the transformation came from. This phase is referred to as the pre-transformation period.

**Phase 2: The process of transforming the organisation**

This phase refers to the period when the decision was set in motion by means of various activities and processes to move or transform the organisation and its employees from the old, existing model to a new model. For the purpose of this study, this period is referred to as the process of transformation.

**Phase 3: The post-transformation period**

This phase refers to the period directly after the completion of the transformation process when the organisation functioned according to the new model. This period may also be described as the situation where the outcomes of the transformation process were practically experienced or lived by employees. For the purpose of this study, this period is referred to as the post-transformation period. The interviews were conducted during the post-transformation period.

**Table 3.2: Framework applied in the analysis of the data**

PHASE 1 PRE-TRANSFORMATION	PHASE 2 PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION	PHASE 3 POST-TRANSFORMATION
<p>This phase refers to the period when the decision was taken to transform the organisation.</p> <p>Participants described their perceptions and experiences of issues such as (1) the necessity to transform, and (2) the origin of the decision to transform</p>	<p>This phase refers to the transition or the period of implementing the various decisions.</p> <p>Participants described their experiences and opinions regarding aspects such as (1) the management of the process, and (2) the interpersonal dynamics during the process.</p>	<p>The post-transformation phase refers to the period directly after the transformation process was completed.</p> <p>Participants reflected on their experiences of the outcome of the process and their personal functioning in the transformed organisation. Interviews were conducted in the post-transformation period</p>





## 4 SYMPTOMATIC ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION

### 4.1 Participant 1: Drohan (fictitious name)

#### 4.1.1 Drohan's description and experience of the current, post-transformation period/situation

##### 4.1.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

Drohan described the transformation as drastic, resulting in changes in various (measurable) dimensions of his work life. He had to move into a new department with a new head of department, his colleagues changed (five of his previous colleagues moved with him), the focus of courses he used to teach changed, he had to develop and teach a new course and finally he also had to move to a new office. The transformation therefore resulted in significant changes in Drohan's personal work environment.

##### 4.1.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general terms

Drohan described the transformation as dramatic and, as already indicated, it resulted in various measurable changes for Drohan in his work environment. However, these changes were not regarded as negative but rather contributed to a positive experience of the process.

So dit was nogal 'n drastiese verandering maar dit was nie 'n negatiewe verandering nie. Ek het dit baie positief beleef. Van almal hier was dit miskien vir my die mees positiewe belewenis.

It is clear that in general terms, Drohan experienced the transformation as a positive process.

##### 4.1.1.3 Experience of the extent of the transformation

Although Drohan experienced the transformation process as positive, he did not necessarily agree with all the changes that took place. It was important for Drohan to clarify that he did not support change for the sake of change. In his opinion, facets of the "old" organisation or the previous model should have been kept unchanged.

Dit is nie dat ek net vir verandering is nie want ek dink daar is 'n paar goed wat ons dalk nie moes verander nie. Ekself was gekant teen die wegdoen van dissiplines. Dit was vir my 'n onnodige verandering.

Drohan not only disagreed with some of the changes that materialised as a result of the transformation, but he was also of the opinion that these changes were the result of external pressures and did not necessarily happen as a result of the decisions in the organisation.

Maar baie van die verandering is op ons afgedwing deur ons eie kollegas in ander fakulteite.

##### 4.1.1.4 Experience of the current work situation

Drohan was outspoken about his satisfaction with and enjoyment of his work activities which materialised in the post-transformation situation. He expressed his personal and professional interest in his job activities and referred to the enjoyment he derived from being involved in what he was doing.



Dit wat ek nou doen, is presies wat ek graag wil doen. As ek my lewe kan oorbê is dit die goed waarby ek betrokke wil wees en dis ook die werk wat ek wil doen — om dit aan te bied. Ek kan my nie voorstel dat daar lekkerder werk kan wees as wat ek doen nie.

Drohan undoubtedly enjoyed what he was doing. He experienced a satisfactory to high level of job satisfaction in the post-transformation period. Judging from the extent of his job satisfaction, it can be deduced that Drohan's professional identity was not negatively affected by the transformation.

Drohan himself was of the opinion that the job satisfaction he experienced in the post-transformation period played a substantive role in shaping his experiences of the transformation.

Omdat ek betrokke is by wat ek regtig graag wil doen, voel ek positief. Maar die feit is, op die ou einde was dit vir my 'n baie positiewe beleving. Ek geniet my werk.

Drohan summarised his experience of the transformation by indicating that he was, generally speaking, not negatively affected by the process:

Ek kan nie kla nie want ek is net so goed af as vroeër.

A summary of Drohan's description or experiences in the post-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- The transformation resulted in measurable and drastic changes in Drohan's work life.
  - Generally speaking, he had a positive experience of the transformation.
  - Despite this positive experience, he did not necessarily agree with all the changes that took place.
  - Drohan clearly enjoyed job satisfaction in the post-transformation phase.
  - His professional identity seems to be unaffected by the transformation.
  - His job satisfaction in the post-transformation period seems to play an important role in contributing to his positive experience of the transformation.
- 

#### **4.1.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions on the decision to transform (pre-transformation)**

Drohan's opinion on the need for the organisation to change and the origin of this awareness is discussed below.

##### **4.1.2.1 The need for change**

Drohan said that he personally felt the need for change in his immediate work activities (the courses he taught). As a matter of fact, he did actually implement changes within the limited scope acceptable or allowed in the old organisational context.

Die kursus was baie gestruktureerd en al baie oud en dieselfde. Die tweede jaar het ek gesê ons moet 'n plan maak en die kursus verander. Dit het darem gebeur maar die inhoud was maar steeds oud. In 'n mate het ek ook gevoel daar moet verandering kom. Dit is baie belangrik dat ons ons eie onderwysgraad moet aanbied.

This uncomfortableness with the status quo was not limited to his immediate work activities. Drohan indicated that he felt to an extent that the broader organisational context also needed



some change.

In 'n mate het ek ook gevoel daar moet verandering kom. Dit is baie belangrik dat ons ons eie onderwysgraad moet aanbied.

The organisation's decision to transform was therefore not totally unexpected for him. It may be argued that due to his own uncomfortableness with the old model, he had an understanding for the organisation's decision to transform and could therefore accept this decision on an intellectual level.

#### 4.1.2.2 Impetus for the transformation (where the idea for the transformation process originated)

Various deductions on Drohan's experience of the impetus for the transformation are possible as discussed below.

In the previous section it was explained that Drohan had an intellectual understanding of the organisation's decision to transform. This intellectual understanding was partially based (and motivated) on his personal felt need for change in the organisation.

In 'n mate het ek ook gevoel daar moet verandering kom. Dit is baie belangrik dat ons ons eie onderwysgraad moet aanbied.

It could therefore be argued that Drohan experienced the decision to transformation as originating from inside the organisation. He was of the opinion that some of the changes implemented during the process of transformation took place as a result of external pressure and not necessarily as a conscious decision taken by the organisation.

Maar baie van die verandering is op ons afgedwing deur ons eie kollegas in ander fakulteite en nie soseer van buite af nie.

Drohan's statement that the perception was created that transformation had to take place as a result of the external environment, leads to more deductions.

By ons is in 'n groot mate die persepsie geskep dat "daar buitekant is die mense ongelukkig oor wat julle doen en julle moet dit regmaak of julle is uit" .

Three deductions may be made from the statement. First, is possible that Drohan meant that the management took the decision for the transformation but they did not want to take the responsibility for the decision. Creating the perception that it was forced on them (management) could possibly excuse them from the harsh decisions that had to be taken as a result of the process. Second, Drohan meant that management did not see the need to transform at all and that the decision was therefore, in fact, forced on them from the external environment. Third, this remark had a bearing on the management of the process *per se* rather than on the origin of or the impetus for the decision to transform. There was no opportunity to ask Drohan to clarify his statement.

Given Drohan's personal uncomfortableness with the old model and his satisfaction with the new one, it seems valid to deduce that Drohan's experience of the process was not particularly influenced by the origin (or impetus) of the organisation's decision to change. Although he felt that the wrong perception was created in the process, it may be argued that his personal felt



need for change seemed to be more significant in determining his experiences than whether or not the organisation took the decision as a matter of internal conviction.

A summary of his opinions and experiences in the pre-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- Drohan personally experienced a need for change in the organisation.
  - He understood and accepted the decision to transform intellectually.
  - Although he criticised the perception that was created that transformation happened as result of external pressures, he seemed to be unaffected by the impetus (internally/ externally) for the organisation's decision to transform. It did however, affect his opinion about the management of a process as such.
- 

#### 4.1.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation

The next section deals with the process of transforming the organisation. The participant was requested to discuss and describe positive and negative experiences and to explain why they were experienced in that way. He was also asked what the motivation was for his participation in the process (if he did) and what the motivation was for resisting (if applicable). These experiences and motivations are discussed below according to particular themes identified in the coding process of the data analysis.

##### 4.1.3.1 New opportunities and challenges

The transformation of the organisation necessitated the establishment of totally new courses or subjects and the re-writing of existing course material. Drohan had to develop course material in an area in which he had a personal, academic interest.

Omdat dit my belangstelling is, het ek gevra om daarby betrokke te wees.

He experienced this dimension of the process of transformation as a wonderful opportunity and a challenge.

Ek het die geleentheid gehad om my eie kursus saam te stel. Dit is wonderlik om 'n nuwe kursus te skep. Dit is absoluut aan my oorgelaat. Buiten die buite-persone het ek vryheid om die kursusse te ontwerp, dit is my produk wat ek onderrig en wat meer wil 'n mens hê, dit is wonderlik.

In this process of developing new course material, Drohan experienced absolute creative and intellectual freedom to do as he thought best. Implicit in this statement about his freedom in developing the course is also the notion that he had the responsibility for the eventual outcome of the creative process. He was granted the opportunity and the responsibility to develop something new.

Drohan experienced the process of transformation as challenging in the sense that it provided him the opportunity to create and develop new course material in an area he found intellectually stimulating and satisfactory. In this development process he had creative and intellectual freedom and independence as well as responsibility. This challenge to create something new contributed to Drohan's positive experience of the process of transformation.



#### 4.1.3.2 Participation in the process of transformation

Drohan explained his constructive involvement in the process as follows:

Hulle het aanvanklik volonteers gevra en daar was 'n klomp taakgroepe waarby ons kon betrokke raak. Toe het ek betrokke geraak by 'n groot verskeidenheid van die taakgroepe (omtrent 8). Party daarvan gaan net oor motivering van personeel en omdat ek gewerk het in mentorskap het hulle my gevra om daarby betrokke te raak. Dit was miskien meer toevallig as beplan dat ek betrokke was by omtrent alles wat verander het. Mens het dan nie tyd om te dink of om negatief te wees nie. Jy voel jy is nodig en jy word geag.

His participation in the process of transformation concerned more than the immediate job activities he found intellectually stimulating. He also participated in processes that dealt with broader organisational issues (such as HR issues) as a result of the organisation's request for his participation. This request for involvement communicated to Drohan that he was important to the organisation and that the organisation valued him. It also told him that the organisation needed his particular input. The organisation therefore confirmed his personal importance and value to the organisation and conveyed the message that the process of transformation depended on his personal input. He responded to the request because he felt that the organisation needed him. It is possible to argue that Drohan's willingness to respond to the request was a demonstration of a personal inclination to feel responsible for the organisation.

As mentioned earlier, Drohan indicated that he was involved in almost all the changes that took place. He made a direct link between his involvement in the process and his positive experience of the transformation.

Verder was nie veel emosionele aspekte nie — ek het dit vreeslik positief ervaar. Miskien was die rede daarvoor dat ek betrokke was die heel tyd — met die nuwe kursus was ek oorweldigend betrokke.

It seems that Drohan experienced himself neither as helpless in this process nor as a victim of the changes that took place. He saw himself as a co-constructor of the process thus having the ability or opportunity to influence the direction and outcome of the process. His recommendation for future transformation processes also lead to this interpretation.

Dit is miskien goed as 'n mens ouens kan saamvat deur hulle in die proses betrokke te maak en vir hulle te sê jy kan jou stempel afdruk.

This opportunity to influence the transformation process is also illustrated by the fact that Drohan succeeded in reversing decisions regarding his personal work environment that were unacceptable to him. At first he was allocated to a specific department which he experienced as unacceptable. After a strong response from Drohan, the decision was changed.

Hulle het my bv. by ... onderrig ingedeel en ek het heftig gereageer daarop want dit is nie waar ek my werk doen nie. Hulle het toe wel daarop gereageer en my geskuif.

Drohan furthermore moved to a new office of his choice.

Mense is verknog aan hulle plekke waar hulle is — ek ook want ek het gesê ek skuif nie as julle nie vir my 'n kantoor gee na my keuse nie. Ek het 'n vreeslike lekker kantoor gehad en ek het net weer aangedring op 'n vreeslike lekker kantoor.





Thus, it could be argued that his positive experience of the process of transformation was a result of his opportunity to (1) influence and co-construct the process of transformation and the outcome, and (2) to influence or change decisions taken during the process that were unacceptable to him with respect to his immediate work environment.

#### 4.1.3.3 Disagreement and resistance

As mentioned earlier, Drohan did not necessarily agree with all the decisions taken during the transformation process. Drohan said that the organisation allowed him the freedom to disagree on issues and he did, indeed, use this freedom. He expressed his concern or disagreement with respect to issues he found intellectually unacceptable.

Ek het gesê as ek gedink het ons moet nie iets verander nie soos bv. om nie Opvoedkunde<sup>1</sup> uit te faseer voordat ons nie iets in sy plek het nie. Ek sê my sê as iets nie reg is nie en ons word die vryheid gegun om dit te doen.... Daar was die vryheid om te sê as jy nie saamstem nie en ek het dit uitgeoefen. Indien (ek) nie op 'n intellektuele vlak saamgestem het nie, het ek dit gesê.

During the process of transformation Drohan not only voiced his concerns or disagreements, but also actively resisted a decision that affected him negatively in his immediate work environment and work activities. He felt secure and free enough to challenge the decision regarding his allocation to a particular department (see discussion above). It could be argued that he felt free to express his opinions and even to resist decisions because he knew that the organisation valued him and depended on his participation. He had no (or little) fear that disagreeing or resisting aspects of the transformation process would endanger his continued employment at the organisation.

For comprehensiveness it should be mentioned that Drohan did not necessarily respond to everything he disagreed on. There were occasions when he was of the opinion that a wrong decision was taken but he did not feel strongly enough to openly speak his mind or resist the decision.

Ek self was gekant teen die wegdoen van dissiplines — ek is geskool in ... Opvoedkunde en ek dink dit is belangrik om daardie deelperspektiewe in Opvoedkunde te behou. Dit was vir my 'n onnodige verandering. Ek was gekant daarteen maar nie in so 'n mate dat ek 'n brief wou skryf of so iets nie.

It may thus be concluded that during the process of transformation Drohan felt he had the freedom to express his opinion even if it meant criticising a particular issue. As a matter of fact, he did voice his disagreement on particular issues he found intellectually unacceptable. He also actively resisted decisions that affected him negatively in his immediate work environment. His satisfaction with the post-transformation situation may be explained, among other things, by the fact that Drohan experienced himself as a co-constructor of the process who had the freedom to participate, influence and resist in order to co-determine the outcome of the process.

#### 4.1.3.4 Interpersonal relationships

It is quite significant that Drohan did not experience difficulty in his interpersonal relationships during the process of transformation. Apart from mentioning that the transformation did not affect his relationships with colleagues drastically, no reference, neither positive nor negative, was made to interpersonal relationships.



Baie van die kollegas waarmee ek saamwerk, het ek mee saamgewerk voor die verandering so dit was nie so drasties vir my as wat dit vir ouens op bestuursvlak was nie.

It therefore seemed that Drohan's experiences of the interpersonal relationships in the organisation during this process did not contribute significantly to his experience of the transformation process.

#### 4.1.3.5 Management of the process

Drohan experienced the process of transformation as lacking in clarity with respect to the direction of the transformation.

Ek dink dit was te onseker: onsekerheid oor die rigting van die verandering want dit was 'n evolusionêre verandering en onsekerheid oor werkstabieleit. Mense het nie geweet waarheen ons oppad was nie.

According to him, the plan for the transformation crystallised and developed as the process of transformation evolved.

Maar die plan het ontwikkel soos wat ons verander het.

Although Drohan felt that an evolving plan also had its merits in the sense that it created opportunity for people to become involved and influence the process

...dit het ook sy meriete want dan het almal 'n inset en jy kan gedurig die plan verander soos dit nodig is,

he still felt that a clear objective or direction for the changes was necessary. In his opinion a clearer objective or direction for change would have increased people's involvement in the process.

Ek sou daarvan gehou het as daar 'n plan was voordat ons verander het. Ek dink as 'n mens 'n plan het of 'n model waarna jy toe werk dan sal mense dalk meer geneig wees om saam te gaan omdat hulle weet waarheen hulle gaan.

As discussed earlier, Drohan felt that the opportunity he had to influence the process, contributed towards his participation as well as his positive experience of the process. Based on his personal experience he indicated that this could perhaps be a strategy in transformation processes to involve employees:

Dit is miskien goed as 'n mens ouens saamvat deur hulle in die proses betrokke te maak en vir hulle te sê jy kan jou stempel afdruk.

#### 4.1.3.6 Intrapersonal characteristics

##### (a) Inclination to feel responsible

Ek kon nie bekostig om daardie tyd negatief te wees nie omdat ek en 'n kollega 'n nuwe kursus moes dryf, dit aan die gang kry.

As discussed earlier, Drohan had the responsibility to ensure the successful completion of new course material. He also had the responsibility to participate in broader organisational issues for the sake of the transformation. The above quote and his willingness to participate on various



issues due to a request from the organisation could mean that Drohan had an inclination to feel responsible towards the organisation and the process of transformation. This inclination to feel responsible could also have contributed to Drohan's constructive and intensive involvement and participation in the process.

(b) Preference for a dynamic work environment

A second intrapersonal dimension Drohan communicated was a preference for a changing, dynamic environment and therefore an inclination to become bored with too much stability.

Ons leef in 'n geweldige opwindende tyd — as alles dieselfde bly dan raak 'n mens verveeld. Dit sal moeilik wees om verveeld te raak met so 'n dinamiese iets soos die Onderwys.

This personal preference for a dynamic, changing environment could have contributed to his positive experience of the changing nature of the transformation process.

A summary of Drohan's experiences of the process of transformation is provided in the text box below.

- 
- Drohan experienced the process as challenging in the sense that it provided him with the opportunity to develop new course material in an area he found interesting and stimulating.
  - He participated in the process because he felt acknowledged by the organisation and was also convinced that his input was needed. The fact that he could influence and co-construct the process contributed to his positive experience of the process.
  - Drohan voiced his disagreement with some decisions and in some respects actively resisted a decision that had a negative impact on him. He was successful in reverting the decision and this change contributed further to his satisfaction with the process.
  - He experienced no difficulty with respect to interpersonal relationships.
  - In his opinion, there was a lack of clarity with respect to the direction of the transformation process. Although it had some benefits in the sense that people could contribute to or co-construct the process, he felt that a clear objective would have facilitated a greater degree of participation.
  - His inclination to feel responsible may have contributed to his active participation while his preference for a dynamic work environment contributed to his experience of the process as exciting and a challenge.
- 

#### **4.1.4 Opinions and experiences of the nature and management of the transformation process**

##### **4.1.4.1 The nature of a transformation process**

Drohan's experiences of the transformation process and his opinion on the nature and extent of the changes lead to the realisation (conclusions) that transformation as a process is, indeed, a multifaceted phenomenon and people's experiences thereof are also multifaceted. Agreement with the decision to transform, or advocating the transformation of an organisation does not necessarily imply agreement or satisfaction with all the changes implemented as a result of the transformation. The contrary should then also be true: disagreement with the decision to transform does not necessarily imply disagreement with all the changes that result from the process.



The question arises as to what extent the people or managers responsible for the management of the process can foresee (and manage) the unfolding of the process and foresee all the areas of the company that will be affected or influenced by the process.

#### 4.1.4.2 The management of a transformation process

##### (a) Clear direction

As discussed Drohan indicated that the lack of a clear objective for the direction of the change created insecurity and hampered employees' participation.

Ek dink as 'n mens 'n plan het of 'n model waarna jy toe werk dan sal mense dalk meer geneig wees om saam te gaan omdat hulle weet waarheen hulle gaan.

He felt that a clear plan or model is necessary to facilitate a process of transformation.

##### (b) Co-constructors of the process

Drohan indicated the opportunity he had to constructively participate in the transformation process had a positive impact on his experience of and attitude towards the process of transformation. He therefore suggested that a possible management strategy could be to involve people in the process in the sense of allowing them the opportunity to make some personal input.

##### (c) Internal conviction to change

Drohan was of the opinion that one of the problems in the management of the transformation process was the fact that the perception was created in the organisation that the impetus for the transformation resulted from external pressures and not from an internal conviction to change. In his opinion, this stimulated a reaction by employees to "defend their own territories" instead of convincing people to improve the organisation.

Wat ook belangrik is, is dat mens die gevoel moet skep dat die verandering van binne af kom want as 'n ou gedwing word om te verander van buite af dan is jy sommer negatief. Jy beskerm jou mishoop terwyl as jy gemotiveerd kan wees om te verander omdat jy dink dit is nodig dan sal jy meer geneig wees om dit te doen.

He thus recommended the communication of an internal organisational conviction to change as a potential facilitator for the required changes.



## 4.2 Participant 2: Stephan (fictitious name)

### 4.2.1 Stephan's description and experience of the current, post-transformation period/situation

#### 4.2.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

The transformation process resulted in several measurable changes for Stephan. He had to move to a new department and a new office. Many of his colleagues from the old system went to other departments. Stephan indicated that with respect to the courses he taught, he was not particularly affected as he was still teaching the same course as before the transformation.

#### 4.2.1.2 Experience of the nature and extent of the process and the process in general

Stephan described his experience of the transformation process as follows:

As ek 'n bietjie moet huigel dan sou ek sê, ek sê dit opsetlik want ek is nie vreeslik beïndruk met die hele transformasieproses nie. Ek dink nie dit was werklik nodig nie. Dis in 'n groot mate onnodig gewees. Dit het 'n klomp spanning op mense geplaas wat nie nodig was nie. Maar nou ja, jy is in 'n sekere mate uitgelewer.

Wat het ek positief ervaar? Ek weet nie hoe om dit te antwoord nie want ek het eintlik nie vreeslike positiewe gevoelens oor die transformasie nie. Ek moet vir jou sê ek het bitter min positief ervaar van die proses. Dit was rêrig vir my 'n baie groot trauma gewees.

On a personal level, Stephan experienced the transformation process as quite stressful, traumatic and generally as a negative event. He was furthermore of the opinion that the transformation process was too extensive in nature and, in some respects, even unnecessary.

Ek het nie gedink dit is nodig om die hele Fakulteit te herstruktureer nie. Dit was nie nodig om die hele appelkar om te keer nie...

Stephan made it clear though, that he did not disagree in principle with the notion of transformation. He felt that transformation was inevitable and necessary for survival in a fast developing and technological age. However, transformation for the sake of transformation was regarded as counter-productive. To some extent, Stephan regarded the completed process as transformation for the sake of transformation (see phase 3 for the discussion of the impetus for the transformation).

#### 4.2.1.3 Introduction of uncertainties in the current work situation

A critical dimension in Stephan's experience of the post-transformation period revolves around the impact of the transformation process on his assumptions about the nature of the organisation and the nature of his profession.

Ek voel oor my siening van wat wetenskap is en van wat my taak as dosent is van wat die opvoedkunde as wetenskap is, daar is sekere algemene geldende waarhede rondom hierdie kwessies wat geld, onbepaald van watter regering aan bewind is. Daardie essensiële goed gaan nie verander nie want dit is deel van die werklikheid. Hierdie ingesteldheid raak jou totale menswees — dit is nie oppervlakkige goed nie. Dit sny tot in die diepste wese van jou in. Maar nou kom die ouens en kom skiet gate met 'n haelgeweer in daardie benadering. Hulle tas jou menswees aan en dis skielik nie meer aanvaarbaar nie.

From the above it is evident that Stephan upheld or supported a particular opinion or set of assumptions regarding the essence and nature of the work he was doing. These particular



assumptions directed and defined his understanding of his professional role, the objective of his professional activities and his participation in the organisation. Stephan explained that these assumptions were fundamental to the way in which he performed his activities as well as to his deepest inner being. It may be deduced or argued that these assumptions formed an integral part of his professional identity. To some extent, it determined how he defined himself and his activities in the professional work environment. The fact that Stephan mentioned that his assumptions were queried and disputed during the process of transformation leads to the deduction that these particular assumptions were accepted in the old or previous system. It could be argued that his personal set of assumptions were in harmony with the tacit assumptions of the old or previous system. The organisation previously supported and validated his assumptions and his definition and understanding of the nature of his profession. The fact that these fundamental assumptions were queried and regarded as invalid in the post-transformation period had a profound impact on the way Stephan perceived and experienced his professional identity. It also affected his professional performance in the organisation.

Hulle tas jou menswees aan en dis skielik nie meer aanvaarbaar nie... Dit het my in 'n geweldige mate ontgogel selfs soveel so dat ek nou nog nie weet wat ek eintlik moet doen nie. Ek voel in my wese onseker en dit maak jou minder effektief omdat jy onseker is of dit wat jy doen reg is. Dit beïnvloed jou produktiwiteit, dit beïnvloed jou verhoudinge met ander mense, selfs met jou gesin.

Stephan experienced that the way he used to maintain himself, perform his duties and form his opinions was no longer applicable in the post-transformation organisation. He felt unsure of himself, less effective and less productive than prior to the transformation process. These feelings were possibly intensified by the fact that Stephan was in the employ of the organisation for twenty-seven years already and had been promoted to the highest teaching level of full professor in the organisation. At a stage in his career when he should have relied on his acquired skills and know-how, he experienced them as being in disharmony with the new system. Furthermore, Stephan indicated that the questioning of his professional assumptions even affected him in his private capacity. It affected his relationships with people and with his family

It may therefore be concluded that his professional identity and professional self-confidence were detrimentally affected by the transformation process. To some extent, Stephan had to redefine himself in the new post-transformation organisation. The impact on his professional identity also had ramifications for his personal life (or personal identity).

However, Stephan remained committed and loyal to what he believed to be the core of his profession - educating teachers - amidst the many changes that affected him directly in his work environment.

As jy die geleentheid het om dit wat jy wil doen, en dit is om onderwysers op te lei, en jy kan dit doen — of dit nou onder 'n apartheids- of nie-apartheidsregering moet geskied, — is nie so vreeslik ter sake nie. Jou primêre taak is nog steeds onderwysersopleiding.

Despite his continued involvement in teachers education, Stephan derived less enjoyment and satisfaction from performing this primary task in the post-transformation period although he still perceived it to be important and worthwhile.

Dit is vir my belangrik om my werk te doen, om te sorg dat my studente se belange eerste kom. Jy doen nog steeds jou werk maar jy voel ontgogel.



It may therefore be concluded that Stephan's level of job satisfaction was detrimentally affected by the transformation.

A summary of Stephan's experience of the post-transformation period is provided in the text box below.

- 
- Stephan experienced the process in general as stressful and traumatic with little positive aspects to it. It resulted in several measurable changes in his immediate work environment.
  - His negative retrospective evaluation of the transformation and his discomfort with the post-transformation situation seemed to be influenced by his experience of the extent of the transformation process and the impact it had on his professional identity and performance. Stephan experienced the transformation process as too extensive in nature and largely as unnecessary or as change for the sake of change.
  - Due to the questioning of his core assumptions about success and competence in the organisation, he felt professionally unsure of himself. Although he continued his professional activities as prior to the process, he seemed to experience less job satisfaction than previously.
- 

#### **4.2.2 Phase 1: Perceptions of and opinions on the decision to transform**

##### **4.2.2.1 The impetus for the transformation process**

Stephan indicated that discussions about the necessity to change dimensions in the organisation had been taking place prior to the transformation process.

Daar is kollegas wat al lank daaroor praat, dink en met mekaar debatteer oor die hele storie van die deeldisiplinêre benadering. Dit is nie 'n ding wat sommer skielik gekom het nie. Dis is 'n ding wat al lankal in die Fakulteit aan die lewe is.

He took notice of this debate and was therefore not unaware of an internal uncomfortableness with the status quo. Although Stephan did not explicitly express his stance in the debate, it could be deduced that he deemed it necessary to communicate that there was an internal impetus for the process of transformation. However, he also made it clear that external, political pressures influenced or determined important decisions taken during the process.

Dit kan lyk of die proses net polities gedrewe is op grond van die verandering van die regering. Dit is nie heeltemal waar nie. Dit het wel 'n groot deel uitgemaak van die uiteindelijke besluite wat die Fakulteit indringend geraak het.

It may be concluded that Stephan was of the opinion that the impetus for the transformation initially originated within the organisation as discussions about changes to a specific dimension of the organisation. It was not so much that Stephan felt that there was no reason for change or that the transformation process had been forced on the organisation. It was rather that Stephan experienced the process as too far-reaching, including too many dimensions of the organisation and having resulted in unnecessary changes due to external pressures and influences. The transformation he anticipated as a result of previous internal discussions in the organisation



eventually formed only a small part of the actual transformation process. Stephan did not agree with and did not anticipate such far-reaching transformation.

#### 4.2.2.2 The decision to transform

Stephan's experience of the motivation for and decision to transform revolves around two issues. First, it refers to how he experienced the impact of the decision on himself and secondly, it refers to his experience of how colleagues perceived and treated him in this phase.

As discussed in phase 3, Stephan regarded his particular orientation or assumptions regarding his role as lecturer, the context or framework in which he performed his professional duties, as an integral part of himself. He actually said that this orientation became part of himself, became part of his identity.

Ek staan aan die einde van my loopbaan... en dit waarmee jy besig is, word deel van jouself ... Hierdie ingesteldheid raak jou totale menswees — dit is nie oppervlakkige goed nie. Dit sny tot in die diepste wese van jou in. Maar nou kom die ouens en kom skiet gate met 'n haelgeweer in daardie benadering. Hulle tas jou menswees aan en dis skielik nie meer aanvaarbaar nie.

Stephan experienced the motivation for and decision to transform to the extent it did, as a questioning of the very assumptions that had guided his professional activities for many years. Given the interrelatedness of these assumptions and his identity, he experienced the decision to transform to a new orientation or set of assumptions as a questioning of the validity of the essence of his identity or being. The fact that the organisation had not previously queried this personal set of assumptions leads to the deduction that his personal assumptions were in harmony with the tacit assumptions of the old system. Therefore, the decision to transform the organisation, to support a different set of assumptions did not simply imply a move towards something new or a new challenge; it implied a negating of what he was (professionally) and what he believed in.

The actual decision to transform was preceded by discussions and critical evaluations in the organisation of the positive and negative aspects of the current or old system. As Stephan was one of the senior personnel and had served on the management committee of the organisation for many years, he was perceived by colleagues as representing and embodying the old system. The implication of this embodiment was that Stephan experienced himself being attacked personally and criticised for the problems and biases of the old system.

Om die gevoel te kry, en om gesê te word, "jy was nou vir jare lank bestuurslid en jy was daarvoor verantwoordelik dat daar teen my as vrou gediskrimineer is; jy was daarvoor verantwoordelik dat daar teen swart mense gediskrimineer is" terwyl jy in jou hart weet dit is nie waar nie. Maar ek het gevoel dit is ongeregverdig. Die goed waarvan ons beskuldig is, is ongeregverdig. Ek kan selfs so ver gaan as om te sê dit was partymaal oneties gewees. Dit het by my die gevoel gewek van, jy weet omdat ek 'n WAM (wit Afrikaner man) is, daarom moet daar van my ontslae geraak word en moet jy uiffaseer word.

A summary of his opinions on and experiences of the decision to change is provided below.

- 
- Stephan was of the opinion that the impetus for the decision to transform originally came from within the organisation. However, this decision was influenced by external, political roleplayers.





- The organisation's decision to transform to the extent it did, had profound personal implications for Stephan. As a member of the previous management structures, he was personally blamed for the problems of the old system. He experienced this criticism as unfair, unethical and a way of trying to get rid of him. To Stephan, the process that was aimed at evaluating and critiquing the old system felt as an attack on him personally. Furthermore, Stephan experienced the decision to transform as rendering his personal set of assumptions invalid and therefore also rendering him and what he professionally believed in as invalid and unacceptable.
- 

#### 4.2.3 Phase 2: Perceptions, opinions and experiences of the process of transformation

This section covers the period when the organisation was in the process of transformation.

##### 4.2.3.1 Career implications resulting from the process

Prior to the transformation process, Stephan had served on the executive management committee of the department for many years. In this position he had access to privileged information and he could contribute to decisions in the department.

Elke hoof het 'n uitvoerende of 'n bestuurskomitee gehad wat hom gehelp het. Ek was baie, baie jare lank op die bestuurskomitee, op die uitvoerende komitee van die ou departement.

It could be argued that the allocation of this position to Stephan told him that the organisation valued and respected him and that his opinion and contribution were important to the organisation. However, during the process of transformation, the existing structures in the organisation were changed and adapted, which consequently affected Stephan's presence on this committee.

Daar was ouens wat gedink en gevoel het die bestuurstrukture is te rigied, te hiërargies, te paternalisties. Onder die voorwendsel van dat alles so verskriklik deursigtig moet wees, is daardie strukture en die mense wat die sitplekke vol gesit het, is hulle in 'n sekere sin enersyds genegeer en andersyds amper ... ek het dit beleef as verneder.

Die feit is, mense is uit posisies uitgeskuif. Veral in die begin van verlede jaar was dit vir my 'n geweldige trauma om maar net 'n gewone departementslid te wees en geen aansien te hê in terme van die bestuur — en die besluitnemingsprosesse in die departement nie. Maar daardie tyd verlede jaar was regtig vir my 'n baie traumatiese jaar. Ek het dit geweldig stresvol beleef, ek het dit as verwerping beleef en dit het stres veroorsaak.

From the above it is evident that Stephan was not particularly convinced of the necessity to alter the decision-making structures. He experienced it as a pretence to get rid of the people in this structure. Stephan saw no logic in his omission from the new management structure and thus as a personal humiliation and negation of him as person. He lost the status he had had in the organisation and the opportunity he had to influence decisions in the organisation at a particularly critical period in the organisation's existence. As a formerly respected and important member of the organisation, Stephan felt rejected by the organisation. It is quite possible that this demotion in importance and status in the organisation had a detrimental impact on how Stephan perceived and experienced his own worth and importance to the organisation.

It may be concluded that Stephan experienced himself to be demoted from an influential position with accompanying status to the relatively unimportant or common position of an ordinary mem-

ber of staff as a result of the transformation process and not as a result of any of his. As a previously valued and respected member of the management committee of the organisation, he felt rejected and humiliated by the organisation for doing and believing what he had for many years.

#### 4.2.3.2 Loss of security

Transformation inevitably has an underlying sense of potential loss of employment. In Stephan's situation it was a real cause of concern throughout the process of transformation. Given his particular age, he was constantly afraid that he would be forced to go on early retirement with the consequent/perceived risk of losing economic independence and stability.

In 'n sekere sin veral in my ouderdomsgroep, weet 'n mens daar kan more, oormore besluit word alle mense bokant 55 moet aftree ... die moontlikheid van 'n ekonomiese onstabielheid het ek as negatief ervaar. Die probleem dat jy jou huidige lewenstandaard nie sal kan handhaaf nie. Die probleem dat 'n mens nie weet en geweet het wat more, oormore, oor 'n maand verder kan gebeur met jou salaris, met jou ekonomiese sekuriteit.

This insecurity over his economic position remained a source of concern to Stephan even after the completion of the process of transformation. The potential for economic vulnerability contributed to his feelings of insecurity and negative experience of the process.

#### 4.2.3.3 Interpersonal relationships

Stephan had worked for between 15 to 20 years in close contact with particular colleagues, consequently forming special collegial relationships and even friendships. The restructuring of the organisation into new functional units and the physical relocation of people, physically removed Stephan from the colleagues and discussion partners with whom he had interacted on a daily basis over many years. Although his previous colleagues remained in the organisation, the physical relocation and new departmental boundaries defined new people as colleagues and neighbours. Stephan experienced these forced changes in his interpersonal relationships as stressful and traumatic.

Op die vlak van die meer emosionele, affektiewe. Jy weet as mens vir 15, 20 jaar saam gewerk het, dan ontstaan daar bande, vriendskapsbande selfs, maar ook bande wat op kollegiale vlak gegroei het. Die transformasie veral met die ding dat ons heeltemal uitmekaar moes spat en departement heeltemal van nuuts af ons plekke moes gaan vind het, dit het mense in 'n sekere sin ontgogel, dalk selfs stress by mense veroorsaak ... ons is nou twee jaar aan die gang, maar as ek terugdink aan verlede jaar (Januarie veral), het mens aanhoudend geadem 'n gevoel van onsekerheid. Dit is maar 'n bietjie van 'n trauma vir ons almal gewees — 'nuwe aanpassing, 'n nuwe oriëntering, 'n nuwe plekkie vind. Ek dink tog daar het spanning met die ding gepaard gegaan.

Stephan experienced the disintegration of his previous interpersonal network system as a personal loss and this contributed to feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. He found himself having to find a new place in the new collegial environment and, to some extent, to redefine himself in this context. What is significant in this particular interpersonal context is that Stephan did not have control over these changes. Interpersonal relationships were affected and changed as a result of the transformation process.

However, the changed interpersonal environment was also the only source for the positive experiences Stephan had about the process.



Ek moet vir jou sê ek het bitter min positief ervaar. Die min wat dit is, is dat met die nuwe samevoeging van departemente en kollegas, het jy mense leer ken en met hulle begin saamwerk wat nuwe perspektiewe bring, wat nuwe sieninge bring wat jy nie gehad het nie en wat jy nie bewus van was nie. So, dit is in 'n sekere sin 'n verryking op persoonlike vlak en ook op akademiese vlak.

The process of transformation provided Stephan with the opportunity to get to know other organisational members and consequently exposed him to ideas or ways of thinking he would not otherwise have known. This was experienced as a personal and academic enrichment.

#### 4.2.3.4 Participation in the process of transformation

From the discussion of phases 1 and 3 it is evident that Stephan did not agree with the extent of the transformation and generally experienced the process as traumatic and stressful, as change for the sake of change. On the question of possible resistance to the process, it became apparent that Stephan "silently resisted" the process.

Ek kan selfs so ver gaan as om te sê dit was partymaal oneties gewees. Dit het by my die gevoel gewek van, jy weet omdat ek 'n WAM (white afrikaans male) is, daarom moet daar van my ontslae geraak word en moet jy uitfaseer word. Dit het gemaak dat ek in 'n sekere sin weerstandig was oor bepaalde goed. Na my mening, het die aanklagte nie gronde gehad nie en dit het my weerstandig gemaak.

Stephan experienced feelings of resentment and resistance but did not actively or openly resist any of them. They remained personal feelings of discomfort, disagreement and resistance without overt action. Stephan also qualified that he did not necessarily contribute to the process either.

Maar nou ja, jy is in 'n sekere mate uitgelewer. Ek het nie eintlik bygedra of meegewerk nie. Ek het maar net saamgespoel. Ek het bitter min gedoen. Kyk, ek doen mee aan wat gebeur maar ek beywer my nie noodwendig vir bepaalde veranderinge nie.

He did not actively participate in the process in the sense of working towards the accomplishment of a specific goal. Stephan explained his passive involvement in the process by referring to the fact that he did not have much choice

It may be argued that Stephan's silent resistance and passive involvement stemmed from the fact that he did not feel secure enough about his position, status or continued employment in the organisation to influence the process of transformation. His conduct was influenced to some extent by the mere fact of maintaining his source of subsistence.

#### 4.2.3.5 Intrapersonal dimension/characteristics of relevance to conduct during the process

##### (a) Particular work ethic and work commitment

The discussion of phases 1 and 3 indicated that the participant's professional identity and performance and the level of job satisfaction were detrimentally affected by the transformation. Given the personal turmoil he experienced during the process of transformation, it is significant that Stephan remained committed and loyal to his primary tasks. It may be argued that Stephan had a strong personal work ethic of commitment and loyalty that contributed to his continued participation in his personal work activities despite the difficulties he experienced during the process of transformation.



(b) Interrelatedness of organisation and professional identity

As discussed in phase 1, Stephan's professional identity and the previous organisational model were interrelated. Questioning the previous model resulted in Stephan experiencing himself as being rendered invalid. It may even be argued that Stephan made no distinction between himself (personally and professionally) and the organisation.

A summary of his experiences of the process of transformation is provided below

- 
- Changes in the criteria for representation on the management committee resulted in Stephan losing the position which he had occupied for many years. He felt humiliated and rejected by the organisation.
  - Stephan feared that he would be forced to go on early retirement which could mean economic instability for him and his family
  - The disintegration of his previous interpersonal network contributed towards feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. Losing access to his close colleagues was a very traumatic and stressful experience. However, he also felt that the opportunity to get to know new people, was enriching and exposed him to new ideas.
  - Stephan resented the fact that he was blamed for the problems of the past, but did not resist the process openly. He indicated that he was passively involved in the process because he did not have much choice.
  - Despite the many difficulties he experienced in the post-transformation period, Stephan demonstrated a particular work ethic and commitment to his professional responsibilities. It is argued that Stephan experienced his professional identity as interrelated with the previous organisational paradigm and this could possibly have contributed to his traumatic experience of the process.
- 

#### 4.2.4 Opinions on and experiences of the nature and management of the transformation process

##### 4.2.4.1 The nature of a transformation process

(a) Meanings of the concept "transformation"

Stephan was particularly concerned about the fact that he did not understand the meaning of transformation. As a matter of fact, he was of the opinion that the concept "transformation" had different meanings for various people in the organisation.

Dit is 'n ding wat my verskriklik hinder, selfs nou nog. Ek weet nie presies wat word met "transformasie" bedoel nie. Transformasie, lyk dit vir my, beteken vir sommige mense politieke verandering. Vir ander mense beteken dit ander goed. So ek weet nie wat transformasie beteken nie. Dit beteken vir een groep mense 'n bepaalde iets en vir 'n ander groep iets anders.

It is postulated at this point of the analysis that a multiplicity of meanings of the concept of transformation exists during such a process in an organisation. Although the concept or term is used by the various role players and employees in the organisation, it does not necessarily imply or



convey the same meaning. The implication of the multiplicity of meanings of the concept is that it entails different expectations of the content of the process, the how of the process and the eventual end product or outcome of the transformation. At this point the question is to what extent the multiplicity of meanings and expectations are recognised and dealt with in the management of a transformation process. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in the further analysis of the interviews.

(b) Transformation affects the status-giving structures and processes in an organisation

In Stephan's organisation, upward mobility could be obtained or achieved in two ways. The first path was through academic competency and proficiency with the position of full professor as the highest possible achievement. The second path was through representation on influential structures in the organisation, such as the departmental management committee. Awarding an employee with a position on such a structure (or committee) could be seen as an organisational reward for hard work, success and accomplishment (this will be referred to as a secondary reward system). Achieving such a position would thus communicate to an employee that he or she had been successful in the organisation.

Changing the structures in the organisation during the process of transformation therefore had implications for the secondary reward system in the organisation. In Stephan's case, the structures that had confirmed his competence and success in the organisation were altered (even removed) and this led to questions and insecurities about his success and competence. Immediately after the completion of the process there seemed to be a void in respect to the secondary reward system which affected people's experiences of themselves and the process. Another implication of changing structures is that it may impact on employees' aspirations in terms of upward mobility and career pathing in the organisation.



### 4.3 Participant 3: Soonja (fictitious name)

#### 4.3.1 Soonja's description and experience of the current post-transformation period/situation

##### 4.3.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

Soonja explained that the transformation did not have a huge impact on her as an individual.

It didn't have a huge impact on me as an individual particularly in terms of my work because I am in a fairly specialised area. Individually, I am responsible for several courses. So with all the changes in the courses, even in so far as moving offices, I did not really experience much change at all.

The transformation did not have any impact on Soonja's immediate work activities. She remained responsible for the particular, specialised courses in which she had qualified in the pre-transformation period. Although she moved to a new department (as all the employees did), the current head of the department used to be her former head of department, which implied no substantial change in the management style she was used to. She did not have to move offices. However, she became separated from previous colleagues due to their physical relocation in the building. The measurable changes seemed to be minimal in her situation.

##### 4.3.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general and the extent of the transformation specifically

Soonja had no doubt in her mind about the fact that it was essential for the organisation to be transformed.

The process of transformation has been necessary...

However, in her opinion the transformation did not go far enough and sometimes she doubted if any change had really taken place. Her experience of the nature and extent of the transformation process in general seemed to dominate her experience of the transformation process in general.

I think in some instances the change hasn't gone far enough. I think we still have too many departments, we still have the same heads of departments. The heads are still all Afrikaans, male sort of old guard. We still have an imbalance in terms of staff: student — the cultural balance. There is still ... although there is definitely now greater participation in management structures, I still think it is insufficient ... But my concern is that we changed but everything is still the same.

Soonja was disappointed with the few changes that resulted from the transformation process. Prior to the transformation process she regarded various dimensions of the organisation as problematic and in need of change, such as the staff representation (language, ethnic group, genderwise), the structure of the organisation and the management style. She expected these issues to be redressed during the transformation process. However, this did not materialise to the extent she expected.

Maybe this transformation process is something between radical and evolutionary change. However, I expected much more; I was ready for radical change.



Her disappointment with the end product of the transformation process seemed to be partially the result of her expectation of a much more radical process than what actually crystallised in the organisation.

Maybe my expectation of what should have been achieved was unrealistic. There was a lot of bureaucracy involved in the transformation but maybe processes take a long time. I suppose I was getting into that kind of mindset and gearing myself up, personally and as a Faculty member for that radical change.

#### 4.3.1.3 Experience of current work situation

With respect to her personal work situation in the period after the transformation process, Soonja indicated that she found the courses she was responsible for exciting and enjoyable.

I've always been fortunate in my course work I'm responsible for because it is such an exciting, interesting field. So I always enjoyed my actual work side and that has just continued to be a positive. The transformation process didn't change that in any way, negatively or positively. I continue to work, specialise and grow in my field and certainly in terms of my subject area I definitely make a valuable contribution to the Faculty and the University .

Soonja stated clearly that she was responsible for a very specialised subject area she found intellectually stimulating and which provided her with the opportunity to grow and develop her expertise. The process of transformation did not affect her personal work situation detrimentally in any way and therefore she continued to derive satisfaction from her professional activities. It may be deduced that Soonja's professional identity has not been affected by the transformation process and she continued to experience a satisfactory to high level of job satisfaction in the post-transformation period.

#### 4.3.1.4 Interpersonal dynamics and relationships

In the pre-transformation period, Soonja used to be part of a group of colleagues. However, as a result of the changes during the transformation process, she found herself isolated and working as an individual rather than as part of a group of colleagues. The absence of a collegial support group in the post-transformation period contributed to her negative experience of the process.

I feel I work more now as an individual rather than with a group of colleagues around me who provided support, who provided collegiality.

The interpersonal relationships, is discussed in more detail in phase 2.

Soonja's experience of the post-transformation period is summarised below.

- 
- The transformation process resulted in no measurable personal changes for Soonja. However, due to the physical relocation of her previous colleagues, she felt herself left alone without collegial support.
  - In general, Soonja was disappointed with the limited extent of the transformation process. She expected a much more radical transformation with respect to various dimensions of the organisation which, in her opinion, did not materialise.
  - In her professional capacity she continued to experience her work as exciting and stimulating and clearly enjoyed a satisfactory to high level of job satisfaction.
  - Her professional identity seemed to be unaffected by the transformation process.
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### 4.3.2 Phase 1: Perceptions of and opinions on the organisation's decision to transform (pre-transformation)

As indicated in the discussion of phase 3, Soonja was of the opinion that the organisation had to transform. In the following section her opinion and experience regarding the need to transform and the impetus for the decision are discussed.

#### 4.3.2.1 The need for transformation

When Soonja joined the organisation several years ago, before transformation was mentioned, she was already of the opinion that the organisation had to transform.

I firmly believed that transformation should take place in SA and Unisa - socially and politically. When I came to the Faculty I realised that the politics, management and staff component should change.

Her conviction about the necessity to transform the organisation stemmed from a deeper conviction that the previous socio-political paradigm in the country had to transform. The organisation as a social institution embedded in the previous societal paradigm therefore also had to transform. This statement demonstrates Soonja's awareness of the organisation's situatedness in and interaction with the external environment. In her opinion the organisation had to respond to changes in the external environment.

Soonja explained her opinion regarding the organisation's necessity to change by referring to the exposure she had to previous work environments.

Another reason for the need I saw for transformation was because, before I started teaching at Unisa, I taught in private, integrated schools. When I came to the Faculty I realised that the politics, management and staff component should change.

Her previous work experience in institutions with different paradigms (or mental models), different management styles and staff compositions contributed to her particular conviction that the model applied in the organisation at that stage was outdated and that the organisation had to transform. It may be deduced that when Soonja joined the organisation she realised that she did not share the mental model or paradigm practised in the organisation.

Apart from her personal conviction that the organisation had to transform, radical changes in the external environment raised the expectation in Soonja that her organisation would have to undergo radical transformation in the same way as institutions in the external environment did.

One of the reasons for my expectations was the greater socio-political change in the country which I felt was quite radical. For educational institutions the change was radical, for instance, schools had become desegregated. To me, that was a radical change — it didn't happen slowly.

Intense discussions in the organisation about the necessity to change also contributed further to her expectation of a radical transformation of the organisation.

There was so much talk and buzz about Unisa having to change, there was so much discussion and so much attention, an anxiety about it.

Soonja's opinion about the necessity to transform the organisation may be summarised as follows:





Soonja's prior work experience and her awareness of and opinion about the broader socio-political situation in the country contributed to a personal opinion and conviction that the organisation had to transform. Radical changes in the external environment and extensive discussion in the organisation about the need to transform contributed to an expectation of radical transformation in the organisation. She had a clear intellectual understanding of the necessity of the organisation to transform and the need for the organisation to be in harmony with the changed external environment.

#### 4.3.2.2 Impetus for the transformation

Soonja was of the opinion that the organisation's decision to transform was the result of external pressure and not necessarily because of an internal organisational conviction that it had to change.

On that point, I still believe the impetus for the change came from outside and not from inside. Eventually the pressure came from outside in the form of an investigation into the University, into the Faculty — as far as from a university in another country. Obviously, a great deal of pressure came from government.

She was of the opinion that due to changes in and pressures from the external environment, the organisation had to respond by starting the process of transformation. It seems therefore as if Soonja viewed the transformation as a reactive rather than a pro-active response of the organisation. She was not convinced that it happened as a result of an internal organisational conviction.

#### 4.3.2.3 Proactive participation in the process

Because of her personal conviction that the organisation had to transform, Soonja proactively promoted change in the organisation. Her activities involved writing discussion documents and making core proposals for the process.

I and some of my colleagues were very proactive in promoting change in the Faculty ... by getting together in small groups, preparing documents, making recommendations and core proposals.

Soonja's proactive involvement also included reading scientific literature about transformation and the re-engineering of companies.

I actually started reading books on re-engineering companies, where companies in the '80s went through radical transformation. I suppose I was getting into that kind of mindset and gearing myself up, personally and as a Faculty member for that radical change.

She actively prepared herself mentally/intellectually for the envisaged transformation process. It may be argued that her exposure to literature on the subject of transformation contributed to her understanding of such a process and perhaps raised her expectations with respect to the nature, management and outcome(s) of a transformation process in the organisation.

Soonja firmly believed in the necessity of transforming the organisation. She proactively promoted change in the organisation and prepared herself mentally for a radical transformation of the organisation. These activities lead to the conclusion that Soonja was committed to participate in and work towards the successful completion of the process. Her active involvement in

promoting the transformation can be seen as a demonstration of the responsibility she felt for the organisation and the transformation process. She actually took responsibility for the process and for her own role in the process. It may be argued that her proactive actions demonstrated an attitude of co-ownership of the process and the organisation.<sup>1</sup>

A summary of her opinion and experiences regarding the pre-transformation period is provided below:

- 
- Soonja never shared the organisation's paradigm. Previous work experience, a personal conviction and an awareness of changes in the external environment contributed to her opinion that the organisation should have transformed long ago.
  - Soonja had a clear intellectual understanding of the necessity for the organisation to transform.
  - She was of the opinion that the transformation happened as a result of external pressures rather than from a proactive organisational decision.
  - She proactively promoted the transformation in the organisation.
  - She took responsibility for her own actions by preparing herself intellectually for the process.
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### **4.3.3 Phase 2: Perceptions, opinions and experiences of the process of transformation**

#### **4.3.3.1 Participation in the process of transformation**

In Soonja's experience opportunities had been created for people in the organisation to participate in the process of transformation. People could get involved by serving on committees of their choice. She used this opportunity to become involved in the process and experienced it as one of the positive aspects of the transformation process.

For me, in general the positive has been that it has created new opportunities... It has given opportunities to participate in the transformation... Efforts were made to involve people: there are a lot of committees where people can get involved...

Soonja used the opportunity provided by the organisation to participate in the process. In her opinion, she supported the process not only by agreeing with it but also by disagreeing with or being critical about aspects she found unacceptable or problematic.

In terms of transformation in general, I do believe I have supported the process. I might have been critical and negative at times in meetings or when I've served on committees and that's probably because I experienced the process as too slow.

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1. In the discussion of the framework used for the analysis of the data, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish to which phase a particular experience, opinion or conduct belongs. Soonja's proactive participation is a good illustration of this difficulty. In principle it is also possible to discuss Soonja's proactive participation as an element of phase 2 (process of transformation) since some of her activities continued in phase 2 of the transformation process. The decision to discuss her participation as part of phase 1 (the pre-transformation period) is based on the weight Soonja placed on her actions to stimulate or promote the transformation as opposed to intended to influence the process of transformation or the decision making during the process of transformation.



From Soonja's descriptions it is possible to derive several reasons or motives for her participation in the process. Firstly, she made it clear that she was personally convinced of the necessity for the organisation to transform. Her involvement was furthermore elicited or encouraged by the opportunities created by the organisation for employees to participate. Her personal preparation for the process and proactive behaviour demonstrated her personal commitment and feelings of responsibility towards the organisation and the process. It also seems viable to argue that Soonja felt secure enough in the organisation to participate even if it meant criticising something she disagreed with.

#### 4.3.3.2 Interpersonal relationships

Soonja experienced the changes in her relationships with colleagues as negative and unsettling. Prior to the transformation, she felt part of a group of colleagues who also fulfilled the role of a support group.

Some of my colleagues changed but it is more the physical move and for a while I actually found that quite unsettling. I felt that my very close support group, close group of colleagues, we had been separated and moved. And I lost that support group. I experienced that negatively. In fact, most of my close colleagues are at the other end of the corridor. I feel I work more now as an individual rather than with a group of colleagues around me who provided support, who provided collegiality.

It is quite significant that the mere physical relocation of Soonja's close group of colleagues had a detrimental effect on the quality of her relationship with them. Prior to the transformation process she experienced herself as being part of a group of colleagues, of having access to the support of colleagues. The physical distance between Soonja and her colleagues hampered the experience of collegiality and resulted in her feeling isolated and working on her own.

#### 4.3.3.3 New opportunities and challenges

The process of transformation provided Soonja with the opportunity to initiate and develop a new course and course material the organisation deemed to be important. The development of the new course material presented her with the challenge to be intellectually creative and innovative. Although Soonja initially experienced this opportunity for creative intellectual activity as a challenge, it eventually culminated in her most negative experience of the process.

At the end of '95, that was my darkest experience of the transformation process, because it resulted in a particular workload for me that I, in '94 initiated but felt that at the end of '95 it was moving the wrong direction. I wanted to redirect it but I wasn't allowed to — it was taken out of my hands and I got no support from the heads of departments. I felt I initiated something very important but the initiative and control had been removed and that I strongly objected to. It resulted in putting a tremendous amount of pressure on me to produce work in an unreasonable amount of time. I did it. I decided to go for the challenge and I did it. What upset me the most was that the responsibility for the development and the trust was removed; I had to produce the material but I had no say over it.

The positive experience of being challenged to develop and create something new soured and became a negative experience because the responsibility for the development and the eventual outcome of the process did not reside with Soonja. The removal of the control and responsibility she had, not only affected her sense of intellectual accomplishment and satisfaction but also resulted in tarnishing the trust relationship that existed between her and the organisation. This was her most traumatic experience during the process of transformation.



Based on this particular experience, it may be argued that the nature of the trust relationship<sup>2</sup> that exists between an employee and the organisation and the impact of the transformation process on that relationship plays a significant role in influencing employees' experiences of the process.

#### 4.3.3.4 Critical reassessment of the organisation/ current situation

Soonja was of the opinion that one of the positive aspects of the process of transformation was that it inevitably forced the organisation and the employees to re-evaluate their situation.

The positive in general has been that it has forced us to get out of our rut to start addressing realities, the realities facing us as individuals, courses, Unisa as a whole. It forced us to re-evaluate our situation and to renew the course content. It forced us to bring the needs of the students back into focus.

The process forced her to move out of her comfort zone and reconsider her situatedness and role in the organisation. In her opinion, the process also forced the institution (and employees) to look critically at the organisation's role and function and reconsider the organisation's response to the needs of its clients. This re-evaluation implied the re-evaluation of existing products (existing course material) and the assessment of their relevance to the client in a changed external environment. Soonja experienced this opportunity to reconsider and re-evaluate as one of the positive aspects of the transformation process.

#### 4.3.3.5 Representation and/or diversity

Soonja highlighted her most positive experience of the process as the election of a representative executive management committee of the organisation.

My most positive experience was when the new executive committee became elected and it was actually representative of all the people in the Faculty.

Prior to the transformation process, the executive management committee was reserved for the highest rank (full professor) in the organisation only. For Soonja, the significance of the elected representative committee pertained to her personal belief in and proactive endeavours towards a more democratic and representative style of management. In a sense, the new elected committee demonstrated an organisational commitment to a more democratic style of management that happened as a result of the process of transformation. This contributed to her most positive experience of the process of transformation.

#### 4.3.3.6 Perceived outcomes of the process

In Soonja's opinion, positive outcomes or perceived successes of the process of transformation contributed to a positive experience whereas the lack of achievements or results contributed to a negative experience. Apart from the representative nature of the management committee, its election was also a concrete result of the transformation process and therefore contributed to a positive experience of the process. However, the lack of results or progress of the various committees allowing participation in the process contributed to negative experiences.

There are opportunities for people to get involved. This is, however, also experienced as negative because there are too many committees going nowhere, producing no results. My

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2. This reference to a relationship of trust includes both the existence or the lack of such a relationship.



perception is that people then start to withdraw, disengage from activities because they are physically, emotionally and psychologically tired.

In Soonja's opinion, the lack of results during the process had a negative impact on the participants' morale.

Soonja was furthermore of the opinion that they did not have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the transformation process as a whole. The absence of such an opportunity contributed to her negative experience of the process.

A negative side to the transformation process is that before we could benefit from the changes that took place, we were confronted with the financial problems of the University. It is actually a pity that the general financial management of the University dampened the new initiatives in the Faculty.

It may therefore be concluded that the concrete materialisation of results and/or benefits of the transformation process or the lack thereof played a role in Soonja's experience of the process.

#### 4.3.3.7 Management of the process

Apart from experiencing the process of transformation as too slow, Soonja was of the opinion that the process was not consultative enough.

There are efforts to engage in processes that are based on genuine consultation and participation. The average lecturer in the Faculty does not actually perceive that as being consultative, we don't necessarily experience a genuine consultative process.

Her experience of a lack of consultation can perhaps be understood in the context of her understanding of and expectations with respect to the appropriate style of management during the process of transformation. Although she acknowledged the efforts of consultation and participation it was clearly not substantial enough in her opinion. It seems as if her own understanding of consultative management seemed to be more progressive than what was practised in the organisation during the process of transformation.

In the course of the interview, Soonja reflected on an element which, in her opinion, could facilitate a transformation process. She felt that an effort should be made to communicate to employees what the benefits of the transformation process are or would be.

I think for a while, unless you can convince people of the need to change, you are not going to get people to change. People have to see that there are benefits in the change and that it is not change for the sake of change or change for some ideological, political reason.

Soonja remarked that, in her opinion, the transformation process involved a lot of bureaucracy.

There was a lot of bureaucracy involved in the transformation but maybe processes take a lot of time.

In a sense she expressed her concern about the lack of focus and determination in the management of the process to achieve the set objectives without unnecessary delay.

#### 4.3.3.8 Sharing of experiences

Soonja was of the opinion that there was a difference or gap between management's and employees' experiences and perception of the transformation process.



I think there is a gap in how the transformation process is perceived by management and how it is actually experienced by the people. I think management refuse to accept the experiences of the people.

Although the particular nature of the difference or gap was not explored, it may be deduced from the statement that Soonja experienced that management disregarded people's experiences. She did not explicitly describe it as a negative element of the process but it may be deduced from her statement that she felt it was probably a failure on management's side. However, to a question about the particular experiences of her own colleagues, Soonja responded:

It is difficult, I am realising that I haven't spoken to my colleagues enough about it. I must admit that it sounds ridiculous, but although I work closely with many of my colleagues, I suppose I don't socialise with my colleagues to any great extent. Which, I suppose, in itself says something that we haven't actually sat down in our departments or in our groups and actually talked about it — maybe we should.

It is quite significant that although Soonja had a general awareness of colleagues' experiences of the process and although she sensed a gap between people's experiences and management's perception, this was actually never openly discussed or explored between her and her close colleagues. The question arises as to what extent employees' experiences were disregarded by management and/or to what extent people's experiences of the process were simply not a topic of discussion in the organisation on the whole; not even between close colleagues.

#### 4.3.3.9 Intrapersonal dimension

##### (a) Macro perspective of the organisation's situatedness in an external environment

From the discussion of Soonja's opinion about the necessity for the organisation to transform, it may be deduced that, for various reasons, Soonja had an awareness of the imbeddedness of the organisation in the broader socio-political context. She also had the understanding that the organisation had to respond to changes in the external environment, that the organisation had to be in harmony with the external environment. For this reason, she understood transformation and expected transformation in the organisation to reflect the changes of the broader external context. This particular external sensitivity or macro perspective probably contributed to her assessment and experience of the transformation process not only in terms of her immediate, personal situation and the internal fine-tuning of the organisation, but also in terms of the organisation's response to the changes in and demands of the external environment.

##### (b) Commitment to the organisation

Soonja's active participation in the process of transformation, advocating for change and the measures she took to prepare herself for the envisaged process demonstrated her commitment to the organisation and the successful completion of the process. It may further be argued that she involved herself in these activities because she felt responsible for the organisation and the process. This intrapersonal dimension probably facilitated her participation in the process of transformation despite her disappointment with the nature and extent of the process.

A summary of Soonja's experiences of the process of transformation is provided below.



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- Soonja utilised the opportunities that were created to participate in the process. She felt that she contributed to the process in two ways, by supporting positive developments but also by being critical and querying things she disagreed about.
  - The loss of her previous support group resulted in her feelings of isolation. This was one of her most negative experiences of the process.
  - The opportunity to create new course material, which she initially experienced as exciting and challenging, changed into an extremely negative experience due to the fact that the responsibility for the outcome was taken away.
  - She felt that one of the positive aspects of the process was the fact that it forced her and her colleagues to re-evaluate their personal situation in the organisation, the products and the role and function of the organisation as such.
  - Soonja indicated that although people experience the opportunities to participate in the process positively, the lack of visible progress or success changed them into real negative experiences. In her opinion, the organisation at large did not have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of their hard work.
  - Soonja felt that the management of the process should have been more consultative in nature. Furthermore, bureaucracy seemed to slow the process down.
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#### **4.3.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations**

##### **4.3.4.1 The nature of a transformation process**

###### **(a) Meanings of the concept "transformation"**

It was discussed in the analysis of the previous interview that Stephan was concerned about the diverse meanings of the concept transformation. From the discussion of Soonja's experiences it is quite clear that she had a rather broad or encompassing understanding of the concept which definitely differed from Stephan's understanding or meaning of the concept. Apart from changes to course material, subjects and organisational structuring, Soonja understood transformation as also including changes to the staff composition, style of management and composition of the management committee.

Soonja furthermore clearly articulated that she had particular expectations of the process, which probably determined her experience of the process as well as her assessment of the success or the outcome of the transformation process.

###### **(b) Informal support systems and physical proximity**

Soonja's reference to the impact of the physical relocation of her colleagues on her relationship with them, is quite significant. This experience leads to the understanding that a special kind of relationship develops among colleagues in a particular physical proximity<sup>3</sup>. As Soonja described

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3. There may be several reasons for the development of this relationship. In the first place, it may be assumed that people are grouped together in a unit or department, which implies a common objective or interest as defined by the activities happening in the unit. In the second place, these relationships can develop as a result of the frequency of interaction and simply because of the physical proximity which involuntarily leads to frequent face-to-face interaction or contact. It can also develop as a combination of both. However, the issue here is not the reasons for the establishment of these relationships, but simply the notion or fact that these relationships do exist.



it, these colleagues functioned as a support group for one another. However, the physical move of colleagues had a detrimental effect on this relationship and the support function of the group. The mere lack of physical nearness, the lack of a shared common environment, caused the experience of distance in terms of the relationship. If this were a more common experience, it could imply that the physical relocation of people during a transformation process has a detrimental effect on the informal network and support system in the organisation. This could probably be a significant dimension influencing people's experiences and their emotional well-being during the process.

(c) Sharing of experiences

From this interview it was deduced that experiences of the transformation process were not necessarily a point of discussion during the process - not even amongst close colleagues in Soonja's case. The question is to what extent experiences are recognised and dealt with in an organisation at all during a transformation process. To what extent is this dimension deliberately overlooked, or considered to be outside the domain of the work environment and the concern of the employer.





#### 4.4 Participant 4: Anja (fictitious name)

##### 4.4.1 Description and experience of the current, post-transformation period/situation

###### 4.4.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

The transformation process resulted in several measurable changes for Anja. She had to move to a new office, a new department (administrative and managerial) and her immediate colleagues changed significantly. The most critical change involved a redirection in her professional area of speciality to an area she used to be involved in before she joined the organisation. This change resulted in new courses while the course content of previous courses also changed.

###### 4.4.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general

As indicated above, Anja experienced many changes as a result of the transformation process. Despite the many and even dramatic changes, Anja described her general experience of the process as more positive than negative.

Ek dink ek het die transformasie baie positief ervaar, dit was vir my meer positief as negatief. Dit is iets wat lankal moes gebeur het.

###### 4.4.1.3 Experience of current work situation

Anja said that she had to change with respect to her field of speciality. It was this redirection in particular that contributed to her satisfaction with her personal work situation.

Met die nuwe kursusse was daar openinge, behoefte aan mense wat help met die bepaalde vak. Baie persone van die kursus het weggegaan en ek het weer teruggeskuif. Wat dit aanbetref, was dit vir my baie aangenaam; dit is iets wat vir my baie na aan die hart lê. Dit is natuurlik nou nuwe terminologie met die nuutste: "learners with barriers to learning". Dit is eintlik my eerste liefde. Dit is vir my uitdagend en ek geniet dit; ek kan nie een oomblik daaroor kla nie.

It is clear from the above that Anja derived pleasure from her professional activities, which were in an area which was very close and dear to her and furthermore provided her with an intellectual challenge. It is thus evident that her level of job satisfaction had not been negatively affected by the transformation. In fact, it seems as if her level of job satisfaction increased as a result of the changes that took place.

Contrary to her satisfaction with the new area of speciality, Anja was perturbed by the fact that she was allocated to a department (organisational structure) that had little relevance to her actual work activities. She experienced this as problematic because she felt that the professional identity she communicated to the outside world was skewed by her association with a department with which she had nothing in common.

Wat vir my 'n probleem is, is die feit dat ek binne (...) onderwysersopleiding is en ek het eintlik geen betrokkenheid daarby nie. Ek het dit ook vir die departementshoof gesê en 'n brief vir die Dekaan geskryf. Ek moet dit nou op my visitekaartjie sit. Ek sê vir die buitewereld ek weet iets daarvan af en dit is vir my 'n verleentheid omdat ek in iets anders werk. Ek verstaan dat dit om administratiewe redes gedoen is, maar dit is vir my en Unisa 'n verleentheid.



This experience of Anja's indicates that a dimension of professional identity involves the communication and presentation of the profession to the external environment. Although Anja felt positive and satisfied with her personal work activities in the post-transformation period, she felt that her professional identity was incorrectly portrayed to the outside world because of her association with the particular structure in the organisation.

A summary of Anja's experiences of the post-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- The transformation resulted in definite measurable and even drastic changes in Anja's professional life.
  - Her general experience of the transformation process was very positive and as something that should have happened long ago.
  - Anja described her post-transformation work situation as very satisfactory. She seems to experience a higher level of job satisfaction than prior to the transformation.
  - She felt that her professional identity was hampered/negatively affected due to her association with an organisational structure with which she had very little in common.
- 

#### **4.4.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)**

In the course of the interview, Anja discussed her opinion regarding the need for the organisation to transform as well as the origin of the impetus for the decision to transform. These aspects are discussed below.

##### **4.4.2.1 The need for transformation**

With respect to the need for the organisation to transform, Anja stated:

Ek dink die onderwyssituasie in die land het ons almal meer en meer laat besef hier is geweldige tekorte en geweldige agterstande en ons moet dit aanspreek. Ek dink dit was regtig die hoofrede. Almal het besef ons sit hier, ons is besig met onderwysersopleiding en met verdere opleiding en ons sit met 'n probleem — dit was ons uitgangspunt, die probleem wat ons moet aanspreek.

This statement reflects the fact that Anja had a clear intellectual understanding of the need for the organisation to transform. This statement also demonstrates her awareness of and sensitivity to the external environment in which the organisation had to operate. According to her own assessment of the clients' needs and the external environment, the conditions and demands had changed and therefore the organisation had to change to be able to meet these demands.

##### **4.4.2.2 The impetus for the transformation**

Anja experienced the impetus for the transformation process as originating from an internal organisational conviction for change.

Ek dink die onderwyssituasie in die land het ons almal meer en meer laat besef hier is geweldige tekorte en geweldige agterstande en ons moet dit aanspreek. Ek dink dit was regtig



die hoofrede. Almal het besef ons sit hier, **ons** is besig met onderwysersopleiding en met verdere opleiding en **ons** sit met 'n probleem — dit was **ons** uitgangspunt, die probleem wat **ons** moet aanspreek.

The significant aspect of this remark is the way in which Anja identified with the organisation in referring to the problem and the decision to transform. Her referrals to “**we** had a problem ... that **we** had to address” (researcher’s emphasis) communicated her realisation as member of the organisation that they had to transform to respond to the external environment. From this statement it may be deduced that Anja experienced the impetus for the transformation as originating from inside the organisation and also from her own conviction as member of the organisation in response to conditions in the external environment. It seems as if Anja felt herself to be co-responsible for the decision to transform.

It may be argued that Anja’s intellectual understanding of the need to transform and her feelings of co-responsibility for taking and agreeing with this decision facilitated a general experience of the transformation process.

Anja’s experiences and opinion about the decision to transform and the impetus for the decision are summarised below.

- 
- Anja had a clear intellectual understanding of the need for the organisation to transform.
  - Her intellectual understanding resulted from (1) her awareness of the demands made on the organisation by the external environment, and (2) a personal conviction that the organisation had to respond.
  - In her opinion, the impetus for the transformation developed from within the organisation in response to external challenges.
  - She experienced herself as being co-responsible for the decision to transform.
- 

#### **4.4.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation**

This section deals essentially with the process of transforming the organisation. The participant was asked to discuss and describe positive and negative experiences and to explain why they were experienced in that way. She was also asked to clarify her motivation for participating in and/or resisting the process (if applicable). These experiences and motivations are discussed below with respect to themes or dimensions covered during the interview.

##### **4.4.3.1 New opportunities and challenges**

As a result of the process, Anja had to develop new course material in a subject area she found exciting and challenging.

Die nuwe kursusse wat ek aanbied, is vir my uitdagend en ek geniet dit ... Dit is interessant en dis nuut. Ek kan self kursusse skryf. In ander kursusse wat ek aangebied het, was daar soms boeke voorgeskryf waarmee ek nie saamgestem het nie maar ek moes dit gebruik. Dit is baie lekker om kursusse self te ontwikkel.



She experienced this task as an opportunity to be intellectually creative and develop something new. Apart from the challenge to be creative, it seemed as if Anja experienced the opportunity to determine the course material herself and develop it according to her satisfaction and standards as the rewarding aspect of the development process. This opportunity to have responsibility for the development of something new contributed to Anja's positive experience of the process of transformation.

#### 4.4.3.2 Representative employee profile

Anja felt particularly positive about the changes with respect to the increased participation of women in the various committees in the organisation.

In die onderhoude wat ek gehad het verlede jaar was daar vir die eerste keer dames op die keurkomitee. In al die ander onderhoude was dit net mans met swart pakke. Dit is geweldig intimiderend al die donker pakke. Verlede jaar het ek vir die eerste keer gevoel dit is wonderlik want daar was iemand van die vakbond, iemand van die transformasieforum, dames — dit was anders. Ek het vir die eerste keer gevoel dit is oop, eerlik en dit is 'n "fair deal".

It is clear from the above that Anja felt uncomfortable with and intimidated by the previous homogeneous, male-dominated profile of the organisational committees. The process of transformation resulted in a changed perspective on the composition of committees and opened it up to participation of all employees. It is quite significant that the more diverse profile of especially the selection committee (responsible for promotions) and the representation of her own gender on this committee led to her experience of this process as transparent and honest for the first time. It may be argued that this more heterogeneous representative committee contributed to a feeling of "being part" of the organisation.

Anja furthermore expressed her satisfaction with the appointment of colleagues from other racial groups.

Ek is ook baie bly oor die transformasie in die opsig dat ons swart en Indiër kollegas ingekry het, want dit is hoe ons studente lyk. Feitlik 85% van ons studente is Swart. Ons skryf wat in hulle skole aangaan. Dit maak dit makliker.

She felt that the new appointments contributed to a better reflection of the profile of their clients and could therefore enhance the organisation's ability to deal with the clients' needs.

#### 4.4.3.3 Empowerment of employees

Anja experienced the process of transformation as an empowering exercise especially for the women.

'n Ander positiewe aspek is dat ons vrouens geleer het om onself te handhaaf wat baie goed was. Ek het agtergekom dat vrouens hulle monde kan oopmaak. Ons het binne (die vorige vakgebied) ons monde oopgemaak, ons was nie so vreeslik vasgepen nie. Ons het gepraat. Die mense moes hulself bewys het binne breër vakgebiede. Met die oorkom na die nuwe departement moes jy jou man kon staan en ek dink ons het dit reggekry. Ek dink in 'n mate het hulle geleer om hulle man te staan. Dit is belangrik om jou sê te sê maar om terselfertyd ook positief te wees. Dit is vir my baie prominent dat vrouens sterker navore gekom het.

Anja's reference to the necessity for employees to stand their ground leads to the deduction that during this process of transformation employees had to re-negotiate for a place in the new organisational set-up. The particular equilibrium of the previous system was distorted and there-



fore everybody had to reclaim a new position or standing in the new system. To Anja, the significance of this evolvement was that women actually stood their ground in this process. According to her experience, this resulted in women succeeding in playing a more prominent role in the organisation than previously. This empowerment of women contributed to one of Anja's most positive experiences of the process.

Based on this particular experience, the question is to what extent the process of transformation required women to fulfil a more prominent role in the organisation or to what extent the process allowed them to be more prominent because of the distortion of the previous authority structures and procedures or perhaps of the acceptance of a different paradigm.

#### 4.4.3.4 Re-assessment of existing activities and products

The re-evaluation and re-assessment of existing products (course material) and approaches with respect to relevance and appropriateness to clients' needs, contributed to Anja's positive experience of the transformation process.

Ek dink ons is nogal gedwing om van ons vakinhoude aan te pas vir die huidige situasie en daarvoor is die meeste van ons baie opgewonde. In plaas van om die afstand te hê vanaf die Universiteit en die mense daar onder is ons nader. Ek dink ons leer om die onderwysbehoefes wat daar in die land is, meer aan te spreek. As ons kursusse vir onderwysers opstel, gee ons erkenning aan wat hulle gedoen het. Die feit dat ons hulle vorige ervaring, opleiding en kennis erken, dit is eintlik wat ons lankal moes gedoen het. Ek dink die inhoude is ook beter, die inbring van Afrika-inhoude om dit nie so geweldig te verwesters nie.

This statement once again demonstrated her awareness of the external environment and the need for the organisation to take cognisance of changes in this environment and to remain relevant to this environment and to address the clients' needs. In her opinion, the process of transformation caused a re-evaluation of existing products and processes, which she experienced as a positive and productive exercise. She expressed her satisfaction with the new, adjusted course material which, according to her, should have been done long ago.

#### 4.4.3.5 Workload

Anja was fairly outspoken about the fact that the process of transformation generated a tremendous amount of work which she regarded as a definite negative aspect of the process. The usual day-to-day activities and usual course work had to continue while the new course material had to be developed and people had to participate in the process. To the question of what she experienced as negative, Anja replied:

Die geweldige werkslading. Dit het beteken dat ons ou kursusse steeds moes voortgaan en aan die ander kant nuwe kursusse skryf. Niemand het daarmee gehelp nie, ons moes dit self doen. Die afgelope twee jaar het ons regtig hard gewerk. Sommige mense het ongelooflik baie vermag, mens kan dit nie glo nie. Ek dink dit is maar ook in die gees van die negatiewe houding wat partykeer oor mens gekom het omdat jy oorwerk is. Hier is party mense wat regtig baie oorwerk is.

According to Anja, the extent of the work load sometimes resulted in a spirit of negativity during the process. Irrespective of her agreement with the necessity to change and the organisation's new philosophy, she found that the workload influenced her attitude towards the process. One could argue that such a heavy workload consumes a lot of emotional and intellectual energy, leaving little reserves for dealing with all the issues involved in such a process.



Apart from a heavy workload, Anja also felt negative about the fact that it was not evenly distributed. While she had difficulty in managing all her responsibilities, she observed that other colleagues apparently had very little with which to occupy themselves.

lets saam daarmee is dat party ouens se lading nie so groot was nie — party mense is oorlaai, maar ander het ligter daarvan afgekóm. Hoe gebeur dit? Party mense is in 'n klein vakgebied opgelei, baie gespesialiseerd en het nie iets anders om aan te bied nie, wat nie kon oorskuif na 'n ander fokusgebied toe nie. Saam met die baie werk het ons dit baie keer ervaar dat jy jou oor 'n mik werk en 'n ander sit die koerant en lees. Dit het nie baie gebeur nie, maar dit het tog gebeur.

Anja experienced the heavy workload as one of the difficult aspects of the process, which at times affected her attitude negatively towards the process. The difficulty of the heavy workload was further intensified by the fact that not all colleagues contributed equally diligently.

#### 4.4.3.6 Interpersonal relationships

In Anja's opinion, the physical move had a detrimental effect on the established interpersonal relationships that had developed over years.

'n Ander ding wat ons baie sleg getref het, was die skuif uit jou ou kantoor, weg van kollegas wat lank langs jou gesit het vir jare en met wie jy goeie bande opgebou het, weg van jou ondersteuningstelsel af.

According to Anja, she had close relationships with the colleagues who used to be in physical proximity to her. These colleagues were also her support group. The relocation to a new physical environment affected these relationships negatively and removed her from her support group. For her, this was a definite negative result of the transformation process.

In a very sensitive and polite manner Anja referred to the uneven distribution of the workload as causing tension in the relationships amongst colleagues. She was of the opinion that the uneven workload was the result of some colleagues being so specialised in a particular area that they could not apply their skills in any other field. They could therefore not contribute to the development of products in any other area in the organisation. She found them having limited applicability. When asked how it happened, she replied:

Party mense is in 'n klein vakgebied opgelei, baie gespesialiseerd en het nie iets anders om aan te bied nie, wat nie kon oorskuif na 'n ander fokusgebied toe nie.

Although Anja was very polite in her comments about colleagues, it is possible to deduce from this statement that she felt some hostility towards colleagues who did not have the appropriate skills to contribute towards the development of new products and processes for the transformed organisation. She did not explicitly mention that, but it could be argued that this uneven distribution of work and especially the reasons for that, namely the inappropriate skills of some colleagues (in her opinion), affected her relationship with these people.

#### 4.4.3.7 Loss of security

Becoming part of a newly established functional unit initially caused Anja to feel insecure and sometimes negative because of the lack of a shared, common understanding of how the usual



day-to-day activities had to be done.<sup>4</sup> According to Anja, people continued with their habits as practised in the various departments of the old system until they formally agreed to establish a new, commonly acceptable system for the new functional unit that would guide the practicalities and daily activities in the unit.

Vir 'n tyd lank is daar voortgegaan soos dit in die ou departement was todat gesê is ons begin heeltemal van voor af en hierdie departement het nou 'n nuwe stelsel en 'n nuwe karakter. Ek sou dink mense het dit nuut ervaar, ons het nie geweet hoe dit werk nie, byvoorbeeld die koek en tee elke maand, soos waar kry jy jou briewe. Dit het niks te doen met ons werk as sulks nie, meer met die opset. En todat ons dit op 'n vergadering bespreek het en ons besluit het om oor te begin en dit te maak soos wat almal dit wil hê. 'n Nuwe departement het ontstaan maar die manier van doen was nog steeds die van die ou departement — dit is negatief deur die nuwe personelede in die departement ervaar todat ook "die manier van doen" gewysig is. Dit het gemaak dat ons baie keer onseker was todat dit oopgekrap is.

#### 4.4.3.8 Management of the process

Anja had definite negative feelings about the way in which people were allocated to the new departments. Apart from her discontent with her inappropriate allocation to a department with which she had very little in common, she was dissatisfied with the lack of consultation during the decision-making process. She felt treated as an object by the organisation and therefore experienced it as a very cruel decision. She objected in writing against the decision, but it remained unchanged.

Een ding wat baie sterk uitgekome het, is toe ons in die departemente in geskuif is. Dit is glad nie onderhandel nie, ek het gedink dit is baie swak. Persone is eintlik soos 'n pion geskuif. Daaroor was baie mense ongelukkig: die feit dat mense net geskuif is. Die feit dat ek verskuif is sonder dat mens eintlik enige sê daaroor gehad het. Ek het dit ervaar as 'n geweldige harde besluit. Dit moes sagter hanteer word. Mense is nie genoegsaam gekonsulteer in hierdie besluit nie.

Although Anja experienced the physical move to another office also as negative, she did not have negative feelings about the decision making process. The fact that she was consulted made a difference in how she experienced and accepted the outcome of the process.

Die fisiese verskuiwing was vir my ook baie sleg. Ons is gekonsulteer oor wat ons dink en dit was vir my baie goed.

These two experiences of Anja with respect to how the process was managed lead to the deduction that consultation or the lack thereof in decision-making, plays a role in shaping employees' experience of the transformation process. It seems that participation in decision making during the process of transformation can facilitate the acceptance of the outcome of the process, particularly if the outcome is less favourable for the individual than expected.

#### 4.4.3.9 Participation in the process of transformation

Anja participated actively in the process of transformation because she felt it provided the opportunity to become more relevant and to help meet clients' needs.

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4. The concept of culture is used in this context while it carries a much deeper and complex meaning than what is referred to in this particular discussion. Culture has more to do with the tacit assumptions in the organisation and refers to the underlying value system in an organisation. In this discussion reference is made to practicalities in the general set-up of a structural unit and not the value system that guides behaviour.



Transformasie het die geleentheid gebied om meer relevant te word en probleme van die onderwysgemeenskap aan te spreek.

She participated by supporting the process and by commenting on issues which she disagreed with.

As iets nie vir my reg is nie, dan sal ek dit sê.

She even protested formally against her allocation to a particular department by writing a letter to the Dean of the Faculty.

Ek het dit vir die departementshoof gesê en 'n brief vir die Dekaan geskryf.

It may be deduced that Anja experienced herself as having the freedom and the opportunity to participate in the process. In her situation, freedom to participate also included the freedom to disagree with proposed changes.

When commenting on her participation in the process, Anja indicated that after her disappointing experience over her allocation to a new department, she consciously took the decision to remain positive.

Ek het op 'n stadium besluit, veral oor die skuiwery binne die departement, dat 'n mens nie negatief moet wees nie. Ek het besluit dat ander persone wat saam met my werk my nie as negatief moet ervaar nie. Ek het besluit om 'n positiewe klimaat te skep.

When asked why she took this decision, Anja replied:

Ek dink dit is deels my geaardheid — ek laat nie die lewe my onderkry nie en dit het my vreeslik ontstel dat sommige van my kollegas net negatief is. Ek het besluit ons moet 'n ander beeld uitstraal sodat ander mense nie se almal wat van Didaktiek af kom is moeilik nie. Ons is nogal ervaar as moeilik.

In the process Anja consciously took the decision to participate constructively and positively.

#### 4.4.3.10 Intrapersonal characteristics

##### (a) Macro perspective of transformation

Anja's agreement with the decision to transform and her satisfaction with the opportunity to tackle the needs of the broader society, demonstrates her awareness of the interrelatedness of the organisation and the external environment. She acknowledged that changes in the external environment necessitated changes within the organisation. This understanding of the relation between the organisation and the external environment perhaps facilitated Anja's understanding and experiences of the organisational transformation process.

A summary of the dimensions that elicited Anja's positive and/or negative experiences of the process of transformation is provided below.

- 
- Anja actively participated in the process. Her involvement included contributions as well as criticism if and when deemed necessary.
  - The process provided the opportunity for Anja to take responsibility for the development of new course material. This intellectual challenge contributed to





- her positive experience of the process.
- In her opinion, the more representative profile of committees in terms of women and racial group was a satisfactory outcome of the process.
  - Anja felt particularly positive about the more prominent role that women acquired during the process.
  - She experienced the critical re-evaluation of products, approaches and activities in the organisation during the process as productive and constructive.
  - As a result of the process her workload increased dramatically, which sometimes affected her attitude towards the transformation negatively. In addition, she found that colleagues did not contribute equally to the completion of tasks. Some managed to do very little while others (like she) had to carry a heavy work load.
  - Anja felt hostility towards those colleagues whose contributions and participation were limited because of their inability to apply their skills in a different or new area.
  - The move to another office physically removed her from colleagues with whom she had a very special and long-standing relationship. This was a definite negative aspect of the transformation.
  - Becoming part of a new department caused feelings of insecurity because of the initial lack of an agreed framework for directing and organising daily activities and habits within the department.
  - Anja felt particularly displeased and negative about the lack of consultation on the decision to move her to a department with which she had little in common. This intensified her negative experience of the actual decision.
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#### **4.4.4 Opinions and experiences referring to the nature of and the management of the transformation process and recommendations**

##### **4.4.4.1 The nature of a transformation process**

###### **(a) Unsettling the informal social hierarchies and power relationships of the old system**

In her reference to the more prominent role that women started playing during the process, Anja mentioned that people had to find themselves a new place in the new organisation.

Die mense moes hulself bewys het binne breër vakgebiede. Met die oorkom na die nuwe departement moes jy jou man kon staan en ek dink ons het dit reggekry.

As remarked, it seems that transformation in an organisation affects the particular informal social hierarchy and power relationships that existed in a previous system. It may be argued that the particular paradigm of the organisation, the structure and the way of doing things allow some employees (who support this or initiated it) to play a leading role or to have some position of authority in the system. The formal changes induced by a transformation process inevitably lead to changes in the informal processes, employee positions and relationships. Some employees may be in a stronger position than prior to the transformation while others may be in a less influential position than previously.

###### **(b) Allowing for the redefinition or re-negotiation of social positions**

Anja's reference to the stronger role of women during the process can be interpreted in two ways. First, it could mean that the nature of a transformation process is such that only those people that can endure and fight for a standing in the new organisation will come through the



process successfully. (*...met die oorkom moes jy jou man kon staan*). In other words, a transformation process requires (or forces) people to be more aggressive and forceful than usual. Secondly, because of the formal changes that took place (changed paradigm, management practices, structures, communication, etc) and the changes or disturbance of the power relationships and hierarchy, the opportunity is created for people to play a stronger role than previously. Stated differently, these people always had the ability to play a strong role but were inhibited or disempowered by the previous system.

#### 4.4.4.2 The management of a transformation process

##### (a) Consultation and participation in decision-making

Anja made it very clear that she objected to the lack of participation and consultation in some of the decisions of the transformation. The lack of consultation created an impression that the organisation regarded her as an object that could be moved around without consequence. This particular decision was the only one that Anja highlighted as a very cruel one despite other decisions that also affected her negatively. Participation in and/or consultation during the process of transformation (or the lack thereof) seems to play a significant role in influencing people's experience of the transformation process.



#### 4.5 Participant 5: Ute (fictitious name)

##### 4.5.1 Ute's description and experience of the current post-transformation situation

###### 4.5.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

Ute described the actual changes that resulted from the transformation as not affecting her too much. To her, the most significant change was the presentation of totally new courses and the adaptation of existing course material. She was allocated to a new department, and some of the old colleagues moved with while new people joined the department. She did not have to move to another office.

###### 4.5.1.2 General experience of the transformation process

Ute said that she was totally indifferent about the transformation process. She did not pay much attention to the transformation-related activities and, apart from changes with respect to the courses, she was not affected by the transformation in any significant way.

Dit het my nie veel gepla nie, behalwe dat ons ons kursusse moes verander. Verder is ek taamlik gedistansieër van die hele storie. Al hierdie vergaderings wat gehou is, dit was nou maar dit en dit het my ook nie vreeslik gepla nie want ek het gevoel ek hoef nie myself te regverdig nie. Ek is vreeslik afgeskakel van al hierdie ander dinge. Ek voel altyd dit raak my nie, dit interesseer my nie. Ek het geen belewenis of 'n gevoel daaroor nie. Ek staan heeltemal indifferent daaroor. Jy weet, ek is nie geïnteresseerd in wat ander mense mee besig is en wat hulle storie is nie. Ek kan amper sê die Universiteit kan dalk brand dan sal ek dit nie eers weet nie.

She did not feel threatened by the process because of her belief in the value of her particular field of interest and speciality. She was disinterested in the process, did not involve herself emotionally but merely focused on her particular responsibilities.

###### 4.5.1.3 Current work situation in the post-transformation period

Ute found herself largely unaffected in the post-transformation period. The main reason for this was her continued involvement in her area of speciality.

Myne (my kursusse) is nog presies dieselfde. Dit is nie dieselfde wyse waarop die kursus gedoen word nie maar dit is nog steeds dieselfde vakrigting, dit is nog steeds probleme en ek hoef dit nie te regverdig nie. Dit bestaan en daardie kinders moet gehelp word... Ek het half gevoel of dit my nie raak nie omdat ek kursusse het wat ek aanbied en die Universiteit verwag nie van my om heeltemal iets anders te doen nie. Ek gaan aan met my werk, ek doen my werk met die hoop dat ek studente kan help.

As Ute indicated, she did not have to make any adjustments to her field of speciality. The fact that she could continue with her particular activities the way she had previously could be understood as a confirmation by the organisation of the value and validity of her work even in the changed situation. Because of her continuation with her previous activities, Ute did not experience any crisis with respect to her professional identity and did not have to make any adjustments in this respect. It may therefore be deduced that Ute's professional identity was in no way negatively affected by the process.



#### 4.5.1.4 Work satisfaction

With respect to her work situation in the post-transformation period, Ute stated that:

Ek is nie so baie gepla daarmee nie want, omdat ek voel my vakgebied is 'n vakgebied wat bestaan, ek hoef dit nie te regverdig nie. As 'n kind (iets nie kan doen nie, kan hy dit nie doen nie) en of jy dit nou deur middel van insluitingsbeleid of watter beleid nou ook al het, ek is baie min gepla met die beleid wat kom want vir my gaan dit daaroor om 'n kind wat 'n probleem het, te help...

Dit is nog steeds dieselfde vakrigting, dit is nog steeds leerprobleme en ek hoef dit nie te regverdig nie. Dit bestaan en daardie kinders moet gehelp word. Vir my gaan dit net oor hoe ek die beste vir my studente kan gee en dit is wat ek nog altyd probeer het.

It is clear that Ute felt strongly about the significance and value of her field of speciality. She felt that not even a changed paradigm or changed policy could decrease the value of these activities. Ute seemed particularly committed to her responsibilities and it could be deduced that the transformation process with all its implications, did not have any negative effect on her commitment to or execution of her professional activities. It seems valid to conclude that Ute was content with her professional situation and continued to experience work satisfaction as previously.

A summary of Ute's experience of the post-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- Due to the transformation Ute moved to a new department, experienced changes to her immediate colleagues, was given responsibility for new courses and adjusted the content of previous ones.
  - Ute indicated that she felt totally indifferent about the transformation process in general.
  - She continued with her professional activities in the same way she had prior to the transformation. Her professional identity and professional activities were largely unaffected by the process.
  - Due to her prolonged involvement in an area she enjoyed and felt strongly about in the post-transformation period, it may be deduced that Ute continued to experience job satisfaction as previously.
- 

#### 4.5.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)

Ute referred to the decision to transformation only in terms of her particular professional activities (academic courses and course content).

##### 4.5.2.1 The impetus for and the need to transform

Ute found that the course material she was responsible for was outdated and in need of change. She implemented several changes but had to stay within the approved syllabus.

Ek het al lankal gesê die kursusse is verouder. Ek het byvoorbeeld toe ek die kursus in 1993 oorgeneem het, reeds drastiese veranderinge aangebring, maar omdat ek binne die sillabus moes werk, kon ek nie te ver gaan nie.

For Ute, transformation referred to the content and approach of her immediate personal job activities only. The organisation's position was of little interest to her. To her, the process was



only relevant as far as it involved her personal job activities and in this respect she felt uncomfortable with the status quo and therefore felt a need to change.

Verder is ek taamlik gedistansieer van die hele storie... Met ander woorde dit gaan nie vir my persoonlik oor beleidsdruk of wat ook al nie. Dalk is dit die druk wat maak dat ander dit negatief beleef, maar vir my is dit nie so nie omdat ek net gevoel het die kursusse moet regtig verander en dit was nou die geleentheid om dit te verander.

It may therefore be deduced that Ute agreed intellectually with the need to change the products of the organisation. Because of her own uncomfortableness with the old products it can be argued that she felt that the impetus for changing these products came from her own personal conviction and was not forced upon her from any internal or external sources.

Ute's remarks about her indifference about the process demonstrated her lack of concern and interest in the transformation debate and its broader organisational implications. One possible clarification for her disinterest in this process is perhaps her conviction about the validity of her activities in any given context or paradigm and therefore she saw herself as "untouchable" by the transformation process.

Al hierdie vergaderings wat gehou is, dit was nou maar dit en dit het my nie vreeslik gepla nie want ek het gevoel ek hoef nie myself te regverdig nie.

#### 4.5.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation

Issues that Ute referred to during the interview, revolved around (1) new opportunities provided by the process, (2) workload, and (3) her experiences of interpersonal relationships. She also made some comments with respect to her personality. These themes are discussed below.

##### 4.5.3.1 New opportunity

Ute saw the transformation as an opportunity to change and adapt the products she was responsible for and with which she had felt uncomfortable for some time. The process allowed her the freedom to do something new and different and to her own satisfaction, which had not been possible prior to the transformation.

Maar toe ek met die nuwe kursus begin het, kon ek doen wat ek in die ander kursus nie kon nie. Dit het my die geleentheid gebied om 'n nuwe kursus te ontwikkel.

This opportunity to develop something new and possibly more appropriate seemed to be the most dominant aspect of Ute's experience of the process.

##### 4.5.3.2 Workload

A definite negative side to the development of new products was the heavy workload this created. Ute felt positive about the development of new products but, in her opinion, this had to be done in too short a time which resulted in a heavy workload and perhaps in a product of lesser quality. She felt that this aspect should have been planned better.

Dit het my die geleentheid gebied om 'n nuwe kursus te ontwikkel maar die jammerte van die hele storie is net dit dat dit onder soveel druk gedoen is... ons moes alles vreeslik gou klaarmaak.

Behalwe dat dit vir my in 'n bietjie te kort tyd was om die produk te lewer. Te midde van die ou werksdruk, moes jy probeer om 'n nuwe kursus te skryf met die gevolg ek het 'n bietjie bedenkinge oor die kwaliteit van die skryfwerk. Dit kon dalk fyner deurdaag gewees het.



Apart from the time pressure, the process resulted in an increased workload because the new products had to be developed amidst the performance of the usual organisational activities.

Waar ek aanvanklik twee kursusse gehad het, het ek nou agt. Dit moet ek sê, jy word vreeslik oorlaai op die oomblik. Of jy nou 80 studente het of 1, al die administrasie moet gedoen word. Ek sit werklik dag en nag en werk. Nuwe kursusse moet ingefaseer word, oues moet uitgefaseer word terwyl 'n klomp (8) van die ou personeel nie meer hier is nie.

#### 4.5.3.3 Interpersonal relationships

Ute did not refer to any changes or adaptation with respect to relationships with colleagues. She made no reference to the “loss” of previous colleagues or a support group nor to the gain of new colleagues. Her attitude towards relationship with other people was explained by the following comment:

Ek steur my te min aan die mense. Ek is nie 'n mens-geïntereerde mens nie. Jy weet, ek is nie geïnteresseerd in wat ander mense mee besig is en wat hulle storie is nie.

The only aspect Ute mentioned as something that concerned her and caused some negative feelings was the allocation of colleagues to interest fields in which they were not necessarily trained. During the process of transformation some of the interest fields or specialist areas were phased out or integrated with other areas. This resulted in the reallocation of the employees concerned to new subject areas. In some instances these employees had to be retrained in the new interest fields. For Ute, this was somewhat problematic and caused concern and negative feelings.

Nee, wat ek wel voel wat my so 'n flentertjie pla, is die feit, maar ek weet nou nie of dit met transformasie te doen het nie — ek wonder somtyds 'n bietjie, die mense wat nou intree in hierdie vakke en moet begin deelneem daaraan, dit is dalk vir my sleg. Maar dit het nie met transformasie te doen nie, dat ek nie altyd seker is dat daardie mense werklik weet waaroor dit gaan nie. Maar dit raak nie my vakgebied nie. Dit is maar meer die basiese kursusse dat ek wonder in watter mate is die mense werklik onderlê.

Although the reallocation or redeployment of people in new specialist areas did not affect Ute personally, she expressed her concern and doubts about the wisdom of this decision. Ute seemed skeptic about the ability of colleagues to perform in areas in which they were not necessarily trained. It may be argued that the redeployment of some of the employees affected Ute's relationships with these people in the sense that she did not trust their academic proficiency (as previously) and felt skeptic about their ability to contribute and produce work of quality.

#### 4.5.3.4 Intrapersonal dimension

##### (a) Orientation to other people

Ute explicitly described herself as someone who is not people-orientated. This explains her disinterest in what and how other people experienced the process and also clarifies the fact that she did not experience the process as emotionally taxing.

Ek is nie 'n mens-geïntereerde mens nie. Ek praat so bietjie met my ou kollegas maar ek is nie 'n mens wat probeer uitvis wie beleef dit negatief en wie sê wat nie.



(b) Micro perspective on work activities

Ute experienced the transformation process only in terms of its relevance to her personal work activities. As mentioned already, Ute had no interest in the broader organisational issues or colleagues' activities and concerns. This particular attitude is referred to here as a micro perspective on transformation. It may be argued that because the transformation process did not disrupt her personal work activities and because of her micro perspective on the transformation, she did not experience the process as traumatic.

A summary of Ute's experiences of the process of transformation is provided below.

- 
- The transformation process provided Ute with the opportunity to develop new course material to her satisfaction. She regarded this development as the most important positive aspect of the process.
  - The process resulted in a heavy workload for Ute: she had to develop new material amidst her usual responsibilities. Due to the short time span in which products had to be developed, Ute had some doubts about their quality.
  - Ute indicated that she is not really interested in other people and was therefore not affected by the change of colleagues.
  - Ute expressed her concern about the ability of redeployed colleagues to contribute in an area in which they had no professional training.
  - Her concern with her own professional activities only leads to the deduction that Ute had a very limited or micro perspective on or concern for the transformation process.
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#### **4.5.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations**

##### **4.5.4.1 Nature of a transformation process**

(a) Workload

Transformation in an organisation seems to imply an increase in the workload. This increased workload in itself can be challenging and responsible for creating stressful working conditions. In Anja's case, it sometimes caused her to experience the transformation as negative despite her agreement with the necessity for the change. It may thus be argued that the increased workload resulting from such a process can, in itself, have a significant physical and emotional impact on employees, irrespective of their particular attitude towards the process. The increased workload can thus in itself elicit negative experiences of a transformation process.

(b) Impact of personnel redeployment on interpersonal relationships

Both Ute and Anja referred to the role of colleagues whose specialist areas no longer formed part of the organisation's new focus. Anja felt that because of the non-applicability of their skills, these people could not contribute to the development of the new organisation. She found them being underutilised at a stage when she and fellow colleagues had to carry a heavy workload. Ute, on the other hand, expressed her concern about the ability of these people to perform in a new specialist area in which they had little formal training or experience. From these



experiences it may be deduced that the reallocation of employees to new specialist areas created elements of tension and discomfort in the relationships between the two groups of employees. It seems as if employees who had to be redeployed were viewed with skepticism.





## 4.6 Participant 6: Heike (fictitious name)

### 4.6.1 Description and experience of the current post-transformation situation

#### 4.6.1.1 Measurable changes as result of the transformation

Heike retained responsibility for the courses she had presented prior to the transformation process and resumed responsibility for additional courses. She moved to a new department and therefore also a new head of department but she regarded this change as more ideal in comparison to other people.

So ek het nie wat sommige ander ouens gehad het wat hulle in 'n departement geplaas is waarin hulle geen vakke onderrig nie. So in daardie opsig was dit waarskynlik meer ideaal as in ander gevalle.

She had to move office and this resulted in losing close contact with colleagues in her physical proximity. Heike regarded this as the most drastic and traumatic change as a result of the transformation process. The lack of reference to her academic functions leads to the conclusion that this sphere of her professional life has been relatively undisturbed by the transformation.

#### 4.6.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general and the extent of the transformation specifically

Heike described her experience of the transformation process as fluid, changing from day to day.

Jy is ook nie elke dag dieselfde nie; dit is 'n baie vloeibare proses. Beleef elke dag verskillend.

However, from her discussion it may be deduced that she experienced the process more negatively than positively. In response to the question on positive aspects or experiences of the process, she remarked:

Ek moet baie hard dink.

In support of this deduction, Heike described only one aspect of the process as slightly positive (see phase 2 for discussion of interpersonal relationships).

Heike's main concern about the process was that she felt that transformation did not actually take place. She was of the opinion that it was more of a structural change, it progressed too slowly and she felt that more could have been achieved than what had actually materialised.

Ek wonder of dit 'n transformasie was of 'n struktuurverandering? Dit mag wees dat my verwagting, gegewe my agtergrond, vir meer was en is van jy moet alles van die tafel afvee en nuut begin... Ek het 'n ongeduld met die slakkepas van transformasie gehad. Ook omdat daar baie meer uit gemaak kon word.

She explained her disappointment with the outcome of the process by referring to her particular expectation and understanding of transformation. Heike understood transformation to be a radical change; to delete everything from the past and to start all over with something new. To her, it almost had a religious connotation in the sense that she compared it with a conversion experience. And in her experience of the process that did not happen.



Transformasie is soos bekering — en dit is 'n ding wat binne jou is. Bekering kom nie elke dag op 'n mens se pad nie, sommige mense kry dit nooit nie of nooit so dat hulle radikaal omkeer nie. Dit beteken vir my om van die tafel af te vee en met iets heeltemal nuuts te begin. Dit kan op verskillende maniere gedoen word, (a) inkrimenteel of (b) radikaal. My siening is dat dit soos 'n bekering is, dat alles radikaal anders is. Dit is waarskynlik 'n idealistiese siening in terme van om 'n organisasie te verander.

For Heike, the transformation of the organisation had more of a character of incremental change and did not comply with her expectations of a radical transformation or conversion. This incremental nature of the change was responsible for her lack of enthusiasm about the process and its outcome. In her reflection on the process, Heike admitted that her expectations were probably idealistic for the particular context. Despite her acknowledgement of her particular expectations, Heike doubted whether transformation had actually taken place.

#### 4.6.1.3 Experience of current work situation

Apart from her disappointment with the nature and extent of the transformation process, it seemed as if Heike's personal professional activities were relatively unaffected by the process. As indicated, she continued her involvement in her specialist area and was given responsibility for other courses as well. It was not necessary for her to acquire skills in a new specialist area. Heike's lack of reference to this sphere of her professional life, given the elaborate discussion of negative aspects of the process, leads to the deduction that her immediate work activities and her professional identity were not negatively affected by the process.

#### 4.6.1.4 Interpersonal relationships

Heike identified her physical move during the process of transformation and the resulting physical distance between her and her previous colleagues as the most negative outcome of the process.

Dit het meegebring dat ek geskuif het van die een punt van die gang na die ander punt en daardie effek was vir my waarskynlik soort van eintlik baie belangrik. Die intellektuele, akademiese verwydering van kollegas: Dit is my groot negatiewe ervaring van die proses.

The reason for discussing the physical move and the impact it had on her interpersonal relationships is that this dimension remained an issue for Heike even after the completion of the process. For her, the impact of the transformation on her relationships with colleagues had a lasting effect and impacted on her professional functioning in the post-transformation period.

The physical distance between Heike and her previous colleagues had a detrimental effect on her experience of group cohesion. According to Heike, many important academic and other discussions took place in an informal way as a result of the physical proximity of colleagues. The physical environment was shared with people who had similar interests. The move to another physical environment involuntarily cut these close and informal (relaxed) relationships with close colleagues. This resulted in Heike finding herself isolated and marginalised in the post-transformation period. Furthermore, she was of the opinion that the physical move did not only leave her marginalised and lonely without her close colleagues but also harmed the ability of the colleagues (and organisation) to function as a team.

Waar ek eers gesit het, was daar baie traffic gewees en mense het gekom en gegaan en jy het met hulle gesels. Jou kollegas wat jou belange gedeel het, het reg rondom jou gesit. Toe ek



geskuif het, is ek soort van, dit voel nou of ek gemarginaliseer is want al die kollegas wat op die traffic route was wat jy toevallig gesien het, is nie meer daar nie. Baie van die akademiese gesprekke vind toevallig plaas, jy besluit nie nou moet jy met iemand gaan praat nie. Jy loop iemand in die gang raak, of jy en nog iemand werk laat die middag en dan praat julle somer in die gang of oor 'n koppie tee oor iets wat julle in gemeen het, deel iets uit. Dis weg, dis weg. En dit is waarskynlik vir my die swaarste aanpassing. Die fisiese verskuiwing en die effek wat dit gehad het op my interaksie met kollegas met wie ek belange deel. Van my kollegas het ook getrek en ek sien hulle en ons praat nog maar daai groepskohesie is weg. Jy ontsien die moeite om somer net gou te gaan inloer om iets te gaan afgee. Jy druk dit maar in die pos as dit nie 'n belangrike ding is nie. Mens moet soveel meer effort insit om as 'n span saam te werk. En vir ons wie die core business is om onderrig te gee, kan dit nogal 'n effek hê.

It is quite clear from the above that Heike experienced this involuntary disruption of the relationships with colleagues as quite traumatic and lasting even after the completion of the transformation process.

A summary of Heike's experience of the post-transformation period follows below.

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- The transformation process resulted in substantial measurable changes for Heike. She had to move office, became part of a new organisational and management structure, assumed responsibility for new courses, and lost contact with her close colleagues.
  - Heike's experience of the process was changing and fluid but she generally experienced it as more negative than positive. She was disappointed with the incremental nature of the transformation and the lack of real change. She had expected and prepared herself for a radical transformation.
  - Apart from the difficulty in terms of collegial relationships, Heike's professional, day-to-day activities seemed to be unaffected by the process. The absence of references to this dimension of her work life leads to the deduction that her professional identity remained unaffected.
  - Heike experienced the loss of close contact with significant colleagues as a result of the physical move as the most negative outcome of the transformation. She felt isolated and indicated that the lack of the previous, informal contacts affected her professional functioning detrimentally.
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#### **4.6.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)**

To understand Heike's particular perception and experience of the organisation's decision to transform, it is necessary to understand her perception of the organisation prior to the transformation. Her references to the role of her personal background in shaping her opinion and expectations of the process identify this as an important dimension for understanding Heike's particular experience of the process in general. In this section attention is therefore given to her personal background, her perceptions of the organisation and then, finally, her perceptions of the organisation's decision to transform.

##### **4.6.2.1 Personal background and perception of the organisation**

With respect to her personal background, Heike stated the following:



Ek kom uit 'n ander agtergrond as Unisa, met geen opvoedkundie kwalifikasies by Unisa nie. Ek kom uit 'n ander provinsie en was in die tyd van die strugle by die Wes-Kaap Universiteit. Ek het by 'n klomp Universiteite gestudeer en ek was in die beginjare van die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit daar. Dosente is van oral oor daar aangestel met die gevolg dat daar nie 'n vaste paradigma bestaan het nie. Dit was vir my baie moeilik om aan te pas na Stellenbosch, in die opset en ook die politieke setup. Ook die manier hoe die skool en kerk bedryf was. In die Kaap kon ek sê wat ek wou, hier het die kerk oor my skouer geloer. Ek het net meer vryheid gehad om oor goed te dink. Dit was vir my baie moeilik om aan te pas by Unisa. Ek was gelukkig in die departement waarin ek was, waarin ek tog vryheid gehad het om te se wat jy wil. Maar tog die belewenis dat almal nie baie vry is om vry te wees nie. 'n Mens se eie opvoeding bepaal 'n sekere siening teenoor die lewe.

Her reference to being at the University of the Western Cape during the struggle leads to the deduction that Heike was exposed to an alternative socio-political paradigm or environment than the then prevailing paradigm. It could therefore be argued that Heike did not experience the socio-political changes in the external environment (society) as traumatic or as a threat, but rather as a necessary change. It may further be deduced that, owing to her previous work experience in several organisations, Heike was exposed to many different “work paradigms” and ways of doing things. One organisation in particular had room for the concomitant existence of various paradigms and employees were not confined to one particular paradigm. Previous work environments also allowed her the freedom of critical thinking. Although she experienced the freedom of thinking and speaking her mind in her pre-transformation unit (department), she was of the opinion that other employees in the organisation (in other units) did not experience the same freedom. In her experience therefore, people had to comply with the dominant thinking and ways of doing things in the organisation and did not have the freedom to think and do anything beyond.

Heike's particular perception and opinion of the socio-political situation of the country and her exposure to other work environments with varied paradigms and ways of doing things, made it difficult for her to adjust to the organisation in the pre-transformation period. She did not share the organisation's dominant paradigm and found it restrictive and even prescriptive. She also found the pre-transformation organisation homogeneous with respect to cultural grouping and the way of thinking.

Die oorwig van die mense wat by hierdie Fakulteit aangestel is as mens na die profiel kyk, personeelsamestellingsgewys, is waarskynlik oorwegend Afrikaanssprekende mense, omtrent 90%. Bepaalde mense met bepaalde sienings is aangestel omdat hulle inpas by die kultuur.

According to the demographical information on the organisation, it is true that it consists of a majority of Afrikaans speaking people. What is however, more significant about this remark, is Heike's perception that people were appointed who shared the dominant paradigm and would fit into that paradigm of the organisation. This leads to the deduction that Heike experienced the organisation as having very little room and opportunity for deviance from the one, approved or official paradigm.

With respect to the organisation's dominant paradigm, Heike felt that it was built on the prior conservative or exclusive socio-political paradigm of the broader society (external environment). In her opinion, the pre-transformation organisation (and the colleagues) uncritically accepted and modelled the philosophies of the external environment (previous socio-political situation). According to Heike, this resulted in the organisation having mono-cultural, mono-lingual, mono-



religious assumptions with a rather conservative socio-political orientation. She furthermore experienced the organisation as having little, if any, critical thinking and debate about the validity of these assumptions and actually discouraged people from doing so.

Mense was gewoon om op 'n bepaalde manier te kyk en te doen. Dit was "geentrenched" of "legislated comfort zones" wat deur die groter politieke bestel onderhou is. Dit was nie nodig om te dink nie.

Mense kom uit 'n bepaalde politieke agtergrond: hulle was gewoon om die dominante groep te wees. Dinge is gedoen soos wat hulle dit wou gehad het. Bepaalde goed rondom multi-kulturaliteit kan vir sommige mense 'n probleem wees wat glo daar is net een manier van doen. Tot onlangs is goed soos die Christelike godsdiens so beskerm en verskans in baie dinge wat gedoen is dat mense nie basies nodig gehad het om te dink oor ander godsdiens nie, of in terme van multi-linguïsmes, in terme van hoe akkommodeer jy meer as een taal.

#### 4.6.2.2 The need for transformation

Given Heike's diverse work experience, her particular socio-political orientation and her experience of the pre-transformation organisation as homogeneous and restrictive, it is clear that Heike thought it necessary for the organisation to transform. It seems as if she felt this need before the organisation even realised the necessity for transforming itself. Her particular previous work experience and exposure, her personal convictions raised the expectation of a radical transformation resulting in something new and different.

Dit mag wees dat my verwagting, gegewe my agtergrond, vir meer was en is van jy moet alles van die tafel afvee en nuut begin.

#### 4.6.2.3 The impetus for the transformation

Heike did not comment on where the impetus for the transformation originated, whether it happened as a result of external pressure or an internal organisational conviction. However, she was skeptic about the organisation's involvement in the initial assessment of the status of the organisation and the decisions with respect to the areas and direction of the transformation.

Ek het nie in die legitimiteit van die transformasieproses geglo nie en die aanbevelings. Hoekom was dit nie 'n onafhanklike ondersoek nie? Jy kan nie jouself van binne ondersoek nie. Ek het die legitimiteit van die aanbevelings bevraagteken.

Heike clearly felt that the organisation's participation in determining the direction of the transformation and in the management of the process was illegitimate. She therefore mistrusted the intentions of the organisation to transform. It is also possible that she mistrusted the ability of the organisation to transform itself, given her experience of the organisation as quite homogeneous, restrictive and providing little room, if any, for discussion and reflection of alternative ideas and ways of doing things. Thus, although Heike felt that the organisation had to transform and agreed with the organisation's decision to transform, she did not agree with how it decided to go about the transformation and even the direction that was chosen.

Ek het 'n alternatiewe transformasie voorgestel.

It may thus be concluded that although Heike agreed with the organisation's decision to transform, she disagreed right from the start with the particular direction and approach it took. This difference between Heike's opinion about the transformation and the direction the organisation actually took, to some extent determined Heike's participation in the process of transformation.



A summary of Heike's experiences of the pre-transformation period is provided below.

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- Due to her particular upbringing and exposure to different work environments, Heike experienced the pre-transformation organisation as having mono-cultural, mono-lingual, mono-religious assumptions with a conservative socio-political orientation. Little room existed for critical thinking and debate about this particular orientation. She found this dominant paradigm in the organisation restrictive and even prescriptive.
  - In her opinion, the organisation had no other way but to transform. She expected the transformation to be radical, resulting in something totally new.
  - Although Heike agreed with the organisation's decision to transform, she disagreed with the direction of the proposed change. She proposed and advocated an alternative process.
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#### 4.6.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation

Several dimensions in the process of transformation featured in Heike's particular experience.

##### 4.6.3.1 Participation in the process

Given the particular nature and direction of the transformation process initiated by the organisation, Heike found it difficult to contribute to the process positively. She described her participation in the process as constructive resistance: resisting the proposed transformation but suggesting or advocating an alternative.

Ek het 'n alternatiewe transformasie voorgestel. Daar was nie 'n geleentheid vir my om binne die transformasie proses 'n positiewe bydrae te lewer nie.

This she did by raising questions about suggested processes and decisions; by submitting alternative proposals and discussion documents and by starting additional discussion groups.

Ek het 'n ander tipe van weerstandrol gespeel in die sin van toe die kommissie van ondersoek aangestel is, het ek dit geweldig bevraagteken. Ek het wel vir hulle 'n memorandum deurgestuur met kritiese vrae oor mag en sulke goed... 'n Paar van ons was nie baie happy met wat hulle gedoen het nie. Ons het toe alternatiewe besprekingsdokumente op die tafel gesit. Ons het gevoel die proses is onbevredigend en het toe 'n eie stimulerende gespreksgroep gestig.

Heike remained involved in the process despite her disagreement with the direction of the transformation process. In addition to these actions during the process, Heike took the effort to inform herself about transformation per se and the management of such a process.

Ons het wyd gelees oor transformasie en bestuur en dit was baie stimulerend.

This can be seen as a demonstration of her commitment to the organisation and the successful completion of the process of transformation. It is also possible to argue that she prepared herself for the process because she felt responsible for the organisation and the outcome of the process. Given her skepticism about the organisation's management of the process it could also be argued that she read extensively because of her mistrust in the organisation and its ability to steer the process appropriately. These two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. However, it was not possible to obtain Heike's comment on this interpretation.



Although Heike consciously decided to resist the transformation in a constructive manner, she had doubts about the effect of such a role.

Jy weet nie altyd wat die effek van konstruktiewe weerstand gaan wees nie. Dit is moeilik om die effek te bepaal.

It is clear that she decided to continue her particular participation despite the uncertainties of such a direction. As mentioned, Heike was personally convinced of the necessity of the organisation to transform. Her particular participation was thus based on her personal conviction and she was prepared to take the risk of unpredictable constructive resistance.

The question is why Heike felt secure enough in the organisation to resist the process in such an active and overt manner. Various arguments may be put forward for her particular conduct. One argument is that management valued Heike specifically for her liberal or alternative opinion. She could have been the embodiment of a different way of thinking of which the pre-transformation organisation was incapable. Perhaps management saw in her an opportunity to stretch their own thinking, to expose them to ideas and opinions they were incapable of because of their particular way of thinking. Then, too, perhaps they could use her to portray a more liberal, progressive picture of the organisation to the external environment.

It is very difficult to establish the nature of the relationship but it seems valid to argue that the organisation (or management) valued her alternative or liberal opinion in the organisation (for whatever reason). The fact that they consulted her or used her as a sounding board in specific decisions contributed to this deduction. It may thus be argued that, although she stood outside the mainstream of the organisational paradigm, she had a particular position in the organisation as a critical thinker.

Die kommissie het my gesoek net as klankbord want hulle wou iets doen.

#### 4.6.3.2 Interpersonal relationships

According to Heike, the only positive aspect of the process of transformation was the opportunity it gave her to get to know people she did not work with in the pre-transformation period.

Ek moet baie hard dink. Dit was om sekere mense te leer ken wat ek nie vroeër mee saamgewerk het nie. Om hulle 'n bietjie beter te leer ken.

It seemed that this getting to know other people involved more than just acquainting herself with 'unfamiliar' people. According to Heike's experience of the pre-transformation period, little contact existed between people from different departments and especially between people from differing opinions and ways of doing things. This lack of contact (formal and/or informal) contributed to alienation and feelings of antagonism between people from different units and/or different opinions in the same organisation.

Daar was antagonisme teenoor mekaar omdat lede uit die verskillende departemente mekaar nie geken het nie. Daar was verskillende persepsies van mekaar op grond van verskillende maniere van doen wat waargeneem is in die departemente in die ou dae. En aan die einde van die gesprek het die persoon opgemerk: "Haai, nou haat ek jou nie meer nie." Ons het mekaar nie geken nie en daar was idees wat nie binne mense se verwysingsraamwerke bestaan het nie omdat hulle so gewoond was om maar net aan te gaan.



It seems that the process of transformation created an opportunity for people to interact with unfamiliar colleagues and to share opinions and ideas usually restricted to the smaller in-group or people who thought alike. Furthermore, the process contributed to the discovering colleagues of opposing ideas as “human” and perhaps less threatening and destructive. Although Heike did not explicitly highlight it during her interview, it may be deduced from the above statement that some of her colleagues viewed her with hostility in the pre-transformation period. However, due to discussions during the process she became less of an enemy to some of them.

To conclude, Heike felt that changes in the interpersonal relationships could be regarded as positive results of the process for three reasons: first she got to know previously unfamiliar colleagues; secondly she was of the opinion that the discussions during the process of transformation exposed colleagues to new ideas, and thirdly colleagues got to know her better and found her less of a threat than previously.

#### 4.6.3.3 Changing the way of doing things

She found the organisation to be more open and transparent during the process of transformation. In her opinion, more consultation of staff members took place while communication also improved. Employees, especially women, had greater freedom to speak their minds. To Heike, this was a semi-positive development.

Miskien is dit 'n semi-positiewe ding dat sekere dinge meer openlik plaasgevind het as van tevore. Sekere goed word meer geraadpleeg, daar word meer gekommunikeer... Mense wat uit outoritere departemente kom waar hulle nie openlik kon praat nie, het dit nou bevrydend gevind om te kan praat. Vrouens kom praat nou meer vrylik oor dinge.

However, this very move towards improved transparency and consultation was also the cause of negative experiences during the process. She felt that although there was an awareness of the necessity for transparency and consultation and indeed, a move towards that, people (management) still struggled with this new approach. In her opinion, the relevant people (managers/leaders) were not necessarily skilled in the new approach and therefore sometimes found it difficult to apply. This failure to apply or disregard for the new approach caused negative feelings.

Dit was miskien 'n werklike begeerte om meer transparant te wees maar omdat jy nooit daaraan blootgestel was voorheen nie, het van dit geboemerang. Dit is 'n mengsel van mense wat nie weet hoe om die culture van konsultasie en participative management te hanteer nie. Hulle se dit (nuwe kultuur) is goed maar doen dit nie altyd nie. In daardie opsig is dit dan negatief.

Acknowledgement of the necessity to be more transparent and more consultative but being unable (or unwilling) to follow this approach led to negative experiences of the process.

#### 4.6.3.4 Loss of security

In her opinion, the allocation of people to new departments resulted in feelings of insecurity. They were uncertain of what and how things had to be done in the new departments. People were used to different styles of management and their previous experiences and habits resulted in various and different expectations of the “what” and “how” of the new organisational units.





Dit was 'n positiewe belewenis wat ons van ons vorige departement gehad het en dit het tot gevolg gehad dat toe ons in die nuwe departemente ingekom het, het ons met verskillende style gesit. Mense het dan ook verskillende verwagtinge van die nuwe departementshoofde gehad — wat toegelaat gaan word en wat nie.

#### 4.6.3.5 Management of the process of transformation

##### (a) Lack of consultation

The implementation of new work activities (courses) necessitated the re-allocation of responsibilities to employees. This happened without employees' participation which Heike experienced very negatively. Work had been allocated to people without giving them the opportunity to participate in the decisions.

Maar die wyse waarop die werkverdeling gedoen is, is baie negatief ervaar en gedoen. Daar was nie konsultasie in die proses nie — die vol profs en mede-profs het oor die werk van mense besluit (die uitvoerende komitee van die ou departement).

It was not so much the re-allocation exercise that elicited the negative feelings but rather the lack of consultation during the process.

##### (b) Ownership of the process

Although Heike did not discuss this issue in particular detail, she was of the opinion that management was more concerned about having the right blueprint or plan of action than accommodating the employees in the process. She felt that management perceived the organisation as being constituted of structures and not people.

My opmerking aan die komitee was dat as julle nie die mense kan saamvat nie, as julle nie mense kan kry om ownership te vat nie, dan kan jy die strukture verander tot jy blou word. Maar 'n organisasie bestaan nie uit strukture nie. Mense dink as jy blueprints het, die planne het, dan kan jy werk.

Heike's concern about the involvement of people leads to the conclusion that she felt that management did not do enough to involve the people in the process and to allow or enable them to take ownership of the process. However, this aspect could not be discussed in more detail.

#### 4.6.3.6 Intrapersonal dimension

##### (a) Role of personal upbringing and previous exposure in the development of a life perspective

Heike said that her upbringing played a significant role in determining her particular perspective on life, the broader socio-political situation and the situation in the organisation.

Ek dink dit het te make met 'n bepaalde lewensbeskouing, bepaalde denkwyses en 'n manier om na die werklikheid te kyk... 'n Mens se opvoeding bepaal 'n sekere siening oor die lewe.

##### (b) Independent/critical thinking

Heike explained her critical assessment and evaluation of the process of transformation by sharing a personal characteristic.

Ek het nie uit gelid gesprink as ek nie 'n baie goeie rede gehad het nie. Ek kan myself daaromtrent baie goed verantwoord. Dit gaan nie vir my net om anders te wees ter wille van



anders wees of om snaaks te wees nie. Jy moet redes kan gee, jy moet behoorlike argumente kan uitmaak. Ek wou toegelaat wees om uit gelid te spring as ek myself kon verantwoord.

It may be argued that Heike had the ability (and a need) to think independently and critically. This presupposes a personal confidence in her own opinion and her ability to evaluate situations. Furthermore, it seems that Heike had little fear in communicating her opinion when she felt that she could justify her particular perspective, even if it contradicted the dominant opinion. This characteristic contributed to her critical evaluation of the proposed transformation process and her conscious decision to constructively resist the process.

(c) Ability to take risks

The fact that Heike maintained her position of constructive resistance, given the uncertainty of the outcome or effect of such a role, leads to the deduction that Heike had an ability to take risks on the strength of her personal convictions.

Jy weet nie altyd wat die effek van konstruktiewe weerstand gaan wees nie. Dit is moeilik om die effek te bepaal.

(d) Inclination to feel responsible for the process and the organisation

Heike's efforts to inform herself extensively about the issue of transformation and her involvement in the process may be interpreted as an inclination to feel responsible for the organisation and the outcome of the process.

A summary of her experiences of the process of transformation, is provided below.

- 
- Due to her disagreement with the direction of the transformation, Heike consciously decided to participate in the process by constructively resisting it despite uncertainties about the result of such a role. She did this by actively proposing an alternative process. She also informed herself about transformation per se through extensive reading.
  - Heike experienced the loss of close contact of colleagues as very traumatic. However, she regarded some of the changes in the interpersonal relationships as favourable. She gained an opportunity to get to know colleagues who were previously unfamiliar and was of the opinion that the discussions during the process of transformation exposed colleagues to new ideas. Finally, she felt that previously hostile colleagues got to know her better and found her less of a threat than before.
  - A positive development during the process, in her opinion, was the change towards greater transparency, improved communication, consultation and empowerment of women. However, the negative side to this development was the inability or perhaps unwillingness of management sometimes to stick to the new practices.
  - Heike felt that the allocation of people to new departments created uncertainty among them. Because they came from different backgrounds (styles of management, habits, etc) and expected different things, they felt unsure about the acceptable practices in the new structures.
  - In her opinion, the process should have been managed differently. Firstly, she criticised the lack of consultation on critical decisions and secondly, she felt that management were more concerned about the structures and procedures than



- about the employees. She indicated that management should have done more to involve the people in the process.
- During the discussion Heike referred to several personal characteristics that might have facilitated her perception and experience of the process: critical thinking, ability to take risks, inclination to feel responsible for the organisation and a diverse background.
- 

#### **4.6.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations**

##### **4.6.4.1 Nature of a transformation process**

###### **(a) Various perceptions and expectations of the concept transformation and its outcome**

It is clear from Heike's experience of the process that she had a distinct understanding of the meaning of the concept and also specific expectations of the outcome of the process. Her understanding of the concept and her expectations were a product of her personal background and previous work experience among other things. This therefore supports an earlier deduction that employees in the same organisation do not necessarily share the same notion of the concept. This implies that various "definitions" and expectations of transformation are covert in an organisation. Thus referring to transformation and discussing the topic does not necessarily imply a uniform understanding of the concept. It may furthermore be deduced that a person's experience of the process and opinion about the outcome (or success) of such a process is co-determined by his/her own understanding and expectations of the process.

###### **(b) Impact of transformation on the informal networks in an organisation**

According to Heike's descriptions of the interpersonal communication in the pre-transformation period, it is clear that an informal vibrant communication network existed that fulfilled various functions.

Baie van die akademiese gesprekke vind toevallig plaas, jy besluit nie nou moet jy met iemand gaan praat nie. Jy loop iemand in die gang raak, of jy en nog iemand werk laat die middag en dan praat julle sommer in die gang of oor 'n koppie tee oor iets wat julle in gemeen het, deel iets uit. Dis weg.

In an informal and voluntary manner workrelated and personal issues were shared with close colleagues. These informal networks fulfilled an important communication function among colleagues as well as a valuable social and emotional support function. Heike found that the physically moving colleagues resulted in the disruption and demolishing of this vibrant and important function in the organisation. Seeing that organisational transformation processes often involve the re-allocation of people to new structures and physical environments, such a process can involuntarily impact on an organisation's informal network and support system. The disruption of the informal network and support system seems to be one of the crucial dimensions contributing to negative experiences of the process. It may also be argued that the absence of this close and sometimes intimate network leaves people vulnerable without the workrelated and emotional support they were used to. It is actually during processes like transformation that people need such support systems.



#### 4.6.4.2 Management of a transformation process

##### (a) Important role of consultation

The fact that Heike mentioned the negative impact of the lack of consultation on several occasions and even the perceived lack of consultation shows the importance of this aspect in facilitating and determining experiences of a transformation process. Moreover, it seems that negative feelings aroused by the lack of consultation are not easily soothed even if a good reason for such an act is provided (such as a lack of skills).

##### (b) Ownership of the process

Heike highlighted the issue of perceiving an organisation as constituted of structures or of people. It seems as if these two different perspectives of an organisation could have significant implications for how a transformation process is managed. As already indicated, Heike recommended that a transformation process should acknowledge the people in the process and allow them to take ownership of it.

##### (c) Acknowledging the existence and role of the informal network

It should be acknowledged that a great deal of organisational issues are discussed in the corridors, over a cup of tea or in an informal gathering or group discussion. The formal communication channels and structures in an organisation do not necessarily constitute the sum of communication. This dimension could have implications for the management of a transformation process: (1) The negative effect of the disrupted informal network identified the importance of the network for the well-being of employees. In the management of the process, care should therefore be taken to preserve the network as far as possible. However, if this is not possible, the organisation should understand the impact it will have on employees and perhaps investigate possible mitigating strategies. (2) Because of the effectiveness of the informal network, information shared in a selective manner has the tendency to be spread through this network. This could very easily contribute to the spreading of rumours or the sharing of inaccurate information simply because of the lack of verifying possibilities. It might also raise questions about the reasons for the secrecy of information and could contribute to a spirit of mistrust in the organisation. It seems valid to argue that the role and impact of the informal network on a transformation process should not be underestimated during such a process.



#### 4.7 Participant 7: Leslie (fictitious name)

##### 4.7.1 Description and experience of the current, post-transformation situation

It should be noted that the discussion of his comments is based on the second part or informal interview with Leslie. Although Leslie agreed to the recording of the interview, he simply replied with yes, no or don't know. He was afraid that he would be identified as a participant and made the researcher promise not to reveal any of his comments and opinions.

###### 4.7.1.1 Measurable changes as a result of the transformation

Leslie felt that fundamentally his work remained the same, namely teaching and research. However, he had to assume responsibility for courses he was not previously involved in and participate in the development of totally new courses. He had to move office and became part of a new department which also involved a new head of department. Some of his previous colleagues moved with him to the new department but he also gained new colleagues from other departments. The process thus resulted in several measurable changes for Leslie.

###### 4.7.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general and the extent of the transformation specifically

At the beginning of the interview it was difficult to persuade Leslie to speak about the transformation process in the organisation. Despite a lengthy introduction to the particular topic during which "transformation" was defined as the process that happened in the organisation, starting with a commission of enquiry and ending with the restructuring of the organisation, Leslie kept on querying referrals to the process and the use of the term "transformation".

Which transformation are you referring to?...What do you mean with transformation?

After agreeing that the term would be used to describe of or refer to how management and other people perceived the process, he was willing to reply to the questions about transformation.

Leslie was adamant that no transformation had taken place. In his opinion, the process merely involved rearranging the organisation and changing names without any attempt at real transformation.

I don't know. I don't see much in terms of it having affected me because it was just a shift from certain departments to new ones... I don't know whether this change of offices and the change of names of the old departments, I don't know whether that is what is named transformation in this Faculty. Transformation did not take place in the Faculty. I regard it as a change of arrangement and change of names.

Leslie understood transformation as doing things differently and better than they used to be done.

To me transformation means moving from the way in which things are being done into another way which is better and improved.

It is thus clear that whatever changes took place in the organisation as a result of the transformation, Leslie regarded the situation as unchanged with no improvement on previous practices and habits. He also highlighted that a transformation should result in a change of heart which would then be reflected in deeds.



People must show change of heart with deeds; lip service is a dangerous game.

His particular experience of the post-transformation organisation offers detail about his understanding and expectations of the outcomes of such a process.

#### 4.7.1.3 Leslie's experience and perception of the post-transformation organisation

According to Leslie, the organisation did not encourage or allow all people to speak their minds. To him, it seemed that the position people held in the organisation determined the level of freedom they had to speak.

I move around and it is not always easy to air one's views against the whole Faculty. It depends on your position in the Faculty. It is always the same people that talk in the meetings, the others keep quiet. In this Faculty the females don't talk. If the senior people keep quiet, then I also keep quiet.

From these statements it may be deduced that Leslie found the organisation undemocratic and restrictive with respect to allowing or encouraging all employees to express their opinion. In Leslie's experience, women and people in lower positions in particular, were inhibited in this respect. He experienced himself as inhibited in speaking his mind and specifically refrained from doing so when employees in higher positions (senior people) kept quiet.

Apart from the undemocratic nature of the organisation, Leslie was also of the opinion that the organisation was unbalanced with respect to the racial profile of the employees. He felt that the demographics of the organisation had to reflect the demographics of the wider community.

The Faculty needs to become more balanced in its demographics to reflect the demographics of the community. When I started in the Faculty we were two black people — after five years we are only ten.

From the figures he quoted (correctly) it is clear that Leslie belonged to a minority group in a rather homogeneous organisation. It seems that he was not only concerned about the small number of black people in the organisation but also about the slow tempo of the organisation in recruiting people from other racial groups.

Leslie was furthermore of the opinion that the organisation practised favouritism not only with respect to seniority but also with respect to race. According to him, only white people were promoted.

Only the white people are being promoted and that creates negativity with the black people. We keep quiet "om die vrede te bewaar". Black people don't stick around for long, they just leave after a few months.

In addition to his experience of the organisation as favouring some employees, it may also be deduced from this statement that he found the homogeneous nature of the organisation difficult, forcing him and his black colleagues to suppress their own opinions and arguments simply to maintain a peaceful work environment. Leslie did not explain what the motive was for keeping quiet, but it is possibly fear of victimisation.

With respect to the management of the organisation Leslie made the following remark:



Top management of the Faculty is old, they can retire when it gets too hot and then the young people will have to face reality. But they are not speaking out — they don't have a problem with the inflexibility of management.

Leslie found management inflexible and, by implication, not that much in touch with reality. He suggested that because there was the possibility that management could leave the organisation (retire) when things went wrong, they were probably not serious enough in dealing with the problems of the organisation and facing reality. However, he unfortunately did not explain what he meant with reality. Apart from management's inflexibility Leslie found the young people uncritical, accepting and perhaps approving the inflexibility of management.

To summarise, Leslie still found the organisation in the post-transformation period undemocratic and favouring people in higher positions and of a particular colour. He was disappointed with the unbalanced demographic profile of the employees and the slow way in which the organisation rectified the racial presentation. It seems that as a result of the few black employees Leslie felt part of the minority and therefore deprived of the opportunity to speak their minds. Management was experienced as inflexible and out of touch with reality and the young people were seen as uncritically accepting the status quo. Based on these perceptions of the organisation it may thus be deduced that Leslie expected transformation to tackle and rectify precisely these issues. In his opinion, none of this had happened and therefore he could not accept that transformation had actually taken place.

#### 4.7.1.4 Experience of the current work situation

Leslie did not offer much information about himself and his personal work situation. However, despite the little information he provided, it may be deduced that he found his personal work activities in the post-transformation period interesting and exciting. He mentioned that the organisation provided him with the opportunity for personal development.

I enjoyed it because I enjoy the type of work that I do... It provided me the opportunity to develop new courses and to work in areas that I am interested in... I am empowered daily because I am in a process of learning. The Faculty should get the credit for that.

It thus seems that Leslie found himself in the same and even slightly better position with respect to his personal work activities after the changes. Based on his involvement in areas of interest (as a result of the changes) and the opportunity for personal development, it may be argued that his level of job satisfaction did not decrease after the changes but rather increased. His opinion that transformation did not take place apparently did not affect his personal satisfaction with his professional involvement and responsibilities.

A summary of Leslie's experiences of the transformation process is provided below.

- 
- The transformation resulted in several measurable changes for Leslie. He moved office, became part of a new organisational structure with a new head of department, lost some of his colleagues and gained new ones and he assumed responsibility for new courses.
  - Leslie regarded the process as a change in names and structures. In his opinion, no transformation took place because nothing was being done differently than before.



- In the post-transformation period, Leslie found the organisation still as undemocratic and inhibiting employees to speak their minds freely. The racial profile remained skewed with an under representation of black people and favouring whites in senior positions. In his opinion, the management remained inflexible and young people were uncritical about the new developments.
  - Leslie assumed responsibility for courses he enjoyed and found interesting. His level of job satisfaction did not decrease but seemed to have increased as a result of the changes.
-





#### **4.8 Participant 8: Delianne (fictitious name)**

##### **4.8.1 Delianne's description and experience of the post-transformation situation**

###### **4.8.1.1 Measurable changes as result of the transformation**

The transformation resulted in substantial changes in Delianne's immediate work situation. The content of subjects she used to teach changed and she also assumed responsibility for new courses. She moved to a new department with a new management structure and new colleagues. Furthermore, she had to move to a new office, which Delianne experienced as a intensifying all the changes.

###### **4.8.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general terms**

Delianne found the transformation process in general exciting, challenging and providing her with an opportunity which she appreciated. For her, the process entailed more positive than negative aspects.

Dit het eintlik vir my 'n deur oopgemaak waarvoor ek dankbaar is. Ek het dit baie opwindend ervaar, uitdagende verandering.

Delianne furthermore described the transformation process as a learning experience for her in terms of her own reactions and conduct and also with respect to colleagues' response to the process.

Ek het eintlik baie geleer. Om te kon sien wat die verandering in ander mense teweegbring, was ook vir my baie interessant.

###### **4.8.1.3 Experience of the extent of the transformation**

Delianne never referred to the nature, extent or direction of the transformation process. It seems as if her experience of the process was predominantly focused on the interpersonal dynamics during the process and other people's (colleagues') responses to the changes. However, the fact that she found the process exciting and challenging and generally positive leads to the deduction that she approved of the direction and nature of the transformation. Her reference to the implementation of things she had foreseen long ago supports this deduction:

Ek het dit baie opwindend ervaar, uitdagende verandering. Dit wat mens lankal raakgesien het, wat nou geïmplementeer word.

###### **4.8.1.4 Experience of the current work situation**

As mentioned, Delianne offered very little information about her daily professional activities and the effect of the process on her personal work environment and work activities. However, her appreciation of the changes and opportunities created by the process leads to the conclusion that her personal work situation improved as a result of the transformation. It may be argued that she probably experienced a higher level of job satisfaction in the post-transformation period than in the pre-transformation period.

Ek is betrokke by ander kursusse as vroeër. Dit het vir my eintlik 'n deur oopgemaak waarvoor ek dankbaar is.



Her reference to the restrictive nature of the previous system may be seen as support for the deduction that her personal work conditions improved as a result of the process.

Dit was 'n baie positiewe ervaring daarvan want ek dink ons het baie vasgeval in die ou sisteem in die ou departement.

A summary of her experiences of the post-transformation period is provided below:

- 
- The process resulted in several changes for Delianne. She became part of a new department with a new head of department, assume responsibility for new courses, had new colleagues and had to move office, which she described as the worst of all the changes.
  - In general, Delianne experienced the transformation as exciting and a challenge, providing her with a much longed-for opportunity.
  - She made little reference to the nature and extent of the transformation. Her general approval of the process leads to the deduction that she agreed with what materialised from the process.
  - Her gratefulness for the new opportunities she has as result of the process, leads to the conclusion that she experienced a higher level of job satisfaction in the post transformation period.
- 

#### 4.8.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)

To understand Delianne's perception or opinion regarding the organisation's decision to transform, her experience of the pre-transformation organisation and situation needs to be explored. These aspects are discussed below.

##### 4.8.2.1 The need for change

Delianne found the system (organisation) prior to the transformation process stagnant, without the possibility of new developments or initiatives.

Dit was 'n positiewe ervaring daarvan want ek dink ons het baie vasgeval in die ou sisteem in die ou departement.

Her reference to the implementation of changes she foresaw long ago suggests that Delianne personally felt a need for change and was conscious of the challenges facing the organisation in the pre-transformation period and the necessity for the organisation to transform.

Dit wat mens lankal raakgesien het, wat nou geïmplementeer word.

Delianne not only understood the necessity for transformation intellectually, but the decision also coincided with her personal belief that change should take place.

Vir my het dit weer bloot gegaan ook oor wat ek geglo het. Dit was vir my reg en ek kon insien wat moes gebeur.

Her acceptance of and agreement with the decision to transform the organisation therefore leads to the conclusion that Delianne, generally speaking, agreed with the new paradigm implemented in the organisation.



It may thus be concluded that Delianne felt uncomfortable with the pre-transformation organisation and was aware of the need for the organisation to transform. She agreed with the decision to transform because it made sense to her on an intellectual level and because she was personally convinced that it was the right thing to do. It seems as if she felt comfortable with the new paradigm implemented in the organisation.

#### 4.8.2.2 Experience of the pre-transformation organisation

Delianne's experience of the process of transformation seems to be influenced by her particular situation in and experience of the pre-transformation organisation. It is significant that her experiences of the organisation predominantly involved interpersonal interaction and relationships.

Delianne had a very negative experience of the pre-transformation period. She found the organisation homogeneous and one-dimensional in its thinking. Alternative perspectives were not allowed while the people who suggested other perspectives were viewed with suspicion.

Die ou bestel, wat my betref, kon nie insien dat veranderinge nodig is nie. Dat daar tonnelvisie is, dat mense sake vanuit een perspektief benader, dat daar nie akkommodasie vir ander perspektiewe is nie. En dit het ook soos al die ander prosesse teweeggebring dat daar persoonlike aanvalle gedoen is, dat jy gesaboteer word in jou werk. Mense kon miskien nie ruimte gegee het vir andersdenkende persone nie.

Thus, Delianne felt that the previous system allowed no room for alternative thinking and alternative thinkers. According to her, divergence from the dominant perspective resulted in personal attacks on her and in the obstruction of her professional activities and duties. In her experience, the organisation (and other colleagues) not only frowned upon her alternative ideas but actively alienated her from the organisation and hampered her in the performance of her professional duties.

Delianne further explained that the lack of space allowed for alternative thinkers affected her personality, her response in the organisation and the relationships she had with fellow colleagues.

Mense kon miskien nie ruimte gegee het vir andersdenkende persone nie. Dit het definitiewe invloed op jou persoonlikheid, jou reaksies en verhoudinge, wat in my geval om dit sterk te stel, eintlik nie in 'n sosiale sin verhoudinge kon he nie. Daarom moes mens verander, jy is gedwing om amper iets te word wat jy nie wou word nie.

The inflexibility within the organisation, the strong homogeneous nature of the organisation forced Delianne to be untrue to herself in order to survive in the organisation. She found it almost impossible to establish social relationships with colleagues because of this inflexibility of opinion. It may be argued that, in order to maintain her job and avoid (constant) conflict with other colleagues in the pre-transformation organisation, she had to refrain from speaking her mind and being true to who she was and what she believed in. It is quite clear that Delianne experienced the intolerance of the organisation and fellow colleagues as traumatic. This is confirmed by her reference to the time it took her to become less emotional about this aspect and obtain distance from it.

Dit is asof dit 'n lang tyd geneem het om te kan distansieër, om minder emosioneel te wees.



the process. The process seemed to elicit a battle between those for and those against transformation. Delianne indicated that she found colleagues' rivalry and counteractions negative to the extent that she resisted them.

#### 4.8.3.2 Participation in the process

Delianne contributed to the process by writing and developing new course material and by participating in some of the transformation committees. She explained that she participated in the process because she believed that it was the right thing to do.

Vir my het dit weer bloot gegaan oor wat ek geglo het, dit was vir my reg en ek kon insien wat moes gebeur.

She felt that the main reason for her participation was that she found the process of transformation exciting and challenging.

Dit was opwindend, ek is positief oor verandering as mens en dit was hoofsaaklik my motivering om deel te he. Verandering ervaar ek as baie uitdagend en stimulerend.

Delianne did not involve herself in a proactive manner. Her participation was rather elicited by opportunities presented to her by the process. Through her participation in areas she found exciting and interesting, she could actively contribute to a better work situation for herself. Eventually she could benefit personally from her involvement. Given her frustration with the previous stagnant system, it is intriguing that Delianne chose to respond in a reactive manner.

My frustrasie was nie noodwendig so groot nie want ek wou nie graag nuwe kursusse skryf nie. Maar toe daar geleenthede na my toe kom waarin ek belangstel, waarin skryfwerk gedoen moes word, het ek dit gedoen.

In summary it could be said that Delianne participated in the process because she believed in the necessity of transformation and she agreed intellectually with the process. She found the transformation exciting, posing new challenges and providing her with the opportunity to improve her own personal work activities.

#### 4.8.3.3 Critical reassessment

In Delianne's opinion, one of the positive aspects of the process of transformation was that it caused people (and herself) to adopt a more critical way of thinking as opposed to simply accepting and agreeing with whatever is decided. She also felt that the process instilled a flexibility in people's thinking. The fact that the pre-transformation laws and truths were challenged in the process, led people to realise that more than one truth could be valid at a given time.

Die transformation het mense regtig gedwing om eintlik, vir baie mense, om te dink om nie net klakkeloos na te volg nie. Om... op 'n meer intellektuele vlak miskien minder te glo, emosioneel te glo, daar is net een regte antwoord.

The process thus caused people to reflect on their own way of thinking and to reassess the manner in which they formed their opinion about issues in the organisation and in the broader society.



#### 4.8.3.4 Room for new ideas and new opportunities

Delianne regarded the opportunities and challenges created by the process of transformation as a positive aspect and this contributed to her favourable experience thereof. She personally benefited from the new opportunities created by the process.

Dit het vir my eintlik 'n deur oopgemaak waarvoor ek dankbaar is. Ek het die uitdagings en die nuwe geleenthede raakgesien.

Apart from the challenges and opportunities created, Delianne experienced the process as posing new demands which required a change in the way they were thinking.

Nie net vakinhoude het verander nie, jou denkwysie moes meer aanpas by die eise wat gestel is.

#### 4.8.3.5 Workload

The process of transformation resulted in a heavy workload for Delianne. She felt that the workload caused her a lot of stress during the process and forced her to make harsh decisions with respect to the amount and kind of work she could manage. She also found that the workload caused some colleagues to resist the transformation who would not have done that under more relaxed conditions.

Ander negatiewe aspek was die geweldige oorlading van werk — dit maak 'n mens, dit laai baie stres op jou tot jy op 'n punt kom waar jy sê nou moet ek uitgooi ongeag miskien jou behoefte. Almal het 'n geweldige werkslading gehad wat ek dink ook tot weerstand te weeg gebring wat by sekere mense seker nie noodwendig so 'n reaksie sou ontlok het nie.

Delianne observed that some colleagues suffered from a heavy workload they brought upon themselves. In her opinion, colleagues chose to be involved in new courses and perhaps over-extend themselves for fear that they would not have work in the post-transformation organisation.

Wat ook gebeur het, baie mense het verskriklik gehardloop om die nuwe kursusse te ontwikkel om sogenaamd werk te hê.

Involving themselves in many activities during the process of transformation could perhaps guarantee them a position in the transformed organisation. Employees' participation in multiple activities could be the result of real interest and responsibility, but it seems that fear of losing their jobs also motivated people to carry a heavy workload.

#### 4.8.3.6 Physical move

In Delianne's opinion, the physical change of office forced her to acknowledge the fact that transformation had actually taken place. This increased the impact of the transformation in the sense that it made the effect visible.

Kantore moes verskuif so mens was letterlik gedwing, fisies en konkreet, om te beweeg. Jy kan nog steeds nie die ou se gedagtegang verander nie maar dit maak die impak sterker. Jy beleef dinge baie erger, jy was gedwing deur jou omgewing om te erken, om jou frustrasies te erken, om jou positiewe ervaring te erken.

It may be argued that the familiarity of the old office protected Delianne, to some extent, from the realities of the transformation process. Moving to a new office in an unfamiliar environment sym-



bolised the move from the old to the new and caused her to accept the finality of the transformation and deal with the positive and negative effects of the process.

#### 4.8.3.7 Intrapersonal dimension

##### (a) Personal flexibility and preference for change

Delianne had a personal preference for change as opposed to a too stagnant, stable situation. Her appreciation for the challenges and opportunities created by change facilitated her positive experience of the process.

Dit was opwindend, ek is positief oor veranderinge as mens en dit was hoofsaaklik my motivering om deel te hê.

Her reference to colleagues' inflexibility in dealing with the changes, leads to the deduction that her preference for change presupposed a personal flexibility and ability to adjust to new situations and demands.

##### b) Ability to identify and respond to challenges and opportunities

Delianne's perception of the transformation as creating opportunities demonstrated her personal ability to identify and respond to opportunities and used them to her advantage. This personal characteristic contributed to her positive experience of the process and constructive participation in the process.

##### c) Tolerant approach

Delianne demonstrated a flexibility in her thinking and a tolerance for varied perspectives and ways of doing things. She seems to have an inclusive rather than exclusive way of thinking. This characteristic possibly facilitated her positive, unproblematic experience of the process.

A summary of Delianne's experiences of the process of transformation is provided below.

- 
- Establishing relationships with new colleagues was one of the difficult aspects of the process. Delianne said that because of mistrust that resulted from the pre-transformation period, it took her a long time to develop collegial relationships. The only aspect that caused her to be negative about the process was the resistance, inflexibility and fears of fellow-employees.
  - Delianne participated in the process because she agreed intellectually with the decision. She furthermore found the process exciting and challenging. She benefited from her involvement by improving her personal work situation.
  - According to her, the process made people reflect on their own way of thinking and reassess how they formed their opinions about issues in the organisation and in the broader society. She found this as a very positive outcome of the process.
  - The process provided her with new opportunities, challenges and even a new way of thinking, which contributed to her positive experience.
  - She experienced high levels of stress due to the increased workload.
  - Delianne described the physical move as intensifying the transformation process; it forced her to accept the realities of the changes. However, she did not refer to the move as a positive or negative experience.



- From her descriptions, it is deduced that Delianne has the flexibility to adapt to change, an ability to identify and respond to challenges and a rather tolerant approach to life. These characteristics could have contributed to her general positive experience of the transformation.
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#### 4.8.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations

##### 4.8.4.1 Nature of a transformation process

###### (a) Impact of experiences of the pre-transformation organisation on expectations of and conduct in the post-transformation organisation

As discussed in phase 1, Delianne found herself an outsider in the pre-transformation organisation. She did not share the dominant paradigm and was therefore not accepted by fellow colleagues. She explained that the mistrust she had in colleagues determined her expectation of the nature of relationships in the new organisation. Her experience of the old system therefore influenced her perception of and conduct in the post-transformation organisation. It may thus be argued that an employee's experience of him- or herself in the old organisation and of relationships in the old system influence the expectations of the nature of the transformed organisation and the nature of interpersonal relationships in the transformed organisation. This expectation of the new organisation, based on the experience of the pre-transformed organisation, may also co-determine an employee's initial conduct during the process of transformation.

###### (b) The position of an employee in the pre-transformed organisation and conduct during the process of transformation.

Although Delianne felt uncomfortable in the old organisation and agreed with the proposed transformation and perceived it as a challenge and as an opportunity, it is clear that she behaved in a reactive and unobtrusive manner. Her conduct raises the question of the relation between an employee's position in the old organisation and his/her conduct during the process of transformation. This aspect needs to be explored in the veridical analysis of the data.

###### (c) Impact of colleagues' conduct on the experience of transformation

Delianne referred to the issue that fellow colleagues' responses to the process influenced her experience of the process. She also described the process whereby colleagues of differing opinions overemphasised their point of view in reaction to opponents. This behaviour leads to the deduction that people's experiences of and conduct during the process of transformation are also co-determined by colleagues' conduct (positively or negatively) during the process. People therefore do not only respond according to their agreement or disagreement with the new paradigm or the changes or lack of changes, but also in terms of how other people respond to the transformation and the nature of the relationships during this period.

###### (d) Impact of transformation on the power relationships in the organisation

En ek dink die hele proses van om te aanvaar dat mense wat voorheen gesien is as die vyand, mense met wie moontlik oorlog gemaak is, nou in beheer is. Mense met ideologiese verskille beleef mekaar as vyande, wat vroeër die underdog was, is nou die een wat toon aangee.



By this comment Delianne described the changes that happened in the interpersonal relationships as a result of the transformation. Because of the new paradigm, people who used to be in positions of power were replaced by those who were in support of the new paradigm. The previous positions of status or power were upset in the process thus affecting the nature of the relationships amongst employees.

(e) Rumours

Delianne mentioned that the process of transformation was characterised by rumours. She felt that the rumours created wrong perceptions about the process and, in her opinion, many of the rumours were deliberately spread to enhance resistance against the transformation.

Gerugte wat die rondte doen wat persepsies, verkeerde persepsies meebring, volgens my mening wat ook 'n persepsie is. Gerugte het deur die departement getrek. As jy klinies daarna kyk, was dit gerugte wat doelbewus versprei was om weerstand uit te lok en aan te moedig.

This occurrence of rumours raises the question of the role of communication in a transformation process. Communication in this respect refers specifically to the sharing of information (positive and negative) about the process with employees in the organisation. It is contended that in situations where sufficient information is communicated, the possibility of spreading (and believing) rumours would be less than in situations where information is limited.

4.8.4.2 Management of a transformation process

(a) Reconciliation of opposing groups

The transformation process elicited a kind of battle between people for and people against the transformation. A battle between employees of different opinions can be very detrimental to the future functioning of the organisation. Having transformed the organisation into something new (accepting a new paradigm) does not necessarily mean that all employees accept the new paradigm and that all difficulties in the interpersonal relationships have been settled.

It seems crucial for the productive continuation of the organisation that it take responsibility for the reconciliation of employees and the restoration of the professional relationships. Based on Delianne's experience of rebuilding trust, it is clear that reconciliation and relationships of trust cannot be achieved overnight.

Related to the reconciliation of people is the reconciliation of beliefs. Although the danger of a too homogeneous belief system has been mentioned by implication, some form of agreement is necessary for the organisation to continue as a focused and goal-directed unit. However, it is also acknowledged that some people will never agree (and perhaps should not agree). People who really disagree strongly with the new paradigm, will eventually leave the organisation. Is this a dimension that can and should be managed at all? What is the relation between the paradigm and the vision of the organisation.

(b) Provision of information

Delianne did not refer directly to the issue of the availability of information. However, her reference to the spreading of rumours implies this issue. The question arises whether rumours would still be prevalent in a situation where sufficient information is freely available to all





employees. Are rumours part and parcel of a transformation process or could they be inhibited by the availability of information?



## **4.9 Participant 9: William (fictitious name)**

### **4.9.1 William's description and experience of the post-transformation situation**

#### **4.9.1.1 Measurable changes as result of the transformation**

The transformation process resulted in many measurable changes in William's professional life. He used to teach one course but after the transformation he assumed responsibility for twelve courses. He moved to a new department with administrative and teaching responsibilities in two other departments as well. All of his colleagues, except one, were new to him and like all other employees, William had to move office. Many of his previous colleagues decided to take advantage of the option of early retirement.

#### **4.9.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general**

William described the process as painful but constructive, as producing something new.

The experience of the transformation is painful, but it is like childbirth, it is a necessary pain in order to produce something new.

It seems that he differentiated between an emotional and intellectual experience of the process. Intellectually, he experienced the process of transformation as positive and producing something he agreed with and felt proud of. However, on an emotional level, he experienced the process as traumatic. He seemed to be tormented by a longing for what used to be despite his acknowledgement of the importance of moving forward.

I do long for the "good old days" but I realise that it is important to move forwards to embrace the realities and the challenges of the new South Africa.

Towards the end of the interview William remarked that as an older person, he found it difficult to change.

When you get older it is more difficult to change.

#### **4.9.1.3 Experience of the nature and extent of the transformation**

William indicated that there were different interpretations of the concept as well as different areas of transformation. With respect to transformation in his organisation William indicated that the attitude towards their clients (students) changed to a more humane approach and the syllabi (products of the organisation) changed from a white male approach to a more multiracial one.

There are different understandings of the concept of transformation. There are also different areas of transformation: eg, attitude changes and subject content changes. There is now a more humane approach towards students, they are not just seen as mere numbers. There were also changes in the syllabi: it used to be approached from a white male culture, but now study material about other races are also included.

Referring to the change in people's attitude and mind-set, William felt that this remained unchanged, as in the pre-transformation organisation.

The apartheid mentality caused people to refuse to mix with people of different races. That mind set didn't change.



This remark leads to the deduction that he felt that the process should have resulted in a changed mind-set where people from different racial groups would have accepted one another as equals and interacted with one another in an integrative manner. He regarded affirmative action as part and parcel of the transformation process but felt that candidates should be suitable for positions.

Transformation also includes affirmative action. In the long-term it is important to look for the sound management of the organisation. Candidates should be suitable for the positions.

It seems that William had mixed feelings about the nature and extent of the transformation process. He felt positive about changes to the organisation's products and the new humane approach to clients, but was disappointed with the inability of the process to change people's mind-sets. He was less positive about changes in the management and administrative structures of the organisation.

Now you also have many bosses and you don't know who is your boss... After climbing the ladder to reach that point of the Executive Committee of the Faculty, the new set-up can be a bit cruel.

In some respects William felt that the process hasn't gone far enough but in other respects he felt that it affected too many dimensions of the organisation.

#### 4.9.1.4 Experience of the current work situation

During the interview William made few comments about his work situation in the post-transformation period. It is possible to distinguish between comments about his personal professional activities and more administrative issues. With respect to his personal work activities, it seems as if William found the new syllabi and course material exciting and worthwhile.

What comes out from the new syllabi is exciting, and there is a sense of challenge. It is something from which the students will benefit and I am proud of the new product.

William saw the founding of a specific forum at the university and the introduction of specific education in the faculty as a very positive outcome of the transformation process. In the pre-transformation period he advocated for these changes.

I advocated the introduction of (specific) education a long time ago and I am now the co-chairman of the (specific) forum at Unisa.<sup>5</sup>

Being co-chair of the forum can be seen as recognition from the organisation and colleagues for his particular role and leadership in this regard.

However, despite his satisfaction with the new course material and the introduction of specific education, William found the working conditions of the new system stressful and difficult to adjust to.

The courses I teach cover two departments. You have to get used to numerous different marking schemes, memos etc. In the new set-up there are now so many committee meetings, one finds it difficult to cope. Now you also have many bosses and you don't know who is your boss. This caused confusion and disorientation.

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5. The type of forum is not specified to protect the identity of the participant



Given the absence of information on William's position in the pre-transformation organisation, it is not possible to compare his pre-transformation job satisfaction with his post-transformation job satisfaction. However, in the post-transformation organisation he found his personal activities to be exciting and rewarding but, on the other hand, he found the system stressful and confusing. His hesitation to take a decision about his immediate future in the organisation perhaps demonstrated his own feelings of ambiguity about his continued involvement in the post-transformation organisation.

I got the opportunity to take a package but I am not sure whether to retire or not. It is not an easy decision.

It is not possible to summarise William's experience of his work conditions in the post-transformation organisation as mainly positive or negative. However, given the difficulties he experienced in the new system, it seems valid to conclude that he found the situation stressful rather than relaxed, despite his intellectual agreement with the transformation. The fact that he pondered on the option of early retirement may be seen as support for the deduction that he had doubts about his future and happiness in the organisation.

#### 4.9.1.5 Interpersonal dynamics

Contributing to William's feelings of ambivalence in the post-transformation period was the fact that he lost his colleagues of many years as a result of the transformation. These old colleagues were his support group, which made their absence in the new system a very painful experience.

One sees one's friends and other the people around you taking early retirement packages. It was difficult and painful to lose the contact and interaction with one's old colleagues one had known for many years. This is very unsettling because I lost colleagues and my support group overnight. It was very painful.

It is clear that William experienced the loss of colleagues as very traumatic. The fact that some of his friends took early retirement packages not only left him without their support but possibly contributed to his uncertainty about his continuation in the new organisation.

It is clear from William's description of his post-transformation experiences that he found the new system difficult and painful to adjust to despite his agreement with the new paradigm of the organisation. It is possible to distinguish between an intellectual and an emotional and interpersonal experience of the post-transformation process.

Intellectually, he agreed with the new paradigm and the changes it produced. He even felt that it did not achieve enough in terms of changing mind-sets about interracial interactions. He found the new approach and course content exciting and an improvement on the previous system. However, emotionally, he found it difficult and painful to adjust to the absence of his old colleagues and support group. The new administrative set-up in the organisation was also a source of stress and discomfort.

It may also be argued that the transformation William anticipated and how it materialised did not correspond. It seems as if William expected the process to deal mainly with correcting the racial inequalities. In his view, transformation of the organisation meant predominantly responding to the changes in the external environment without upsetting the internal, organisational dimensions.



A summary of William's experiences of the post-transformation period is provided below.

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- The transformation resulted in many measurable changes for William. He assumed responsibility for many more courses, moved to a new office and a new department and lost almost all his previous colleagues due to their early retirement.
  - In general, he experienced the process as painful but constructive and producing something new. He indicated that because of his age he found it difficult to change.
  - William had mixed feelings about the nature and extent of the transformation. He agreed with changes to course content and the approach to students but was disappointed with the inability of the process to change employees' mind-sets. He felt that the "apartheid" mentality persisted. On the other hand, William found changes in the management and administrative structures of the organisation difficult to deal with and perhaps too far-reaching
  - Although William found his immediate work activities stimulating and exciting, he experienced the work conditions as stressful and difficult to adjust to. He had the option of early retirement but found it difficult to make a decision.
  - William found it very difficult and painful in the post-transformation period without the support and camaraderie of his previous colleagues.
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#### **4.9.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)**

##### **4.9.2.1 The decision to transform**

William agreed with the organisation's decision to transform, provided that it was not revolutionary in nature and was done in a proper manner. In his opinion, the transformation of the organisation was inevitable.

I am all for transformation provided that it is done properly and that it is not a revolutionary type of transformation. I never resisted the change, since I knew it was part of the future.

William's agreement with the decision to transform is partially explained by the way he grew up and his personal and professional exposure to integrated, multicultural situations.

I think it is easier for me as an English-speaking person. I went to school... in a dual medium (English and Afrikaans) school. I can therefore relate to Afrikaans-speaking people and black people, since English speakers have always been a minority group.  
I went [abroad]... and I got exposure to specific education. I gained a foresight into the future of South Africa.

His exposure to integrated, multicultural situations led to the realisation that this should happen in the society at large and also in the organisation as part of the broader society. It could be argued that implicit in this statement of William's is his approval of the socio-political changes in the external environment resulting in democratic rights for people for all races and a movement towards integration among the various language and cultural groupings. It seems that he agreed to a transformation in the organisation that would reflect and respond to especially the social changes that occurred in the external environment. The fact that William advocated the



implementation of multicultural education long before the process started is an indication of his agreement with and belief in the necessity of the organisation to prepare itself and its clients (students) for an integrated, multicultural future society.

I advocated the introduction of multicultural education a long time ago...

It may therefore be concluded that William had an intellectual understanding of the need for the organisation to respond to the transformation that took place in the external environment. It is noticeable, however, that William made no reference to the need for change with respect to organisational dimensions such as the style of management, employee demographics or the availability of information.

#### **4.9.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation**

##### **4.9.3.1 Participation in the process**

As mentioned, William perceived the process of transformation as necessary for the future and therefore participated in it and even advocated the implementation of specific education before and during the process. William explained his participation in the process as follows:

If one doesn't transform or participate in the transformation, then the Faculty will lose out, and as a person one will also lose out. My philosophy is that you should participate because you will gain in the long run. If you don't participate you will feel as if you are losing out. I think one has a moral obligation to contribute to the changes. I believe that as a Christian I need to make a positive contribution to the changes in the Faculty. I believe that one has simply got to give of one's best to improve the situation. And then there is also the fact that other people are looking up to Unisa to set the example. I think my participation in the process was a matter of adapt or die.

William felt that it would be to his own and the detriment of the organisation and the successful completion of the process if he did not participate. He believed that he could make a difference. His statement could also imply the belief that any situation (in this case transformation) has the potential to become a valuable learning experience. William furthermore communicated a deep-rooted personal conviction that he had to contribute in a constructive way. His consciousness of the example Unisa had to set reflected his loyalty towards and pride in the organisation. It may be deduced that William participated in the process because he felt responsible for the organisation and the successful completion of the process.

It is quite significant that despite his deep personal conviction about his responsibility and despite his loyalty and obligation towards the organisation, William admitted that in the end he participated because the transformation process did not leave him with any choice. He did not explain what the results of non-participation would have been, but it seems valid to deduct that he thought it would have resulted in the discontinuation of his employment.

I think my participation in the process was a matter of adapt or die.

The question arises of to what extent William's explanation of his participation is a rationalisation to enable him to deal with the process of transformation or whether it is a reflection of his own struggle to comprehend the extent of the process.



#### 4.9.3.2 Interpersonal relationships

With respect to interpersonal relationships, William had both positive and negative experiences. As discussed in Phase 3, William lost many (almost all) of his colleagues and support group due to their early retirement. For him, it was a very traumatic and painful experience. Added to the loss of colleagues was the loss of discussion partners as a result of office relocations.

I had to move office and I don't have a problem with that although in your old office you build up a rapport with others and you could discuss common subject areas. This is no longer possible.

Getting to know other people he had not previously worked with was a positive aspect of the process. William tried to establish relationships with new colleagues by attending informal functions. However, the fact that these relationships did not develop spontaneously as a matter of personal choice was a painful experience for William.

The transformation forced me to get to know other colleagues I did not previously work with. In one way it is nice to get to know a new team. I have attended informal social functions in my new department and it has started to feel like a new family. But it is also painful in the sense that you are forced to become friends with other, unknown people - it is a culture shock.

William was of the opinion that younger people found it easier to adapt to the new situation than older people.

It seems to me that the younger staff members adapted much easier than the older people. Older staff members have tended to dig in their heels.

He furthermore observed that some colleague's supported transformation in public for fear of losing their jobs and not necessarily because they agreed with the process.

It seems to me that a lot of people appear to be pro-transformation but they complain about it in the corridors. Maybe they fear that their jobs are in jeopardy and that it will help them to retain their jobs if they are seen to be pro-transformation.

Participating in the process therefore does not necessarily imply agreement with the process.

#### 4.9.3.3 Career implications of the transformation process

The ECF (Executive Committee of the Faculty), consisting of full professors only, had managerial and decision-making responsibilities and represented the highest order in the Faculty. The transformation process changed the ECF to a more representative structure. William found this a traumatic change.

Before each department had an ECF, the executive committee for the department, which consisted of all the full professors. Now, the executive consists of people from all the ranks: full professor, professor, senior lecturer, lecturer etc. The executive is now more democratic but it also is difficult to accept. After climbing up the ladder to reach that point (ECF), the new set-up can be a bit cruel — a cultural shock.

It may be argued that membership of the ECF embodied achievement and status in the organisation. Membership meant access to information and an opportunity to influence the direction of the organisation. From William's statement it is clear that he aspired to and systematically worked towards achieving this privileged position during his career at Unisa. He found it difficult to accept that what used to be "recognition for achievement" in the old system



became accessible to everyone in the new system. Furthermore, this implies that his achievements in the old system, his particular status in the pre-transformation organisation were no longer valid in the new system. The organisation no longer demonstrated its acknowledgement of William's contribution to the organisation and its management. William found this a cruel result of the process of transformation. It is likely that the changes in the management structures resulting in William's loss of his "corporate position" contributed to his ambiguity about his future in the organisation.

#### 4.9.3.4 Intrapersonal dimension

##### (a) Inclination to feel responsible

In William's explanation for his participation in the process, he made it quite clear that he felt morally obliged to make a constructive contribution to the process. It may be deduced that William felt responsible for the organisation and the successful completion of the process.

And as I've already said, I feel morally obliged to make a contribution.

##### (b) Loyalty and commitment to the organisation

If one doesn't transform or participate in the transformation, then the Faculty will lose out, and as a person one will also lose out. And then there is also the fact that other people are looking up to Unisa to set the example.

William's consciousness of the organisation's image to the external environment could be interpreted as a reflection of his loyalty and commitment to the organisation. This loyalty to the organisation could have contributed to his continued participation in the process despite the difficulties he experienced.

##### (c) Awareness of the demands of the external environment

William's intellectual understanding of and agreement with the decision to transform may be the result of his personal convictions as well as an awareness of the necessity for the organisation to keep in touch with the changes in and demands of the external environment.

A summary of William's experiences of the process of transformation is provided below.

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- William participated in the process because he felt that it was his obligation to do so and believed that both he and the organisation would benefit from his involvement. Despite his personal convictions, he also said that he participated because it was a matter of adapt or die.
  - The loss of colleagues and discussion partners due to early retirements and office relocation was a very painful experience for William. However, getting to know people he did not previously work with was, in his opinion, a positive aspect of the process.
  - William saw the change in the management structures from seniority to representativeness as cruel and depriving him of the recognition from the organisation he had worked towards for many years.
  - Several personal characteristics may have contributed to his experience of and conduct during the process: he seems to have a deep commitment, loyalty and obligation to the organisation. His awareness of the interrelatedness of the



organisation and the external environment seems to have contributed to his agreement with the decision to transform.

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#### **4.9.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process**

##### **4.9.4.1 The nature of a transformation process**

###### **(a) Expectations and the reality**

William's experience of the nature and extent of the transformation process once again provides a good example of the difference between an employee's expectations of the process and its actual materialisation. As mentioned, William thought it was necessary for the organisation to transform. However, he had a particular understanding of the nature of such a process. He expected changes in the organisation to reflect the socio-political changes that had occurred in the external environment. He did not necessarily understand the transformation as encompassing structural or managerial changes. His adjustment to the new organisation was complicated by the difference between his expectations and what was actually implemented. It seems that employees' expectations are partially influenced by their own beliefs or convictions as well as by their own "history"; in other words, prior experiences and exposure.

###### **(b) Impact of a transformation process on status symbols and career aspirations**

William perceived the management committee not only as a functional dimension of the organisation, but also as a symbol of achievement, success and prestige. He worked towards this committee during his career in the organisation. Changes to the management structures therefore also affected the status symbols in the organisation (in his view) and, by implication, the direction of his aspirations. Representation on the committee no longer depended on his quality of work or his senior position in the organisation. As a matter of fact, he could no longer work towards representation because the criteria for representation changed in the process.

##### **4.9.4.2 The management of a transformation process**

###### **(a) The translation of status symbols for the transformed organisation**

William's experience illustrates the perceived impact of the transformation process on the status-giving symbols in an organisation. This may have an effect on employees' career aspirations or even motivation in the new system, especially in a situation where status-giving symbols are not replaced by new, appropriate symbols. It may be argued that it will probably take some time for employees to recognise and accept the new symbols as such. It seems important for employee well-being that a transformation process deal with the translation of tangible and non-tangible status symbols from the old to the new system.

###### **(b) Dealing with the loss of colleagues**

Almost all the respondents commented on the difficulty of adjusting to the new situation without the emotional and intellectual support of close colleagues and friends. Most respondents experienced the loss due to physical relocations while William explicitly mentioned the loss due



to early retirement. It seems important that in the management of a transformation process, support should be provided to employees to deal with this traumatic situation, especially to colleagues who remain behind and have to deal with the permanent loss of colleagues.



#### 4.10 Participant 10: Pedro (fictitious name)

##### 4.10.1 Description and experience of the post-transformation situation

###### 4.10.1.1 Measurable changes as result of the transformation

The transformation in the organisation affected Pedro substantially. He had to move office and also became part of a new department. The effect of the relocation to a new office and a new department was the loss of previous colleagues but also the acquiring of new ones. His area of speciality, that used to be practised as a discipline on its own, was integrated into other specialised areas. Pedro retained responsibility for some of his previous subjects and had to acquire new skills in one of the new areas implemented during the process of transformation. However, prior to the process, he had already involved himself in the development of skills in the new area.

###### 4.10.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general and the extent of the transformation specifically

For Pedro, the transformation was generally difficult despite his personal agreement with the notion of transformation. He felt that the difficulty of the process related to the fact that it was chaotic in nature and had a strong impact on his feelings.

Dit was vir my baie swaar en ek was een van die ouens wat transformasie voorgestaan het, ek wat selfs bereid was om getuies af te vlieg vir die kommissie van ondersoek... Wat swaar is van transformasie is dat dit altyd met 'n bietjie chaos gepaard gaan want dit is verandering en dinge is nie meer so ordelik nie... Ek dink die ding van transformasie is omdat dit so sterk met gevoel te doen het, is daar sekere dae wat mens baie positief voel en ander dae wat mens baie negatief is. Ek dink die gevoel speel 'n baie belangrike rol by transformasie.

He was rather disappointed and disillusioned with the nature of the transformation. In his opinion, nothing really changed.

Daar was ander verwagtinge gewees dat dinge anders sou wees en op die ou einde hoe meer dinge verander het, lyk dit nou vir hulle hoe meer bly dit dieselfde?

When asked what he had in mind, Pedro replied:

Dit is so vaag. Ek het gedink ons gaan ons kurrikula heeltemal herskryf, ons gaan alles van die tafel afvee en ons gaan met 'n nuwe benadering kom tot kurrikulumontwikkeling wat 'n sosiale bewussyn sal demonstreer. En al wat op die ou end gebeur het, is mense het gegaan en alles van die tafel afgevee en met ander toeriewe gekom en maar weer top-down gekom. Hoe meer dinge verander, hoe meer bly dit dieselfde. Ook die bestuurstyl.

Pedro was disappointed with the nature and extent of the transformation because he had expected something different, a clear deviation from the status quo and definitely something more radical than what actually materialised. He acknowledged that his disillusionment with the process could be the result of his idealised or unrealistic expectations of such a process.

Dit is maar weer dat mens baie idealisties was toe ons begin het. Maar wat vir my ontugter het, en ek dink dit is 'n ontugtering wat deur die land vloei nou, is dat ons het hierdie ideale gehad en ons besef dat dit nie alles waar gaan word nie. So, ek dink wat my gevang het, is die verskil in teorie en praktyk, dat dit wat ons graag wou sien gebeur, nie gebeur nie. As daar iets gebeur, is dit nie regtig iets wat ons in gedagte gehad het nie.



Looking back at critical and decisive decisions that were taken, Pedro was concerned about the wisdom of some of the decisions. In the post-transformation period he felt that they had erred in some respects.

Nou na 'n jaar dink ek nie dit was so 'n goeie besluit om deeldissiplines af te skaf nie, dit was dalk 'n fout gewees.

It seems as if he had regrets about this particular decision. It may be deduced that his experience of the unsatisfactory outcome or effect of this doubtful decision contributed to his feelings of uneasiness and dissatisfaction with the transformation process. The question arises to what extent his doubts affected his opinion about his own judgment.

Finally, for Pedro transformation meant fundamentally a change of heart and a shared vision. In his opinion, this did not happen.

Ek het gedink dat, dit is moeilik om te sê, ons 'n baie meer gemeenskaplike visie sou hê en dit is nie so nie. Dat mense in hulle sou verander, maar ek besef dit is 'n baie idealistiese siening gewees wat ek destyds gehad het van die transformasie.

There seemed to be a substantial difference between the idea of transformation, his expectations of the process and how it actually materialised.

#### 4.10.1.3 Experience of current work situation

Apart from referring to his involvement in new and interesting course material, Pedro made no remarks about his personal work activities. However, the work environment and the attitudes of colleagues seemed to be significant in his experience of the current, post-transformation work situation. He described the atmosphere of the new department as dull in comparison to that of the former department.

Die hele kultuur wat daar in die Fakulteit geheers het en sommige departemente soos die een waar ek was, het 'n baie goeie werkkultuur gehad. Dit is 'n departement wat gevibreer het van aktiwiteite en mense het lawaai in die gange en geredeneer en gepraat en geargumenteer en hulle was vol planne gewees: "kom ons doen dit, kom ons doen dat". Nou, jy sien self die gange is dood in die middag... hier is nou mense wat 'n heeltemal ander etos het.

It seems that Pedro longed for the vibrancy, companionship and way of doing things in his previous department. He found it difficult to get used to the dullness of the new department.

On a very personal level, Pedro mentioned that some of his professional activities were not approved by the previous dominant thinking within the organisation. In the post-transformation period, this attitude seemed to have changed. Colleagues were more appreciative of his activities.

Daar is ook meer verdraagsaamheid, byvoorbeeld dit is nou positief vir my wat baie lief is om in ('n spesifieke plek) (sekere) werk te doen. Dis of hulle besef dit moet gebeur. In die verlede was ek baie sterk gekritiseer. Jy weet 'n akademikus is nie eintlik veronderstel om sy hande vuil te smeer nie. So daar was tog bewussynsverruiming van gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid by 'n groep.

However, despite this change in thinking, Pedro seemed to expect a more radical change in their attitude and thinking.



Ek kan partykeer met vreeslike rare goed kom en in plaas daarvan dat mense na my luister, kan hulle my totaal afskiet en my persoonlik aanval. Dit is vir my nog steeds baie swaar.

Pedro did not provide enough information about his personal professional situation in the post-transformation period to justify a conclusion about his immediate work activities and level of job satisfaction. However, it may be concluded that he found the lack of vibrancy and the change in the work culture in his department unsatisfactory. Despite changes in the organisation's attitude and thinking, he still found it difficult to be himself in the organisation. The discussion seemed to focus primarily on his perceptions of and involvement in the organisation as an entity rather than on his personal, professional activities on a daily basis.

A summary of Pedro's experience of the post-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- The process resulted in substantial changes for Pedro: he moved to a new office and a new department, lost some of his colleagues but acquired new ones. He retained responsibility for parts of his previous activities and had to involve himself in some of the new courses implemented during the process.
  - Pedro found the process difficult and generally disappointing. He expected it to be radical and result in a change of heart and a shared vision, which did not materialise. He also had doubts about the wisdom of some of the decisions taken. To him, the theory and the expectations of transformation were far removed from its actual implementation.
  - Except for referring to his involvement in new courses he enjoyed, Pedro did not offer much information about his personal situation. He did indicate that he found the work environment less active and vibrant than previously. However, he experienced more appreciation from colleagues for some of his activities but still felt that they should have become more tolerant of other perspectives.
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#### **4.10.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the decision to transform (pre-transformation)**

##### **4.10.2.1 The need for transformation**

Before the organisation took the decision to transform, Pedro felt uncomfortable with the status quo. His exposure to outside people, literature and developments in other organisations, and a sensitivity to the external environment in which the organisation had to operate, led him to realise that the organisation had to transform.

Dit is maar hoe ek grootgeword het, lees meer kritiese toerieë. My belangstelling in die filosofie, in teorie, in die tale en 'n bewussyn wat in my gegroei het. Ek moet sê ek is baie sterk beïnvloed deur wat in die Fakulteit Teologie gebeur het, invloed van buite ook, denkers, in die Universiteit met wie ek in gesprek was. Gesprekke wat ek gehad het met mense het my in tot so 'n mate verander dat ek voel ek moet nou die gesprek probeer voortsit in die Fakulteit, al is dit dan binne my eie klein kring.

He explained that conversation about growth and transformation had changed him as follows:

My uitkyk, my siening van die Universiteit, ons rol in die samelewing. Ek het baie meer krities geraak oor die rol van die universiteit in die samelewing, en besef ons sal moet verander en dat ons uit pas uit is met Afrika. En dit kom nou al van lankal af, dit is 'n wete wat groei in jou en dit kom deur hierdie intersubjektiewe gesprek.



Apart from being personally convinced about the necessity to transform, Pedro felt he had a responsibility to initiate this debate in the organisation. It may thus be deduced that Pedro not only agreed with the decision to transform, but also tried to influence his colleagues and the organisation towards the decision.

#### **4.10.3 Phase 2: Perceptions, opinions and experiences regarding the process of transformation**

##### **4.10.3.1 Participation in the process of transformation**

Pedro promoted the idea of organisational transformation. Because he agreed with the decision to transform, he participated in the process. Furthermore, Pedro described the process of transformation as somewhat chaotic in nature:

Wat swaar is van transformasie is dat dit altyd met 'n bietjie chaos gepaard gaan want dit is verandering en dinge is nie meer so ordelik nie. Maar dit gee dan ook vir die individu 'n bietjie meer vryheid om sy eie ding te doen.

This chaotic nature of the process provided Pedro with the freedom to move beyond previous confines and be creative in his work. He also indicated that he participated because as employee (and perhaps as a senior staff member) he had a responsibility to make a success of the process.

Omdat ons die verantwoordelikheid gehad het, kon kreatief wees, jou eie ding doen. Ek het bygedra omdat dit vir my lekker is om kreatief te wees, om buite reëls en regulasies te funksioneer.

##### **4.10.3.2 Critical reassessment of the organisation/current situation**

Pedro was of the opinion that a positive aspect of the process was that it forced them to reassess the organisation's relevance to the needs of the clients and the external environment.

Ek dink wat positief is, is dat ons nou uiteindelik begin om die gemeenskap se behoeftes aan te spreek met ons studiemateriaal, dat ons besig is om relevant te raak. Die behoeftes van ons studente, die behoeftes van ons land.

##### **4.10.3.3 Room for new ideas**

As discussed, Pedro felt that the chaotic nature of the process provided people with opportunities that would not have happened under normal circumstances.

Wat swaar is van transformasie is dat dit altyd met 'n bietjie chaos gepaard gaan want dit is verandering en dinge is nie meer so ordelik nie. Maar dit gee dan ook vir die individu 'n bietjie meer vryheid om sy eie ding te doen. Die chaos het 'n geleentheid gebied.

He also indicated that the process contributed to a change in thinking with respect to acceptable professional activities. In the pre-transformation period some of his activities were frowned upon and perceived as less professional or less academic. These activities became more acceptable as a result of the process. Pedro found that colleagues' attitudes had changed, become more tolerant than prior to the process. For Pedro, this was a definite positive of the process.



Daar is ook meer verdraagsaamheid, byvoorbeeld dit is nou positief vir my wat baie lief is om sekere werk te doen. Dit is of hulle besef dit moet gebeur. In die verlede was ek baie sterk gekritiseer. Jy weet 'n akademikus is nie eintlik veronderstel om sy hande vuil te smeer nie. So daar was tog bewussynsverruiming van gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid by 'n groep.

It may thus be concluded that the process of transformation created opportunities and room for new ideas and initiatives and also an attitude of tolerance among the people for new or unusual ideas.

#### 4.10.3.4 Interpersonal relationships

Pedro found that some of his non-typical academic activities became acceptable as professional activities as a result of the process. Not only did his activities become more acceptable, but he found that his colleagues' attitude towards him and his particular professional involvement had changed. It may be deduced that Pedro's formal interpersonal relationships with former antagonistic colleagues changed as a result of the change in perspective in the organisation.

Daar is ook meer verdraagsaamheid, byvoorbeeld dit is nou positief vir my wat baie lief is om 'n sekere werk te doen.

However, Pedro also found the opposite. While some colleagues became more tolerant and lenient in their thinking and attitudes, others of opposing opinions felt more strongly about their viewpoints. They defended their viewpoints by attacking Pedro and some of his colleagues personally.

Aan die een kant was daar hierdie verruiming gewees in perspektief, in filosofie, maar dit het ook 'n backlash gehad. 'n Baie skerp Christelik Fundamentalistiese backlash. En wat ons nou baie sleg ervaar hierdie jaar, daar was 'n taamlieke sterk aanval op ons groep geloods asof ons nou sou onchristelik of anti-christelik wees in ons beskouing en dat ons hulle nie wil ruimte gee om hulle standpunt te stel nie.

It may be argued that the direct and personal attacks on Pedro affected his relationship with these colleagues in a negative way.

In writing course material, Pedro came into serious conflict with one colleague who chose to present the material in the way it used to be done in the pre-transformation period. In an effort to resolve opposing paradigms, the relationship between them was irretrievably damaged. In his opinion, they could not resolve the problem.

Die probleem is toe nie aangespreek nie waaroor ek baie jammer is. Dit het eintlik gelei tot openlike konflik.

Pedro also felt critical about those colleagues who were unwilling to be retrained or re-skilled in order to be used in different or new capacities in the post-transformation organisation. Although he did not explicitly describe them in negative terms, it may be deduced that he had hostile feelings towards them.

Nou sit mens met die mense. Hulle is onwillig om heropgelei te word. Baie van hulle stel nie rêrig belang nie. Ek kry veral die indruk dat een helfte van die Fakulteit werk hulle morsdood en die ander helfte sit lekker rustig agteroor. Persone uit vorige departemente wil hulself nie laat heroplei nie, hulle wil eger nie saamspeel nie.



It seems that Pedro felt that these colleagues did not contribute to the process and the organisation as they should have. He had to develop new skills to remain effective in the new organisation. It may be argued that their perceived lack of commitment had a negative effect on his attitude towards these people.

Pedro admitted that the one aspect that really caused feelings of resistance and negativity in him, was the negative reactions of colleagues to the transformation process.

Wat my wel negatief gestem het en waarteen ek weerstand gebied het, is oor die negatiewe reaksie van ander kollegas op die proses. Ek het gevoel hulle hou die transformasieproses terug.

He took transformation as a given and expected colleagues to realise that and contribute to the process. He seemed upset by their lack of positive and constructive participation.

#### 4.10.3.5 Changing the way of doing things

According to Pedro, the process of transformation made people acknowledge their assumptions and viewpoints and discuss and defend them openly.

Daar was nooit in die verlede hierdie openlike debat nie, nou het ons dit. Dit is die een goeie ding dat mense nou bereid is om op te staan vir dit waarin hulle glo. En ek het respek vir hierdie ouens.

It may thus be deduced that prior to the process, the context did not require them to express their assumptions and viewpoints. It is possible to argue that perhaps some of the employees were not even aware of what their assumptions really were. It seems as if the change in the organisation's paradigm or underlying assumptions brought employees' personal assumptions to the fore. The discussion about the organisation's assumptions provided the opportunity for employees (or forced them) to become aware of and justify their own assumptions. Pedro found the open debate about personal beliefs and viewpoints one of the positive developments in the process.

Another positive development in Pedro's opinion was the change in the organisation towards critical thinking, transparency and participation. The implication therefore is that Pedro felt that these characteristics did not feature prominently in the pre-transformation organisation.

Ek dink wat positief is, is dat ons baie meer krities raak, daar is 'n groter mate van deursigtigheid en deelname.

#### 4.10.3.6 Empowerment of employees

Pedro observed that during the process some of his colleagues played a much more prominent role than before.

En ek dink veral, weet jy wie in die nuwe opset blom, is 'n klomp vrouens want die deure het vir hulle oopgegaan en dit is asof hulle nuut bemagtig is. Jy weet, ek sien ook baie groter deelname aan kongresse, en dat mense meer bereid is om hulle eie sê te sê. 'n Verdere ding wat positief is, ek sien 'n klomp mense hier wat nou nie net binne die fakulteit nie maar ook binne die universiteit betrokke geraak het. Wat die fakulteitgrense transendeer, wat bereid is om vir die vakunie te werk.

He experienced the empowerment of some of his colleagues as a very positive outcome of the process of transformation.





#### 4.10.3.7 Introducing uncertainties: the need for personal redefinition

Pedro was convinced of the necessity for the organisation to transform. He worked towards this goal by means of introducing and continuing the debate for transformation in the organisation. Despite his personal conviction of the necessity to change and his personal endeavours to introduce the process of transformation, Pedro indicated that he found the transformation difficult and had to find himself in the post-transformation situation.

Ek moet myself herontdek in hierdie nuwe omgewing. Dit was vir my baie swaar en ek was een van die ouens wat transformasie voorgestaan het, ek wat selfs bereid was om getuies af te vlieg vir die kommissie van ondersoek.

Pedro's redefinition or rediscovery of himself in his new environment leads to the deduction that, despite his pro-transformation attitude and actions, he could not fully prepare himself for the transformed situation. He could not simply continue as usual in the new organisation. Although Pedro did not specify how he had to rediscover himself, it is clear that it was not possible to anticipate pro-actively what the new organisation would be like and adjust accordingly.

#### 4.10.3.8 Management of the process

Pedro felt negative about particular management aspects of the transformation process. He regarded it as a problem that employees were not consulted on the allocation of employees to new departments. He felt that it was contrary to the notion of democracy that was supposedly one of the characteristics of the process and the organisation.

Wat vir my belangrik is om daar te sê, is dat ek geen sê gehad het nie dat ek oorgaan. Die probleem is dat almal daar wou gewees het en toe is daar redelik arbitrêr net gewoon besluit waarheen jy gaan en watter kursus jy gaan doen, sonder enige konsultasie. Dit was vir my heeltemal teenstrydig met die hele idee van demokrasie en so in 'n sekere sin het ons hierdie verandering ondergaan maar dit was glad nie demokraties op die ou einde gewees nie.

In his opinion, the organisation lacked leadership throughout the process.

Daar was nie leierskap nie, nie in die Universiteit nie en nie in die Fakulteit nie. Leierskap is om 'n visie oor te dra aan die mense.

From this statement it may be deduced that Pedro felt that they did not necessarily have a vision that guided them through the transformation process. They did not necessarily know where they were going or what they were moving towards.

Power games were perceived to be part of the process. Pedro felt that some of the people (influential) did not necessarily work towards the transformation process and for the good of the organisation. They seemed to be more concerned about their own positions and survival in the "new" organisation than the effective outcome of the process.

Ek beseft daar is baie belange wat beskerm word binne die Universiteit, magsbelange en dat jy sit met magspeletjies wat mense speel. Dat mense nie rêrig wil verander nie, dit gaan vir hulle meer om oorlewing... Hulle speel hierdie powergames... Ek dink die groot probleem met transformasie is eie belang wat healtyd in die pad kom.

Pedro stressed the difference between the decision to transform and the actual implementation of the decision. He indicated that, although it was a good decision, the implementation of the decision was not necessarily unproblematic. He substantiated this remark by referring to



redeployed employees who were supposed to be retrained, but eventually lost interest in this decision.

Ek dink die besluit om te transformeer was op sigself nie problematies nie, maar wel die implementering daarvan. Persone uit vorige departemente wil hulself nie laat heroplei nie, hulle wil egter nie saamspeel nie.

#### 4.10.3.9 Intrapersonal characteristics

##### (a) Desire to be creative

As mentioned, Pedro agreed with the notion to transform and therefore participated in the process. He also mentioned that he found the chaos stimulating because it provided him with the opportunity to be creative and function beyond particular boundaries - something he prefers. This desire to be creative could have contributed to his involvement and participation in the process even despite his disappointment with the nature or extent of the transformation.

##### (b) Responsibility towards the process

Pedro made it clear that he had to participate in the process and continue participating because he had a responsibility to make a success of the process. It was not clear to what extent responsibility was delegated to him or to what extent he took the responsibility upon himself as a member of the organisation. What is clear, however, is that Pedro was convinced of his responsibility to make a success of the process.

##### (c) Broad perspective on transformation

Pedro's perceptions of the process and especially his particular view and expectation of the process stemmed from his perspective of the organisation as integrated in a broader South African (even African) context. Apart from changing the structure, the style of management, courses and course material, Pedro was aware of the necessity to transform the organisation to keep up with the external changes and demands. His evaluation and experience of the process was therefore in terms of changes internally but also in terms of the relation with the external environment.

A summary of his experiences and opinions regarding the process of transformation is provided below.

- 
- Pedro participated in the process because he agreed with the decision to transform and because the process allowed him the freedom to be creative. He also felt that it was his responsibility to participate.
  - According to Pedro the reassessment of the organisation's relevance to the needs of the clients and the external environment was a positive aspect of the process.
  - For Pedro it was a positive experience that the process of transformation created opportunities for new ideas and initiatives and contributed to an attitude of tolerance among colleagues for new ideas.
  - Pedro had various experiences in his relationships with fellow employees. On the one hand, he felt that some colleagues developed an appreciation and acceptance of his "unconventional" professional activities while at the same time, others of opposing views defended their position by attacking him personally. He felt particularly negative about people who resisted the process and some



hostility towards those who were unwilling to be retrained for “re-application” in the new organisation.

- The process contributed to open debate, critical thinking, transparency and participation in decision making. In his opinion these were positive changes to the way things were done in the organisation.
  - In his opinion some employees (especially women), were empowered in the process. He saw this as a positive outcome of the process.
  - One of the difficulties of the transformation was that he had to redefine or rediscover himself in the post-transformation organisation.
  - Pedro did not have a positive experience of the management of the process. In his opinion, not enough consultation took place and it lacked leadership in providing the organisation with a vision. He also felt that some of the influential people were more concerned about their own positions and power than about the good of the organisation.
  - Several personal characteristics may have played a role in his perception of transformation and his conduct during and experience of the process.
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#### **4.10.4 Opinions and experiences regarding nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations**

##### 4.10.4.1 The nature of a transformation process

###### (a) Diverse meanings of the concept transformation

It may be deduced from Pedro's experience of the process that he understood transformation to entail a change of heart and attitude, and providing room for differences over and above tangible changes to courses, structures and processes. As in previous interviews, his particular expectation of the process to a large extent determined his actual experience of and satisfaction with the process. Within one organisation the concept “transformation” means different things and evokes different expectations from the various employees.

###### (b) Chaotic nature

It seems as if some sort of chaos is part and parcel of a transformation process. Because of the many variables involved in such a process, it seems impossible to predict or manage all of them. So, for example, it is impossible to predict how employees will react to the different aspects of the process. Managing these reactions or emotions is simply impossible. Some employees seem to thrive on the element of unpredictability and use the opportunity to their advantage while others find it threatening. The question is to what extent management experience a transformation process as chaotic. In other words, is it at all possible to be totally in control of such a process?

###### (c) Changing truths and changing relationships

Pedro's reference to the changing attitude towards and perception of his community activities leads to the deduction that a transformation process makes room for the re-evaluation and re-assessment of “truths” and “untruths” of the old system. In his situation, previous unacceptable activities became desirable activities in the new system. Two deductions may be made: In the first place it should simply be noted that the nature of a transformation process is such that truths and untruths of the old system are re-evaluated for applicability in the new system.



Moreover, this re-evaluation process could entail all dimensions of the organisation; even aspects not necessarily intended for re-evaluation. It is not a given that truths or best practices of the old system will retain validity in the new system.

In the second place, it may be argued that the changed thinking or perspective on truths and untruths of the previous system will also affect the interpersonal power relationships and/or importance of individuals in an organisation. Employees can gain standing or more power in an organisation when the belief (truth) or activity they are associated with gains acceptance or validity in the new system. The contrary could obviously happen as well. It may thus be concluded that the changing beliefs, assumptions and desirable practices in an organisation resulting from a transformation process have an influence on interpersonal relationships and an individual's standing or status in the organisation.

(d) Clarifying hidden assumptions, beliefs, view points

Pedro's reference to the debate resulting from the process leads to the deduction that a transformation process forces people to become aware of and define their own assumptions and beliefs according to which they operate/function. It is possible that employees are not always sure or aware of the hidden assumptions that guide their actions and beliefs regarding the organisation and the process. Such a process thus seems to bring assumptions to the fore/surface and enables employees to acknowledge and discuss differences in assumptions. (Discussing assumptions does not necessarily mean agreement or conflict-free discussion).

4.10.4.2 Management of a transformation process

(a) Participation in decision making

Pedro's negative experience of the lack of consultation or participation in decision making once again points to the importance of this aspect in a transformation process. It is clear that the way decisions are taken is just as important as the actual decisions.

(b) Leadership to provide the vision

Pedro said that in their organisation they lacked leadership that could provide the organisation with a vision to guide it through the transformation process. He thus felt that a transformation process should be facilitated by leadership that provides a vision to employees on the direction and objective of the process.



#### 4.11 Participant 11: Robert (fictitious name)

Robert's experience of the transformation process is slightly different to the other participants, seeing that he formed part of the management team that initiated and managed the transformation process. Although he also experienced the process and was confronted with the results, he was co-responsible for the management of the transformation.

##### 4.11.1 Description and experience of the current post-transformation situation

###### 4.11.1.1 Measurable changes as result of the transformation

Robert used to be head of department of one of the previous six departments. He was elected as one of four heads of the new organisational structure. He had the responsibility of establishing a totally new department with a new focus and activities, new departmental members in a different physical environment. In addition to assuming responsibility for a new department, he also made a career shift in involving himself in a different sub-discipline in which he used to be involved. To some extent, this was a necessary move, seeing that his previous specialist area became far less important in the new system.

###### 4.11.1.2 Experience of the transformation in general and the extent of the transformation specifically

In general, Robert experienced the process as more positive than negative.

Die transformasie was vir my oorwegend positief. As ek dit weer moet doen, sou ek waarskynlik dieselfde pad geloop het.

He described the transformation as having involved various aspects of the organisation. Dealing with the international competitiveness of the organisation seemed to be a critical dimension.

Ons was vir jare geïsoleer maar na 1994 het baie mense oorsese universiteite besoek. Die vraag is of ons in pas is met internasionale universiteite. As ons kompetender wil bly, moet ons aanpas.

It included the relationship with the clients, the style of management, the structure of the organisation, processes (the way of doing things) and the physical movement of employees into the new structure.

Vroeër het dosente besluit wat die studente moet weet. Nou is dit meer van 'n kompromis tussen die dosent en die behoefte van die student. Ons moet nou vra wat die student wil hê.

Die literatuur sê dat bestuurstyle nou baie anders is as vroeër. Nou praat ons van demokratiese bestuur in plaas van outokratiese bestuur.

Ons het besluit op 'n plat struktuur met so min moontlik red tape en bestuursposisies. Die aanstelling van bestuurders moet ook meer demokraties wees.

It may also be deduced that in the process the organisation also responded to the demands of the changed external, socio-political environment.

Daar was baie druk van politieke groeperinge - die druk sê ons moet verander.

Robert seemed quite positive about the changes that materialised as a result of the transformation. Although he did not explicitly say so, his general satisfaction with the transformation leads to the deduction that he felt that they had achieved the objectives what they had set for them-



selves. Despite this positive outlook, Robert seemed to be quite aware of colleagues' disapproval with the implementation of some decisions and the problems created by some decisions.

Vier persone is byvoorbeeld hier ingedeel sonder om 'n kursus te doseer wat hier tuishoort. Dit is 'n bron van baie ander probleme.

However, the actual issue that seriously raised his concern was the impact of these changes on the people in the organisation. In his opinion, this is one aspect of the transformation that should have been dealt with in a different manner.

Ek het die vroeë gevra oor hoe dit (transformasie) die mense gaan raak. Vir baie mense is hierdie hulle hele lewe: hier voel hulle veilig. Dit is een van die bekommernisse maar die UKF (Uitvoerende Komitee van die Fakulteit) het van my verskil hieroor. Vir hulle was dit 'n minor issue. Ons staan drie jaar verder en ek dink hulle besef dit nog steeds nie. Van my kollegas se verhouding het verbrokkel, een is in 'n kliniek opgeneem, 'n ander is uit die vriendekring geskop. My vraag is in watter mate is hierdie probleme geskep of aangehelp deur transformasie. My mening is dat ons dit geskep het.

He was so serious about the emotional neglect of the people that he tried to establish a service to assist people in coping with the transformation and its implications.

Ek probeer om 'n beradingsentrum te stig — as departementshoof moet ek kyk na hoe mense die transformasie hanteer. Kollegas moet hier kan kom sit en praat. As ek nie kan help nie dan sal ek hulle verwys na hulp.

This remark leads to the deduction that, in his position as manager, Robert felt personally responsible for the well-being of his colleagues.

#### 4.11.1.3 Experience of current work situation

Robert's work situation in the post-transformation organisation included two (closely-related) dimensions, namely his managerial responsibilities as head of department and his own academic activities. Due to his responsibilities as head of department (pre-transformation) he lost contact with his own subdiscipline. The transformation furthermore resulted in the abolishment of one of these areas. While he initially found this as unsettling, he later saw the opportunity of making a career shift, which in the end turned out to be satisfactory.

Ek persoonlik het ... Opvoedkunde onderig. Maar toe word ek aangestel as departementshoof en het dus nie meer tyd om die kursus te hanteer nie. Ek het dus die vakke verloor. Ek het in 'n groot mate losgeslaan gevoel; ek het gevoel ek moet nou 'n loopbaanskuif maak. Die departementhoofskap het eintlik vir my nuwe moontlikhede oopgemaak. Ek het in bestuur gespesialiseer en het die kans gekry om die inhoud toe te pas.

Being head of department provided him with the opportunity to apply his acquired knowledge and skills. It may therefore be argued that Robert was not in a worse position than prior to the transformation process. As a matter of fact, this managerial position has the potential of facilitating/enhancing his academic activities in his area of speciality.

#### 4.11.1.4 Interpersonal relationships

As head of the department Robert clearly enjoyed the trust and respect of his fellow colleagues. This relationship of trust with members of his department and other colleagues seems to have been a very positive experience for Robert and something he consciously nurtured.



Probleme waarmee mense worstel lê op die vlak van 'n nood om met ander te praat. Ek word aanvaar deur kollegas en daarom praat hulle met my. Ek geniet dit ook dat mense uit ander departemente by my instap. Dit voel of ek vir mense iets beteken en dit maak dit sinvol. Mense het vertroue in my en hulle weet dat wat hulle vir my sê nie weer oorvertel gaan word nie.

It may be concluded that Robert's personal work situation was not negatively affected by the transformation. His honest relationships with colleagues and the respect and trust he had from them contributed significantly to the fulfilment he experienced in his work situation.

A summary of his experiences of the post-transformation period is provided below.

- 
- Robert had to resume responsibility for the management of the transformation process as well as for a whole new department. He had to move office and got involved in an area he had specialised in some time ago.
  - Personally, he experienced the process as predominantly positive.
  - As manager, he felt that they had no option but to transform. To be internationally competitive and to meet the concerns and demands of the external environment, they had to change.
  - Despite his full agreement with the theoretical decisions that were taken, he was of the opinion that mistakes were being made in the implementation phase. The new structure was a source of several problems and unhappiness while he also felt that the emotional impact of the process on employees was underestimated and perhaps even ignored. This was a real concern for him in the post-transformation period.
  - He found his work situation in the post-transformation period satisfactory and challenging as it provided him with the opportunity to apply his knowledge and skills in his new position.
  - As head of department he particularly enjoyed the opportunity to develop close and confidential relationships with colleagues. He found these relationships rewarding.
- 

#### **4.11.2 Phase 1: Perceptions and opinions regarding the organisation's decision to transform**

##### **4.11.2.1 The need to transform and the impetus for the transformation**

As part of the management team that took the decision and steered the process, Robert was involved in the transformation right from the start. His satisfaction with the outcome of the process made it clear that he agreed with the organisation's decision to transform.

Die transformasie was vir my oorwegend positief. As ek dit weer moet doen, sou ek waarskynlik dieselfde pad geloop het.

For him, the impetus for the transformation came from various sources: he referred to colleagues' exposure to international organisations that raised the issue of competitiveness, pressure from the political sphere to change the paradigm (socio-political paradigm) of the organisation, the changed needs of their clients and scientific literature on recent management styles.

Eintlik het alles gesê dat ons moet verander.



It may thus be deduced from this statement that, as an individual, Robert felt that the transformation was inevitable. It was something that the organisation had to do.

#### 4.11.3 Phase 2: Experiences of the process of transformation

##### 4.11.3.1 Participation in the process

Robert clearly indicated that his participation in the process was not the natural result of his being in a managerial position and having to set an example. As an individual he consciously evaluated the situation, realised that the transformation was necessary and then decided to give the process his full support.

Toe ek vir myself uitgemaak het dat ons moet verander, het ek besluit om daarvoor te gaan met alles wat ek het en ek kyk nie weer terug nie.

He participated in the process because he agreed intellectually with the direction of the organisation. It is possible that, as manager, he also felt it his responsibility to the organisation and his fellow colleagues.

##### 4.11.3.2 Interpersonal relationships

On a personal level, Robert felt positive about his relationship with his fellow heads of departments. It seems as if he saw these managers as his support group. He also felt that during the process he got to know new people, which was a very positive outcome.

My verhouding met die ander departementshoofde is ook vir my 'n positiewe ervaring. Die dag voel leeg as ek hulle nie êrens gesien het nie. My vriendekring het ook uitgebrei. Dit is natuurlik 'n vraag of die (nuwe) struktuur dit noodwendig teweeggebring het.

As manager, Robert was of the opinion that many of his colleagues became isolated during the process.

Een van die eerste dinge wat die vise-dekaan vir my gesê het, is dat sy baie geïsoleerd is van kollegas, van vriende en van vakinhoud. Ek dink dit geld vir meer van my kollegas — hulle is baie geïsoleerd.

The vice-dean's reference to her feelings of isolation may be interpreted in two ways. First, it could be argued that such a position inevitably leads to isolation due to the nature of the activities and responsibilities. If this is a given of the position, it seems possible that feelings of isolation will even be enhanced by a process of transformation, which has the effect of influencing interpersonal relationships. This raises the question of the support that is available for people in such positions during transformation.

##### 4.11.3.3 Sharing of experiences

Robert was of the opinion that many of the problems people experienced revolved around the need to be able to talk to other people about their own problems and fears; to share their experiences. His concern was about the process or organisation's inability to accommodate this need either in processes or in facilities (to enable or enhance discussion).

Probleme waarmee mense worstel lê op die vlak van 'n nood om met ander te praat. Ek word aanvaar deur kollegas en daarom praat hulle met my. Van die kollegas word in groeperinge ingedwing waarin hulle nie pas nie. Op sigwaarde lyk dit vir my dat die mense nie bymekaar





uitkom nie tensy jy gaan pos uithaal. Hier is geen teekamer nie, geen ruimte vir samesprekings of groepwerk nie.

This need to share experiences, anxieties and uncertainties was something that Robert experienced himself.

My probleem is, waar gaan die dekaan en die departementshoof heen vir gesprek? Ek het 'n geweldige behoefte om vir iemand te sê watter probleme ek ervaar, om my eie frustrasies uit te spreek... Al die bestuursmense sit op die komitee vir M- en D-studies en dit gee die geleentheid vir die bestuur om op mekaar se skouers te huil. Dit lewer 'n geweldige bydrae om eie gevoelens van onsekerheid en van angs te besweer.

Robert was in the fortunate position that a research committee could be used as discussion group for the managers. In his experience, this opportunity to share contributed significantly to his ability to cope with the process. It should be noted that although this committee was not dedicated for the purpose of sharing, the managers used it as such because of their need to share. The downside of this event is that the needs of the managers were being fulfilled without the recognition of the organisation (management) that this dimension should be dealt with more officially. The implication thereof is that the general employees and even people in other positions (such as the vice dean) did not have access to such an opportunity. It may be argued, however, that the managers created an opportunity to share because of their need.

To conclude, it seems that employees and even people in managerial positions have a need to share experiences and feelings about transformation during and after the process. Robert benefited significantly from an opportunity to share. He regarded the lack of opportunities for all staff members to share experiences as one of the shortcomings of the process.

#### 4.11.3.4 Practical aspects of the implementation of the process

Adequate equipment, furniture and organised access to the support staff seemed to be a dimension that influences people's experience of the process. The size of an office, which presumably symbolised a person's status, the amount and quality of furniture and equipment had to be taken care of during people's relocation.

Die kantoorgroottes was problematies en dan het die universiteit nog sekere reëls byvoorbeeld matte en kaste wat by sekere range tuishoort. Dit het gebeur dat byvoorbeeld lektore meubels het wat nie by hul rang pas nie en wat dus bang was dat indien hulle trek, gaan hulle die meubels verloor. Al hierdie probleme moes uitsorteer word: probleme rondom ameublement and apparatuur.

Robert felt that the lack of proper equipment and access to available resources had a negative impact on the employees. For example, the new structure resulted in confusion about the administrative responsibilities, which employees experienced very negatively.

Omdat ons aan programme werk, is dit nie altyd duidelik waarheen die tikwerk moet gaan en hoe dit verdeel moet word nie. Administrasie en finansiering word baie negatief beleef.

Robert was of the opinion that the "small" concrete issues that affected the immediate functioning of people, were not properly taken care of during the process of transformation.

Ek het as departementshoof die navorsingsuitsetfonds gebruik en seker gemaak dat almal rekenaars en drukkers het. Met die herstrukturering het junior lektore beter rekenaars as bv.



die professore gehad. Dit is klein goedjies wat mense gelukkig maak in hulle werk. Dit is in die transformasie geïgnoreer.

#### 4.11.3.5 Room for new ideas and new opportunities

Overseeing the process, Robert felt that, for many people, the process resulted in the removal of frustrations that had existed for many years. It also contributed to an increased experience of freedom.

Vir baie was dit die verwydering van 'n frustrasie wat oor jare opgehoop het. Vir baie jare al was daar 'n behoefte om inhoude te verander — hulle ideale is skielik verwesenlik. Dit is 'n groep mense wat groter vryheid beleef, hulle word nie meer aan bande gelê nie. Die struktuur en vakinhoud gee nou vryheid om oor genres heen te werk.

Increased freedom was one of the aspects that Robert himself experienced as a positive result of the process.

Wat ek besonder positief ervaar, is die groter mate van vryheid.

#### 4.11.3.6 Changing the way of doing things

In Robert's opinion changes in the way they used to do things resulted in a positive experience of the process. He indicated that people experienced the new style of management as a positive development because it was more flexible and involved employees to a greater extent.

Die nuwe bestuurstyl word positief beleef. Die vorige styl was streng, outokraties en kwaai. Mense kan nou vreesloos sit en werk. Daar is groter buigbaarheid, deelnemende bestuur.

#### 4.11.3.7 Introduction of uncertainties

Inherent in the concept of transformation is the notion of retrenchment, which inevitably leads to fear, anxiety and negativity during such a process.

Die gedagte aan AA en die onsekerheid wat daarmee gepaard gaan. Almal besef dat jy personeel sal moet verloor en sal moet plekmaak vir anderskleuriges en anderstaliges. Ons het 'n formule gebruik om werkverdeling te doen waarvan die doel was om gelyke werksverdeling te bewerkstellig. Nou wil die mense meer punte of ure hê want hulle is bang hulle word op grond daarvan retrench. Die vrees en angstigtheid is diepliggend.

The lack of security is related to the demand on organisations to change the staff profile staff in response to the socio-political transformation in the external environment. However, it is possible to argue that the lack of security refers indirectly to the uncertainty about the criteria to be applied when the organisation decides to retrench employees.

Robert observed that the implementation of a new language policy, which resulted in lecturers having to present courses in their second language, created an anxiety amongst some of them that this would eventually result in the loss of their own language and culture.

Daar is vrees vir nuwigheid. Die taalbeleid is 'n goeie voorbeeld: Kollegas doseer een kursus in Engels en dan ontstaan daar 'n vrees vir die algehele opskorting van hul taal en kultuur.

#### 4.11.3.8 Perceived outcomes of the process

It seems as if the perceived outcome of the transformation process had an impact on the people's experience of the process. Perceived successes tended to instill a positive experience



of the process whereas perceived failures or difficulties enhanced a negative experience. Robert indicated that people felt very positive about the decrease in negative comments or publicity about the organisation due to the transformation that took place.

Dit is positief beleef dat die druk van buite-instansies, veral die wat baie invloed het, afgeneem het. Die negatiewe kommentaar, kommentaar in dagblaaie in briewekolomme het baie afgeneem. Dit is as positief beleef.

He also referred to the positive attitude people had towards the organisation's new, improved products or courses.

Die mense voel dat die kursusse die moeite werd is.

This is also something that Robert felt particularly positive about.

Dit was vir my lekker om terug te kom na my sabbatsverlof. Die nuwe gidse lyk mooi en ek is trots daarop.

The organisation's financial difficulties that were partially the result of the transformation process made people negative about the process and query the necessity thereof.

Opvoedkunde is nou in die rooi omdat Opvoedkunde 1,2 en 3 afgeskaf is. Sodra dit ter sake kom sê die mense dat hulle nie meer bevordering kry nie, hulle hoor elke dag hulle moet bespaar. Wanneer hierdie kwessies opgehaal word dan vra hulle hoekom dit nodig was om te verander.

#### 4.11.3.9 Intrapersonal dimension

Apart from his personal agreement with the organisation's decision to transform and his responsibility as manager, Robert explained his acceptance of the changes and his participation in the process as a result of his ability to deal with change.

Ek dink dit lê in my persoonlikheid. Ek dink dit is 'n mens se gesindheid jeens verandering — ek kan cope met verandering.

#### 4.11.3.10 Management of the process

Robert regarded the time-consuming nature of the management of the process as one of his negative experiences.

Die geweldige tyd wat dit geneem het, die organisasie of die by-mekaar-hou van dinge. Die werksverdeling het byvoorbeeld 'n minimum van drie maande geneem.

The overemphasis on participation and democracy contributed to his negative experience of the process. In addition, he indicated that the poor communication of decisions to staff members was problematic.

Die oordrewe beklemtoning van demokrasie, die oordrewe raadpleging ervaar ek as negatief. Jy moet baie mense raadpleeg en verduidelik. Die probleem is dat besluite nie gekommunikeer is nie. Maar daar moet êrens 'n balans wees: 'n besluit moet geneem word. Almal raak gefrustreerd as 'n besluit nie geneem kan word nie.

Although in general Robert felt positive about the process and its management and outcome (or results), he made it clear that he disagreed with management about their approach to the people in the management of the process. In his opinion, they did not do enough to accommodate the



people in the process. As a matter of fact, he believed that, even after the completion of the process, management was still not aware of the impact of the transformation on the employees.

Ek het die vroeë gevra oor hoe dit die mense gaan raak. Vir baie mense is hierdie hulle hele lewe; hier voel hulle veilig. Dit is een van my bekommernisse maar die UKF het van my verskil hieroor. Vir hulle was dit 'n minor issue. Ons staan drie jaar verder en ek dink hulle besef dit nog steeds nie. Van my kollegas se verhoudinge het verbrokkel, een is in 'n kliniek opgeneem, 'n ander uit die vriendekring geskop. My vraag is in watter mate is hierdie probleme geskep of aangehelp deur transformasie. My mening is dat ons dit geskep het.

Moreover, Robert felt that his concern about the emotional and psychological well-being of the people during the process resulted in his being stereotyped by the management committee.

Die ander bestuurslede verwys na my as die gesinsman, die mensman.

A summary of Robert's experience of the process of transformation is provided below.

- 
- Robert participated in the process because he was in full agreement with the necessity for the organisation to change.
  - The new relationships that were formed with the management committee contributed to his positive experience of the process. However, he was aware of colleagues' experience of isolation as a result of the process
  - As manager, he observed that the problems employees experienced during the process revolved around the need to share their anxieties, fears and experiences with other people. As manager, he had the same need to share his experiences but he was in the fortunate position of being able to do so in the management committee. In his opinion, the lack of opportunities for staff members to share their experiences was one of the shortfalls in the management of the process.
  - Staff members did not have adequate access to administrative support and resources while they also experienced many problems with respect to furniture and equipment. He felt that these practical issues were overlooked in the management of the process and thus contributed to employees' negative experience of the process.
  - The freedom for professional activities contributed to his positive experience of the process.
  - In his opinion, the more democratic style of management contributed to employees' positive experience of the process and the organisation at large.
  - Robert felt that some of the actions taken by employees were forced by a deeper anxiety or fear for losing their jobs.
  - Successful outcomes of the process, such as good products and a decrease in negative publicity, contributed to employees' positive experience of the process.
  - Robert explained his participation in the process by referring to his personal ability to cope with change.
  - He found the process extremely time consuming and also felt that there was an over-emphasis on participation and consultation.
  - Despite his general satisfaction with the process and its outcome, Robert felt strongly about the management committee's decision not to acknowledge the impact of the process on the psychological well-being of employees.
-



#### 4.11.4 Opinions and experiences regarding the nature and management of the transformation process and recommendations

##### 4.11.4.1 The nature of a transformation process

###### (a) Difference in perspectives between management and the general staff

The contrast between Robert's and other participants' opinions about the extent of participation in the decisions is quite significant. The general staff members were of the opinion that the staff members' participation was not sufficient; they should have been involved to a greater extent. Contrary to this opinion, Robert indicated that too much consultation took place. He felt that at times the consultation hampered effective decision making. This particular issue indicates the difference in experiences and opinions between management and the general staff during a transformation process. The question arises as to what extent such differences are part and parcel of a transformation process or perhaps only a symptom of the management (good/bad) of the process in this organisation. It seems valid to argue that such differences between management and staff members can contribute to feelings of hostility and can hamper future co-operation and trust in the organisation.

###### (b) Difference between theory and practice

What is significant in Robert's description and experience of the process is the difference between the theory of a decision and its actual implementation. Robert was convinced of the necessity for the organisation to transform. He also agreed with the depth or extent of the transformation process, resulting in changes in almost all aspects of the organisation. However, Robert was quite aware of the shortfalls in the implementation of the decisions. Although he supported the idea (decision) of changing the structure, he was aware of the practical problems created by this theoretical decision. Previous respondents also referred to their agreement with a decision that was taken but raised concern about the way it was implemented.

It is therefore argued that three levels in a decision should be identified, namely the theoretical decision, the practical implications of the decision and the way the decision is implemented.

##### 4.11.4.2 The management of a transformation process

###### (a) Sharing of feelings

Robert was particularly concerned about the inability of the organisation to deal with the emotional and psychological well-being of employees in the management of the process. In his interactions with colleagues, he became aware of people's need to share their feelings about the process. He personally experienced the need to share his anxieties and worries with people who would understand. Many of the participants also referred to the emotional impact the process had on their lives. It therefore seems valid to deduce that transformation does not only affect employees on an intellectual level but also on an emotional level. Given the origin of the transformation that affects people, it may be argued that, in the first instance, an organisation has to acknowledge the emotional impact of such a process and secondly, to take responsibility for assisting employees in dealing with the situation. As Robert and the vice dean remarked, managers are not safeguarded against the emotions, anxieties and worries brought about by a transformation process. Assistance to employees should therefore also make provision for the particular needs of managers, taking cognisance of the sensitivity of their positions.



(b) Practical aspects of a transformation process

Robert observed that administrative confusion and insufficient infrastructural support resulting from the transformation, had a significant impact on employees' experience of the process. In his opinion, more attention should have been given to this aspect during the management of the process. It seems as if the poor administration and infrastructural support affected people's immediate fulfilment of their duties. Instead of facilitating their professional activities, the poor administration and insufficient infrastructure became another hurdle to overcome in an already taxing process.

Given the increased workload and the emotional impact induced by such a process, it seems vital that an organisation alleviate as many hurdles or difficulties as possible to enable employees to cope with the workload and contribute to the bottom line of the organisation.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed individual participants' experience of the process of transformation, referring to various issues that elicited particularly negative and/or positive responses. Each participant's experience of the process is truly unique, depending on each one's particular characteristics and position in the organisation, amongst other things. However, it became apparent that particular themes, such as interpersonal relationships and opinions regarding the management of the process, were dominant in shaping participants' experiences. Where this chapter focused on the individual experiences of the process, chapter four deals with the similarities and differences in experiences pertaining to these dominant themes.

## CHAPTER 4

# ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA IN AND BETWEEN CATEGORIES

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Dey (1993, p. 128) remarks “that one of the most powerful injunctions of qualitative analysis is that data should be analysed in context”. This is the reason for organising and discussing the data in terms of themes or categories for each participant individually (in chapter 3). This provides the opportunity to understand the particular experiences in the context of the participant’s experience of the process in total. Kvale (1996) refers to the descriptions of individual experiences as the symptomatic reading of the experiences of participants. The participant’s account is acknowledged as a valid description of his/her relation with the particular phenomenon (transformation). The participant is not perceived or treated as a representative who should give an objective, verifiable account of the phenomenon.

The next step in the process of organising or analysing the data entails the comparison of data in or between categories. This step in the process usually allows the researcher to become more creative with the data. To compare data in and between categories necessitates the abstraction of the data from the context in which it is originally located (Dey, 1993). Although this option seems to be in direct contradiction to the notion of analysing data in context, it does not imply a complete break with the context. Comparing data in and between categories entails a constant referral to and interaction with the primary context to provide the framework within which valid interpretations can be made. Thus, abstracting data from its original context does not imply a complete break with the original context, but includes and encourages interaction with the context for clarification purposes (Dey, 1993). This contradiction may be partly rectified by “allowing direct access to the context from which the data has been abstracted” (Dey, 1993, p.128).

Viewing the data in terms of categories as opposed to the original context may be referred to as a recontextualisation of the data (Dey, 1993, p. 129). The advantage of this step in the analysis process is the opportunity it provides to view the data in a different way, which allows for identifying patterns, commonalities or differences in the data. The aim of this chapter is therefore the analysis of the data in and between the various identified categories or themes to uncover and develop new insights into participants’ experiences of transformation.

### 2 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF IDENTIFIED THEMES OR CATEGORIES

The framework (consisting of three phases) used in the description and presentation of the data in chapter 3 is also applied in the themes. Themes are therefore presented in the three phases, namely (1) the pre-transformation phase (phase 1); (2) during the transformation (phase 2), and (3) the post-transformation phase (phase 3). However, at times the comparison of data between

categories necessitated the comparison of themes classified in different phases. This was not seen as a problem as it was said earlier that the three phases were not watertight compartments and were mainly used to make the information provided by participants more accessible.

The various themes identified in chapter 3 are presented in Table 4.1 below, structured according to their applicability to the three phases.

**Table 4.1 Themes identified by participants as significant issues of the process**

PHASE 1 PRE-TRANSFORMATION PERIOD	PHASE 2 PROCESS OF TRANSITION	PHASE 3 POST-TRANSFORMATION PERIOD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding of the need to transform</li><li>• Perceptions of the origin of the decision to change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interpersonal dynamics</li><li>• New opportunities/ideas</li><li>• Reassessment of the situation (personal, organisational)</li><li>• Diversity</li><li>• Workload</li><li>• Uncertainties</li><li>• Career implications</li><li>• Perceived outcomes of the process</li><li>• Empowerment</li><li>• Change in the way of doing things</li><li>• Management of the process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience of the nature and extent of the transformation</li><li>• Current work situation (includes perceptions of post-transformation organisation)</li></ul>

The themes or categories are not necessarily discussed in the order as presented in Table 4.1. The comparison of data in and between categories (themes) at times necessitated regrouping or combining themes as this contributed to the meaning of a particular idea. Comparing data between categories (themes) sometimes contributed to the emergence of a meaning or picture not apparent in the analysis of individual experiences.

## **2.1 Phase 1: The pre-transformation period**

### **2.1.1 Understanding the necessity for the organisational decision to transform**

The theme "the need for change" includes those issues that participants offered as motivation for the organisation's decision to change. The issues they identified include areas or aspects they personally felt uncomfortable with in the pre-transformation period. The analysis of data in this category was done mainly by comparing data bits in the category (in other words, between the various participants).





Ten of the eleven participants felt that there was a need to change some or more areas of the organisation. Stephan was the only respondent who did not identify something he personally felt uncomfortable with. (It should be mentioned, however, that he agreed in principle with the necessity for change and that he was aware of discussions in the organisation about the reconceptualisation of some of the courses). A first observation of data in this category indicates that respondents identified various and different areas in need of change.

Looking at the diverse areas or issues identified by the respondents, three levels of perspectives can be identified. On the first level, respondents focused on the products (courses) and the product development in which they were involved (eg, Drohan, Ute). This may be referred to as a microperspective on areas in need of transformation. On the second level, concerns revolved around issues in the organisation (intra-organisational issues), such as the style of management, the profile of the management team, the profile of the staff and diversity in thinking. This may be referred to as a mezzoperspective on areas in need of transformation. The third level deals with the relationship and/or interaction of the organisation with the external environment. Concerns about the organisation's relationship with its clients are also included in the third level. This level may be referred to as the macroperspective on areas in need of transformation. A fourth sub-category, which deals with personal or attitudinal issues, was also identified. Although the three levels micro, mezzo and macro are distinguished, these are by no means watertight compartments. Some of the issues may be regarded as intra-organisational issues but may also refer to the relationship between the organisation and the external environment. The focus in this analysis is more on the diversity of areas than on a concise content analysis.

The areas identified by respondents are presented in Table 4.2 under the four sub-categories. It shows that although almost all the respondents were of the opinion that the organisation had to transform, they felt that way for different reasons. For some, the organisation had to transform in order to grapple with problems on the microlevel only (Ute, Drohan) or the mezzolevel only (Delianne, Leslie). Other participants identified problems on two levels (Soonja, Heike and Robert) while only three (Anja, William and Pedro) of the participants were of the opinion that problems on all three levels of the organisation necessitated transformation of the organisation.

The first deduction made from this theme is thus that although employees may experience a need for transformation, they do so for different reasons.

Referring to the respondents' individual experiences (the context), it seems that a participant's opinion about why the change is necessary, is influenced by various factors:

- (1) a participant's own personal beliefs, values and particular upbringing (Soonja, Heike, Pedro; Delianne)
- (2) prior work experience (Soonja, Heike)
- (3) exposure to external people, literature and other thinking (Pedro, William, Heike, Soonja)
- (4) personal characteristics, such as race, gender, political orientation, religious values (Leslie, Anja, Pedro, William, Soonja, Heike),
- (5) personal investment in the pre-transformation organisation (Stephan).<sup>1</sup>

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1. The intention is not to compile a comprehensive list of all possible influences but simply to indicate that working in the same organisation does not mean that employees will share the same perspective on whether and why an organisation needs to transform.



**Table 4.2: Areas in the organisation in need of change identified by participants**

<b>AREAS IN NEED OF CHANGE</b>			
<b>Products offered by organisation</b>	<b>Intra-organisational issues</b>	<b>Relationship with external environment</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Drohan:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses are too old and structured</li> <li>• Organisation needs to present its own degree in education</li> </ul>			
<b>Stephan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No real need for transformation</li> </ul>			
<b>Soonja</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style of management needs to change</li> <li>• Composition or profile of management team in need of change</li> <li>• Structure of the organisation needs to be altered</li> <li>• Staff profile needs to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-political change in country should also happen in the organisation</li> </ul>	
<b>Anja</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses and methods need to acknowledge and accommodate the realities of the external environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff profile needs to change (more representative of society)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to address the needs of the clients</li> </ul>	
<b>Ute</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses need to be updated</li> </ul>			



<p><b>Heike</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for increased diversity in thinking in the organization</li> <li>• The need for diversity in the staff component (language, religion, culture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to reflect socio-political change of external environment</li> </ul>	<p>Personal changes (change of heart)</p>
<p><b>Leslie</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style of management need to change</li> <li>• Staff profile need to change</li> </ul>		<p>Personal changes: change of heart</p>
<p><b>Delianne</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for increased diversity in terms of ideas and thinking</li> </ul>		
<p><b>William</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in course content and approach to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in diversity in terms of multi-culturalism</li> <li>• Social transformation is necessary to change apartheid mentality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change to reflect the socio-political changes in external environment</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Pedro</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to develop a new curriculum</li> <li>• Need to change the approach to curriculum development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style of management needs to change</li> <li>• Needs to develop a new, shared vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to adapt the role of the university to a changing society in an African context</li> </ul>	<p>Personal change: a change of heart</p>
<p><b>Robert</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style of management needs to change</li> <li>• Process of appointing management needs to change</li> <li>• Structure of the organisation needs to change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to respond to the demands of the external environment</li> <li>• Need to become internationally competitive</li> <li>• Need to change the relationship with clients</li> </ul>	

The second deduction is that a range of constituents or factors (eg, personal experience and background, organisational issues, external developments) may influence an employee's opinion regarding the necessity for an organisation to transform.

Thirdly, referring to individual experience, it is deduced that the felt need for an issue to be changed during the transformation may create the expectation that this particular aspect will, indeed, be dealt with or rectified by the process. Soonja, Heike and Pedro referred to the expectations they had with respect to the transformation.

Dit mag wees dat my verwagting, gegewe my agtergrond, vir meer was en is van jy moet alles van die tafel afvee en nuut begin (Heike)

### 2.1.2 Opinions regarding the decision of the organisation to transform

Only one of the participants (Stephan) expressed direct disagreement with the organisation's decision to transform, while another (Leslie) felt that the decision concerned structural issues only and had nothing to do with transformation. The other nine participants indicated that they personally identified an area or areas in need of change (see Table 4.2) and it is thus deduced that these employees agreed with the notion of transformation. It may also be argued that these people had some intellectual understanding of the necessity for change (see Table 4.3 ) and thus agreed intellectually with the notion of transformation. However, as in the case of personal reasons for the need to change, it is argued that employees' agreement with the decision to transform is also based on their personal understanding and opinion of why the organisation needs to transform. It is further argued that employees' understanding of the "concept" or "understanding"<sup>2</sup> of transformation in their particular organisation depends, among other things, on their own, personal understanding and conviction of why the organisation has to transform.

In the same way, it may be argued that disagreement with the decision to transform (or to change to such an extent) is also based on the personal understanding and opinion of why the organisation is in no need of transformation. However, it may also be argued that disagreement with the decision to transform supposes a satisfaction with the status quo (pre-transformation organisation) and agreement with the particular products, values, and ways of doing things. Disagreement with the decision to change is possibly a function of an employee's understanding of the threats posed by the proposed transformation to these valued dimensions of the old organisation. At the same time, disagreement with the decision may also be influenced by an employee's level of personal investment in and identification with the old organisation, on the one hand, and the supposed threats of the transformation to this investment, on the other.<sup>3</sup> It can once again be argued that dissatisfaction with the decision is to an extent based on the individual's understanding of the necessity (or not) for organisational change.

Given the differences in opinion amongst the participants of why the organisation had to transform (or refrain from transforming), it is stated that various understandings of the need (or no

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2. By "concept" and "understanding" is meant what employees envisage the process will be like and what it is supposed to achieve.

3. It is necessary to clarify that, for the purpose of this theme, attention is focused on respondents' experiences of the decision to transform in the pre-transformation period. In Stephan's case, it is clear that his disagreement with the transformation and his bleak experience of this decision revolved around the way he was treated during the process: he found himself being made the scapegoat of the difficulties or failures of the old organisation.



Table 4.3: Perceptions of the need for change and the decision to change

Participants' comments regarding the need for change	Deductions regarding participants' opinion about the decision to change
<p><i>In 'n mate het ek ook gevoel daar moet verandering kom. (Drohan)</i></p> <p><i>The process of transformation has been necessary. (Soonja)</i></p> <p><i>Dit (transformasie) is iets wat lankal moes gebeur het. (Anja)</i></p> <p><i>Ek het lankal gesê die kursusse is verouder...verder is ek taamlik gedistansieer van die hele storie. (Ute)</i></p> <p><i>Vir my het dit bloot gegaan oor wat ek geglo het, dit was reg en ek kon insien wat moes gebeur. (Delianne)</i></p> <p><i>I am all for transformation...I never resisted the change. (William)</i></p> <p><i>ek beseft dat ons sal moet verander. (Pedro)</i></p> <p><i>Toe ek vir myself uitgemaak het dat ons moet verander... (Robert)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstration of an intellectual agreement with or an understanding of the decision to change</li> </ul>
<p><i>Ek het 'n alternatiewe transformasie voorgestel. (Heike)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed with the decision to change but not the direction</li> </ul>
<p><i>Dit was nie nodig om die hele appelkar om te keer nie. (Stephan)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disagreed with the decision to change</li> </ul>
<p>Transformation did not take place. (Leslie)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No decision was made to transform – only to implement structural changes</li> </ul>

need) for transformation and the “content” of transformation are prevalent in the organisation when the decision is taken. Apart from all the individual perceptions of the need for and the concept of transformation, the organisation (represented by management who actually took the decision) also had an understanding of why it was necessary for the institution to transform. As in the case of individual employees, the needs identified by the organisation contributed to their understanding of the concept of transformation.<sup>4</sup> It is thus argued that at the time of taking the decision (the pre-transformation period), various perceptions (including expectations) of the why, what and how of transformation were present in the work environment. Thus, in theory, it is possible that all the role players (employees, management) had a personal understanding of the concept of transformation which did not necessarily correspond with their colleagues’ views. The various perceptions are presented in Graph 4.1.

Employees can only know how management sees the concept of transformation if this is communicated to them. Thus, employees’ understanding of management’s use of the concept depends on the information provided by management in this regard. It is now argued that a necessary requirement for an overt, organisational understanding of the concept is the communication of management’s understanding to employees.<sup>5</sup> See Graph 4.2.

The question arises of whether this is a sufficient requirement for the development of a “shared” organisational understanding of the concept “transformation”. Obtaining information about management’s understanding transformation does not necessarily mean that employees will share or subscribe to that view. It seems valid to argue that the degree of overlapping between individual perceptions of the concept and that of the organisation will determine the extent to which employees will share the organisation’s view. Is partial agreement on the organisational understanding of the concept sufficient for a successful transformation? At this point the assumption is that the proposed transformation can only benefit when the organisation develops or works towards a shared understanding of transformation (whether by discussion, factual information or persuasion).

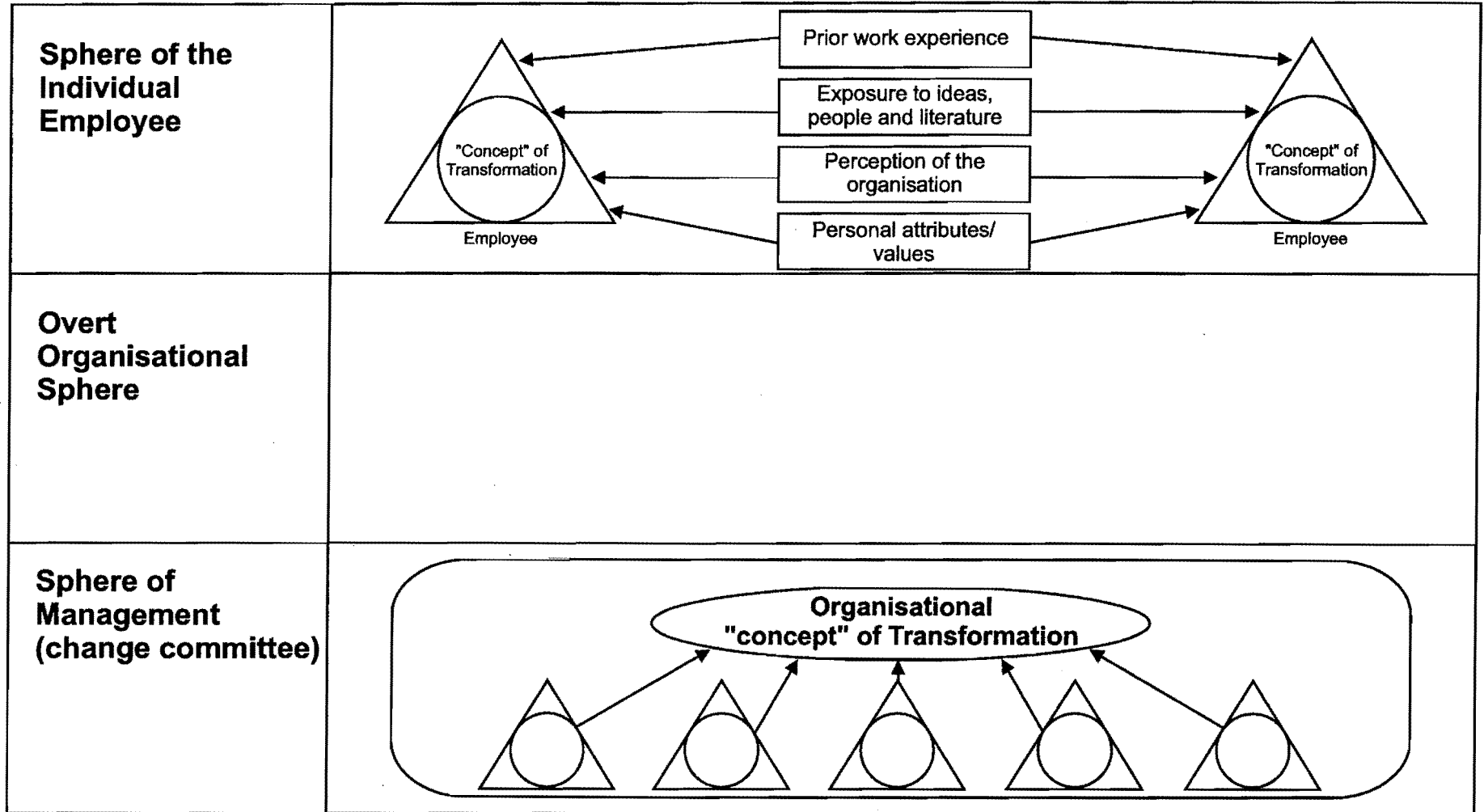
The notion of developing a shared understanding of transformation leads to the question of the extent to which employees’ perceptions need to be communicated to management and whether doing so would co-determine or at least influence the shared organisational understanding of the concept. It seems that the upward communication (or not) from employees to management will depend on the various organisational assumptions regarding employees’ role and status in the organisation. Graph 4.3 presents the shared understanding of transformation.

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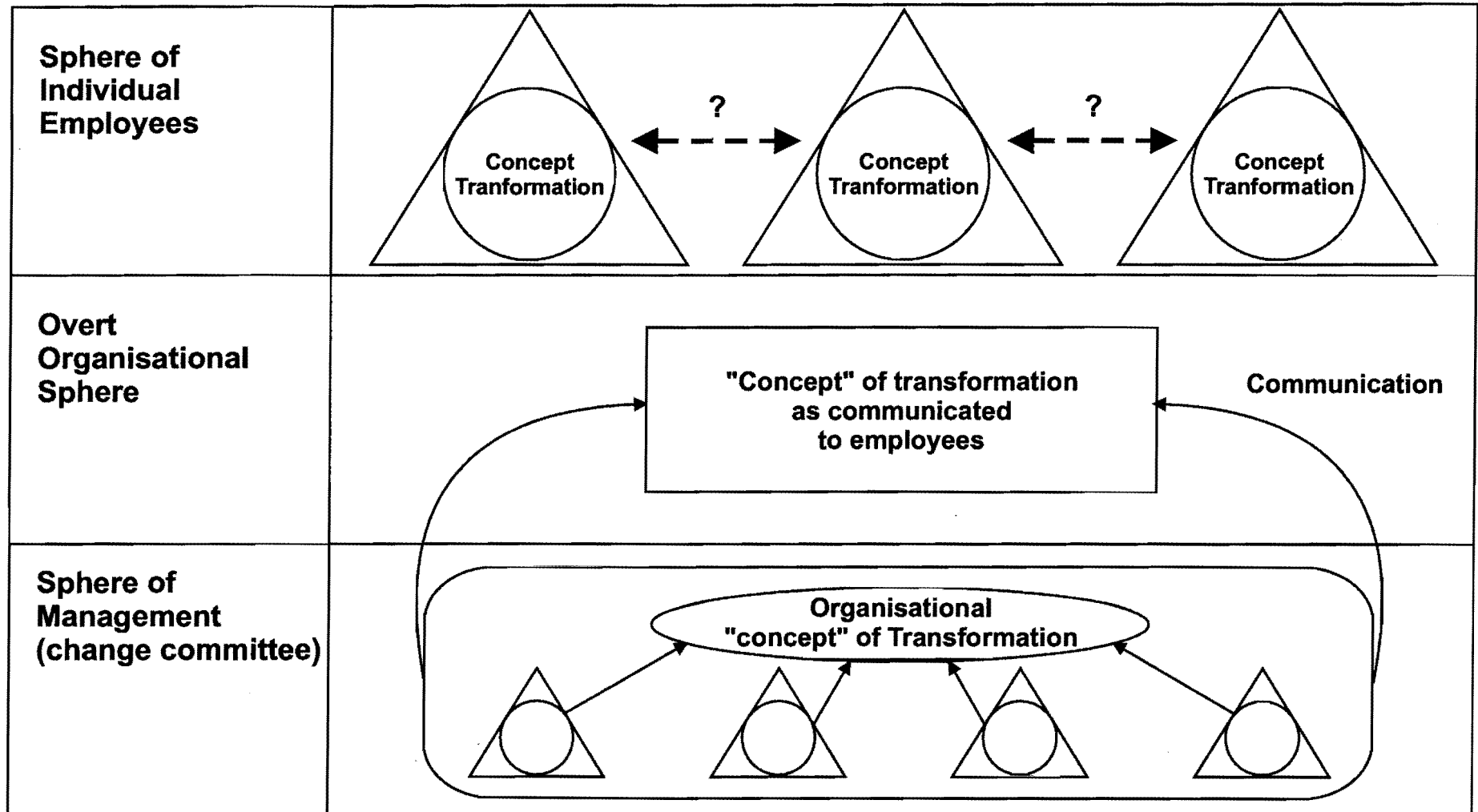
4. Although the organisation, represented by management, is referred to as an entity, it should be remembered that management consists of individuals with their own understanding of the why, what and how of transformation. Robert (a member of the management team) actually described the differences in opinions that did exist amongst the members of the management team with respect to the emotional well-being of employees. It is therefore assumed that the same processes that took place among the individual employees in the organisation happened in the management team. For the purpose of this discussion (and not to overcomplicate the arguments) management is treated as an entity

5. For colleagues to gain access to one another’s understanding of the concept it is also necessary for their perceptions to be communicated. This argument focuses deliberately on the interaction between management and employees, but that does not mean that communication between colleagues is not important.

**Figure 4.1** Various views on the meaning of transformation

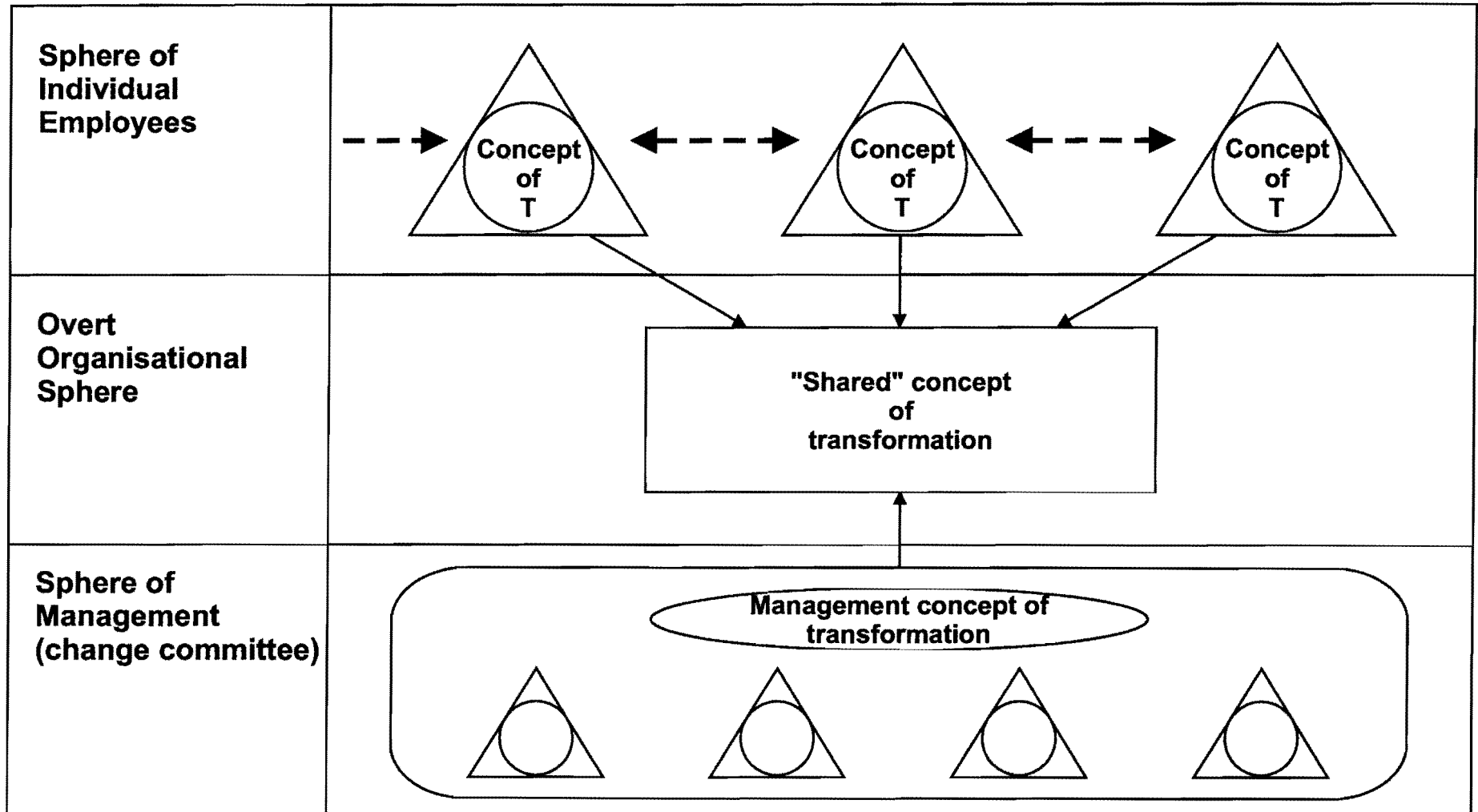


**Figure 4.2** Communicating the meaning of transformation to employees





**Figure 4.3** A shared understanding of transformation



### 2.1.3 Impetus for the decision to transform

Only six participants referred directly or indirectly to the origin of the decision to transform. The manager felt that the decision was the result of a combination of internal convictions and external pressures, changes and demands. With respect to the other participants, it seems as if their experience of the origin of the decision depended on their perceptions and experience of the organisation as such and their opinion about the necessity to change. Soonja, for example, was very skeptical about the organisation's willingness to change, so in her opinion this was the result of external pressures. She did not believe that the organisation would have taken the decision voluntarily. Heike, who was also dissatisfied with many issues of the pre-transformation organisation, perceived the impetus as coming from inside the organisation. In her opinion, this was a deliberate act from the organisation to determine the agenda for transformation without too much external interference. Her opinion reflects her distrust of the organisation's intentions. Drohan, on the other hand, felt that it is important to communicate to employees that the origin for a transformation process comes from within the organisation.

Given the diverse nature of the opinions regarding the impetus of the transformation process, it is difficult to make accountable deductions in this regard. However, this does raise the question of the impact of an impetus for transformation on employees' perceptions of the necessity for change.

## 2.2 Phase 3: The post-transformation period

The post-transformation period involves experiences of the transformation in general, the nature and extent of the changes and the current work situation. Some respondents also commented on their experiences of the organisation in the post-transformation period and these are dealt with in the post-transformation period.<sup>6</sup>

It is only possible to understand participants' experience of the transformation in general and of the nature and extent of the transformation, if their opinions on the decision to transform are also considered. As the general experience of the process is sometimes motivated by the nature and extent of the process, these two themes need to be analysed with full cognisance of one another. Thus, in order to obtain a more integrated understanding of the respondents' experiences regarding the post-transformation period, these three themes are simultaneously analysed and presented. This corresponds with Dey's (1993) proposed method of analysis in and between analysis of categories.

### 2.2.1 Participants' experiences and perceptions of the nature and extent of the transformation

The opinions regarding the organisation's decision to transform may be grouped into three sub-categories, namely, agreement with the decision, disagreement with the decision and the opinion that no decision for transformation was taken. Respondents who agreed with the decision to transform may be subdivided according to their particular role in the decision-making process. (Information for this sub-category is derived from participants' individual information).

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6. Experiences and opinions about the organisation in the post-transformation period were initially discussed as an integral part of the experience of phase 2, namely the process of transformation. However, it seems more appropriate in the second-order analysis to group these experiences with other experiences relating to the post-transformation period.

Thus, those participants who agreed with the decision may be subdivided as follows: (1) responsible for the management of the process, (2) proactive canvassing in favour of the decision, and (3) varied levels of involvement in the process.

The analysis of experiences of the process in general and the nature and extent of the transformation was done using the three sub-categories of opinions of the decision to transform. Table 4.4 provides the information on these three themes. Column 1 deals with opinions about the necessity for change in the various sub-categories, column 2 deals with opinions about the nature and extent of the transformation and column 3 deals with experiences of the process in general.

Several deductions may be made from the sub-categorisation:

It is deduced that respondents' evaluation and experience of the nature and extent of the transformation depend on factors like their personal opinion about the need for transformation, their own understanding of the concept of transformation and their expectations<sup>7</sup> of the process (in the pre-transformation phase). In other words, respondents evaluated the actual outcome of the process against their understanding and expectations of transformation.

Soonja, Heike and Pedro understood transformation to be radical and they therefore expected fundamental changes in the areas they identified. However, this did not materialise as they felt that nothing had really changed. Compared to their understanding of a radical change, they considered the changes that did happen insufficient. William, for example, understood the transformation as dealing with the products, the relationship with clients and the socio-political paradigm in the organisation. He was therefore unprepared for and unsettled by the changes on the mezzolevel of the organisation which resulted in the changed structure and the criteria for and composition of the management committee.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, agreement with the decision to change does not necessarily mean satisfaction or agreement with all the aspects of or decisions taken during the process. Several respondents (Drohan, William, Anja and Robert) referred to issues or aspects with which they disagreed despite their general approval of the transformation. Agreement also does not mean that the process will necessarily be experienced as positive or satisfactory.

Thirdly, when participants' general experience of the transformation is also accounted for, it is deduced that such a process has an emotional impact on employees, irrespective of their particular opinion about the necessity for the transformation.

As was to be expected, Stephan, who deemed the transformation largely unnecessary, found the process very traumatic. At the same time, William and Pedro, who approved of the process and even worked towards the decision, also found the transformation emotionally taxing. Therefore it cannot be argued that employees who agreed with the decision to transform found

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7. It is argued elsewhere that a person's opinion about the need for transformation and the what of the transformation raises the individual's expectations of the objectives and/or outcome of the transformation process.

8. Some of the changes resulted in practical difficulties, such as the multiplicity of bosses mentioned by William, and thus contributed to some of the dissatisfaction with the transformation. This issue is dealt with in the discussion of phase 2. At this point, the argument focuses on the discrepancy between the expected and the actual transformation.



**Table 4.4: General experience of the process and experience of the nature and extent of the process**

OPINIONS ABOUT THE NECESSITY FOR CHANGE	NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION	GENERAL EXPERIENCE OF TRANSFORMATION
<p><b>Intellectual agreement with the notion of transformation</b></p> <p><b>Responsible for the management of the process</b></p>	<p>Vier persone is bv. hier ingedeel...Dit is 'n bron van baie ander probleme... Ek het die vrae gevra oor hoe dit die mense gaan raak... Van my kollegas se verhoudinge het verbrokkel, een is in 'n kliniek opgeneem, 'n ander is uit die vriendekring geskop. My vraag is in watter mate is hierdie probleme geskep of aangehelp deur transformasie? My mening is dat ons dit geskep het. (Robert)</p>	<p>Die transformasie was vir my oorwegend positief. As ek dit weer moet doen, sou ek waarskynlik dieselfde pad geloop het. (Robert)</p>
<p><b>Intellectual agreement with the notion of transformation</b></p> <p><b>Pro-active involvement in the process</b></p>	<p>I think in some instances the change hasn't gone far enough. I still think it is insufficient... But my concern is that we changed but everything is still the same. (Soonja)</p> <p>Ek wonder of dit 'n transformasie was of 'n struktuurverandering. Dit mag wees dat my verwagting, gegewe my agtergrond, vir meer was en is jy moet alles van die tafel afvee en nuut begin.... Dit is soos 'n bekering, alles is radikaal anders. Dit is waarskynlik 'n idealistiese siening. (Heike)</p> <p>Daar was ander verwagtinge gewees dat dinge anders sou wees en op die ou einde hoe meer dinge verander het, lyk dit nou hoe meer bly dit dieselfde. Dit is maar weer dat mens baie idealisties was toe ons begin het. So, ek dink wat my gevang het, is die verskil in teorie en praktyk, dat dit wat ons graag wou sien gebeur, nie gebeur nie. (Pedro)</p>	<p>I expected much more: I was ready for radical change. (Soonja).</p> <p>Jy is ook nie elke dag dieselfde nie; dit is 'n baie vloeibare proses. Beleef elke dag verskillend. Wat het jy as positief beleef? Ek moet baie hard dink. (Heike)</p> <p>Dit was vir my baie swaar en ek was een van die ouens wat transformasie voorgestaan het...Wat swaar is van transformasie is dat dit altyd met 'n bietjie chaos gepaard gaan want dit is verandering en dinge is nie meer so ordelik nie... Ek dink die ding van transformasie is omdat dit so sterk met gevoel te doen het, is daar sekere dae wat mens baie positief voel en ander dae wat mens baie negatief is. Ek dink die gevoel speel 'n baie belangrike rol by transformasie. (Pedro)</p>



<p><b>Intellectual agreement with the notion of transformation</b></p>	<p>Van die verandering is op ons afgedwing deur kollegas in ander Fakulteite....Ek self was gekant teen die wegdoen van dissiplines. Dit was vir my 'n onnodige verandering. (Drohan)</p>	<p>So dit was nogal 'n drastiese verandering maar dit was nie 'n negatiewe verandering nie. Ek het dit baie positief beleef. Van almal hier was dit miskien vir my die mees positiewe belewenis. (Drohan).</p>
<p><b>Varied levels of involvement in the process</b></p>	<p>No comment on nature and extent of changes</p> <p>No comment on the nature and extent of the changes</p> <p>No comment on the nature and extent of the changes</p> <p>There are different understandings of the concept... different areas of transformation. Now a more humane approach to students;...changes in the sillabi;...the apartheid mindset didn't change; ... Have now many bosses and don't know who is your boss. After climbing the ladder to reach that point of the Executive committee of the Faculty, the new set-up can be a bit cruel. (William)</p>	<p>Dit het my nie veel gepla nie, behalwe dat ons ons kursusse e moes verander. Dit raak my nie; dit interesseer my nie. Die universiteit kan brand dan sal ek dit nie eers weet nie. (Ute)</p> <p>Ek dink ek het die transformasie baie positief ervaar, dit was vir my meer positief as negatief. Dit is iets wat lankal moes gebeur het. (Anja)</p> <p>Ek het dit baie opwindend ervaar, uitdagende verandering. Dit wat mens lankal gesien het, wat nou geïmplementeer word. (Delianne)</p> <p>The experience of transformation is painful, but it is like childbirth. It is necessary pain in order to produce something new. I do long for the good old days, but realised that it is important to move forwards to embrace the realities and the challenges of the new SA. When you get older it is more difficult to change. (William)</p>
<p><b>Disagreement with the notion of transformation</b></p>	<p>As ek moet huigel dan sou ek sê, ek sê dit opsetlik want ek is nie vreeslik beïndruk met die hele transformasieproses nie. Ek dink nie dit was werklik nodig nie. Dit is in 'n groot mate onnodig gewees. Ek het nie gedink dit is nodig om die hele Fakulteit te herstruktureer nie. Dit was nie nodig om die hele appelkar om te keer nie. (Stephan)</p>	<p>Ek het eintlik nie vreeslike positiewe gevoelens oor die transformasie nie. Ek moet vir jou sê ek het bitter min positief ervaar van die proses. Dit was regig vir my 'n baie groot trauma gewees. (Stephan)</p>
<p><b>Do not acknowledge decision</b></p>	<p>Transformation did not take place in the Faculty. I regard it as a change in arrangement and change of names. (Leslie)</p>	



the process generally less traumatic and emotional. It seems rather that transformation impacts on employees' emotional state irrespective of their intellectual agreement or disagreement with the decision to change. Intellectual understanding of the decision to change does not prevent employees from being emotionally affected by the process. Transformation seems to be an emotionally taxing event (to a larger or smaller extent) for employees for different reasons .

### 2.2.2 Experience of the personal work situation in the post-transformation organisation

In the analysis and discussion of this particular theme, it should be kept in mind that participants described their experiences and opinions about a process that had been completed (an historical event). They commented and discussed (and judged) this historical event from their current personal positions in the new organisation. As almost all the themes discussed in phase 2 have some bearing on employees' post-transformation work situation, it could be argued that all these themes should be dealt with as part and parcel of the current situation. However, the personal work situation in the post-transformation period emerged as an independent theme due to participants' referrals to the improvements or deteriorations in their work situation or work environment as a result of the transformation. This theme therefore does not include their experiences of the total outcome of the process (including all the changes that materialised) in the post-transformation situation. Rather, it focuses on their experiences of the conditions they deemed necessary for the fulfilment of their professional responsibilities.

Respondents' core experiences regarding their current work situation (post-transformation period) are presented in Table 4.5 below. Column 1 contains the participants' verbatim comments (though abbreviated) about their personal work situation. Column 2 contains the elements that constituted the personal work situation as deduced from the verbatim comments. Column 3 gives deductions on the status of the personal work situation in comparison to the pre-transformation period. The deductions are simply made in terms of changes, such as improvement, deterioration or both.

As column 2 shows, some participants presented their experience of the work situation as limited to their personal, professional activities only (Drohan, Ute, Delianne) whereas others regarded their relationships with colleagues as integral to their experience of their personal work situation (Soonja, Heike, Robert). Stephan, William and Pedro, for example, referred to their personal work situation as involving a variety of aspects, such as the interpersonal dynamics and administrative functioning of the organisational unit, status in the organisation, professional identity in the work environment and the level of tolerance of differences. It is thus clear that participants experienced their personal work situation as constituted of various and different aspects. They did not necessarily agree on the elements that were of significance in the work situation: The perspectives varied from a very narrow (personal activities only) to broad, including several organisational issues.

It is thus deduced that different factors seem to play a role in employees' experiences of their personal work situations, although participants were not asked to elaborate on them. However, several arguments can be posed for this response: (1) people differ in their criteria for or the needs they expect a work environment to respond to. So, for example, some employees may expect the workplace to provide the opportunity for creative intellectual activities while another may expect an environment to provide opportunities for creative activities as well as social inter-



action with colleagues. It can thus be argued that employees differ with respect to the elements they regard as significant and important in their work environment. Following this argument, participants therefore focused only on those issues they regarded as important. (2) Participants only emphasised those elements of the work environment that were affected (significantly) by the transformation process. The change in the status quo brought these elements to the fore. (3) Both these arguments may be valid at the same time.

As for changes in participants' personal work situation in the post-transformation period, it is clear that some (Drohan, Ute, Leslie to an extent) were left unaffected by the process. Two experienced an improvement of some kind (Robert, Delianne) while three (Soonja, Heike, Stephan) felt that their personal situations actually worsened. Three people (Anja, William, Pedro) reported improvements as well as deteriorations as a result of the process.

Thus, employees' experiences and opinions of their personal work situation in the post-transformation period play a role in shaping their experience and opinion of the completed transformation process. Clearly, employees whose personal situations improved as a result of the process will be more inclined to feel positive about the transformation than others whose personal work situation had been detrimentally affected.

To summarise: it is indicated that employees regard different aspects/elements of the work environment as important or significant in their interface with the organisation. The deduction is made that employees' experience of the transformation process depend, inter alia, on their experience of their post transformation work situation in comparison to the pre-transformation period. Drohan's remark, serves as an illustration: "*Ek kan nie kla nie want ek is net so goed af as vroeër*".



Table 4.5: Experiences of the current work situation

Current work situation: verbatim comments	Deduced elements of the current work situation	Deductions about satisfaction with the current work situation compared to the pre-transformation situation
<p><b>Drohan:</b> <i>Dit wat ek nou doen, is presies wat ek graag wil doen. As ek my lewe kan oorhe is dit die goed waarby ek betrokke wil wees en dis ook die werk wat ek wil doen – ek kan my nie voorstel dat daar lekkerder werk kan wees as wat ek doen nie. Ek kan nie kla nie want ek is net so goed af as vroeër.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own, personal, professional academic activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work situation remained satisfactory – transformation had little impact</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stephan:</b> <i>Ek voel oor my siening van wat wetenskap is en van wat my taak as dosent is...Hulle tas jou menswees aan en dis skielik nie meer aanvaarbaar nie... Dit het my in 'n geweldige mate ontgogel selfs soveel so dat ek nou nog nie weet wat ek eintlik moet doen nie. Ek voel in my wese onseker en dit maak jou minder effektief omdat jy onseker is of dit wat jy doen reg is. Dit beïnvloed jou produktiwiteit, dit beïnvloed jou verhoudinge met ander mense, selfs met jou gesin. Jy doen nog steeds jou werk, maar jy voel ontgogel.</i></p> <p><i>Onder die voorwendsel dat alles so verskriklik deursigtig moet wees, is daardie strukture en die mense... is hulle in 'n sekere sin enersyds genegeer en andersyds amper... ek het dit beleef as vernederend.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying assumptions and values regarding professional identity and professional activities</li> <li>• Personal, professional activities</li> <li>• Position (of status) within the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal work situation deteriorated due to questioning of his values and professional identity.</li> <li>• Job satisfaction and productivity decreased as a result of feelings of uncertainty.</li> <li>• Felt humiliated due to loss in status representation on management committee – loss of status</li> </ul>
<p><b>Soonja:</b> <i>I've always been fortunate in my course work I'm responsible for because it is such an exciting field. So I always enjoyed my actual work side and that has just continued to be a positive. The transformation did not change that in any way, negatively or positively.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal, professional activities</li> <li>• Relationships and interaction with colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional functioning unaffected</li> <li>• Work situation deteriorated as a result of the loss of the support group</li> </ul>





<p><i>I feel I work more now as an individual rather than with a group of colleagues around me who provided support, who provided collegiality.</i></p>		
<p><b>Anja:</b> <i>Wat dit aanbetref was dit vir my baie aangenaam; dit is iets wat vir my baie na aan die hart lê. Dit is eintlik my eerste liefde. Dit is vir my uitdagend en ek geniet dit; ek kan nie een oomblik daarvoor kla nie.</i></p> <p><i>Die feit dat ek binne primêre skool onderwyseropleiding is... Ek se vir die buitewêreld ek weet iets daarvan af en dit is vir my 'n verleenheid omdat ek in iets anders werk.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal, professional activities</li> <li>• Professional identity reflected by association with departmental structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional functioning improved as a result of involvement in interest area</li> <li>• Professional identity negatively affected due to her association with the specific department</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ute:</b> <i>Ek het half gevoel of dit my nie raak nie omdat ek kursusse het wat ek aanbied en die universiteit verwag nie van my om heeltemal iets anders te doen nie. Ek gaan aan met my werk, ek doen my werk met die hoop dat ek studente kan help.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal, professional activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation had no impact on personal work situation (job satisfaction unaffected)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Heike:</b> <i>No comment with respect to her personal work activities. Die intellektuele, akademiese verwydering van kollegas. Dit is my groot negatiewe ervaring van die proses.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual relationships with colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comment regarding professional functioning</li> <li>• Personal work situation deteriorated due to the loss of her support group</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leslie:</b> <i>I enjoyed it because I enjoy the type of work that I do... It provided me the opportunity to develop new course and to work in areas that I am interested in... I am empowered daily because I am in a process of learning. The faculty should get the credit for that.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own, personal and professional academic activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation had no impact on personal work situation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Delianne:</b> <i>Ek is betrokke by ander kursusse as vroeër. Dit het vir my eintlik 'n deur oopgemaak waarvoor ek dankbaar is.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own, personal and professional academic activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in personal work situation due to involvement in a new, interesting area</li> </ul>



<p><b>William:</b> <i>What comes out from the new syllabi is exciting... and I am proud of it. In the new set-up there are now so many committee meetings, one finds it difficult to cope. Now you also have many bosses and you don't know who is your boss. I got the opportunity to take a package but I am not sure whether to retire or not. It is not an easy decision. Many colleagues have retired After climbing the ladder to reach the point of the Executive Committee of the Faculty, the new set-up can be a bit cruel...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal, profession involvement</li> <li>• Administrative and managerial structure(s) and processes</li> <li>• Intellectual and emotional support of colleagues.</li> <li>• Position (of status) within the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal work situation improved in some respects (eg, new course content, improved client relationships)</li> <li>• Deteriorated in other areas (confusing reporting structures, loss of support group, loss of senior position on management committee)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pedro:</b> <i>Nou sien jy self die gange is dood in die middag... hier is nou mense wat 'n heeltemal ander etos het. Daar is ook meer verdraagsaamheid... So daar was tog bewussynsverruiming van gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid by 'n groep. Ek kan partykeer met vreeslike rare goed kom en in plaas daarvan dat mense na my luister, kan hulle my totaal afskiet en my persoonlik aanval. Dit is vir my nog steeds baie swaar.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No referral to personal, professional academic activities</li> <li>• Dynamics within the organisational unit</li> <li>• Organisational tolerance for diversity in thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal work situation improved in terms of increased tolerance (although not enough)</li> <li>• Deteriorated with respect to the dynamics in the organisational unit</li> </ul>
<p><b>Robin:</b> <i>Ek het in 'n groot mate losgeslaan gevoel; ek het gevoel ek moet nou 'n loopbaanskuif maak. Die departementshoofskap het eintlik vir my nuwe moontlikhede oopgemaak. Ek het in bestuur gespesialiseer en het die kans gekry om die inhoude toe te pas. Mense het vertrou in my en hulle weet dat wat hulle vir my sê nie weer oorvertel gaan word nie.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own, personal and professional academic involvement</li> <li>• Relationships with colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal work situation improved due to involvement in specialist area and rewarding relationships with colleagues</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Phase 2: The process of transformation

As indicated in chapter 3, the “process of transformation” deals with the actual implementation of the transformation. The issues or themes that played a role in participants’ experiences of the process are as follows: (1) interpersonal dynamics, (2) new opportunities, including new ideas, (3) perceptions of the management of the process, (4) uncertainties resulting from the process, (5) the re-assessment of personal and organisation relevance, (6) workload, (7) a change in the way of doing things, (8) perceived outcomes of the process, (9) career implications and (10) diversity and representation. These themes are discussed below and followed by a model for understanding employees’ experiences of transformation.

### 2.3.1 Interpersonal dynamics and interpersonal issues

Issues relating to interpersonal dynamics and relations were most frequently mentioned by the participants (9 of the 11 respondents discussed them). The various identifiable sub-categories illustrate the complexity and multidimensionality of this particular theme. Table 4.6 contains the abbreviated verbatim remarks of participants grouped into the six sub-categories which deal with the following aspects: (1) the loss of the previous support group, (2) exposure to new colleagues and new ideas, (3) perceptions of colleagues’ behaviour, responses and participation during the process, (4) the regrouping of colleagues during the process and the resulting changes in the positions and relationships of power, (5) the disruption in the informal networks in the organisation, and (6) the changes in criteria for the acceptability or desirability of activities and behaviour. The meaning of these themes as well as deductions that follow from the analysis are discussed below.

#### 2.3.1.1 Loss of the previous support group

##### (a) Impact on employees’ social and emotional well-being

Participants indicated that good work relations and even good social and personal relationships developed over years amongst colleagues sharing the same interests. As employees were grouped according to interests, they were necessarily in close physical proximity to one another. With the implementation of the process of transformation, several employees left the organisation (eg, as a result of early retirement) while others were moved to new organisational units and new offices. Respondents found that these changes had a detrimental effect on their established relationships with colleagues. When former close colleagues left or were moved to new offices, employees felt themselves isolated and without their previous support group. It is quite significant that the introduction of physical distance between close colleagues (as a result of the physical relocation) contributed to the experience of distance in the relationships and thus to feelings of isolation and lack of collegial support (see Stephan, Soonja, Anja, Heike). It may thus be deduced that the relocation of employees to new administrative structures and new (different) offices in a transformation process can have a detrimental effect on the social and emotional support system in the organisation. This dimension clearly contributed significantly to negative experiences of the process.

##### (b) Impact on teamwork

The loss of the previous support group not only affected the social and emotional support system in the organisation, but also the academic support system. The lack of easy access to ear-



lier colleagues hampered employees' productivity in that the group cohesion was destroyed and teamwork was therefore more difficult than previously (see Soonja, Heike).

#### 2.3.1.2 Exposure to new colleagues and new ideas

The counterpart of the loss of earlier, close colleagues is exposure to new colleagues. Two sub-categories were identified here:

##### (a) Benefits of establishing new relationships

The mere opportunity to get to know new people seemed to be experienced as a positive and even exciting result of the process. The exposure to new people also exposed employees to new and stimulating ideas (see Stephan, Heike, Robert). It is furthermore deduced that the "forced" interaction with previously unfamiliar and even dissenting colleagues contributed to discovering the person behind the strange ideas (see the remark made to Heike: "Haai, nou haat ek jou nie meer nie"). It may thus be deduced that the interaction between previously unfamiliar colleagues contributed to the development of tolerance (both for people and ideas) in the organisation and employees' perspective.

##### (b) Difficulties in establishing new relationships

Despite the positive feelings and results of getting to know new people and ideas, it also contributed to feelings of stress, pain and uncertainty (William). It should also be acknowledged that these new relationships did not immediately substitute the previous close relationships employees had. It took time to develop. Some respondents were of the opinion that it took almost a year to start the process of getting to know one another. The difficulty of establishing new relationships is highlighted by the reference to the absence of trust between new colleagues (Delianne). As indicated in (1.2), it may be deduced that the overall functioning of an organisation may (initially) be hampered by the lack of established relationships between colleagues.

#### 2.3.1.3 Perceptions on colleagues' behaviour, responses and participation during the process

It is evident that employees' experiences and responses regarding the transformation were not only based on their perceptions and understanding of the process, but were also influenced by the responses and conduct of colleagues during the process.

##### (a) Hostility between individuals of opposing opinions

Employees resisting the transformation process and/or responding negatively to the process made people in favour of the process resent these responses and feel hostile towards those who did not want to support the transformation (see Delianne, Pedro). Although there was no mention of this, it may perhaps be assumed that the contrary was also evident in the sense that people who disagreed with the process had hostile feelings towards those who supported the process. It may thus be deduced that the introduction of transformation in an organisation will inevitably strain the interpersonal relationships as a result of the employees' different and even opposing opinions regarding the process.





	<p><b>2.2 Difficulties in establishing new relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daar was antagonisme teenoor mekaar omdat lede uit die verskillende departemente mekaar nie geken het nie. Daar was idees wat nie binne mense se verwysingsraamwerke bestaan het nie omdat hulle so gewoon was om maar net aan te gaan. Aan die einde van die gesprek het die persoon opgemerk: "Haai, nou haat ek jou nie meer nie." (Heike)</li> <li>• Ek geniet dit ook dat mense uit ander departemente by my instap. Dit voel of ek vir mense iets beteken en dit maak dit sinvol... My verhouding met die ander departementshoofde is ook vir my 'n positiewe ervaring. Die dag voel leeg as ek hulle nie êrens gesien het nie. (Robert)</li> <li>• ( It) forced me to get to know other colleagues. In one way it is nice to get to know a new team... But it is also painful in the sense that you are forced to become friends with other, unknown people – it is a culture shock. (William)</li> <li>• Aanvanklik het dit baie, baie styf gegaan, hier is jy saam met vreemdelinge. Dit het 'n lang tydperk geneem om uit te reik; 'n jaar. Die manier hoe dit vroeër beleef is, kan nie afgeleer word nie want daar bestaan nie 'n basiese vertrouwensverhouding nie. Wantroue word nie deur 'n nuwe struktuur of 'n nuwe kantoor opgelos of weggeneem nie. In die oorgangstydperk is daar kunsmatigheid in verhoudinge. (Delianne)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Impact of the collegial conduct on experiences and relationships</b></p>	<p><b>3.1 Hostility between people of opposing views</b></p> <p><b>3.2 Power struggles between opposing groups</b></p> <p><b>3.3. Discrepancy between private and public opinion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dit is vir my verstommend dat mense nie die uitdagende aspekte kan raaksien nie; dat hulle vasval in emosies en in hulle persepsies en vrese. Die negatiewe ervaring van die transformasie (<i>vir my</i>) was veroorsaak deur die negatiewe reaksies of weerstand van kollegas op transformasie. (Delianne).</li> <li>• Wat my wel negatief gestem het en waarteen ek weerstand gebied het, is oor die negatiewe reaksies van ander kollegas op die proses. Ek het gevoel hulle hou die transformasie-proses terug. (Pedro)</li> <li>• ... mense wat nie kan verander nie veroorsaak by persone wat positief is oor die verandering, wat die verandering teweegbring, ook weerstand uitlok en so 'n groep sou bv. dan sterker na links gaan, 'n drukgroep vorm om so hulle standpunte te probeer deurvoer. (Delianne)</li> <li>• It seems to me that a lot of people appear to be pro-transformation but they complain about it in the corridors. (William)</li> </ul>



<p><b>4. Perceptions regarding re-deployed staff</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party mense is in 'n klein vakgebied opgelei, baie gespesialiseerd en het nie iets anders om aan te bied nie, wat nie kon oorskuif na 'n ander fokusgebied toe nie. (Anja)</li> <li>• Wat ek wel voel wat my so 'n flentertjie pla,... die mense wat nou intree in hierdie vakke en moet begin deelneem daaraan,... ek wonder in watter mate is die mense werklik onderlê. (Ute)</li> <li>• Hulle is onwillig om heropgelei te word. Baie van hulle stel nie rêrig belang nie... Persone uit vorige departemente wil hulself nie laat heroplei nie, hulle wil egter nie saamspeel nie. (Pedro)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Disruption of informal networks</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baie van die akademiese gepreke vind toevallig plaas, jy besluit nie nou moet jy met iemand gaan praat nie. Jy loop iemand in die gang raak, of jy en nog iemand werk laat die middag en dan praat jy sommer in die gang of oor 'n koppie tee... Dis weg, dis weg. (Heike)</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Changing "truths" and changing relationships</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daar is ook meer verdraagsaamheid, bv. dit is nou positief vir my wat baie lief is om sekere werk te doen... aan die een kant was daar die verruiming gewees in perspektief, filosofie...(Pedro)</li> <li>• Aan die een kant was daar die verruiming gewees in perspektief,... maar dit het ook 'n backlash gehad. En wat ons baie sleg ervaar...daar was 'n taamlike sterk aanval op ons groep geloods asof ons nou sou onchristelike of anti-christelik wees in ons beskouing en dat ons hulle nie wil ruimte gee om hulle standpunt te stel nie (Pedro)</li> </ul>



(b) Power struggles between groups of opposing opinions

Apart from responding negatively to colleagues who rejected (or supported) the transformation, participants observed the development of groups within the organisation in support of their particular view and opinion; some even canvassing for support for their view. It thus seems that the introduction of transformation started a power struggle between groups of opposing views (see Delianne, Pedro). Each of the groups struggled and worked to gain ground and support for their particular opinion during the process. Such power struggles between colleagues can be detrimental to interpersonal relationships and future cooperation between opposing colleagues may be compromised.

(c) Discrepancy between private and public opinions

One participant mentioned observing a discrepancy between some employees' public and private opinion about the transformation. This discrepancy may be a reflection of the level of uncertainty and anxiety among employees during such a process. For reasons such as continued employment they may agree with the new direction in public although they disagree personally. They may not feel safe enough to express their personal opinion in public.

2.3.1.4 The sensitive nature of redeployed staff

The reallocation of employees to areas in which they were not necessarily trained did not necessarily happen unnoticed. It caused skepticism among colleagues about these employees' ability to contribute to a new specialist area. They were perceived as unwilling to be retrained and using their inappropriate skills as an excuse not to be involved in the process. This seemed to be an issue of discomfort among employees who worked hard and were committed to the process (see Anja, Ute, Pedro). It seems valid to deduce that redeployed employees are carefully monitored by their colleagues in terms of the extent of their participation in the process and their willingness to be retrained. On the other hand, redeployed staff have to deal with the colleagues' prejudice with respect to the adequacy of their newly acquired skills.

2.3.1.5 Disruption of the informal networks

Heike's remark about the accidental or casual discussions of important issues during tea break or in the corridors indicated that much of the vibrant, serious, professional discussions about work happens outside formal meetings and events. The informal network in an organisation seems to be a crucial communication channel and source of information and sharing for both the social and professional spheres of the organisation. It is evident that the relocation of employees to new units and offices disrupted this vibrant communication network. Hampering the informal networks during a transformation process may thus not only negatively affect employees' social needs and functioning, but also their professional functioning in the organisation. During a taxing process such as transformation it seems worthwhile for an organisation to recognise and utilise the potential contribution of such an informal network, which presupposes an approach of minimal disruption or mitigating strategies to maintain the networks.

2.3.1.6 Changing truths and relationships

Pedro described a change in attitude towards him and his community activities. In the pre-transformation organisation community involvement was deemed an undesirable activity but in





the transformed organisation these activities became acceptable and desirable. It is thus deduced that during a transformation process a re-evaluation of the criteria for desirable or acceptable attitudes, activities and conduct happens. Previous truths or best practices could maintain validity in the new organisation, but as Pedro experienced, previous truths and best practices could also be replaced by new ones. It is further argued that this process of re-evaluation or transformation involves various dimensions of the organisation and could even affect areas not necessarily intended for re-evaluation.

A shift in thinking on the criteria for acceptability (in attitudes, activities and conduct) seems to affect an individual's position in the organisation. When what was previously considered unacceptable behaviour or conduct by an employee becomes desirable in the new organisation, that employee is more acceptable in the new organisation and could thus rise in his/her colleagues' esteem. The contrary could happen as well. Following this argument it is argued that a change in the criteria (or thinking) for acceptability and best practice may affect an employee's status in an organisation. A change in an employee's status may consequently affect his/her relationships with colleagues, which may be a source of tension or discomfort.

Delianne described it as follows: *"wat vroeër die underdog was, is nou die een wat toon aangee"*.

The experiences of participants indicated that the transformation process elicited a battle between people for and people against the transformation. This battle or power struggle between groups of employees of opposing ideas may cause difficulties and tension in the interpersonal relationships. Having transformed the organisation into something new (accepting a new paradigm) does not necessarily mean that all employees accept the new paradigm and that all the difficulties in the interpersonal relationships have been settled. The question arises of how these opposing groups can be reconciled and the difficulties in the interpersonal relationships resolved? It seems crucial for the productive functioning of the new organisation that these tensions be solved. Based on Delianne's experience of rebuilding trust, it is clear that reconciliation and relationships of trust cannot be achieved overnight.

Related to the reconciliation of people is the reconciliation of beliefs. Although the danger of a too homogeneous belief system was mentioned by implication, some form of agreement is necessary for the organisation to continue as a focused and goal-directed unit. However, it is also acknowledged that some people will never agree (and perhaps should not agree). People who really feel strongly about it will eventually leave the organisation. The question is how the reconciliation of beliefs can be managed during the process to achieve enough congruence in thinking to ensure the effective completion of the process and future functioning of the organisation while also allowing for enough diversity in thinking to prevent tunnel vision.

### 2.3.2 The transformation provided new opportunities and room for new ideas

Respondents found the opportunities and the room for new ideas provided by the process of transformation one of the definite positive results of the initiative. Four sub-categories were identified which serve as motivation or clarification for the positive experiences: (1) the challenges posed by something new, (2) the freedom to be creative, (3) the opportunity to develop a product to personal satisfaction and (4) having the responsibility for the development and out-



come of the initiative. Table 4.7 represents participants' verbatim comments subdivided into the four sub-categories.

2.3.2.1 Respondents found the new opportunities resulting from the process exciting, interesting and challenging (see Anja, Delianne).

2.3.2.2 Changes in the organisation's structure and the conceptual boundaries contributed to respondents' experience of greater freedom. This freedom referred to the freedom they had to do their own thing (see Pedro); the freedom to move beyond previous conceptual boundaries (Robert) and specifically the intellectual freedom to be creative and innovative in the development of a product (Drohan, Anja, Ute).

2.3.2.3 An additional advantage of the freedom participants had to develop new products was the opportunity it gave them to develop a product they felt personally comfortable with; something they could associate with (see Ute, Anja and Robert). It may be argued that the importance of a satisfactory product is that it is perceived as a reflection of their professional thinking, as an artifact used by clients and the external world to get to know them and judge them as professionals.

2.3.2.4 It is finally deduced that experiencing the new opportunities and greater freedom as a positive development depended on the extent to which the responsibility of the creative process resided with the individual employee. Those who had the freedom as well as the responsibility for the new initiatives found it predominantly positive (Drohan, Anja Ute). Soonja's initial positive experience of the challenge to develop something new turned into a very negative one when the responsibility for her initiative was taken away. It may be argued that having responsibility for something is a reflection of the organisation's trust in the particular employee to perform the task successfully. Removing the responsibility may therefore be seen as a motion of distrust expressed by the organisation in the particular employee.

**Table 4.7: New ideas and new opportunities as a result of the process**

NEW IDEAS/OPPORTUNITIES	ABBREVIATED COMMENTS (Verbatim)
<p><b>The challenge of something new</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Die nuwe kursus wat ek aanbied, is vir my uitdagend en ek geniet dit... dit is interessant en dis nuut. (Anja)</li> <li>• Dit het vir my eintlik 'n deur oopgemaak... ek het die uitdagings en die nuwe geleenthede gesien. (Delianne)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Freedom to be creative</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dit is wonderlike om 'n nuwe kursus te skep... Buiten die buite-persone het ek die vryheid om die kursus te ontwerp. (Drohan)</li> <li>• Dit is lekker om kursusse self te ontwikkel. (Anja)</li> <li>• Maar dit gee dan ook vir die individu 'n bietjie meer vryheid om sy eie ding te doen. (Pedro)</li> <li>• Dit is 'n groep mense wat groter vryheid beleef, hulle w ord nie meer aan bande gelê nie... vryheid om oor genres heen te werk. Wat ek besonder positief ervaar, is die groter mate van vryheid. (Robin)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development of product to own satisfaction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In ander kursusse wat ek aangebied het, was daar soms boeke voorgeskryf waarmee ek nie saamgestem het nie maar ek moes dit gebruik. Dit is baie lekker om kursusse self te ontwikkel. (Anja)</li> <li>• Maar toe ek met die kursus begin het, kon ek doen wat ek in die ander kursus nie kon nie. (Ute).</li> <li>• Vir baie jare al was daar 'n behoefte om inhoude te verander – hulle ideale is skielik verwesenlik. (Robert)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Responsibility for the initiative</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buiten die buite-persone het ek vryheid om die kursusse te ontwerp, dit is my produk wat ek onderrig en wat meer wil 'n mens hê. (Drohan)</li> <li>• Ek kan self kursusse skryf. (Anja)</li> <li>• What upset me most was that the responsibility for the development and the trust was removed. I had to produce the material but I had no say over it. (Soonja)</li> </ul>



### 2.3.3 Perceptions and experiences of the management of the process

The management of the transformation process was one of the themes that featured quite often in participants' experiences while these experiences were also predominantly negative. Six sub-themes were identified that provide information on the particular areas or issues participants found problematic in the management of the process. Table 4.8 presents participants' verbatim comments in the right hand column with the sub-category they described in the left hand column.

#### 2.3.3.1 Extent of consultation during the process

##### (a) Negative results of perceived lack of consultation

The many negative comments about the lack of consultation indicate that employees put a high premium on consultation in decision making during a transformation process. It is clear from the comments that respondents felt particularly negative and upset about those decisions on which, in their opinion, little or no consultation took place. Implementation without consultation created the impression that employees were regarded as objects or possessions of the organisation that could be moved around without any impact on them. Anja's positive experience of a decision despite her disagreement with the decision, is a clear illustration of the value of involving or consulting employees in decision making. Furthermore, it seems that negative feelings about the lack of consultation are not easily soothed, even if reasons are provided afterwards, and may thus have a prolonged effect on the relationship between management and staff members. It is thus deduced that the extent of consultation plays a significant role in influencing people's experiences of a transformation process. The way decision making is managed during the process seems to be just as important as the actual decisions themselves.

##### (b) Different perceptions of adequate consultation

It is quite significant that while employees found the process not consultative enough, Robert as manager experienced the extent of consultation as excessive and overestimated. At times he felt that the decision making was hampered by the demand for consultation. These experiences illustrate the differences in opinion that may be prevalent between management and the general staff during a transformation process. Conflicting opinions and experiences, sometimes even without the knowledge of disagreements, may have a negative effect on the process as such and on the relationships (of trust) during and after the process.

#### 2.3.3.2 Employees' involvement in the process

Heike was of the opinion that in the management of the process, the organisation was perceived as consisting of structures instead of people. She felt that not enough was done to take the people along in the process, to allow them the opportunity to take ownership of the process. Ownership would imply that employees' had the opportunity to participate actively in and influence the process. Drohan's positive experience of his involvement in the process as co-constructor illustrates the advantage of allowing people to take ownership of the process. [It is not the researcher's intention to give an assessment of the extent to which the organisation had involved employees in the process. The point of the argument is the issue of involvement and especially the advantages of doing so.]



### 2.3.3.3 Acknowledging the emotional impact of a transformation process

#### (a) Different perceptions about the impact of the transformation process

Soonja felt that management was not aware of and even refused to acknowledge the emotional experiences of employees resulting from the process. Robert actually confirmed that the management committee perceived the so-called emotional impact of the process as a non-issue which did not deserve the management committee's attention and intervention. However, Robert was of the opinion that, as a committee, they should have done more to support and accommodate the people.

Having discussed participants' personal experiences of the transformation process, it is clear that many of them found the process emotionally traumatic and taxing, irrespective of their agreement or disagreement with the decision to transform. It is clear that transformation not only affects employees on an intellectual or professional level, but also on an emotional level. The question thus arises of why the management committee was unaware of and/or ignored the emotional impact of the process on employees. Such a mismatch between management's perception of the well-being of staff and their actual well-being may have far-reaching implications for the emotional well-being of employees, the productivity of the organisation and the mutual trust and understanding between management and staff.

#### (b) Sharing of experiences

It is quite significant that Soonja realised that as colleagues they had not shared their personal and emotional experiences of the transformation process. As manager, Robert observed that staff members had a need to talk to someone about their own experiences. He personally experienced a dire need to discuss and share his problems, anxieties and frustrations with someone. Thus, not only staff members had a need to discuss their feelings but also those responsible for managing the process. However, the various experiences of participants reveal that no opportunity or channel was created for discussing or sharing experiences, feelings and anxieties. Furthermore, not even close colleagues felt at liberty to discuss their experiences and feelings with one another. Although people from different levels experienced the need to discuss their experiences with someone, this topic was consciously or unconsciously treated as taboo within the organisation. This might perhaps explain management's choosing to disregard the emotional impact of the process. It may be argued that a tacit, collective assumption ruled emotions and experiences as an inappropriate point of discussion in the work environment and/or it could simply be a reflection of an inability of people generally to deal with emotions.

However, ignoring this dimension does not contribute to employees' well-being and eventually to the organisation's optimal performance. On the other hand, the question may be raised of the ethical responsibility of an employer for the psychological and emotional well-being of employees during a transformation process.

### 2.3.3.4 Leadership providing a vision

Drohan and Pedro felt that the process lacked clarity in its direction; it lacked the vision needed to direct the decision making during the process and to motivate the people. In Drohan's opinion, this was among others the reasons for people's apathy simply because they did not know where the organisation was heading.



### 2.3.3.5 Hidden agendas during a transformation process

Pedro seemed to be disillusioned by his observation that some people involved themselves in the process simply to protect their own positions of power with the organisation. They were not necessarily concerned about working in the best interests of the institution and not necessarily focused on its objectives. Soonja also referred to the bureaucracy that bogged the process down. This raises the question of the nature of a transformation process: is it to be expected that a transformation process will be affected and side-tracked by personal agendas and red-tape or to what extent are these issues a reflection of the management of such a process, or perhaps both?

### 2.3.3.6 Infrastructural issues and practical implications of transformation

The extent of infrastructural support, access to resources and administrative clarity played a role in employees' experience of the process and in the performance of their professional responsibilities. Robert indicated that this dimension was overlooked in the management of the process and thus resulted in insufficient provision of support and administrative confusion. This inhibited the functioning of employees and contributed towards feelings of negativity. Given the increased work load and the emotional impact induced by such a process, it seems vital that an organisation alleviate as many hurdles or difficulties as possible (especially practical, tangible ones) to enable employees to cope with the work load and contribute to the bottom line of the organisation.

### 2.3.3.7 Time-consuming nature of a transformation process

Robert felt that a definite negative aspect of the process was the time it demanded. It should be realised that staff members and the management team participated (managed) in the transformation process while at the same time they also had to continue their usual professional activities. It seems valid to deduce that the efforts to remain on schedule with the process and be punctual with the usual activities, increased the demand on people (increasing the levels of stress), highlighting once again the impact of the process on employees.

From participant's comments it seems important to distinguish three dimensions of a transformation process:

- (1) The theoretical decision to transform. The decision to transform from one paradigm to another also involves other theoretical decisions for example a necessary change in the structure of the company, or change in the style of management or communication.
- (2) The decision to transform or to change to something else has to be implemented to give body to the actual decision. As illustrated by participants' comments regarding the lack of consultation during the process, it is clear that employees may agree with the theoretical decision to transform or to change the structure, but disagree with how the decision is actually implemented. Robert also highlighted the problems experienced with the way of implementing the transformation.
- (3) The practical implications or results of the decision. The decision to change the structures was fairly acceptable to most employees. However, the practical implications of the decision, namely the relocation to new offices, which resulted in unclear reporting structures, insufficient



administrative support, insufficient access to resources and a break in the informal networks were perceived as very negative implications of the decision.

When discussing employees' experiences of transformation, it should be clear which one of the three dimensions is being referred to, namely the (1) theoretical decision in itself (eg, move to a new paradigm), (2) how the decisions are implemented (eg, extent of consultation), or (3) the practical implications of the implementation. It is thus argued that in the management of a transformation process, cognisance needs to be taken of all three dimensions as they all have the potential to influence experiences of the process significantly. It is possible that employees may become negative about the theoretical decision because of shortcomings in the other dimensions. Reflecting on the completed transformation process, Pedro commented as follows:

Ek dink die besluit om te transformeer was op sigself nie problematies nie, maar wel die implementering daarvan.

**Table 4.8: Perceptions and experiences of the management of the transformation process**

MANAGEMENT	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS (Verbatim)
<p><b>Consultation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The average lecturer in the faculty does not actually perceive that as being consultative, we don't necessarily experience a genuine consultative process. (Soonja)</li> <li>• Persone is eintlik soos 'n pion geskuif... Ek het dit ervaar as 'n geweldige harde besluit...Mense is nie genoegsaam gekonsulteer in hierdie besluit nie. (Anja)</li> <li>• Die fisiese verskuiwing was vir my ook baie sleg (maar) ons is (wel) gekonsulteer oor wat ons dink en dit was vir my baie goed. (Anja)</li> <li>• Maar die wyse waarop die werkverdeling gedoen is, is baie negatief ervaar. Daar was nie konsultasie in die proses nie. (Heike)</li> <li>• Wat vir my belangrik is om daar te sê, is dat ek geen sê gehad het nie dat ek oorgaan... toe is daar redelik arbitrêr net gewoon besluit waarheen jy gaan en watter kursus jy gaan doen sonder konsultasie. (Pedro)</li> <li>• Die oordrewe beklemtoning van demokrasie, die oordrewe raadpleging ervaar ek as negatief. Jy moet baie mense raadpleeg en verduidelik. Die probleem is dat besluite nie gekommunikeer is nie. (Robert)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Involving/accommodating people</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My opmerking aan die komitee was dat as julle nie die mense kan saamvat nie, as julle nie mense kan kry om ownership te vat nie, dan kan julle strukture verander tot jy blou word. Maar 'n organisasie bestaan nie uit strukture nie. (Heike)</li> <li>• Miskien is dit goed as 'n mens ouens kan saamvat deur hulle in die proses betrokke te maak en vir hulle te sê jy kan jou stempel afdruk. (Drohan)</li> <li>• Maar die plan het ontwikkel soos wat ons verander het...dit het ook sy meriete want dan het almal 'n inset en jy kan gedurig die plan verander soos dit nodig is. (Drohan)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Acknowledging and dealing with the emotional impact of the process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ek het die vroeë gevra oor hoe dit die mense gaan raak. Vir hulle (UKF) was dit 'n minor issue. Van my kollegas se verhoudinge het verbrokkel, een is in 'n kliniek opgeneem, 'n ander uit die vriendekring geskop. My vraag is in watter mate is hierdie probleme geskep of aangehelp deur transformasie. My mening is dat ons dit geskep het. (Robert)</li> <li>• I think there is a gap in how the transformation process is perceived by management and how it is actually experienced by the people. I think management refuse to accept the experiences of the people. (Soonja)</li> <li>• I am realising that I haven't spoken to my colleagues enough about it. Which in itself says something that we haven't sat down in our departments or in our groups and actually talked about it. (Soonja)</li> <li>• Probleme van mense lê op die vlak van 'n nood om met ander te praat. (Robert)</li> <li>• My probleem is, waar gaan die dekaan en die departementshoof heen vir gesprek? Ek het 'n geweldige behoefte om vir iemand te sê watter probleme ek ervaar, om my eie frustrasie uit te spreek. (Robert)</li> </ul>





<b>Leadership to provide vision and direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ek sou daarvan gehou het as daar 'n plan was voordat ons verander het. Ek dink as 'n mens 'n plan het of 'n model waarna jy toe werk dan sal mense meer geneig wees om saam te gaan omdat hulle weet waarheen hulle gaan. (Drohan)</li><li>• Daar was nie leierskap nie. Leierskap is om visie oor te dra aan die mense (Pedro)</li></ul>
<b>Hidden agendas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There was a lot of bureaucracy involved in the transformation but maybe processes take a lot of time. (Soonja)</li><li>• Ek besef daar is baie belange wat beskerm word ... magsbelange, en dan sit jy met magspeletjies wat mense speel. Dat mense nie rêrig wil verander nie, dit gaan vir hulle meer om oorlewing ... Ek dink die groot probleem met transformasie is eie belang wat heelyd in die pad kom. (Pedro)</li></ul>
<b>Infrastructure and practical implications of decisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Al hierdie probleme moes uitgesorteer word: probleme rondom ameublement en apparatuur... Dit is klein goedjies wat mense gelukkig maak in hulle werk. Dit is in die transformasie geïgnoreer. (Robert)</li><li>• Omdat ons aan programme/kursusse werk, is dit nie altyd duidelik waarheen die tikwerk moet gaan en hoe dit verdeel moet word nie. Administrasie en finansiering word baie negatief beleef. (Robert)</li></ul>
<b>Communicating the benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ... unless you can convince people for the need to change, you are not going to get people to change. People have to see that there are benefits in the change and this it is not change for the sake of change or change for some ideological, political reason. (Soonja)</li></ul>
<b>Transformation a time-consuming exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Die geweldige tyd wat dit geneem het, die organisasie of die by-mekaar-hou van dinge. Die werksverdeling het bv. 'n minimum van drie maande geneem. (Robert)</li></ul>

#### 2.3.4 Introduction of uncertainties in particular personal and organisational spheres

The comments of participants revealed that the transformation process and all the changes it involved, introduced uncertainties in the work environment. The areas in which uncertainties were experienced are indicated in Table 4.9.

##### 2.3.4.1 Economic uncertainty

The transformation process posed a threat to employees that they might have to go on early retirement or be regarded as redundant in the new organisation. Employees' comments indicated that the possibility of losing their jobs was a real concern for employees, even after the completion of the process. This concern was illustrated by employees' sensitivity about the "weight" of their contribution as reflected in the distribution of work, the criteria for "forced" retirement as well as the tendency to over-extend themselves in terms of the workload (see Delianne's comment regarding the workoverload of colleagues for fear of losing their jobs). It is inevitable that uncertainties about job security and consequential economic instability contributed to employees' experience of the transformation process as stressful and difficult to deal with.

##### 2.3.4.2 Personal and/or professional uncertainty

Some employees felt that, because of the many changes resulting from the process, they simply could not continue functioning in the way they used to in the organisation. For some employees, the absence of previous certainties, such as colleagues, friendships, structures and assumptions, had serious consequences. They had to redefine themselves in the new system and had to re-establish the criteria for acceptable professional performance. For some employees, this was a traumatic experience. However, not all employees shared this experience of professional uncertainty (see Ute).

##### 2.3.4.3 Uncertainties over to the way of doing things

Moving to new departments, which meant a new or different style of management, manner of communication, informal interaction with and activities amongst colleagues, created feelings of uncertainty. Because of previous experiences, people had particular expectations of these issues. It is clear that it took some time for employees to settle into new patterns and it seems as if this dimension also contributed to anxiety and interpersonal tension.



Table 4.9: Introduction of uncertainties

AREAS WHERE UNCERTAINTIES WERE INTRODUCED	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS (Verbatim)
<b>Economic insecurity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 'n sekere sin, veral in my ouderdomsgroep, weet 'n mens daar moet mōre, oormōre besluit word alle mense bokant 55 moet aftree... die moontlikheid van 'n ekonomiese onstabiliteit, het ek as negatief ervaar. (Stephan).</li><li>• Die gedagte aan AA en die onsekerheid wat daarmee gepaard gaan... Nou wil mense meer punte of ure hê (in the division of labour) want hulle is bang hulle word op grond daarvan retrench. (Robert)</li></ul>
<b>Personal and/or professional uncertainty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ek voel oor my siening van wat wetenskap is en van my taak as dosent ... maar nou kom die ouens en hulle skiet gate... in daardie benadering. Dit het my in 'n geweldige mate ontgogel selfs soveel so dat ek nou nog nie weet wat ek eintlik moet doen nie. Ek voel in my wese onseker en dit maak jou minder effektief. (Stephan)</li><li>• Ek moet myself herontdek in hierdie nuwe omgewing. (Pedro)</li><li>• Ek het half gevoel of dit my nie raak nie omdat ek kursusse het wat ek aanbied en die Universiteit verwag nie van my om heeltmaal iets anders te doen nie. (Ute)</li></ul>
<b>Uncertainties with respect to the way of doing things</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ek sou dink mense het dit nuut ervaar, ons het nie geweet hoe dit werk nie bv. koek en tee elke maand, soos waar kry jy jou briewe. Dit het niks te doen met ons werk as sulks nie , meer met die opset. (Anja)</li><li>• ... dit het tot gevolg gehad dat toe ons in die nuwe departemente ingekom het, het ons met verskillende style gesit. Mense het dan ook verskillende verwagtinge van die nuwe departementshoofde gehad – wat toegelaat gaan word en wat nie. (Heike)</li></ul>

### 2.3.5 Re-assessment of personal, product and organisational relevance

Some of the participants felt particularly positive about the fact that the transformation process encouraged them or required them to re-evaluate the status quo. Table 4.10 presents the areas of evaluation.

#### 2.3.5.1 Personal, product and organisational relevance

Due to the process, employees had to consider the organisation's role and relevance in the broader, external environment. This included a re-assessment of the applicability and relevance of the products to clients. It also gave individuals the opportunity to re-evaluate their own situation and future role in the organisation. This re-evaluation contributed to a positive experience of the process.

#### 2.3.5.2 Reassessment of personal beliefs

Exposure to a changing or alternative organisational philosophy or paradigm forced people to be critical about the validity of their own conviction or beliefs. In other words, it encouraged people to consider and acknowledge alternative beliefs as acceptable and in that way contributed to a more inclusive way of thinking as opposed to an exclusive way. This seems to be a positive outcome of the process.

### 2.3.6 Workload

The increased workload as a result of the process contributed to participants' negative experiences of the transformation process. Table 4.11 provides descriptions of these experiences as well as their observations of the conduct of colleagues in this respect.

#### 2.3.6.1 Personal experience of an increased workload

Participants found the development of new course material and their participation in the transformation process, over and above their usual professional responsibilities, a tall order. The heavy workload tended to bias their perceptions of the process to the negative side. It evoked negative responses and resistance even in cases where people actually agreed with the transformation process. The workload seemed to increase participants' levels of stress significantly. Doubts were also expressed about the quality of new products given the limited time they had to develop these products. It may thus be argued that the increased workload resulting from such a process may in itself have a significant physical and emotional impact on employees, irrespective of their particular attitude towards the process. The increased workload, in itself, may thus elicit negative experiences of a transformation process.

#### 2.3.6.2 Perceptions of colleagues' conduct in this regard.

People were not only affected by the increase in the workload, but also by their observations of colleagues' workload. Those employees who seemed to be less engaged elicited negative and hostile feelings from those who had a heavy load to carry. Contrary to limited involvement, it was also observed that some colleagues overextended themselves for fear that they would be retrenched. Participation in some activities was therefore not necessarily driven by particular skills or interests, but by the fear of losing their jobs (see also the introduction of uncertainties). This kind of behaviour may be seen as a reflection of the anxiety and lack of psychological safety some employees experience during such a process.

**Table 4.10: Opportunity for re-assessing personal, product and organisational relevance**

AREAS OF RE-ASSESSMENT	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS (Verbatim)
<b>Personal, product and organisational relevance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The positive in general has been th at it has forced us to get out of our rut to start addressing realities, the realities facing us as individuals, courses, Unisa as a whole. (Soonja)</li> <li>• Ek dink ons is nogal gedwing om van ons vakinhoude aan te pas vir die huidige situasie en daaroor is die meeste van ons baie opgewonde. (Anja)</li> <li>• Ek dink wat positief is, is dat ons nou uiteindelik begin om die gemeenskap se behoeftes aan te spreek met ons studiematerial, dat ons besig is om relevant te raak. (Pedro)</li> </ul>
<b>Re-assessment of own beliefs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Die transformasie het mense regtig gedwing om ...nie net klakkeloos na te volg nie. Om ...op 'n meer intellektuele vlak miskien te glo, emosioneel te glo, daar is net een regte antwoord. (Delianne)</li> </ul>

**Table 4.11: Perceptions about the workload**

ISSUES REGARDING WORKLOAD	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS (Verbatim)
<b>Heavy work load</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Die geweldige werkslading. Dit het beteken dat ons kursusse steeds moes voortgaan en aan die ander kant nuwe kursusse skryf. Ek dink dit is maar ook die gees van die negatiewe houding wat partykeer oor mens gekom het omdat jy oorwerk is. (Anja)</li> <li>• Te midde van die ou werksdruk, moes jy probeer om 'n nuwe kursus te skryf met die gevolg ek het 'n bietjie bedenkinge oor die kwaliteit van die skrywery. (Ute)</li> <li>• 'n Ander negatiewe aspek was die geweldige oorlading van werk ... dit laai baie stres op jou tot jy op 'n punt kom waar jy sê nou moet ek uitgooi ongeag miskien van jou behoefte. Almal het 'n werkslading gehad wat ek dink ook weerstand teweeggebring het wat by sekere mense seker nie noodwendig so 'n reaksie sou ontlok nie. (Delianne)</li> </ul>
<b>Perceptions of colleagues' behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saam met die baie werk het ons dit baie keer ervaar dat jy jou oor 'n mik werk en 'n ander sit die koerant en lees (Anja).</li> <li>• Wat ook gebeur het, baie mense het verskriklik gehardloop om die nuwe kursusse te ontwikkel om sogenaamd werk te hê. (Delianne)</li> </ul>



### 2.3.7 Changing the way of doing things

Participants identified four areas in which, according to their experiences, the previous practices of the organisation had changed. Table 4.12 presents participants' verbatim comments on the four areas.

#### 2.3.7.1 Management style

Participants felt that the organisation's management style changed from formal and authoritarian to a more participatory, relaxed and flexible style. This was experienced as a positive result of the transformation process. However, it seems as if the management team was not always successful in upholding the new management style, and occasionally fell back on the previous management style, which resulted in really negative experiences of the management and the process.

This leads to the realisation that the decision to move to a new style of management does not necessarily mean that managers are trained and experienced in this new way of doing things. It is also clear that failure to apply the new management style consistently can contribute to staff members' negative experiences. Employees may doubt management's commitment to the new way of managing the organisation. It thus seems important for the decision to implement a new management style to also be accompanied with efforts to equip managers with the know-how to understand and implement it.

#### 2.3.7.2 Extent of individual participation

Pedro indicated that colleagues seemed to express their own opinions more freely and participated more in organisational activities than previously. Some colleagues even got involved in broader university-related activities. Various deductions may be made from these comments: (1) In the first place it may be argued that as a result of the transformation process itself, previous behavioural restrictions or codes of conduct were no longer or to a lesser extent applicable. This created the opportunity for employees to become more active. (2) In the second place it may be argued the momentum or energy created by employees' participation and involvement in the various transformation committees simply spilled over into other areas of the organisation. In other words, some employees discovered their abilities to make contributions and continued doing so in the transformed organisation. (3) In the third place, it may be argued that the more participatory style of management provided the opportunities for employees to express their opinions and participate in activities without fear. (4) It is also possible that the increased participation happened as a result of a combination of all three reasons.

#### 2.3.7.3 Introduction of debate

Colleagues were perceived to be more open about their own assumptions and beliefs (relating to work issues) and entered into debate about different assumptions. This comment leads to the deduction that a transformation process perhaps forces people to become aware of and define the assumptions and beliefs according to which they function. It is possible that employees are not always sure of the assumptions that guide their functioning and simply abide by the organisation's dominant paradigm. The organisation's move to a different paradigm may contribute to the realisation of people's own hidden assumptions and even the realisation of the nature

of these beliefs or assumptions as negotiable or non-negotiable. Pedro found this critical debate an improvement on the previous silent agreement (or disagreement) with the organisational paradigm.

#### 2.3.7.4 The role of women

According to Pedro and Anja, women played a more prominent role during and after the transformation than prior to the process. This was regarded as a positive result of the process. Various arguments may be presented for this stronger role of women. (1) It could have been as a result of a pertinent organisational decision to introduce gender (and racial) equality. (2) The transformation process introduced many changes. Some were formal changes, such as the new paradigm, new structures and committee and a new style of management. These formal changes triggered informal changes, such as the disturbance of the previous informal social hierarchy as discussed in interpersonal dynamics. These formal and informal changes could create the opportunity for employees to reposition themselves and find (create) a new role for themselves in the new organisation. In other words, employees (always) had the ability to play a strong role but were inhibited or disempowered by the structures, paradigm and processes of the old organisation. (3) Anja's remark that women had to learn to make a stand indicated that there was also a learning process involved for women. It may thus be argued that, apart from opportunities created by the process to redefine a new position, women (and perhaps all employees) had to learn to play a new role in the transformed organisation. They had to unlearn the previous unobtrusive role and re-learn a more active role. (4) Finally, it may be argued that the nature of a transformation process is such that it forces employees to be more aggressive or dominant in order to survive the process and acquire a position in the new organisation.

Table 4.12: Changing the way of doing things

AREAS WHERE CHANGES WERE EXPERIENCED	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS (Verbatim)
<p><b>Style of management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miskien is dit 'n semi-positiewe ding dat sekere dinge meer openlik plaasvind as van tevore. Sekere goed word meer geraadpleeg, meer gekommunikeer. Mense ... het dit nou bevrydend gevind om te kan praat. (Heike)</li> <li>• Dit was miskien 'n werklike begeerte om meer transparant te wees maar omdat jy nooit daaraan blootgestel was voorheen nie, het van dit geboemerang. Dit is 'n mengsel van mense wat nie weet hoe om die culture van konsultasie en participative management te hanteer nie. Hulle sê dit is goed maar doen dit nie altyd nie. In daardie opsig is dit da n negatief. (Heike).</li> <li>• Ek dink wat positief is, ... daar is 'n groter mater van deursigtigheid en deelname. (Pedro).</li> <li>• Die nuwe bestuursyl word positief beleef. Die vorige styl was streng, outokraties en kwaai. Mense kan nou vreesloos werk. Daar is groter buigbaarheid, deelnemende bestuur. (Robert)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extent of participation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jy weet, ek sien ook groter deelname aan kongress, en dat mense meer bereid is om hulle eie sê te sê. 'n Verdere ding wat positief is, ek sien 'n klomp mense hier wat nou nie net binne die Fakulteit nie maar ook binne die Universiteit betrokke geraak het. (Pedro)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nature of debate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daar was nooit in die verlede hierdie openlike debat nie, nou het ons dit. Dit is die een goeie ding dat mense nou bereid is om op te staan vir dit waarin hulle glo. (Pedro)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Role of women</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ... weet jy wie in die nuwe opset blom, is 'n klomp vrouens want die deure het vir hulle oopgegaan en dit is asof hulle bemaagtig is. (Pedro)</li> <li>• 'n Ander positiewe aspek is dat vrouens geleer het om onself te handhaaf wat baie goed was. Ek het agtergekom dat vrouens hulle monde kan oopmaak... Met die oorkom na die nuwe departement moes jy jou man kon staan en ek dink ons het dit reggekry. Ek dink in 'n mate het hulle geleer om hulle man te staan... Dit is vir my baie prominent dat vrouens sterker na vore gekom het. (Anja)</li> </ul>



### 2.3.8 Perceived outcomes (successes or failures) of the process

Following participants' comments it seems that their perceptions of the outcomes of their efforts during the process had an influence on their experiences of the process. Tangible outcomes or successes as a result of their participation (eg, course material, the election of a representative committee or the decrease in negative reporting on the activities of the organisations) contributed to employees' experience of the process as successful and worthwhile. On the other hand, activities leading to no visible or tangible results seemed to have created feelings of despondency, negativity and even resulted in employees disengaging from activities. See Table 4.13 for the verbatim comments of participants

Employees need to experience some kind of progress during the process, assuring them that their efforts are worthwhile and contributing to the good of the organisation. The effect of perceived outcomes on employees' experiences and attitudes needs to be acknowledged in the management of the process. It is deduced that the communication and sharing of successes of endeavours can contribute to positive experiences of the process and possibly lead to maintained participation and belief in the process. Activities and efforts leading to no clear outcome or negative outcomes as well as activities simply continuing without any direction or objective can do much harm in instilling negative feelings towards the process and can even result in employees disengaging from the process.

### 2.3.9 Career implication of the transformation

Both Stephan and William were negatively affected by the decision to change the composition of the executive committee of the organisation. To understand the impact of the decision, it should be realised that seniority, success and status in the organisation were awarded in two ways. The first path involved professional academic competency and consisted of various levels of seniority ranging from junior lecturer to full professor, the highest possible level. This path may be regarded as the primary system for rewarding excellence and proficiency as this was done by the application of formal criteria for competence for each of the levels. The second path of upward mobility or status in the organisation entails representation on influential structures in the organisation (such as the departmental management committee) with the dean of the Faculty as the highest position. This path is referred to as a secondary reward system as these positions were normally awarded to people in senior academic positions or they were elected to these positions as a result of colleagues' perceptions of their competence and ability to contribute to the management of the organisation. The primary rewards system therefore focused on employees' "objective" academic competencies in their particular subject area while the secondary rewards system had more to do with their perceived standing in the organisation and their perceived ability to contribute to the management of the organisation. Thus an employee's position or status in the organisation was reflected by his/her academic position (lecturer etc) as well as his/her managerial position.

Changing the structures (and criteria for achieving membership on committees etc.) in the organisation during the process of transformation inevitably affected the previous positions of seniority and status. These changes not only affected the people who used to be in the senior or managerial positions, but also affected those employees who aspired to get to those positions. Stephan indicated that the change in the managerial structures that used to confirm his success

and competence contributed to his feeling insecure and doubting his own competence. He experienced the loss of his position in the management committee as a humiliation. William described the change in the management structures as a cruel decision. Becoming a member of the management committee was something he had aspired to, something he had worked for many years but in the transformed organisation these aspirations were shattered.

Veral in die begin van verlede jaar was dit vir my 'n geweldige trauma om maar net 'n gewone departementslid te wees en geen aansien te he in terme van die bestuur- en besluitnemingsprosesse in die departement nie. (Stephan)

The executive is now more democratic but it also is difficult to accept. After climbing up the ladder to reach that point (Executive Committee of the Faculty) the new set-up can be a bit cruel - a cultural shock. (William)

These experiences illustrate the perceived impact of the transformation process on the status-giving structures and symbols in an organisation. Not only are the people represented in the old structures or positions affected, but also those aspiring to those positions. It is thus argued that in the management of the process, attention should be given to those employees who have to resign from positions (or simply lose them) as a result of changing structures and criteria. Secondly, previous status-giving structures or positions need to be translated to the new system and/or new status symbols and structures need to be created for the new system to accommodate the aspirations of younger employees. At a minimum level, the issues of upward mobility and gaining status (or esteem) need to be dealt with during the process. Ignoring this aspect of the process seems to have a significant effect on employees' experience of the process; especially those who were in the affected positions or those very close to obtaining such positions.

#### 2.3.10 Diversity and representation

Comments about representation revolved mainly around two issues namely (1) the composition of committees in the organisation, and (2) the staff profile reflecting the diversity of society. Table 4.14 provides participants' verbatim comments on these two sub-themes.

2.3.10.1 With respect to the composition of organisational committees, some respondents felt positive about the move towards increased representation. Committees seemed to be more representative of the total staff component in terms of gender, race and job level. It is significant that the inclusion of women and black people on the selection committee contributed to Anja's feeling of the process being honest and transparent. Her particular experience leads to the deduction that employee representation on the various committees may contribute to their experience of the organisation as more accessible and approachable.

2.3.10.2 A more diverse staff profile, representative of the demographic profile of the broader society or external environment, was also perceived as providing the organisation with an improved ability to understand and deal with clients' needs (external environment). It should be kept in mind, however, that several respondents were of the opinion that the staff profile was not representative enough (see Soonja and Leslie's comments about the post-transformation phase).



Table 4.13: Perceived outcomes of the process

PERCEIVED POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS	PERCEIVED NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dit is positief beleef dat die druk van buite - instansies, veral die wat baie invloed het, afgeneem het. Die negatiewe kommentaar in dagblaai in briewekolomme het baie afgeneem. Dit is as positief beleef. (Robert)</li> <li>• Die mense voel dat die kursusse die moeite werd is. (Robert)</li> <li>• Die nuwe gidse lyk mooi en ek is trots daarop. (Robert)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are opportunities for people to get involved. This is, however, also experienced as negative because there are too many committees going nowhere. My perceptions is that people then start to withdraw, disengage from activities because they are physically, emotionally and psychologically tired. (Soonja)</li> <li>• A negative side to the transformation process is that before we could benefit from the changes that took place, we were confronted with the financial problems of the University. (Soonja)</li> </ul>

Table 4.14: Increased diversity in the staff and committee profiles

INCREASED DIVERSITY	COMMENTS OF RESPONDENTS
<p><b>Diversity reflecting the profile of the whole organisation</b></p> <p><b>Internal value of diversity</b></p> <p><b>Diversity reflecting the profile of society</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My most positive experience was when the new executive committee became elected and it was actually representative of all the people in the Faculty. (Soonja)</li> <li>• In die onderhoude wat ek gehad het verlede jaar was daar vir die eerste keer dames op die keurkomitee. In al die ander onderhoude was dit net mans met swart pakke. Verlede jaar het ek vir die eerste keer gevoel dit is wonderlik want daar was iemand van die vakbond, iemand van die transformasieforum, mans – dit was anders. Ek het vir die eerste keer gevoel dit is oop, eerlik en dit is 'n fair deal. (Anja)</li> <li>• Ek is ook bly oor die transformasie in die opsig dat ons Swart en Indiër kollegas ingekry het want dit is hoe ons studente lyk. Feitlik 85% van ons studente is swart. Ons skryf wat in hulle skole aangaan. Dit maak dit makliker. (Anja)</li> </ul>



## 2.4 Participation in the process: collaboration and resistance

In discussing respondents' way of participation in the process and their motivations for doing so cognisance needs to be taken of the original context of the data as this also provides valuable reasons for their conduct during the process. In a way, it may be argued that many (or all) of the positive results of the process, such as new opportunities and new ideas or the change in management style, motivated people to participate and to continue their participation in the process. These experiences have been discussed in detail and without a doubt contributed to understanding employee conduct during the process. However, in this section the discussion is focused on participants' reasons for participating. This section is thus slightly different from participants' experiences simply because these comments were not made in the course of the interview but were replies to a particular question.

Table 4.15 provides information on the following: (1) shortened comments of respondents' particular participation in the process (including contributions and resistance), (2) the core theme underlying the comments on contribution, and (3) the core theme underlying the comments on resistance.

The use of the terms "participation", "contribution" and "resistance" and the meanings ascribed to them, need to be clarified at this point. Resistance does not mean non-participation or lack of contribution. It may be understood as a specific kind of participation and even as a contribution. This meaning of the term is illustrated by participants' comments. However, to make a distinction between "agreement" and "disagreement" with aspects of the process, the term "contribution" is used to refer to agreement with decisions while disagreement with a particular decision or the expression of a different opinion is described as "resistance". At this point, no positive or negative value is attached to either of the concepts.

### 2.4.1 Reasons for participating in the process

The participants gave various reasons for their active participation in the process. These motivations or reasons are discussed below.

- It seems that an intellectual understanding of the necessity to transform or an intellectual agreement with the decision played a prominent role in participants' motivation for participation. Understanding and/or agreeing with the necessity to transform seems to have facilitated participation. However, in some respects it had no relevance. Stephan, for example, disagreed intellectually with the decision, but still participated. Ute, on the other hand, understood at least some of the reasons for transforming the organisation, but did not participate in transformation-related activities. It is thus concluded that an intellectual understanding of or agreement with the decision to transform facilitates participation in a transformation process. However, it is not a necessary or sufficient requirement for participation.
- In some cases, specific opportunities were provided to individuals (see Drohan, Soonja) and in other respects it involved the open invitation to employees (Anja, Delianne). The availability of opportunities to participate motivated employees to get involved in the process.
- The opportunity to co-construct the process and co-determine its actual outcome thereof, motivated some to participate (Drohan).



- The notion that the organisation needed them and that they were of value to the organisation and the completion of the process, moved employees to involve themselves in the process (Drohan).
- The process elicited participation because it provided employees with challenges and opportunities to be creative (Pedro, Delianne)
- A long term perspective, focusing on the eventual personal and organisational benefits of the process, motivated some employees to participate (William).
- A particular value orientation of commitment and loyalty to the organisation as well as a sense of responsibility, motivated employees to participate (Pedro, William, Soonja). It is also true that some employees had a responsibility for the process (Robert).
- It is also clear that some employees participated simply because they felt they had no other option. Because of fear of being victimised or losing their jobs, they had to go along with the process (Stephan, William).

It is thus clear that apart from an intellectual agreement with or understanding of the decision to transform, many other issues such as a particular value system, personal desires, the eventual benefits of the process or the lack of alternatives play a role in facilitating participation in the process.

**TABLE 4.15: Motivation for participation in the process**

COMMENTS	SUPPORT THEMES	RESIST THEMES
<p><b>Drohan</b>            (1) <i>In 'n mate het ek ook gevoel daar moet verandering kom</i>            (2) <i>... hulle het my gevra om daarby betrokke te raak</i>            (3) <i>Jy voel jy is nodig en word geag</i>            (4) <i>Ek was betrokke die heeltyd. jy kan jou stempel afdruk</i>            (5) <i>Indien nie op intellektuele vlak saamgestem het nie, het ek dit gesê. Daar was die vryheid om te sê ... soos om Opvoedkunde uit te faseer...</i>            (6) <i>Hulle het my by primere ondering ingedeel en ek het heftig gereageer daarop. hulle het toe wel daarop gereageer</i></p>	<p>(1) Intellectual agreement with decision to transform            (2) Provided with the opportunity to participate            (3) Felt needed by the organisation, felt important            (4) Opportunity to co-construct the process and the outcome</p>	<p>(5) Resisted decisions when disagreed intellectually. Experienced the freedom to express intellectual disagreement            (6) Resisted decisions that affected him negatively</p>
<p><b>Stephan</b>            (1) <i>Dit was nie nodig om die hele appelkar om te keer nie</i>            (2) <i>Dit het by my die gevoel gewek van ... moet daar van my ontslae geraak word. Dit het gemaak dat ek in 'n seker sin weerstandig was oor bepaalde goed</i>            (3) <i>... jy is in 'n sekere mate uitgelower. Ek het nie eintlik bygedra of meegewerk nie. Ek het maar net saamgespoel.</i></p>	<p>(1) Disagree with nature and extent of transformation            (3) Went along with the process because he had no other option.</p>	<p>(2) Held responsible for the "wrong-doings" of the old system - resisted these claims.            Passive resistance</p>
<p><b>Soonja</b>            (1) <i>The process of transformation has been necessary</i>            (2) <i>I and some of my colleagues were very proactive in promoting change. reading books, preparing proposals, discussions</i>            (3) <i>It has given opportunities to participate in the transformation</i></p>	<p>(1) Intellectual agreement with the decision to transform            (2) Promoted change pro-actively            (3) Provided the opportunities to participate</p>	



<p>(4) I have supported the process... I might have been critical and negative at times... because I experienced the process as too slow</p>		<p>(4) Critical comment/resist when in disagreement with process of change (more should have been done and achieved)</p>
<p><b>Anja</b> (1) Dit (transformasie) is iets wat lankal moes gebeur het (2) Transformasie het die geleentheid gebied om meer relevant te word  (3) As iets nie reg is nie, dan sal ek dit sê  (4) Ek het dit vir die dept. hoof gesê en 'n brief vir die Dekaan geskryf</p>	<p>(1) Intellectual agreement with the decision (2) Provided opportunity to become relevant</p>	<p>(3) Freedom and courage to voice intellectual disagreements (4) Resisted decision that affected her negatively</p>
<p><b>Ute</b> (1) Ek het lankal gesê die kursusse is verouder... verder is ek taamlik gedistansieer van die hele storie</p>	<p>(1) Agree with decision to change products Total lack of interest in transformation as such</p>	
<p><b>Heike</b> (1) Ek het 'n alternatiewe transformasie voorgestel  (2) Daar was nie vir my 'n geleentheid om binne die transformasie proses 'n positiewe bydrae te lewer nie... jy weet nie altyd wat die effek van konstruktiewe weerstand gaan wees nie  (3) Ons het wyd geles, alternatiewe besprekingsdokumente opgestel, gesprekgroep gestig</p>	<p>(1) Agree with the need to transform but not the direction/manner of change</p>	<p>(2) Constructive resistance to influence the direction of change  (3) Constructive resistance implied the voicing of alternatives based on reading and discussions</p>
<p><b>Dellianne</b> (1) Vir my het dit bloot gegaan oor wat ek geglo het, dit was reg en ek kon insien wat moes gebeur (2) Dit was opwindend, ek is positief oor verandering en dit was hoofsaaklik my motivering om deel te hê</p>	<p>(1) Intellectual agreement with the decision. (2) Excitement of change</p>	



<p>(3) <i>Maar toe daar geleenthede na my kant toe kom waarin ek belangstel... het ek dit gedoen.</i></p>	<p>(3) Provided with the opportunity to participate</p>	
<p><b>Leslie</b> (1) <i>Transformation did not take place</i> (2) <i>It (the organisation) provided me the opportunity to work in areas that I am interested in.</i></p>	<p>(1) No acknowledgement of a transformation process (2) Participated in professional activities irrespective of the change process</p>	
<p><b>William</b> (1) <i>I am all for transformation... I never resisted the change.</i> (2) <i>You should participate because you will gain in the long run.</i> (3) <i>One has the moral obligation to contribute to the change.</i> (4) <i>Other people are looking up to Unisa to set the example.</i> (5) <i>My participation in the process was a matter of adapt or die.</i></p>	<p>(1) Intellectual understanding of the decision to transform (2) Seize the opportunity for future benefits/growth (3) Inclination to feel personally responsible (4) Loyalty towards the organisation (5) He had no other option</p>	
<p><b>Pedro</b> (1) <i>...en besef dat ons sal moet verander</i> (2) <i>Gesprekke... het my in so 'n mate verander dat ek voel ek moet nou die gesprek probeer voortsit.</i> (3) <i>Omdat ons die verantwoordelikheid gehad het...</i> (4) <i>...dit is vir my lekker om kreatief te wees en om buite reëls en regulasies te funksioneer</i></p>	<p>(1) Intellectual understanding for the need to change (2) Promoted change proactively (3) Aware of his responsibility towards the organisation (4) Opportunity to be creative</p>	
<p><b>Robert</b> (1) <i>Toe ek vir myself uitgemaak het dat ons moet verander.</i> (2) <i>het ek besluit om daarvoor te gaan met alles wat ek het en ek kyk nie weer terug nie</i></p>	<p>(1) Intellectual understanding for the need to change (2) Commitment towards the organization</p>	



#### 2.4.2 Resisting the process or aspects thereof

Contrary to the popular belief that resistance usually comes from employees who disagree with the transformation, this study shows that participants who played a leading and even proactive role in the transformation resisted the process at some point (see Soonja, Drohan, Anja, Heike). Focusing on the motives for resistance, it seems that this reaction was elicited for various reasons:

- In some instances, employees were negatively affected on a personal level by a certain decision, which caused them to query and even resist the decision (see Anja, Drohan).
- Employees did not always agree intellectually with decisions taken during the process. By resisting the decision or being critical about it, they tried to influence the process, raise their concerns or persuade the organisation to reconsider.
- Employees also resisted the process as a deliberate action to force the organisation to consider alternatives. The intention of this role is thus not to stop the transformation process, as such, but rather to make the organisation aware of other possibilities (see Heike).

The first deduction from these reaction is that resistance is not necessarily destructive or negative. Resistance during a process can be very constructive in that it can contribute to careful decision making during the process. If several employees raise their concerns or resist a particular decision, surely there must be a reason for it.

The second deduction relates to the employees who resisted aspects of the process. Resistors are not necessarily troublemakers or employees who want to derail the process. As this particular study indicates, resistors can be people who are very much committed to the process and want to make a constructive contribution to the process.

The issue of resistance raises the question of the preparedness of the management team to deal with and accommodate resistance during the process. If it is accepted that resistance can be constructive, it seems important that processes be put in place to deal with resistance (in a positive way) as part and parcel of a change process. Taking the resistance of employees seriously by incorporating that into the process is to allow them to co-construct the outcome of the process. This may then be regarded as a reflection of the organisation's philosophy (management) on the role and liberties of employees. It is possible that this kind of philosophy corresponds with the one which allows employees to communicate and compare their understanding of the concept of transformation to that of management in order to come to a shared understanding.

### 3 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored participants' individual experiences of issues or themes that they found dominant in the process. Similarities and differences in experiences of particular themes were explored by comparing data in and between the various themes. Participants' involvement in the process, whether participation or resistance, was also discussed. As stated in the objective of the study, the exposition of the various themes and the individual experiences as discussed in chapter 3 are used to develop a conceptual framework for understanding employee experiences of a transformation. Chapter 5 proposes a conceptual framework grounded in the experiences of the participants in the study.

## CHAPTER 5

# THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to a conceptual understanding of employees' experiences of a transformation process. This is done by relating described experiences to existing theory and even building or extending theory where applicable. First, a perspective of transformation is offered portraying it as a phenomenon consisting of various stages. This is done with the explicit aim of underscoring the fact that any of the stages of such a process can potentially impact on employees and therefore need to be distinguished. Then follows a discussion on the development of individual frameworks of transformation, referred to as "concepts" of transformation, that represent employees' understanding of the why, what and how of the process.

Descriptions of employees experiences of the general outcome of the process as well as references to the management of the process, are then used to describe a conceptual model for understanding employees experiences of the transformation process. Possible mediators for facilitating positive experiences are also discussed and finally the contribution of the study is highlighted.

### 2 TRANSFORMATION AS A PROCESS OF IDENTIFIABLE STAGES AND DIMENSIONS

The discussion of the individual experiences of the transformation process as well as the identification of common themes of the collective experiences leads to the clear (and rather simple) conclusion that transformation elicits a wide range of diverse experiences, agreements, disagreements and feelings (positive and negative). This empirical study, focusing on employee's experiences of a completed process, provides valuable insights into the multiplicity of events, decisions, processes and interpersonal encounters that elicited particular responses.

#### 2.1 Stages of a transformation process

This study shows that employees experience transformation as consisting of different phases or entities. As indicated earlier, they related their experiences and opinions to the period before (pre-transformation), during and after the transformation. The significant aspect is not that these phases correspond with Levin's (in Burke, 1987) managerial perspective of unfreezing, moving and refreezing stages, but rather that employees experienced these phases differently. In other words, the different phases had identifiably different impacts on employees. Pedro's remark about the difference between the decision and the implementation is a good example of the different responses that might be elicited by the different phases of the process: "...die besluit om



te transformeer was op sigself nie problematies nie maar wel die implementering daarvan.” Thus, when discussing, studying or analysing the impacts or effects of a transformation process on employees, it cannot be treated as a single phenomenon, but rather as one consisting of identifiable stages and dimensions.

This finding on the different impacts of the various stages of a change process corresponds with Brockner's (1988) conclusions on employees' reactions to layoffs. In a theoretical study reflecting on the research, theory and practice with respect to layoffs, Brockner (1988) concluded that studies on layoffs need to regard survivors' reactions (experiences) as a process in which three periods can be used, namely before, during and after the layoff has taken place.

Recognising the process as consisting of different phases has definite implications for the management perspective of transformation or large-scale change. Not only should the management of a process invest energy in establishing a readiness for change (pre-transformation) by comparing the present with the future end-state, but the management should also actively revolve around the transition (moving from here to there) and the final outcome of the process. “Critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact...” (Kotter, 1995, p. 60).

In a study on a large South African organisation that underwent transformation, Hamilton-Attwell (1997) found that the employees grew more negative about the transformation the more they experienced its impact. The reference to “experiencing its impact” raises the question whether the increase in negativity is not rather attributable to the later phases of the process (transition and post-transformation) than to the decision to change from one paradigm (the first phase) to another. In an empirical study on the transformation of the management of Extrusion Company from a traditional to a participative form, Hennestad (2000) came to the conclusion that too little management attention was the major reason why the idea did not fully succeed in practice.

It demonstrates that it is simply not enough to design and proclaim a new order — in this case, participative management. New organizational practices are not ensured by commitment to ideas alone; a complex process is required to create them (Hennestad, 2000, p. 330).

His findings underscores the notion that great organisational effort before implementation, thus creating a readiness for change in the before phase, does not guarantee almost instant or successful implementation. The term “instrumental change management” is created to refer to the process whereby organisational ideas are turned into organisational reality, which is different from operational management. This corresponds with the transition phase identified by Beckhard and Harris (1987) as a period in need of special, dedicated structures and management mechanisms to accomplish the major tasks of that period — and even more so when the change is large and complex (Goodstein & Burke, 1991; Barrett & Cammann, 1984). Although not within the ambit of this study, it is interesting to note that Hennestad (2000) also concluded that the findings on instrumental change management challenge the argument that leadership rather than management can produce change. His findings imply that there is both a leadership and management dimension to change.

Apart from instrumental change management, managing the transition by using structures and mechanisms to implement the proposed change, employees also respond to the way the transition is done. So, for example, participants in this study complained about the lack of consultation during the process, the limited extent of involvement in decision-making and management's



indifference to the emotional impact of the process on employees. According to Cooper (1995, p. 39), "Organizations are bound to continue having trouble implementing change until they learn that people resist not change per se, but the way they are treated in the change process and the roles they play in the effort." Cunningham (1997) concludes that employees' negative feelings during the death of an organisation resulted from the way the process was handled and administered. As one of his respondents remarked: "It is not losing the job that bothered me, it is the insensitivity and callousness by which they dealt with me" (Cunningham, 1997, p. 488).

It is inevitable that the change to a new or different organisational paradigm (the end-state) will produce gains and losses. In William and Stephan's case they both lost their positions on the executive management committee as a result of the change to representivity. Foote (2001) indicates that it is critical to identify (timeously) who is going to lose what in the end state. Losses should be acknowledged instead of simply accepted as part of the process and efforts should be made to give something back to employees (Foote, 2001).<sup>1</sup> Tamboe (1990) argues for a change model that dedicates time at the end of the process to deal with those employees who are adversely affected.

Apart from the impact of the change paradigm, it is also possible that practical implications of the newly implemented paradigm or the various decisions during the process may impact (negatively) on employees. Within the transformation process, several smaller changes eventually culminate in the materialisation of the vision or end-state. These smaller changes also consist of a conceptual element (ie, the essence or conceptual content of the decision), the implementation and finally the practical implications of the decision. This implies that employees experience the "practical outcome" of implemented decisions throughout the process. So, for example, the process of upward mobility in the organisation with representation on the executive committee as the highest rank was made redundant by the decision to have participatory decision-making. Several participants also complained about the heavy workload that resulted from the decision to offer new and changed courses to clients. These new courses had to be developed amidst their normal or usual duties. It is thus possible that employees could lose faith in the new paradigm or become negative somewhere in the process (as Anja, in fact, experienced) due to the adverse effects of implemented decisions. Although some outcomes, such as an increased workload, seem to be an inevitable outcome of such a process, it is necessary to at least acknowledge the changes that resulted from the decision, provide organisational support of some kind, develop new career options or even compensate employees for their efforts in one way or another (Goodstein, et al., 1991, p. 13).

For an organisation to move from the current to the future reality, Goldratt (1994) advises that the organisation deliberately go through an exercise to envisage consequences of the future state (by drawing future reality trees) and timeously develop action plans to prevent or combat potential negative consequences of the change. The administrative chaos with a multiple meetings and bosses to which William referred, could perhaps have been anticipated and dealt with proactively. Dealing with the practical implications of decision is therefore considered an essential part of the change process that needs deliberate attention (Goldratt, 1994; Kendall, 1998). It

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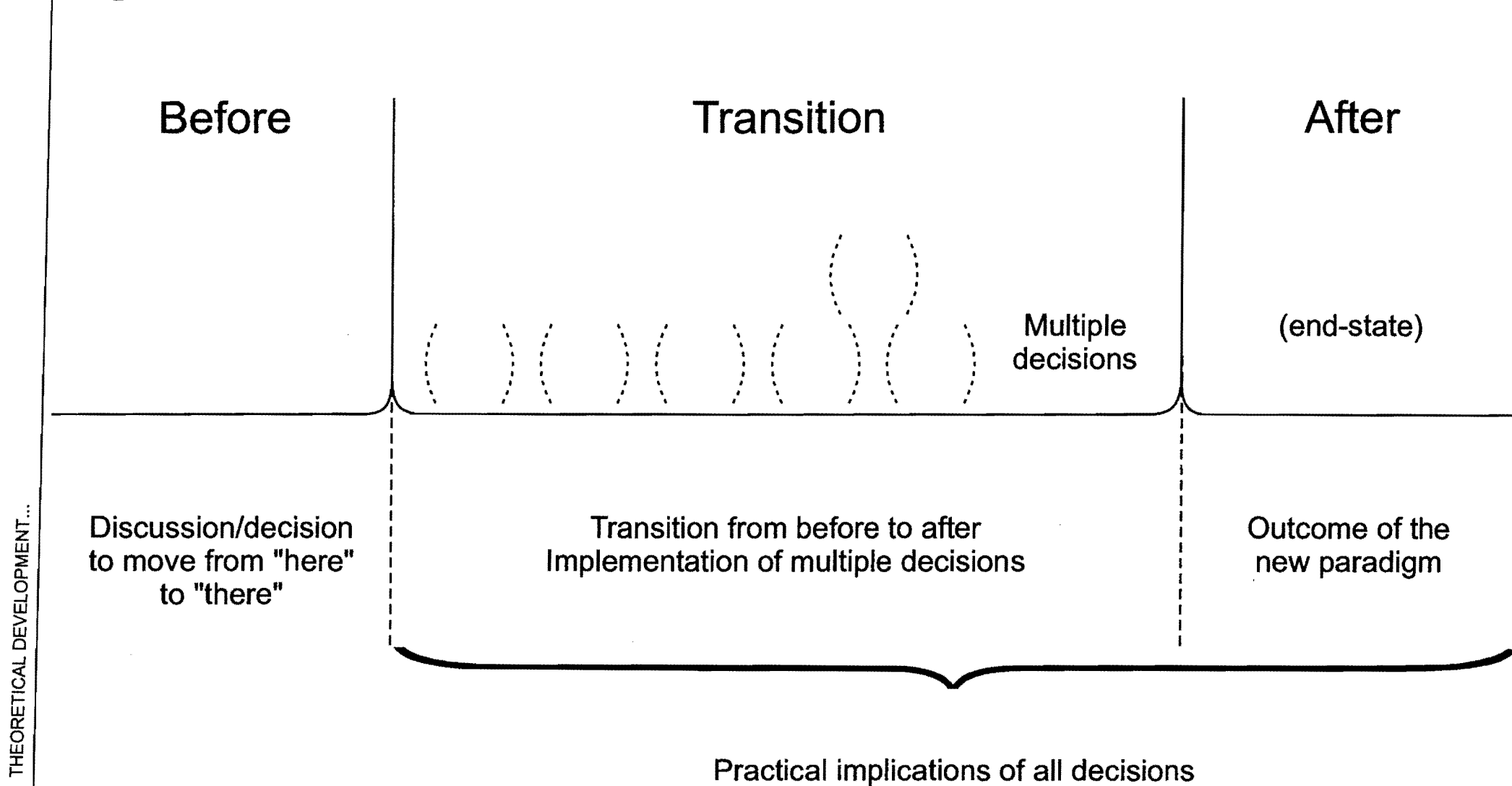
1. Acknowledging losses would imply that the view that employees deserved the losses, or that it is due to their conduct (or misconduct) needs to be changed. It is even suggested that a proper period of grieving needs to be introduced to allow employees the opportunity to part from the past.



is surprising though that in the literature on transformation, little attention is given to the potential impacts of the practical implications of an implemented decision. Figure 5.1 presents the different stages and dimensions of an experienced transformation process.

It is thus concluded that when referring to a transformation or large-scale change, it is necessary to distinguish between the different stages and domains of such a process, as each of these can elicit very different responses from employees. So, for instance, an employee may fully agree with a particular decision (substitute one paradigm for another), but disagree or be adversely affected by the instrumental change management or the way in which the decision or change has been implemented. In the same way, an employee may agree with the decision, the instrumental change management and the way it was implemented, but is adversely affected by the practical implications or outcome of the decision. (See, for example, where participants complained about access to resources that became difficult as a result of the structural changes with which they agreed). To understand and deal with the impact of transformation on employees, it is thus critical to differentiate which stage or domain of the transformation process or decision elicited a particular response as it might require quite different strategies.

**Figure 5.1** Stages and dimensions of a transformation process





### **3 DEVELOPMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PROPOSED TRANSFORMATION**

The pre-transformation phase indicates the period of “coming to the decision” that transformation is necessary. This phase refers to the organisation as perceived and experienced by employees before any changes took place. It also encapsulates the period of discussion and reflection in the organisation leading to the decision to transform and the communication of this decision to employees and other stakeholders. This may be regarded as Levin’s (Burke, 1987) unfreezing period, Beckhard and Harris’ (1987) current or present state of an organisation, or Levy’s (1986) decline and transformation phase where the need for change is accepted, and the organisation commits itself to change and depart from the old beliefs (paradigm) and habits.

Based on the analysis of data in the pre-transformation phase of the process, all except one of the participants felt that the organisation had to transform. Despite their agreement with the decision to transform, employees gave different reasons as motivation for the change. Some participants indicated outdated products as a reason while others felt that intra-organisational issues and/or changes in the external environment necessitated the decision. Furthermore, it was deduced that employees’ perceptions of why transformation was necessary, were influenced by various individual reasons, such as their personal beliefs and upbringing, prior work experience, exposure to literature and external people, personal characteristics and the nature or level of personal investment in the old organisation. It was thus concluded that agreement with the decision to transform happened for different reasons based on their personal beliefs and values and prior experience or history.

#### **3.1 Influence of organisation-employee relationship on the development of an understanding of change**

The deduction that there are multiple and different perceptions of the necessity for change is consistent with research findings that individual employees do not necessarily interpret the reasons for transformation in the same way (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999; Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder, 1993; Eby, Adams, Russel & Gaby, 2000). The second deduction, namely that many factors/constituents, such as personal experience and background, organisational issues and external developments shape individual perceptions of the necessity to change also concurs with research findings. Research on the causal frameworks used by employees to understand change distinguishes between social accounts theory and motivated reasoning. Social accounts refer to the reasons, explanations or excuses offered by management for the proposed change. Motivated reasoning refers to employees’ active interpretation of the reasons for the proposed transformation. According to motivated reasoning, employees interpret the reasons given for the change (social accounts) differently (Armenakis, et al., 1993). Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999, p. 526) conclude that employees rely on “a system of beliefs regarding their relationship with the organization and its management” to understand and interpret the reasons for change. Employees understand the reasons for change differently, depending on the nature of their relationship with the organisation. So, for example, employees are inclined to doubt the legitimacy of management’s reasons for change if the relationship lacks trust. In this particular study, Soonja, Heike and Leslie voiced their mistrust in the organisation by referring to how they experience the organisation as such. An employee’s relationship with the organisation is a pro-



duct of the organisation-employee history and the nature of the employee's psychological contract with the organisation (Rousseau, et al., 1999; Strelbel, 1996). A relational contract which entails mutual obligations to support each other's interests, offers security, loyalty and commitment and involves a high degree of flexibility is believed to be more facilitative of the acceptance of change (Rousseau, et al., 1999; Strelbel, 1996). A transactional contract, on the other hand, consisting largely of a narrowly defined exchange of specific job tasks for monetary compensation, seems to be less facilitative for the acceptance of change (Rousseau, et al., 1999). Thus, employee perceptions of, say, an organisation's trustworthiness, flexibility and willingness to listen and to support (based on prior experiences) filter an employee's understanding of the reasons for change.

### **3.2 The influence of individual histories and characteristics on the development of an understanding of the proposed transformation**

Armenakis et al (1993, p. 687) refer to mass communication theory to explain different perceptions of the reasons for change. Individual difference theory specifies that "specific individuals may react differently to the same message" whereas an individual's cultural or sub-cultural membership will influence the understanding according to the social differentiation theory (cultural or sub-cultural groups should be understood as referring to hierarchical levels, professional groupings, unions etc). Issues such as loyalty, commitment and feelings about the leaders may influence individual members' understanding of the reasons for change (Rousseau, et al., 1999, p. 526). Eby et al (2000, p. 422) state that the understanding of the reasons for change reflects an individual's unique interpretive reality of the organisation. Employees hold different perceptions of a particular objective reality (Spreitzer, 1996). Worren, Ruddle and Moore (1999) claim that employees' different educational background and functional responsibilities contribute to distinctive perceptions of the reasons for change and how to go about it. Katz and Kahn (1978) justify employees' interpretive and active involvement in the construction of an understanding of the reasons for change as follows: "The wish to name the game, to choose and define it rather than merely to play it, is distinctively human..." (Katz, et al., 1978, p. 666).

In the process of comparing a future, preferred state with the current state of the organisation to arrive at an understanding of why the organisation has to change, the participants Soonja, Heike and Pedro pointed out that their expectations of what the process would comprise and would result in were raised. These "individual" expectations were based on their individual interpretations of the organisation and their individual conditions or situatedness in the organisation. It is thus argued that the understanding of the need for change individual employees arrive at also consists of their individual expectations about the content and outcome of the process. This deduction is consistent with Eby et al's (2000) view that the process of responding to happenings in their environment, of understanding the reasons for change, is based on individually held assumptions and expectations. This is the way individual employees interact with a chaotic system in order to make sense of it and instill order (or a new order) (Eby, et al., 2000; Wheatley, 1992).





### 3.3 Open membership of employees as contributing factor to the development of an understanding of the proposed change

The above discussion about employees' understanding of the reasons for change argues that employees interpret the reasons for change given by the organisation (social account) in an individualistic manner to arrive at their own, personal understanding (motivated reasoning). The assumption is thus that the process of understanding starts with the speculations prior to and then the announcement by the organisation that transformation is inevitable. Soonja, Heike, Pedro and Delianne's descriptions of their particular perceptions of the need for change indicate that they were of the opinion that the organisation had to transform prior to the formal decision taken by management. Soon after their respective appointments, both Soonja and Heike felt that the organisation was out of touch with the external environment whereas Pedro indicated that over time he realised that change is inevitable. These three participants, in particular, advocated the necessity for transformation prior to the actual decision taken by the organisation. The point of this argument is to indicate that the foresight and vision that organisational transformation has to happen in order to remain in business is not the prerogative of management only. This study shows that ordinary organisational members can also reflect on the status quo of the organisation, interpret the changing environment in which the organisation functions and come to know that change is necessary. As a matter of fact, it seems as if employees can even play an active role in influencing the opinion of management in favour of a decision for transformation.

Employees do not only interpret and understand the organisational message of why change is necessary in a unique manner (Eby, et al., 2000; Rousseau, et al., 1999; Armenakis, et al., 1993), but they can also arrive at an understanding of the necessity for change based on their personal interaction with the external environment (Levy, 1986; Griffin & Mathieu, 1997). It is thus postulated that besides interpreting the message communicated by management (social account) (Rousseau, et al., 1999), employees also interpret changes in the external environment to come to the understanding of why change is necessary. Acknowledging that an organisation is an open system (Katz, et al., 1978), implies that, as members of the organisation, employees are exposed to the external environment. Cappelli (1991) points out the important role the external environment plays in determining the behaviour of individual employees. Exposure to the external environment is quite visible in an academic institution where the organisational boundaries are permeated by "the culture of the enterprise, the culture of the academic profession at large, and the culture of academic discipline" (Dill, 1982, p. 308; Herguner, 2000). Individual employees are therefore members of four "organisations" simultaneously (organisation, larger enterprise, profession and the discipline) which increases their exposure to the external environment and other opinions. According to Satow in Dill (1982), when conflict arises between professional commitment and bureaucratic role, the potential power of multiple membership enables employees to give preference to the pursuit of knowledge and not to the organisation.

Ashford (1988) points out that there is a tendency to focus on individual resistance to change while ignoring that many employees actually actively try to cope with and adjust to changes. The proactive involvement of participants in bringing about the transformation contradicts the general assumption (and even perhaps management paradigm) that, generally speaking, employees resist change. The proactive involvement of employees is also in sharp contrast to the view that



employees' adjustment to change compares to the psychological stages Kübler-Ross identified that terminally ill patients go through, namely denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Hamilton-Attwell, 1997). The underlying assumption of such a view is that transformation is necessarily perceived and experienced by all employees as a loss. This seems to be an oversimplification. At best it can be argued that some employees, who experience the process as more negative than beneficial, may go through these phases. The responses of participants in this study clearly illustrate that some employees actually experience transformation as a challenge and providing opportunities (see Pedro, Anja, Ute, Delianne, Leslie, Drohan). It can thus be inferred that employees who work towards the change and see it as a challenge do not go through the specified psychological stages (Warren, 1984).

### **3.4 The role of collegial relationships in the development of an understanding of the proposed transformation**

According to the social relationships theory, employees' understanding of the reasons for change, "hinge on the network of relationships" they have (Armenakis, et al., 1993, p. 687). Individual employees are susceptible to colleagues' opinions on the reasons for change (Armenakis, et al., 1993; Rousseau, et al., 1999). Burke (1987) refers to the potentially influential role that informal leaders can play in changing opinions about organisational transformation. The focus of this argument is therefore predominantly on the opinion of colleagues, peer groups or informal leaders about the reasons for change. The potential influence of the nature of the relationships between/amongst colleagues is not highlighted in this regard.

Delianne's experiences of with respect to her relationship with colleagues highlights a different dimension of these relationships, which may influence the understanding of the change. In her description of her perceptions of the old organisation (prior to the transformation) Delianne mentioned several times that her previous colleagues did not allow her the freedom to speak her mind as her opinion diverged from the popular or dominant opinion. She described herself as the outsider whose work had been sabotaged and who was forced to become somebody different. She also indicated that this poor relationship with prior colleagues influenced her perceptions of the change process (*...die manier hoe dit vroeër beleef is, kan nie afgeleer word nie want daar bestaan nie 'n basiese vertrouensverhouding nie*). It thus seems that the history and nature of the relationships between colleagues may have an impact on individual employees' interpretations of the reasons for change.

This argument can be substantiated by the application of chaos theory to organisational science, where an organisation is seen as consisting of relationships (Wheatley, 1992). Individual employees are defined by the relationships amongst them: "None of us exist independent of our relationships with other" (Wheatley, 1992, p. 34). Barczak, Smith and Wilemon (1987) also stress the significance of the nature of employee relationships in a transformation process. They identify bonding and attunement amongst organisational members as one of four key ingredients for successful large-scale change (the other three ingredients are pattern breaking, experimenting and visioning). According to Barczak et al (1987, p. 29), bonding and attunement develop when members cultivate "a greater sense of community, trust, respect and shared values". This corresponds with Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) and Eby et al's studies that identified the level of trust and acceptance, tolerance, shared emotional experiences, and the convergence or divergence of personal ideologies as elements contributing to the nature of the



relationships amongst employees. It is thus argued that as the nature of the relationship between an individual employee and the organisation influences the unique understanding of change, so does the relationship between individual employees or groups of employees influence individual perceptions of change.

#### **4 MULTIPLE CONCEPTS OF CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS**

An understanding of the reasons for change (as discussed in the previous section) is achieved through the development of an awareness of the discrepancy between a desired end-state and the present state or performance of the organisation (Katz, et al., 1978; Bunker & Alban, 1992; Armenakis, et al., 1993). Therefore, when individual employees develop their own understanding of the reasons for change, they have actually compared (intuitively or deliberately) their individual perceptions of a desired end-state with their individual perceptions of the present state. As stated earlier, this process of arriving at an understanding of change is influenced by personal values, beliefs, expectations and previous experiences, the reciprocal relationship between an employee and the organisation and collegial relationships. Bartunek and Moch (1987) and Lau and Woodman (1995) describe this understanding of transformation, or the "concept" of transformation (as used in ch 3) as schemata of change which Lau and Woodman (1995, p. 538) define as "a sense-making framework containing organized knowledge of change attributes".

Armenakis et al (1993) and Eby et al (2000) use the term "readiness for change". Armenakis et al (1993, p. 682) define it as the "cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort" and also add an employee's perceptions of the organisational capacity to successfully change.<sup>2</sup>

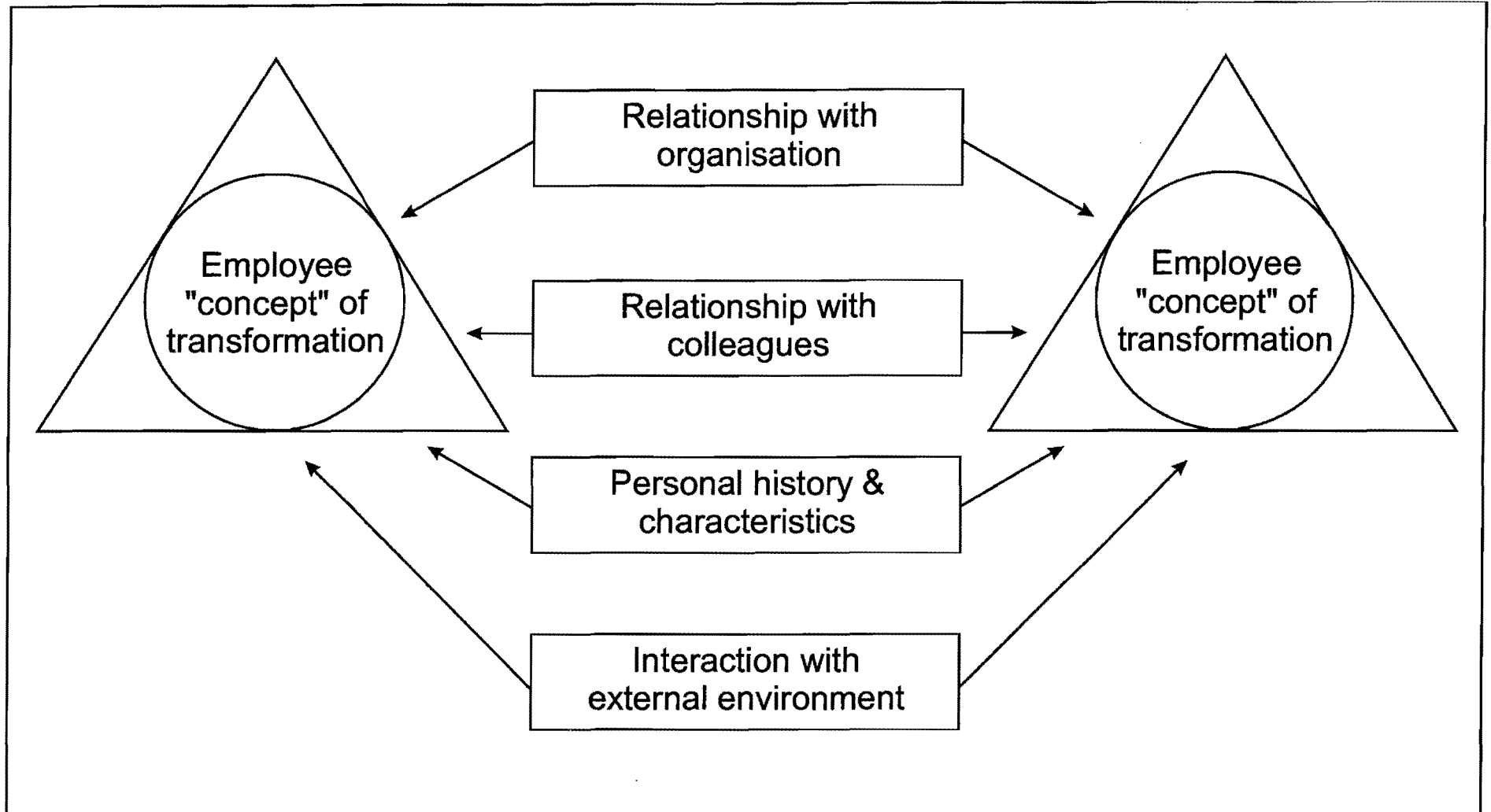
Although a "concept" or "schemata" or "understanding" of change is utilised, it is important to highlight that this state or concept is based on cognitive (factual) as well as relational information. Figure 5.2 presents a model (slightly altered from the one in ch 3) to include the various constituents and relationships that contribute to the development of individually held concepts of transformation.

It is thus clear that "employees are not merely passive recipients of change messages" (Rousseau, et al., 1999, p. 516). They are present in this phase with all their prior individual experiences, beliefs, group membership, opinions about the relevance of the organisation, their personal make-up and expectations. All of these constituents contribute to the interpretative pro-

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2. Focusing on participants' opinions on and understanding of the need for change, it is interesting that they focused mainly on their own views. Perceptions about the capacity of the organisation to change were not as prominent. Opinions about the impetus for change may be interpreted as participants' evaluation of the organisational capacity to change. So, for example, did Soonja mentioned that the process originated externally as she was of the opinion that the organisation would not have taken the decision themselves. This opinion portrays an organisational unwillingness or even inability to change. Heike, on the other hand, felt that the internal origin of the transformation provided the organisation full control over the process. This may reflect her opinion that the organisation perhaps had a predetermined agenda. These opinions about the impetus for the change are also an indication of the nature of their relationship (lack of trust) with the organisation. Although it is not the intention of this study to discuss the definition of the concept "readiness for change", it seems valid to remark that the two aspects of individual readiness and organisational capacity, are not necessarily experienced by employees as elements of the same dimension.

**Figure 5.2** Development of individual concepts of transformation



cess whereby employees develop their individual concepts of transformation (Griffin, et al., 1997; Jurow, 1999). Therefore, in the pre-transformation phase many different, individually comprised concepts of transformation are present which are not necessarily (highly unlikely) congruent with the concept of transformation understood by the organisation (management).

The first implication of this model of experiences/opinions in the pre-transformation phase is that the introduction of transformation in an organisation happens amidst already existing perceptions and relationships between the individual employee and the organisation and mutually amongst employees or groups of employees. Thus, when transformation is introduced, it happens in the context of a whole web of relationships and against a background of histories of past experiences involving perceptions of trust, support, honesty, fairness, and integrity. These relationships and experiences are therefore mitigating factors in employees' experiences and opinions regarding the proposed transformation.

The second implication is that, due to the active, interpreting role of employees in understanding the reasons for change, many diverse concepts of transformation are present in the pre-transformation phase. It thus clear that the concept or schema of transformation as presented by management is definitely not the only concept present when the process is implemented. Given that such a concept serves as a set of guiding principles for people's attitudes, behaviour, participation and direction during a transformation process, it seems valid to conclude that many diverse sets of principles are active when a transformation process is started. It is thus postulated the employees' experiences and opinion of such a process are also influenced by the extent to which their individual concepts of transformation are congruent with the organisation's concept of transformation.

#### **4.1 Bridging the gap between the organisational concept of transformation and the various individually held concepts of transformation**

This study indicates that employees construct their own pictures of the change and these pictures of the change direct their opinions, experiences and conduct during a transformation process. The question is how successful a transformation process can be if various incongruent and sometimes even incompatible pictures (such as Leslie's and Heike's to some extent) are guiding the process. This implies that the various concepts of the stakeholders in the process need to be similar or at least as congruent as possible (Bunker, et al., 1992; Miller, 1998). Beer, Eisenstat and Spector (1990) argue that the development of a shared diagnosis of what is wrong and what must be improved is a critical first step in a change effort. However, this study suggests that the communication of the organisational concept of transformation — even "effective" communication — does not imply a shared or congruent vision or concept of transformation.

Bartunek (1987) points out that an organisation's schema of change, which assumes shared frames of reference (for the whole organisation or at least subgroups) has to be negotiated amongst the individual members; it does not happen automatically. Tampoe (1990, p. 349) concludes that successful change "requires a period of consultation so that a coincidence of views and goals can be achieved". According to Schaafsma (1997, p. 41) research data on the concerns of middle managers regarding organisation-wide change indicate that the model or blueprint (concept) used in the process needs to be adapted and transformed by stakeholders:



“Models of change need to be socially constructed”. Morgan in Schaafsma (1997) states that all stakeholders in the change process need to co-construct the pictures and metaphors for the change. This participation in the development of a shared picture results in more than shared content: “It is the process of developing a shared vision and values that both creates the glue and mobilizes action, not the content alone. For those who are not involved in the process, the result is only words on a paper that are unlikely to create energy” (Antal, 1993, October, p. 12).

Schaafsma (1997) indicates that the common denominator of various contemporary change models, such as the networking model, matrix model and open systems model, is refocusing on the people. This focus requires building consensus among the stakeholders on the critical components of the change. Thus, the development of a shared vision or concept of change presupposes first, the understanding that each employee is differently “situated” within the organisation and thus experiences and perceives the “need to change” differently for valid reasons over which the organisation has little or no control. Secondly, it presupposes an organisational “will” to invite employees to speak, to share their minds, to reveal the origins of their particular perceptions of the concepts of change without fear. It thus presupposes a particular organisational culture that values the intellectual ability of employees, a culture of structuring avenues for employees to share their ideas and opinions (without fear), a culture where differences in opinion and conflicting viewpoints can be maintained (Levine, 2001).

However, arguing for the necessity of a process of consultation or negotiation, or social construction of a shared concept of transformation, does not exclude the possibility that, despite these efforts, some employees may still not share the organisational concept — due to the inevitable existence of individual concepts. Beer et. al (1990) describe commitment to change as uneven. In the same way it may be argued that agreement with the shared concept of transformation will always be uneven.

#### **4.2 The context**

It has been concluded that when transformation is introduced into an organisation, it is done in the context of a whole web of existing relationships and against a background of histories of experiences, and perceptions of trust, support, honesty, fairness, and integrity. The context, from the perspective of an employee, consists of three elements namely the individual, the organisation (usually represented by management) and colleagues. The context is characterised by an organisational paradigm,<sup>3</sup> which corresponds to a lesser or greater extent with the beliefs and values of the individual members (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1996).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, this context also contains the formal and informal relationships within the organisation (between employees mutually and between employees and the organisation). The nature of “formal” relationships depends, to an extent, on an organisation’s perception of employees (their role, status) (Kabanoff, Waldersee & Cohen, 1995) and would be reflected in the various policies and codes of conduct dealing with human resources issues (Goodman, Ravlin & Schminke, 1987).

3. Pascale (1990) distinguishes between an individual’s beliefs and values and organisational beliefs and values or paradigm as a paradigm can only exist in a group context

4. The reference to beliefs and values as they pertain to the organisation is simply to specify them as such to distinguish them from beliefs and values in general. An individual’s organisational beliefs are naturally based on the person’s general belief system. However, personal beliefs and values pertain to more than just the organisational environment.

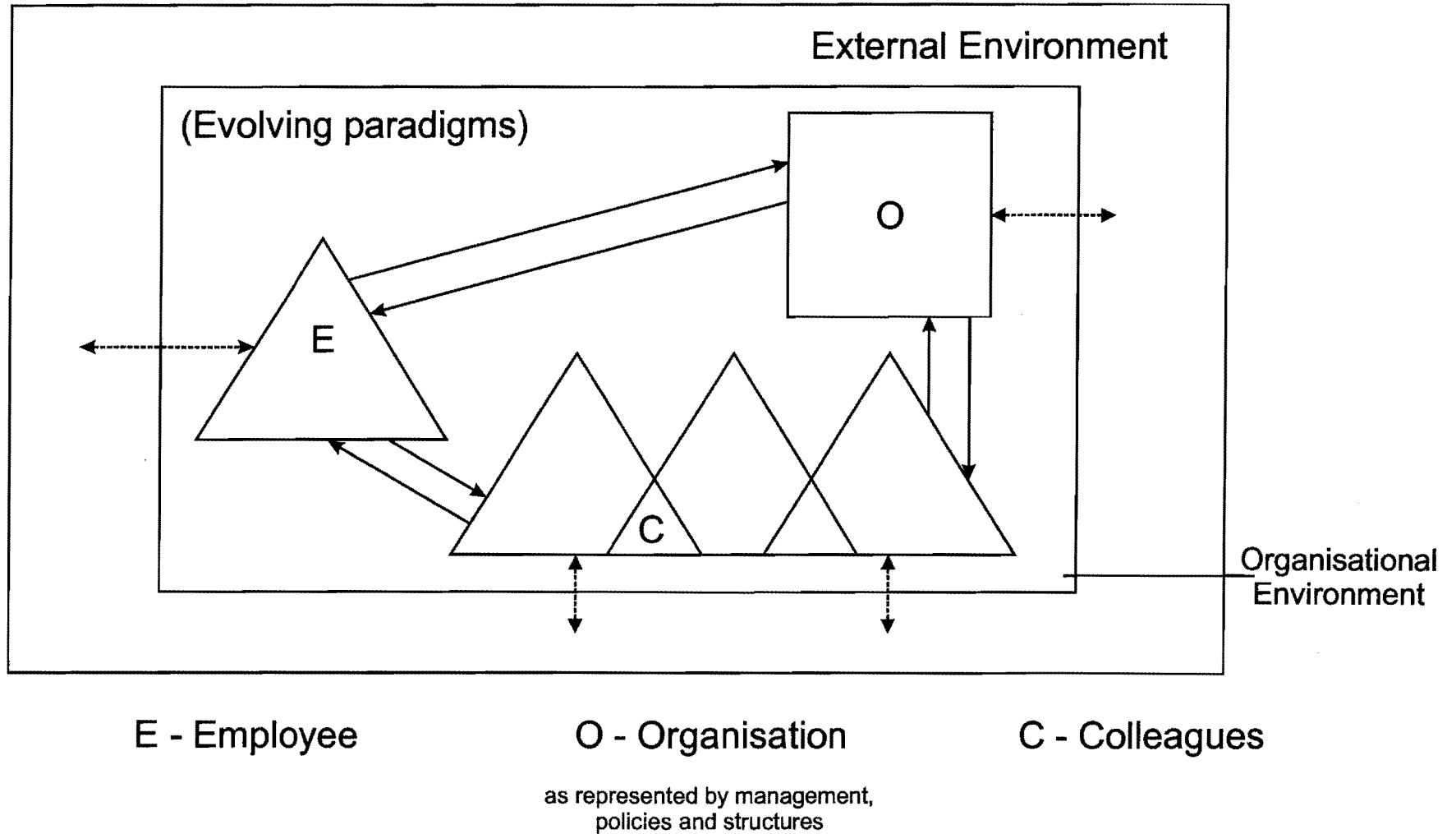


So, for example, an organisation with a strong elitist and leadership perspective would perceive employees as unequal to those in positions of authority who should be managed to perform particular tasks. On the other hand, organisations with a strong meritocratic or collegial perspective would perceive employees as equals who would be valued for their commitment, participation and teamwork (Kabanoff, et al., 1995).

Informal relationships would thus refer to the general, day-to-day interaction in the organisation between management and employees, and employees mutually. The relationship between an individual and colleagues (or groups of colleagues) is influenced by various factors, such as the extent of agreement between the individual and group beliefs and values (O'Reilly, et al., 1996), and the extent to which an individual is willing to and actually does contribute to group objectives and tasks (Mpofu & Das, 1998). Participants' reference to colleagues who actually became friends, the support provided by some and the informal work discussions in the corridors or over a cup of tea leads to the argument that these behaviours refer to the innovative spontaneous behaviours that go beyond role requirements (Katz, et al., 1978). Spontaneous behaviour, such as helping colleagues, spreading goodwill, protecting the organisation, willingness to cooperate, and making constructive suggestions, is also referred to as prosocial organisational behaviour or organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ, 1990; George & Brief, 1992). This kind of behaviour is often (if not always) taken for granted, probably because these acts seem so humble (Katz, et al., 1978) and are often overlooked in systematic study (George, et al., 1992). However, spontaneous behaviour is necessary for organisational effectiveness and according to Katz (in George & Brief, 1992, p.311) "an organization which depends solely upon its blueprints of prescribed behavior is a very fragile social system".

The context is thus a dynamic environment of beliefs and values, shared past and present experiences, encounters, interactions and formal and informal relationships amongst employees, colleagues and the organisation. A particular context may be more beneficial to some employees than to others (Bartunek, et al., 1987) because of the extent of congruence between individual, group and organisational beliefs and values, for instance. However, it has been argued that the context in which an individual employee is situated plays a pertinent role in shaping an individual's concept of transformation. The organisational context is presented in Figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3** Context





## 5 EXPERIENCES OF THE POST-TRANSFORMATION PERIOD (INCLUDING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE TRANSFORMATION)

The comparison of data both in and between categories pertaining to employees' experiences of the post-transformation period, led to four deductions:

- Experience of the process in general (including the nature and extent) depends, *inter alia*, on the degree to which the end-state of the process corresponds with an employee's "concept" of transformation.
- The experiences of the process in general depends, *inter alia*, on the impact of the changes on employees' personal work situation, in other words, how the employee was personally affected. However, it has also been deduced that employees differ in their definitions of the "personal work situation" or the domains they regard as essential elements of their work situation.
- Agreement with the decision to transform (readiness for change) does not necessarily mean that an employee will agree or be satisfied with all the decisions taken. On the other hand, disagreement with a particular decision or aspect of the process does not imply that an employee does not understand or agree with the necessity to change.
- Finally, experiences of the process in general indicated that transformation can be experienced as an emotionally taxing event for employees, irrespective of their agreement or disagreement with the notion of transformation.

### 5.1 Congruence between the end-state of a transformation and an employee's concept of transformation

Chapter 4 argued that an employee's experience of a transformation process in general depends, among other things, on the extent of correspondence between the outcome (end-state) of the process and the employee's personal concept of transformation. The closer the outcome of the process is to an employee's concept of transformation (understanding and expectations), the more positive the general experience of the transformation will be. However, given the fact that employees are constantly interacting with and interpreting information and developments to which they are exposed (Wheatley, 1992), it is acknowledged that employees' concept of transformation in the pre-transformation phase did not necessarily remain unchanged throughout the process. In a study on the evolving interpretations of managers, Isabella (1990) identified four stages of interpretation as the process of change unfolds, namely anticipation, confirmation, culmination and aftermath. She concluded that these shifts in interpretation support previous research indicating that "construed realities constantly change as new facts arise and new questions are asked" (Isabella, 1990, p. 31). In his study of change towards participative management, Hennestad (2000) found that in the transition phase, employees felt that nothing had changed with respect to the management style and that a lot still had to be achieved. However, to the question of how the transition period compared to the pre-transformation phase, employees acknowledged that marked changes had actually occurred. What seems to happen is that as changes materialise, employees are inclined to move the "requirement" or "expectations" forward, expecting even more changes than what was perhaps initially perceived to be satisfactory (or the end-state).

When referring to concepts of change and the actual outcome or end-state, the assumption is made that the organisational concept will show greater resemblance to the end-state than an individual employee's concept. Thus, although it is acknowledged that employees' concepts of transformation evolve as the process continues, individual concepts of transformation will not



necessarily (even automatically) come closer to the organisational concept of transformation. It is contended that congruence between individual and organisational concepts of change depends on the extent of mutual interaction or communication. Following this argument, it thus seems valid to conclude that experiences of transformations depends to an extent on the level of agreement between individual concepts and the actual outcome.

A second argument on the agreement between concepts of change and the actual outcome is that although concepts evolve, some of the elements that construe the concept of change may remain stable throughout this interpretative process. Some of these elements may be tangible or measurable, which will provide employees with the ability to assess the extent to which the end-state deviates from the personal concept (or the intended end-state). So, for example, did Soonja felt that the intended change to participatory decision-making and diversity did not materialise as the new heads of departments were all white males just as in the pre-transformation era (in contrast to a representative management committee). She expected a measurable change in the profile of the managers which did not materialise and thus contributed to her disappointment. William, on the other hand, supported changes to multiculturalism, diversity and equal relationships in the work environment but did not envisage (expect) that the composition of the managerial committee would also be affected. Thus, the discrepancy between his expectation of the election of the committee based on seniority as opposed to representivity in the end-state contributed to his disillusionment with the process. In some instances, the discrepancy may relate to an employee's expectation that his or her position will improve in the transformed organisation.

Employees' concepts (evolving and consisting of fixed elements) of transformation can play an important role in their experience of the final outcome. In his study on experiences of the death of an organisation, Cunningham (1997) stressed the powerful role of beliefs and expectations in influencing employees' experiences and behaviour. Cunningham (1997, p. 486) refers to the words of William Isaac Thomas in this regard: "If [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". Thus, if people expect a process to produce a particular outcome, that outcome becomes a reality in their minds. Deviation from that (expected or believed) reality may thus have adverse affects on their experiences of the success or the outcome of the process in general.

## **5.2 Impact of the completed process (desired end-state of the organisation) on employees' personal situation**

The deduction that employees' experience of a transformation process to some extent depends on the impact (level of disruption) of the process on their personal work situation corresponds with Ashford's (1988) findings that perceived disruption caused by transformation increased employee stress levels even months after it occurred. In this particular study, participants related their experiences of the process in general to the impact of the process on their personal (work) situation in the organisation. For example, Stephan complained about his position of lesser seniority in the post-transformation period as well as his job insecurity due to the possibility of forced retirement. Pedro expected his personal position to improve in the organisation due to an increased acceptance of himself and his strange ideas, but his did not materialise. Soonja and Heike found their personal situations less favourable than earlier due to tarnished interpersonal relationships. Drohan, on the other hand, indicated that he had nothing to complain



about as he was in just as a good position after as before the changes. Tampoe (1990) confirms that a change process may result in various changes on the individual level, such as a change in jobs, movement sideways, downwards and upwards, which will inevitably affect their own performance as well as that of the organisation. Rousseau (1998, p. 228) points out that "in change, losses are more painful than the gains are good".

Another deduction from participants' descriptions of the personal work situations is that participants did not describe their personal work situations in the same manner or as consisting of the same domains. They referred to different aspects (eg, professional academic activities, relationships with colleagues, position in the organisation) as constituting their personal situation. It has also been argued that the reference to different domains of the work situation could be as a result of (1) participants' referring only to areas in which recognisable changes occurred (no change, no reference) and/or (2) the relative importance of a particular domain of the work situation to a participant and/or (3) the extent or nature of changes with respect to those domains a participant regarded as important for the personal work situation. Ute, for example, "lost" the majority of her previous colleagues in the process and thus had to get used to new colleagues. However, she did not find this changes in the "relationship domain" affecting her personal work situation at all as she expressed a total disinterest in people (colleagues) in general.

These personally determined constituents of the personal work situation should be distinguished from the psychological contract that exists between an employer and employee. The psychological contract is more like a mutually agreed relationship of responsibilities (Rousseau, et al., 1999), whereas the personally determined constituents refer rather to the individual's involvement in the organisation depending on his/her work needs. Some perceive an organisation as a place to apply their particular skills in exchange for money whereas others expect an organisation to provide social interaction and opportunities for creative development and demonstrating other abilities.

In their study on subjective well-being and job satisfaction, Judge and Locke (1993, p. 485) conclude that job satisfaction is moderated by the degree to which a job is considered an important part in one's life. Thus, the impact of the transformation process on a particular domain of the personal work situation is moderated by the extent to which the domain is considered important.

### **5.3 The role of personal characteristics in facilitating experiences of transformation**

So far it has been argued that employees' experience of a transformation process in general is determined, amongst other things, by the congruences between their concept of transformation and the final outcome of the process, and the extent (nature) of changes in the personally determined constituents of the personal work situation. In addition, some participants explained their experiences of the process in general by referring to the facilitative role of some personal characteristic in dealing with change. For example, several participants referred to characteristics such as a preference for a dynamic/changing work environment (Drohan), critical/independent thinking (Heike), personal flexibility and preference for change (Delianne, Robert), inflexibility due to age (William), and a desire to be creative (Pedro). Research into the role of personal traits, coping strategies and thinking patterns suggests that personal characteristics, such as internal locus of control (perhaps more the belief about the ability to control as actual control), high feelings of self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity, a high self-esteem (Ashford,

1988), and an ability to adjust personal frames of reference to include information from the external environment (Cunningham, 1997) facilitate experiences of and adjustment to change and threatening situations in the work environment.

In several cases the analysis of participants' experiences of the process led to the deduction that employees' contributions despite disappointments may perhaps be attributed to the degree of personal commitment to the organisation or the job. However, findings on the facilitative role of commitment during organisational transformation seem confusing and contradictory. Begley and Czajka (1993) concentrated their research on the moderating effect of commitment on experiences of organisational change. There are two opposing views on the role of commitment: some studies found the positive experiences of organisational change were facilitated by low levels of commitment while others found exactly the opposite. Begley and Czajka's (1993) findings support the notion that high levels of commitment facilitate acceptance of change. O'Neill and Lenn (1995) are of the opinion that the higher the individual's level of commitment before downsizing, the more difficult it will be to accept the change.

This line of research seems to focus primarily on personal dispositions, with very little reference to the context in which the particular dispositions were explored. In a study on the moderating effects of Type A behaviour patterns and locus of control on the relationship between change in job demands and change in psychological strain, Newton and Keenan (1990) came to the conclusion that in stress research the context is largely ignored or only treated briefly. They emphasised Rotter's (in Newton et al, 1990) findings that internal/external locus of control as personality trait is to some extent a function of the environment: "... particularly in competitive skills situations, there were a number of external who acted much as we expected internals to act" (Newton, et al., 1990, p. 1232). Cappelli (1988) contends that the environment (context) needs to be acknowledged in cognitive approaches as the environment provides information for and assists in structuring the process of cognition. Particular cognitive approaches to personality stress the relevance of context in individual functioning (individual being): (these approaches) "conceptualise personality as something of a "handbag", a portable repository for various identity schemas that are cued up by differing social contexts" (Ryan, 1995, p. 398).

This argument about the contextually-sensitive nature of personal dispositions and behaviour once again draws attention to the importance of taking cognisance of the context in which the transformation process is taking place.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5.4 Individual constituents, circumstances, conditions and relations that can determine experiences of transformation under specific conditions**

Employees' experiences of the impact of the outcome of the process lead to the identification of multiple constituents or domains affecting individual experiences of a transformation process. It is argued that with the onset of such a process, individual employees are directed by their individual concepts of a transformation. Their experiences of the outcome of the process have been linked to the degree of agreement or convergence between their own concept and the actual end-state. However, it has been argued that the "concepts" of transformation are not

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5. Context, as referred to, should not be seen as a static situation. In the process of change, the context is also changing or evolving. The evolving nature of the context is described as part of the proposed model understanding individual experiences of transformation.



necessarily stable although some “measurable elements” of the concepts might be stable. The impact of the process on employees’ personal situation has been identified as a potential domain that may contribute to experiences however, with due reference to the personally determined constituents of the personal work situation. Finally, comments on the role of specific personality traits in facilitating experiences of change also highlighted the potential role of contextual factors in facilitating or eliciting specific personality traits. The discussion of data in chapter 4 also emphasised issues, such as the management of the process, relationships with colleagues and opportunities to do something new and creative, as dimensions contributing to particular experiences of the process.

Considering all the potential constituents or domains that may play a role under certain contextual or individually determined circumstances (or both), it seems as if certain commonalities can be identified. Some of the variables suggest individual differences (thus something to do with personality); others have a cognitive dimension in common (eg, aspects of the concept of transformation) while others entail relational and even emotional aspects. Instead of describing all the possible variables (dependent and/or independent) that may impact on employees under certain conditions, it is possible to try and identify underlying domains that can perhaps link groups of variables together, or present some kind of model to understand experiences.

## **6 A MODEL FOR DESCRIBING AND UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES OF A TRANSFORMATION PROCESS**

To some extent research and theory on the impact of layoffs on survivors can inform the thinking on the impact of transformation on employees. In a theoretical study on the research, theory and practice with respect to layoffs, Brockner (1988) remarks that various studies suggest that layoffs can be experienced very differently and that many independent variables can be associated with survivor’s reactions. That would include for example psychological states such as anger, resentment, relief or positive inequity, and an increase or decrease in levels of motivation. He also refers to the various factors that have been identified as moderators or mediators of the effects of layoffs (such as individual differences, the nature of the work and the informal organisation). Brockner firstly concludes and suggests that research and theory on layoffs need to move towards groups of factors as opposed to lists of independent variables. He proposes that the influence or effect of layoffs are apparent on three levels namely, individual psychological states, group processes and organisational structures. This perspective therefore proposes the application of multiple-theories (individual, group and organisational) in stead of a single theory approach.

As this study focuses on individual experiences of transformation (the whole process), the individual and individual well-being will be used as the point of departure in the process of describing a conceptual model to understand employee experiences. However, individual experiences are firmly conceptualised in a context recognising the role of the group and the organisation.

### **6.1 Level of employee participation in the organisation — the vertical axis**

As indicated in Table 4.2, employees identified problems in different areas of the organisation as the motivators for change. The areas focused on product-related aspects, intra-organisational issues and the organisation-external environment relationship. These areas may also be des-

cribed as different organisational levels ranging from the individual or job level, group or organisational level and the external stakeholder level. Employees' experiences of the outcome of the process support the notion that individual employees are sensitive to particular levels or focus their attention on particular organisational levels. So, for example, Pedro referred to all three levels, while Delianne only referred to the organisational level. Verma and McKersie's (1987) research on employee involvement programmes supports the argument that individual employees differ with respect to the level of their involvement or participation<sup>6</sup> in the organisation. They conclude that employees participated in employee involvement programmes because of a pre-programmed eagerness (or "taste") to influence decisions rather than as result of the character or attractiveness of the programmes. Participating employees were also more attracted to group and voluntary activities than nonparticipants. Graham and Verma (1991) differentiate between habitually active and habitually inactive organisational members depending on the extent to which they regard participation as a virtue in itself. Thus, it may be concluded that employees differ in their desire or "taste" regarding organisational activities and levels they choose to involve themselves.

However, it cannot be inferred that employee involvement on particular levels in the organisation is merely the result of personal taste or choice. Leslie, for example, focused mainly on the job level. It seems as if his experience of the organisation as undemocratic, homogeneous and inflexible made the organisational level inaccessible and involvement even risky for fear of victimisation. This deduction is supported by Graham and Verma (1991), who also point to the relevance of contextual or situational factors (such as the organisation's view on participation) in facilitating or inhibiting habitually active behaviour.

Following the above argument, a conceptual model is now proposed consisting of two axes where the vertical axis depicts the level of an employee's involvement in an organisation prior to and during the transformation process (whether by choice or external conditions, or both). The three levels are the personal job level, the intra-organisational and the organisation-environment level. Given the fact that most of the experiences of participants revolved around the job level and the intra-organisational level, it will just simplify the model to refer to two levels, personal job level and organisational level, with the understanding that the organisational level may also include an external focus.

## **6.2 Underlying psychological needs — the horizontal axis**

Bartunek and Moch (1987), Lau and Woodman (1995) and Isabella (1990) argue that the cognitive sciences could add a new dimension to understanding the organisational development enterprise and specifically to employees' experiences and responses to organisational change. Common to the cognitive explanations or descriptions of employee responses to large-scale change is the postulation of the schema of change that guides people's reaction to change. These schemata or concepts offer a practical conceptual tool for understanding the interpretive processes employees apply in coming to grips with transformation. Schemata offer explanations

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6. Participation or involvement in this context refers essentially to the level in the organisation that an employee feels comfortable or feels compelled to participate in rather than the extent to which an employee is involved in his/her job or organisation. Although it can be argued that so-called employees' "focus" has something to do with their particular involvement in their jobs and the organisation, that is outside the ambit of this study.

for what employees perceive with respect to the process and how they perceive or interpret it. However, it is argued that the identification and description of schemata (including the dimensions or contextual factors that influence the development) do not offer an understanding “why” employees experience a transformation process in a particular way. Ryan's (1995) model of psychological well-being, the ability to grow and to integrate new behaviour, offers a practical conceptual tool not only for understanding why employees respond in a certain manner, but also for understanding the process whereby individuals assimilate and integrate new behaviour as internally motivated conduct (this aspect is described later with reference to the learning of new behaviour). His model furthermore offers a good alternative to lists of variables and conditions that may have contributed to a specific response in certain, specified circumstances. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the role of the social context in the model responds to Cappelli and Sherer (1988) and Goodman et al's (1987) criticism that cognitive science approaches impoverish theorising on this topic because of the absence of the contextual dimension (social, environmental and policy dimensions).

Ryan's (1995) model forms a prominent part of the proposed model for understanding employees' responses and experiences, it is necessary to briefly explain it and place it in the context of paradigms in the cognitive and personality theories.<sup>7</sup>

In the debate on personality and cognitive development, three broad groups of theories on the ability of people to grow and to integrate externally induced behaviour can be identified. One group (eg, Piaget, Jung and Maslow) share the assumption that people have inherent abilities or tendencies to actively learn, grow and integrate information and behaviour for social development. This assumption is strongly questioned by another group (eg, Skinner and Bandura), who argue that the integration of behaviour is attributable to contingencies in the environment rather than to natural (inner) tendencies. An alternative to these two approaches argues that growth (integration) and psychological well-being are attributable to natural integrative tendencies (inner abilities) as well as to contingencies or characteristics of the social context (Ryan, 1995).<sup>8</sup>

Ryan argues that some basic psychological needs are essential for the inner ability to grow (integrate) and to be psychologically well. From the perspective of self-determination theory he identifies three psychological needs essential for growth and well-being, namely autonomy (to have a voice), competence (to feel/be effective) and relatedness (to feel connected with others). He argues that individuals will experience the greatest well-being, satisfaction and level of integration in situations (contexts) where they find their psychological needs supported. Ryan highlights the fact that the well-being, growth and motivation of an individual is the function of the prior history (previous contextual support) as well as current conditions (Ryan, 1995). The psychological needs identified by Ryan concur with Lau and Woodman's (1995, p. 539) findings that the development of an individual schema “would logically be influenced by personal disposi-

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7. It is acknowledged that the mere reference to theories such as individuation (Jung), synthetic functioning (Freud) and actualising tendency (Jung) in no way does justice to the complexities and subtleness of these theories. Moreover, such a superficial description or grouping of theories would be heavily attacked by scholars in these areas. However, it is outside the scope of this study to consult the primary sources or to engage in elaborate discussions on these theories. The objective of the broad brush strokes is simply to give some indication of where the Ryan model fits in.

8. It is stated here that the argument presented in the discussion that follows is based on the acceptance of the approach or assumption that growth and psychological well-being are attributable to inner abilities as well as to contingencies in the social context.



tional factors to change". Lau and Woodman (1995) identify locus of control, dogmatism and organisational commitment as personal dispositional factors. According to them dogmatism defines the extent to which a person's belief system is open or closed.<sup>9</sup> Spreitzer (1996) seems to follow the same line of thinking as Ryan (1995) where empowerment is defined as intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions namely meaning (the fit between work role requirements and personal beliefs, values and behaviours), competence, self-determination and impact (the degree to which an individual can influence administrative, strategic, and operating outcomes) (Spreitzer, 1996, p. 484).<sup>10</sup>

### 6.2.1 Competence

Competence on the level of job involvement/focus implies that individuals have the abilities and skills to perform their functions. It can also entail the perceived competence or confidence and employee experience in having to perform certain activities. Spreitzer (1996, p. 484) defines competence as "self-efficacy specific to work — a belief in one's capability to perform work activities with skill". It is argued further that individual competence (and/or perceived competence and confidence) revolves around the extent of congruence or compatibility between the individual's own beliefs and values regarding his/her job activities and the actual beliefs and values that underpin the job activities as the individual has to perform that in practice. Spreitzer (1996) refers to the fit between the beliefs, values and behaviours of a person and the work role requirements. Competence on the job level can be illustrated by referring to the participants' descriptions of their job-related activities. Several participants (Drohan, Anja, Ute, William and Pedro) indicated that in the pre-transformation period they did not feel themselves comfortable with the content of course material. The remark by Anja is a good example: *...daar (was) soms boeke voorgeskryf waarmee ek nie saamgestem het nie*. Because of the individual disagreement with the content (underlying values/beliefs) it can be argued that their feelings of effectiveness were inhibited. The post-transformation situation was more supportive of the need for competence (perceived competence) because all of these employees develop new course material to their satisfaction which supposes that it was to a large extent consistent with their personal views (beliefs/values) about the subject.

Competence on the organisational level operates on the same basis as on the job level and thus refers to an employee's feelings of having the skills to function properly on the organisational level. It also refers to the fit between the beliefs, values and behaviour of an individual and the required values and beliefs as they are operational at a given time (O'Reilly, et al., 1996). So, for example, employees who value an egalitarian perspective would find themselves unable or incompetent to function in an authoritarian organisational context where the right to be heard and to influence decisions belong to a few privileged senior people. In this, Anja described how women learned to speak their minds in the broader organisational context. Pedro also commented on the more prominent role of women in the transformed organisation. It is possible that

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9. In the researcher's opinion, the three dispositional factors identified by Lau and Woodman (1995) are not on the same level. Locus of control and dogmatism may be defined as personal characteristics but organisational commitment is more of a situational attitude than a personal characteristic.

10. Without going into an extensive debate, it is argued that the concepts of empowerment (as defined by Spreitzer) and psychological well-being, have conceptual common ground. It may be argued that psychological well-being is a necessary precursor (personal condition) of empowerment, hence the similarities in the underlying "cognitions" or "needs" of the two concepts.





the appreciation of women as equal employees provided the opportunity for women to participate confidently in the broader organisational context.

### 6.2.2 Relatedness

The need for relatedness is described as the need to feel connected to others. On the job level, relatedness would imply good relationships or connectedness with the close group of colleagues, or the primary work group (George, et al., 1992).<sup>11</sup> Relatedness on the organisational level would thus refer to the feeling of connectedness with colleagues other than those in the primary work group. The importance of the need for relatedness in periods of change is supported by Gerpott's (in Nelson, 1995) findings that the detrimental effects of a job transfer were reduced by high levels of interpersonal support extended to those employees. Toshio Okuno successfully managed a change process in his plant by applying the following principle: "I believe that in order to find life worth living, individuals require more than just money; they have to be recognized by others as valuable people" (Cooper, et al., 1995, p. 45). A significant conclusion of this study is that participants experienced the loss of prior contact with the primary work group especially as a major negative impact of the transformation process. Not only did participants experience a lack of support during the process, but some of them found their personal situation in the new organisation less satisfactory as a result of poor or broken relationships with significant colleagues — they felt isolated, marginalised and unconnected.<sup>12</sup>

Judging from the participants' comments on the establishment of new relationships, "relatedness" does not come easily or quickly, despite the positive experiences attached to getting to know new people. Getting to know new people or replacing the old primary group with a new group does not necessarily mean that employees' need to feel connected will be satisfied. As Delianne said, it takes time to develop relationships of trust and thus to feel connected to and valued by others. It may thus be argued that participants' psychological well-being was negatively affected by the process, given the fact that in the new structure the relational support they had was drastically diminished.

Relatedness in an organisation (job and organisational level) is not under the individual's control only. Becoming related or connected to a group (primary and/or secondary) also depends on the extent of support or legitimacy granted to an individual from a particular organisational constituency (Spreitzer, 1996). Granting legitimacy to an individual may depend on how the group or constituency perceives the individual's interest in group concerns and contribution to group goals or objectives (or organisation at large) (Mpofu, et al., 1998). Participants' skepticism about the competency of redeployed people and their ability and willingness to contribute to the transformation process is a good example of how the group experiences and evaluates individual interest. In this particular case, it seems as if redeployed employees would have to work much harder to obtain legitimacy from the group.

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11. George and Brief (1992, p. 320) define the primary work group as "the set of individuals, within the organization, with whom one interacts frequently in carrying out his or her prescribed role".

12. Participants in the study referred explicitly to the role of increased physical distance (due to the physical relocation) in straining their previously close relationships with the support group. Due to the distance, close colleagues were no longer easily accessible. In their study George and Brief (1992) refer to research indicating that physical distance between group members actually decreases the attraction between members.



The extent to which an individual will relate to colleagues and at the same time will be granted the opportunity to become related also depends on the fit between individual and group beliefs and values. Delianne, for example, described herself as an outsider, or unrelated to colleagues in the pre-transformation period because she disagreed with the dominant paradigm of the time. She felt herself distanced from colleagues as a result of her way of thinking and was also not accepted by colleagues because of her thinking. In this respect O'Reilly and Chatman (1996) refer to the powerful role of social control in organisations where individuals are "motivated" through peer influence and social construction of reality to subscribe to the preferred or desirable organisational values, beliefs and attitudes. Deviation from the preferred values, especially in a context where a strong, homogeneous value system is adhered to, is thus not lightly accepted. They further argue that individuals will adhere to values and norms they doubt to be in accordance with the desire of friends (O'Reilly, et al., 1996). Differently put: some individuals will and have to suppress their differences — especially in a context with strong monocultural values — in order to relate or be allowed as part of the group (Miller, 1998). This "fear" of becoming an outsider or estranged from colleagues perhaps clarify the difference in employees' public and private opinions reported by participants. It thus seems that employees with alternative values and beliefs will less likely be granted legitimacy to relate to the group in a strong homogeneous value system than a more heterogeneous, diverse system (Miller, 1998).

### 6.2.3 Autonomy

Ryan (1995) refers to autonomy as having a voice. According to Weick (1984, p. 46), "control is the tendency to act and feel as if one can have a definite influence (not the influence) on situations through the exercise of imagination, knowledge, skill and choice". Greenberger and Strasser (1991) describe autonomy or personal control as a reflection of an individual's belief at a given time that he or she has the ability to affect a change in a desired direction. They furthermore concluded in their review on personal control research that "people generally are motivated to seek control and that control is necessary for the individual's well-being" (Greenberger, et al., 1991, p. 115). Control on the job level would thus entail the ability to contribute to the work content (eg, writing course material) and have control over the process of "working". The positive experience of participants with respect to the freedom they had in developing new course material, can thus be interpreted as their satisfaction with the extent of control they experienced at the job level. Soonja's remark that her darkest experience of the transformation process resulted from responsibility being taken from her: she could develop the material but she did not have any decision-making power. Thus, personal control would therefore include freedom as well as responsibility.

Personal control on the group level would refer to an individual's (perceived) ability to exercise control in group situations, such as defending one's interest at a meeting (Newton, et al., 1990, p. 1251) or an individual's (perceived) ability to influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes in the work situation (Ashforth in Spreitzer, 1996). In situations where individuals have no autonomy, where they feel too powerless, issues or problems become depersonalized. "This lowers arousal, leading to inactivity or apathetic performance" (Weick, 1984, p. 41). Thus, an unsupportive context regarding autonomy during a transformation process not only affects employees' psychological well-being but can contribute to their disinterest and apathy in the process.



Although the psychological needs have been identified and discussed as three distinctive entities, it should be noted that these needs do not exist independent of one another. Changes with respect to the extent of support for one need may affect the support experienced for another need. So, for example, it can be argued that the lack of personal control on the job level may also affect an employee's feelings of competence on the job level.

It is thus postulated that employees' experience of a transformation process depends, amongst other things, on the way their psychological well-being is affected during the process based on the extent of support experienced for the psychological needs. The horizontal axis of the proposed model thus refers to employees' psychological well-being with specific reference to the extent of support for the three psychological needs of competency, relatedness and autonomy. Figure 5.4 shows the horizontal and vertical axes of individual experiences of transformation.

However, it is argued that an employee's experience of the contextual support for the psychological need is moderated by the perceived relevance or applicability of the psychological need for the work environment. As discussed earlier, not all participants regarded relatedness (for example) as an important dimension of the work environment.<sup>13</sup>

### 6.3 The contextual dimension

Figure 5.4 indicates that individual employees' psychological needs are applicable to the personal job level as well as to the organisational level. Ryan (1995) also argues that despite the need to feel effective, to have a voice and to feel connected with other matters in every situations, the practical factors affecting the fulfilment of these needs are often context-specific. Thus, in response to Ryan and the concerns of Cappelli and Sherer's (1988) and Goodman et al's (1987) concerns about the relevance of context, as well as strong arguments in previous sections that the context plays an influential role in participants' concepts or schemata of transformation, the context (as described earlier) forms part of the proposed model.

However, during the period of transition and even shortly afterwards, the context may be regarded as evolving due to the various changes happening in the organisation. The change of paradigms within the organisation affect employees' positions and the relationships in the organisation. Employees (like Stephan) who used to be the champions of the old system are not necessarily the champions of the new system. New champions are identified. Activities and behaviours that used to be inapplicable to the old system, now become acceptable and even desirable. "Old alliances will be dissolved and new ones forged, and yesterday's "failures" may be the stars of tomorrow" (Tampoe, 1990, p. 347).

The evolving context involves its fair share of power struggles and broken relationships, however. Delianne referred to the power struggles that happened between opposing groups in order to maintain or achieve the upper hand. According to Greiner and Schein (1988), it is natural that organisations consist of differing interest groups who pursue different goals they regard as in the

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13. As noted in the section on the method of the study, a potential respondent for the study refused to participate in the study because she felt very strongly that personal experience is a very personal issue that should not be part of the work environment. She clearly expressed her opinion that indulging in personal experience would be considered unprofessional. This thinking supports the argument that employees differ on the appropriateness of the support of particular psychological needs in the work environment.





best interest of the organisation — sometimes these goals are selfish. “Political behavior results when an attempt at influence is countered by another interest party and group” (Greiner, et al., 1988, p. 17). Although the power struggle or process of bargaining between different groups or coalitions is a natural phenomenon, it seems as if it could be argued that during a transformation process such activities are intensified simply because of the scale of the change taking place. It is furthermore argued that due to the fierceness of the bargaining process and the inherent gains and losses, working relationships can be affected in the process. Delianne mentioned the difficulty some employees had to adjust to the previous underdogs being the favourites in the new system. Thus, during the process of transformation, the web of relationships between the three elements of the context is in flux and is potentially powerful and political.

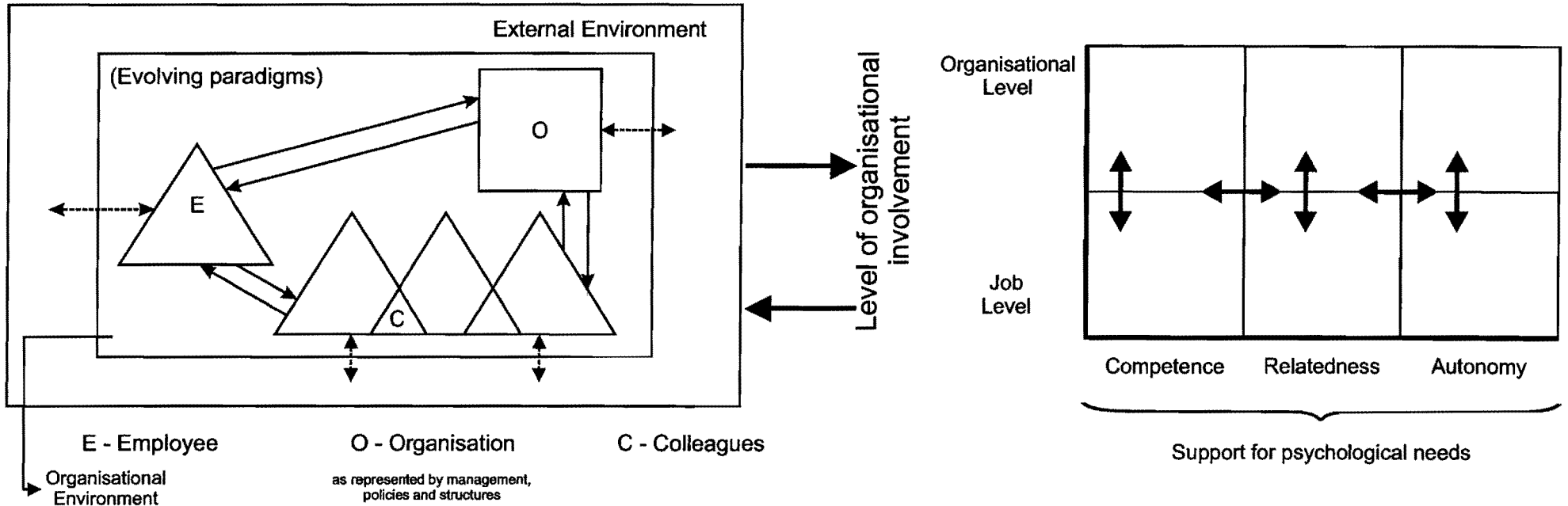
Apart from bargaining processes taking place that affect the web of relationships in an organisation, it seems as if the informal organisation (prosocial behaviour or OCB) (George, et al., 1992; Organ, 1990) is also affected by the process. It is argued that spontaneous or prosocial behavior is an integral part of the context in which transformation happens. However, Heike’s remarks, *baie van die gesprekke vind toevallig plaas...dis weg, dis weg*, and other references to the loss of friends and close colleagues lead to the conclusion that the previous spontaneous or prosocial behaviour is inhibited during the process. This argument is supported by George and Brief’s (1992) findings of aspects such as (increased) physical distance between the group, a decrease in positive affect and a reshuffling of the group in terms of new members with different opinions and beliefs influencing prosocial behaviour (there are more aspects but only those relevant in this situation are referred to here). The implication of this deduction is that employees have to adjust to a new situation without the spontaneous behaviour that is so important for their own functioning as well as the functioning of the organisation as a whole.

#### **6.4 Model entailing a context, level of organisational involvement and psychological needs**

Figure 5.5 shows the conceptual model for the description and understanding of employee experiences of transformation.

Stephan’s experience of the transformation is explained by referring to the proposed model as well as to the phases and dimensions of a transformation process. In a study exploring middle managers’ experiences of a downsizing exercise, O’Neill and Lenn (1995) found that managers understand the message to work smarter as actually communicating that they had been working “dumb” in the past. This message “trivializes the tradition of the company, and important component of the manager’s sense of professional identity” (O’Neill, et al., 1995, p. 25). The managers expressed their anger about messages and hints condemning the past. According to Stephan’s descriptions, the philosophy to which he ascribed was made irrelevant and he was personally blamed for the failures of the past. Following O’Neill and Lenn’s (1995) conclusions, the trivializing of the past tradition of the organisation contributed to his feelings of uncertainty and doubt about his professional identity and competence. This condemnation of the past also robbed him of his respected standing amongst colleagues, degraded his leadership role in the past and resulted in his feeling betrayed by the organisation and fellow colleagues (relatedness). His professional identity, his perception of himself as competent and his relationship with colleagues (standing in the organisation) were adversely affected. Thus, due to the way in which Stephan was treated in the process of motivating the decision to change, Stephan’s psychologi-

**Figure 5.5** Proposed model for understanding employee experiences of transformation





cal well-being was adversely affected on the job and organisational level, as the organisation queried his competence and the applicability of his competence to the new organisation (on both levels). They furthermore contributed to his feelings of humiliation, which adversely affected his courage to relate to colleagues. Finally, it is clear that despite his rejection of "false accusations", he was in no position to exercise any control over what was happening to him.

In the changed context with different relationships and an organisational paradigm he did not fully understand or agree with, Stephan found it difficult to function on both the job and organisational level. He had little status, felt uncertain of his professional abilities and competence, and felt isolated from previous colleagues. Stephan indicated that he did not take any initiative during the transition period nor did he try to influence the process. It may thus be argued that with his feelings of incompetence and lack of trusting relationships in an organisational paradigm he did not agree with, he perceived himself as having little possibility of taking control of his personal situation. It thus seems that the trivialisation of the fulfilment of his personal needs in the pre-transformation period as well as the lack of support in the post-transformation period resulted in Stephan's experiencing little (if any) support for his psychological needs. This lack of support throughout the whole process contributed to his extreme negative experience of the transformation process in general. Rousseau (1998) argues that loss of status and information (certainty) as a result of a change process may be more tolerable to employees whose relationship with the organisation is characterised by organisational caring, support and concern for the well-being of the employee.<sup>14</sup>

It is thus concluded that individual employees' responses to or experience of any of the facets of a transformation process (eg, change in paradigm, transition, practical outcome of decisions) are facilitated by the extent of support provided by the particular context with respect to the psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy. Furthermore, the psychological well-being of employees can be affected by any of the phases or dimensions of a transformation process. It is furthermore concluded that some contexts may be more supportive to particular employees than others.

## **6.5 Conditions for the unlearning of old and relearning of new behaviour**

Blumenthal and Hasperlagh (1994, p. 101) maintain that in order to qualify as a corporate transformation, "a majority of individuals in an organization must change their behaviour". According to Hennestad (2000, p. 316) "we do know that implementing change requires new understandings as well as the learning and unlearning of behaviors". Regarding transformation many references are made to the need to develop new skills, ways of thinking, new knowledge and change the behaviour of individuals and groups (Schein, 1999; Farias, 2000; Levine, 2001; Schein, 1993) as well as to the difficulty or lack of success in maintaining the changed behavioural patterns (Kotter, 1995; Beer, et al., 1990; Goodstein, et al., 1991).

Changing familiar behavioural patterns to new ones thus implies that individuals need to acquire new behavioural patterns. Ryan (1995, p. 405) defines this process, called internalisation, as follows: "internalization represents the active assimilation of behavioral regulations that are

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14. Rousseau's argument that experiences of transformation can be moderated by the nature of the relationships between an employee and the organisation supports the proposed model that experiences happen in a particular context of a web of relationships.



originally alien or external to the self". According to the self-determination theory, individuals are proactive organisms who therefore have the natural inclination to internalise. This inclination is facilitated or impeded by the social context, however (Gagne, Koestner & Zuckerman, 2000). As discussed earlier, Ryan specifies support for autonomy (having a voice), felt competence and relatedness as the critical needs to be supported in the social context. Following this argument, it may then be deduced that employees have the ability to internalise the required behaviour but this ability can be hindered or facilitated by the extent to which the organisational context supports the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. Ryan discusses the process by which individuals grow from the point where they conduct behaviour as a result of external motivators to the point where new behaviour is fully internalised and thus intrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated behaviour is seen as the desired state for behavioural conduct as in this situation no external forces are necessary to ensure the particular behaviour. Ryan demonstrates that if the social context supports the need for competence and relatedness, but supports the need for autonomy to a lesser extent (control is typically perceived and practised as managerial function), new behaviour will be performed in a less stable, persistent and well-performed manner and will subjectively be less enjoyable. Schein (1993) argues that in order to learn new (complex) behaviours and skills, employees need a psychologically safe environment in which failures are acceptable. However, he does not elaborate on the qualities or dimensions of the psychologically safe environment. Nicholson (1998, p. 142) supports this view and argues that employees will only act and think creatively, thus diverging from current, practised behaviours, when they are given the space, safety and support.

Although this study does not explore the issue of changing behaviour, it does seem relevant to link the objective of transformation, namely to change behaviour, to the psychological well-being of employees and the management of a transformation process. In the transformation literature, there is an identifiable trend towards "burning bridges of the past" to force people out of their comfort zones or push them into the deep end of the river to create a readiness for change and to motivate them to change. "If you want people to journey into the future, then you have to burn their comfort zones so they can't cling to the present" (Harper, 1998, p. 30). Arguing from the perspective of the self-determination theory (Ryan, 1995; Gagne, et al., 2000) and the contextual support for growth, internalisation of behaviour and well-being, the question arises to what extent such an approach facilitates or rather alienates employees from internalising particular behavioural patterns. This perspective of the self-determination theory is supported by the arousal theory. According to the Yerkes-Dodson Law, an inverted-U relationship exists between arousal and performance with increasing levels of arousal, first improving and then impairing performance (Weick, 1984, p. 41). According to Weick research on this relationship concluded that at high levels of arousal people often revert to dominant, first learned actions. Furthermore, recently learned patterns of responding are the first ones to disappear, which means that those responses most finely tuned to the current environment are the first ones to go. People at high levels of arousal also tend to miss clues indicating change (Weick, 1984). Cooper and Marcus (1995) warn that the strategy of creating a crisis or an image of a burning platform to motivate people to accept the proposed change may have two negative side effects: (1) it may fail to provide psychological safety, and (2) it may deprive employees of a place to master the required skills and behaviour. Thus, the learning and internalising of new behaviour and skills need to happen in a safe environment where employees receive support for their



psychological needs and where they can practise and make mistakes without fear.<sup>15</sup>

Another argument against making the present inaccessible and burning the comfort zones (with abrupt changes) is the break in employee identification that is vested in the past and the present. Change processes which values and practises continuity with the past are more likely to sustain employee identification with the organisation, which is expected to promote acceptance of change (Rousseau, 1998). Contact with the past not only takes the history of employee experiences at work seriously, but also provides the opportunity to identify best characteristics and practices of the past to be carried forward (Bunker, et al., 1992). Furthermore, acknowledging the past is a way of connecting people with one another and producing energy for the process ahead (Bunker, et al., 1992). In his delete design model for transitions, Albert (1984) argues that continuity or the link between the past and the future creates the possibility of transition. Linking the past with the future dampens the force of a large-scale change (Albert, 1984) and according to Weick (1984), maintains levels of arousal at such a level that employees can perform according to the new challenges and new behaviours.

A transformation process includes two side: the organisational side or management team and the employees. This study focuses primarily on the employee perspective. However, the reference to the social context that exists during a transformation process also incorporates the management perspective. It is logical that the organisation (as represented by management) contributes to the make-up of the social context before, during and after a transformation process. It is thus valid to argue that an organisation's "theory" or "paradigm" about employees' ability to grow (whether known or hidden) influences the characteristics of the social context. For example, if a management team supports the theory that individuals have an inner ability to grow and assimilate new behaviour, they would apply intervention strategies to facilitate, support and nurture the inner abilities. However, if the organisation doubts the existence of the inner integrative trends in the psyche, intervention strategies will be more orientated towards shaping, directing, programming and controlling (Ryan, 1995; Schein, 1993).

## **6.6 Mitigating factors**

### **6.6.1 Participation**

According to Foote (2001), participation of 5% of the workforce is necessary to start a process while 15% of the workforce, actively engaged and committed, is necessary for an enterprise-wide change to succeed. Nadler and Tushman (1989) also argue that success in a change effort depends on a broad base of support in an organisation — more than just the leaders. From the organisational perspective, employee participation has its advantages. Beer et.al (1990) point out that involving people in the development of the vision makes it easier to mobilise employees to work towards the vision while the flow of information is improved with broad participation. Furthermore, employees are more willing to discontinue the past if they are offered the opportunity to participate in shaping the future (Harper, 1998). Employees can also offer good

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15. Manz and Keating (1990) describe a case study where a successful managerial transition was made to employee self-management through a process whereby the managers moved in a safe environment from the past conduct to the new required conduct. In this change process, the management team developed over time and in a psychologically safe environment. The psychologically safe environment provided the managers with the opportunity to practise the required behaviour with constant feedback until they had successfully internalised the required behaviour.

ideas for change, make a difference in organisational performance and are less likely to resist change ideas that they have proposed (Cooper, et al., 1995; Miller, 1998; Kanter, 1984). In a study on the implementation of TQM in a company, Coyle-Shapiro (1999) concluded that the greater the employee participation in TQM, the more likely the intervention will be judged beneficial.

It thus seems as if employee participation can, indeed, contribute to the success of a transformation process. Various participatory, networking or systems-wide approaches and models of transformation also advocate the valuable contribution of employee participation in change efforts (Bunker, et al., 1992; Schaafsma, 1997). The question is whether and why participation facilitates employees' experiences of transformation.

According to the self-determination theory contexts in support of the three psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy enhance psychological well-being and thus facilitate positive experiences of change. In their study Gagne, Koestner and Zuckerman (2000) concentrated on aspects that would support the need for autonomy during organisational change. They examined the three aspects of being provided with a rationale for doing a task (information), acknowledgement of the feelings towards the task, and being given a choice of how to do the tasks. They conclude that all three aspects supported employees' need for autonomy and hence foster acceptance of change. Spreitzer (1996) also concludes that a participative work climate contributes to feelings of having control and being empowered. The facilitative value of participation for employees is also illustrated in this particular study. Drohan commented on the value of allowing people to determine the direction of the transformation process. He was also extremely positive about the opportunity he had been given to influence the process. Anja's acceptance of a decision with a negative outcome for herself was mitigated/moderated by her involvement and participation in the decision-making. It may thus be argued that employees' need of autonomy is supported in a context where they can participate in and influence decision-making processes that will eventually affect their personal work lives and work situation.

However, the literature review indicated that to be experienced as supportive, participation needs to be qualified. In a meta-analysis on participative decision-making (PDM) Cotton, Vollrath, Lengnick-Hall and Froggatt (1990) conclude that not all forms of participation improve job satisfaction or productivity. They describe representative and short-term participation as the least effective forms of employee participation (see also Leana, Locke & Schweiger, 1990). Lawrence (1991, p. 80) stresses the importance of honest participation where employees' contributions are valued: "Participation is a feeling on the part of people, not just the mechanical act of being called in to take part in discussions". Participation under false or dishonest pretences can actually be dysfunctional and have negative consequences for both the employees and the success of the process. Thus, participation has a psychological mechanism of supporting the need for autonomy of employees and thus contributes to their psychological well-being, and also has definite merit in that employees' abilities (ideas, problem recognition, innovation etc.) can be applied for the benefit of organisational performance (Kanter, 1984).

#### 6.6.2 Communication and sharing of information

As discussed above, Gagne et al (2000) came to the conclusion that employees' acceptance of change is facilitated by providing them with a rationale for doing a task. Providing employees



with information about the process contributes to their feelings of having the ability to exercise control in the situation. Spreitzer (1996) argues that access to information helps reduce the uncertainty that comes with change and provides employees with an understanding of their work environment which inevitably enhances the perceptions of having the ability to take control. In a study on the role of communication in a merger, Schweiger and Denisi (1991, p. 110) found that honest and realistic communication did help employees to cope with the effects of the merger and reduced the negative impacts of the process. Information thus provides employees with the opportunity to evaluate the situation, consider their options and prepare themselves for future happenings. Information thus provides employees with the power to take control (Bunker, et al., 1992), and hence contributes to their psychological well-being.

Cunningham (1997) remarks that in the absence of information, people tend to feel uncertain and ambiguous. However, due to people's strong need to feel in control (Greenberger, et al., 1991), they will actively seek for information that will contribute to their (perceived) ability of being in control. In the absence of information, rumours originating from tidbits of information from all kinds of reliable and unreliable sources and often based on fears rather than reality (Schweiger, et al., 1991) "provide that concrete something around which they can begin to construct an interpretational portrait" (Isabella, 1990, p. 17). In a study on communication during change in South African companies, Hamilton-Attwell (1997) found it a common trend that the information employees do receive about the changes comes primarily from the grapevine and not from supervisors or the formal information media. Thus, not only can the absence of information during a process of change have negative effects on employees' well-being, but it can also harm the organisation (and the process) as "rumours may be less flattering ... than the truth would be" (Cunningham, 1997, p. 480). Rectifying perceptions based on rumours also offers a serious challenge to the managers of the process, given the already complex "interpretative" involvement of employees. Delianne's reference to the rumours that were created and spread during the transformation process thus raises the question of the extent and quality of information that was available during the process. Rumours could have been created deliberately, as she indicated, to influence the process in a certain direction but it could also be the natural response of employees actively seeking for information to provide them with a better understanding and thus increased control of the changing situation. Information gathered from best practices in change management from literature and from surveying companies led Clarke and Garside (1997) to conclude that credible communication is one of five key cornerstones of successful change management practices.<sup>16</sup> Kotter (1995, p. 63) remarks that "without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured". Studying the experiences of survivors after a downsizing O'Neill and Lenn (1995, p. 25) conclude that "top management cannot communicate too much with the organisation".

### 6.6.3 Sharing of feelings (emotion)

It is common for transformation or large-scale change to evoke some kind of emotional turmoil from employees (Hamilton-Attwell, 1997; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1991). O'Neill and Lenn (1995) found emotions of anger, anxiety, cynicism, resentment, retribution and hope in employees who

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16. The other four cornerstones are (1) commitment from top management recognising change as an integral part of the business strategy, (2) addressing the social and cultural dimension, (3) selecting appropriate tools and methodology as well as acquiring skills in applying the tools, and (4) methods in the organisation to deal with (operational) interactions in the organisation (Clarke, et al., 1997).



experienced a downsizing exercise. One of the main conclusions of the present study is that, for various reasons, the transformation process was experienced as a emotionally taxing event for most of the participants. Contrary to another popular assumption that "Positive emotion is expected to be associated with tendencies to promote proposed changes whereas negative emotion is associated with resistance" (Mossholder, 2000), this study shows that negative emotions are evoked and experienced by employees irrespective of their agreement or disagreement with the notion of change. For example, Heike, Soonja and Pedro, who actively worked towards the transformation, expressed their disappointment with the process and feelings of isolation, of being marginalised due to the loss of the support of close colleagues. This particular experience of participants offers strong support for the argument that transformation should not be regarded as a phenomenon but rather as a process consisting of various dimensions that can elicit a variety of responses and emotions, irrespective of employees' opinion about the necessity for change.<sup>17</sup>

Albert (1984) argues that in the process of taking the decision to move from here to there (phase 1) it is essential to achieve a sense of psychological closure. This is done by acknowledging and doing justice to the nature and intensity of the emotions that are involved in the process — without that, the process is incomplete (Albert, 1984). Tampoe (1990, p. 347) comments that "Managing change in organizations is as much about managing the emotions of people as it is about managing logistics of change". Gagne et. al (2000) conclude that by acknowledging the feelings of employees towards the task at hand during organisational change, support is provided for their need for autonomy and in that way acceptance of change is facilitated. Ashford (1988) concludes that sharing worries and concerns, or simply "letting of steam" appears to be the most effective coping response during organisational transitions. However, she also indicates that without official consent or permission "individuals may be less likely to share concerns and more likely to worry about appearing confident" (Ashford, 1988, p. 31).

The findings of this study stress the "lack of sharing feelings and experiences" as referred to by Ashford (1988). Despite the emotional impact of the process and the need employees had to share their feelings, *probleme waarmee mense worstel lê op die vlak van 'n nood om met ander te praat*, colleagues and even close friends did not share these feelings. Moreover, Robert revealed that even management overlooked the idea of attending to the "potential" emotional impact of the process. As manager, Robert also indicated that he had a real need to share his anxieties and fears with someone. Thus, despite the reality of evoked emotions, the real need for sharing this with someone, no formal attention was given to participants' emotional experiences. Based on these experiences, it was deduced that a taboo existed with respect to emotions in the workplace. It was considered inappropriate to refer to and share emotional experiences.

The deduction on the taboo on emotions in the workplace (and thus also during a transformation process) concurs with other research findings. Nicholson (1998, p. 138) refers to managers who are often trained to "dispense with emotions in favour of rational analysis". O'Neill and Lenn

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17. As argued, negative consequences resulting in negative emotions can be the result of the way employees are treated during the process (eg, lack of consultation/participation) or of poor planning regarding the practical outcome of decisions taken (eg, lack of access to administrative assistance due to restructuring). Thus, employees' emotional experiences emphasise the importance of differentiating between the stages or dimensions of a transformation that elicited a particular response.

(1995, p. 32) argue that “most approaches to thinking about organizations grant rationality a special prominence in organisations ... Adherents of the rational approach may discount emotion-laden observations, because they are not factual”. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) indicate that feelings, whether emotions or moods, do not occupy a central role in current theoretical approaches to work motivation. They argue further that due to the focus on the dysfunctions of emotions (as opposed to the functions) a belief has been fostered that emotions are the antithesis of rationality. “This belief, in turn, may have contributed to a somewhat pejorative view of emotion and to consequent attempts to control the experience and expression of emotion in organizations” (Ashforth, et al., 1995, p. 98). Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) and Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) offer a comprehensive overview and discussion of organisationally approved or prescribed emotions. Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) contend that a clear distinction needs to be made between the emotions that employees feel and emotions that they are actually allowed or motivated to express. Usually the culture of an organisation has rules governing the emotions that employees are allowed to express — usually supportive of or in line with the preferred dominant culture (Rafaeli, et al., 1989; Van Maanen, et al., 1989). Thus, emotions are perceived as barriers to rationality, interfering with the rational approach to task accomplishment and therefore need to be controlled (Ashforth, et al., 1995).

However, this pejorative view of emotions seems to be challenged by recent rethinking of emotions. Affective experiences (emotions and moods) are regarded as potentially important aspects of work experience (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) and the reconsideration of feelings, their origins and their combination with thoughts are necessary for an understanding of employees’ motivational agendas (George & Brief, 1996). The point is; “emotions are an integral and inseparable part of everyday organisational life. From moments of frustration or joy, grief or fear, to enduring sense of dissatisfaction or commitment, the experience of work is saturated with feeling” (Ashforth, et al., 1995, p. 98). Thus, “the validity of an emotion for those who feel it is a given, is subject to no known truth test, and is neither right nor wrong” (Van Maanen, et al., 1989, p. 53), and “ignoring the emotions neither obviates their influence on behavior nor provides any alternative for behavior or emotion” (O’Neill, et al., 1995, p. 32).

Ignoring the emotions that employees experience during a transformation process, will not make them go away but, as this study indicates, will rather contribute to the unnecessary negative experiences of the process. Acknowledging the feelings of employees during a transformation process, provides support for the need for autonomy. It may also be argued that acknowledging the feelings of employees can be to the benefit of the organisation as well as this can contribute to the employee-organisation relationship.

#### 6.6.4 Producing and celebrating small wins (benefits) during the process of change

Robert commented on the positive effect of experiencing the benefits of the transformation process and Soonja highlighted the emotional impact of efforts and initiatives having no success. Studies stress the importance of obtaining and celebrating victories early in the transformation process. Harper (1998, p. 30) indicates “that it is important to produce early victories”, as visible benefits or success of the process motivate continued participation and effort in the process. In Kotter’s (1995) view, given the lengthiness of a transformation process, such a process can lose momentum if short-term goals are not met and celebrated. Nevis, DiBella and Gould (1995) argue that, due to the complexity of a transformation process that often requires an approach



from multiple directions and several points, the process of change can be maintained if people experience success in specific, modest areas of the process. Weick (1984) maintains that problems of scale (typically the scenario in large-scale organisational change) must be defined, or redefined, as several smaller and more manageable ones so that people can experience small wins. In her study on the process of change involved in the implementation of TQM in a particular organisation, Coyle-Shapiro (1999) found support for the assumption that employees who do not see interventions as beneficial in the early stages are unlikely to subsequently participate. She points out that this finding has implications for the management of a change process in the sense that steps have to be taken to ensure that employees progress quickly and that the likelihood of benefits increases.

It has thus been indicated that it is important to have small wins or successes during a transformation process as this seems to benefit the process through maintaining employee participation and motivation. However, it can be argued that benefits, successes or small wins also support the psychological well-being of employees and in this way facilitate positive experience of the process. According to Weick (1984, p. 46),

a small win reduces importance ("this is no big deal"), reduces demands ("that's all that needs to be done"), and raises perceived skill levels ("I can at least do that")...Deliberate cultivation of a strategy of small wins infuses situations with comprehensible and specific meaning (commitment), reinforces the perceptions that people can exert some influence over what happens to them (control) and produces changes of management size that serve as incentives to expand the repertory of skills (challenge).

Thus, obtaining small wins supports employees' need to have control over the situation as well as the need to feel competent in a specific situation.

Following the argument of redefining the process into smaller manageable units to obtain and celebrate small wins comes the argument to rephrase or redefine a change process as a challenge, an opportunity for growth instead of the end of an era. "Capitalizing on growth opportunities and developing innovative approaches capture the human spirit far more than efforts geared to downsizing and outsourcing" (Harper, 1998, p. 26). Harper argues that change is predominantly perceived as the cutting of costs, the focus on the bottom line and the slashing of the payroll with little reference to inventions or the development of new tactics. In their study of a successful organisational change process, Cooper and Markus (1995, p. 49) state that the manager succeeded in making the change fun: "he replaced a fearful perspective of change with a spirit of play, creativity and experimentation." The findings of this study support the view that change can and perhaps should be rephrased as an opportunity to be creative, a time for new ideas and increased freedom. The single most positive experience resulting from the process to which participants referred was the opportunity it gave them to develop new material, the freedom they had to move beyond previous borders and boundaries and the opportunity to be creative. It is clear that participants placed a high value on the notion of innovation and creativity.

## **7 REVISITING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The findings of this study reinforce the significant impact of a transformation process on the relationships in the organisation. Considering the themes identified in participants' experiences of the process, it is clear that the theme of interpersonal relationships and interpersonal dynamics was most frequently referred to. The process of transformation influenced the inter-



personal relationships noticeably. This study indicates that transformation is implemented in a context of a web of relationships between employees mutually and employees and the organisation. The evolving nature of the context during the process, as a result of the changing power and political relationships, has also been discussed as well as the impact of transformation on "products" of the relationships, such as psychological support (Ryan, 1995; Gagne, et al., 2000) and spontaneous behaviour (George, et al., 1992). Lawrence (1991) supports the notion that transformation impacts on the relationships among people (social context) and argues that it is precisely the changes in relationships (rather than technical changes) that people object to most.

Many studies on large-scale change or transformation highlight feelings of uncertainty, fear of the unknown and mistrust as dominant constituents of a process (Gagne, et al., 2000), but very few highlight the prominence of relationships and how they are affected by a change process. However, as Pascale (1990, p. 49) maintains, "Organizations are in the last analysis interactions among people" (Pascale, 1990, p. 49), and Isen and Baron (1991, p. 27) state, "All individuals who work within a given organization are interdependent, at least to a degree", then obviously one of the central issues of a change process should be maintaining the healthy or binding qualities of these relationships during the process. Relationships are not only affected by a change process, but in acknowledging and utilising their potential strengths, it can actively assist employees of all levels in their dealings with such a process. In the concerns-based networking model of change it is argued that "the competent change manager can deal with the complexities of the change process, not as an individual but as a member of various teams" (Schaafsma, 1997, p. 47).

Looking at organisations from a non-Newtonian way, perceiving people as conduits of organisational energy, Wheatley (1992, p.71) remarks: "I cannot describe a person's role, or his or her potential contribution, without understanding the network of relationships and the energy that is required to create the work transformations that I am asking from that person". Given the findings of this study in the context of the changed perspective on organisations as something more than a machine, it is argued that in the management of change and in the research of this organisational phenomenon, attention needs to be directed at understanding relationships in processes of change.

## **8 THE NATURE OF RESISTANCE**

Hirschman, cited by O'Neill and Lenn (1995, p.32) remarked that organisation members have three choices, namely exit, loyalty, and voice:

Exiting members take valuable and disturbing information with them. Loyal members don't give voice to disturbing information, confusing blindness and silence with loyalty. This confusion naturally arises because those willing to voice disturbing information are often forced to exit, or forced to show loyalty by suppressing that information. Finally, some members take the trouble to voice concerns to the organization. Voice, properly heard within the organization, is the behavioral choice that affords the organization the best chance for adaptation. But voice is often ignored, suppressed or extinguished.

This statement suggests that voice, or the speaking of opinion or perhaps the resistance to a decision, can actually be to the benefit of the organisation and is not necessarily destructive and something to overcome. This statement is in contrast to the typical and rather general assump-



tion that resistance to change efforts is a definite negative, as the remark of Cooper (1995, p. 39), contends, "reengineering fails because people resist change", or that the first step of a change process is to overcome resistance (Goodstein, et al., 1991).

The findings of the present study support the view that resistance to change and, for that matter, participation in the process should not be judged on face value. Participation in a process of transformation is not the automatic consequence of agreement with the change, but can also be the result of fear of losing a job or fear of being victimised for having a different opinion or a perception of total helplessness (having no other option). It cannot be assumed, therefore that employees who participate in the change process are in agreement with it (or the particular phase or dimension). In the same way, it cannot be assumed that employees who resist the process or elements thereof disagree with the notion of transformation. Participants in this study who resisted the process openly at times were the ones who proactively persuaded the organisation in favour of the change. Resistance to change can be the result of an unwillingness to or fear of change, but it could also be the result of a high level of involvement and commitment to the process (Kotter, et al., 1991). "In fact, resistance can anticipate and bring to light flaws in intent, design, and implementation and can be a predictor of problematic and high-risk endeavors" (Levine, 2001, p. 27). Resistance can therefore be constructive, depending on the willingness of managers to listen to employees and their ability (character) to deal with criticism from employees.

However, when referring to resistance, it is necessary to distinguish or diagnose the resistance. As employees resist change for different reasons (Kotter, et al., 1991), it could potentially be destructive or negative, such as, an employee whose self-interest and position of power are more important than the survival of the company. Resistance can also be constructive where voice is aimed at warning about wrong decisions or directions. Furthermore, the phase or dimension of the process the resistance is aimed at should also be distinguished. So, for instance, Heike resisted the direction of the change whereas Anja resisted a particular decision taken during the transition that affected her detrimentally. Distinguishing the phases or dimensions resistance is aimed at as well as the particular reason for resistance is crucial in order to determine the appropriate action to take whether it be the provision of more information, increased involvement, support or acting on the concerns of employees (Kotter, et al., 1991). If resistance is not redefined as multifaceted and potentially constructive, it will typically be trivialised and resisters will be seen as people who need handling (Levine, 2001). Furthermore, it is argued that just as personal experiences of change happen in the context of a web of relationships, so does conducive behaviour or resistance happen in the context of the dynamic relationships between the employee, the organisation and colleagues. Resistance or participation cannot be explored or diagnosed without taking contextual conditions into consideration. So, for example, Delianne and Pedro described their resistance during the process as aimed at colleagues who felt negative about the process and tried to slow it down. In this case, resistance had little to do with the process of change as such but was in response to the conduct of colleagues with whom they had working or collegial relationships. It is thus clear that resistance needs to be regarded as multifaceted, aimed at various aspects, dimensions or conduct during a process and can potentially be as constructive as destructive.





Lawrence (1991, p. 79) concludes:

We are all, at times, resisters as well as instigators of change ... Resistance to change is by itself neither good nor bad. Resistance may be soundly based or not. It is always, however, an important signal calling for further inquiry by management.

## 9 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The main purpose of the study was to gain an insight into and understanding of employee experiences of organisational transformation. Secondly, the study aimed at developing or proposing a conceptual tool or framework for understanding the experiences that are grounded in the life-world of organisational members through reviewing current literature and theory on this subject.

The study contributes to the understanding of employee experiences of transformation as an intricate interplay of positive and negative experiences of employees who support and resist the change, of people involving themselves intellectually and emotionally in the process and of people responding to challenges of a change process. This rich perspective on employees' experiences offers a counterbalance to the hackneyed statement or governing principle (sometimes undeservingly) that people generally resist change.

The second contribution of the study is the description of "experienced transformation" as consisting of different phases, dimensions, practical outcomes and multiple relationships. Thus, to understand a particular experience of an employee, it is necessary to distinguish which of the phases, dimensions, outcomes or relationships elicited the particular response. Not only will such an approach contribute to a better understanding of employee experiences, but it can also facilitate appropriate management responses in dealing with these experiences.

The main contribution of this study is the proposal of a conceptual model for understanding employee experiences of a transformation process. The proposed model furthermore identifies and offers a motivation for constituents that may mediate personal experiences of transformation. In this regard the study contributes to the understanding of the impact of a change process on employee well-being and potential mitigating characteristics of the person or the environment which Nelson and Cooper (1995) identify as lacking in existing literature. In addition, this model may contribute to management's perspective on employees and their efforts to minimise the social or human cost of a change process.

A number of comments have been made about the implication of the proposed model for the internalisation of new behaviour in a process of change. However, the issue of the internalisation of new behaviour patterns during change, is still (little less than) a mystery. It seems worthwhile to explore the applicability of the self-determination theory and the arousal theory (or others) in the context of management practices to ensure large-scale change. Such an endeavour would need to take cognisance of the large body of research on the change of behaviour in other areas of psychology as well as the interrelatedness of attitudes, perceptions and behaviour (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

It was also argued earlier in the discussion that research on change needs to explore the role of relationships in a process of change. Relationships need to be understood as a broad concept, including the close interpersonal relationships between colleagues, the relationships involved in



or leading to spontaneous or prosocial behaviour as well as relationships of power. Furthermore, relationships should also be explored from different perspectives, such as the impact of change on relationships or the potential role of relationships in facilitating change.

The concept of organisational commitment has only been referred to as a side issue as it fell outside the ambit of the study. However, recent literature on the role of deep commitment or deep identification with the organisation during organisation change warrants further attention (Rousseau, 1998). Unexplored findings of this study on the difference between job commitment and organisational commitment offer many questions for further exploration. Stephan, for example, justified his participation in the process of change by referring to his deep commitment to his job. It was concluded that despite his personal pain, his disillusionment with the organisation, he still stayed involved as a result of his commitment to his profession as educator.

## 10 CONCLUSION

Despite careful and intelligent management of a change management logic (Veldsman, 1995) or a best practice model, it is clear that "[i]n reality, even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises" (Kotter, 1995, p. 67). Kotter's statement is a reminder that even with the best tools or conceptual frameworks to guide every step through a transformation process, one should never be complacent and forget about the fact that order and disorder are parts of the same universe. As transformation is about staying in business with people at the crux thereof, managing change seems to require a sense of responsibility as well as of innovation, openness, flexibility, and the willingness to learn.

The old struggle in psychology between the person in particular and the person in general (Allport, 1981) is also apparent in this study. In the process of gaining an understanding of employee experiences of transformation, the process of making sense started off in the particular experiences of an individual and went on to themes constituted of combined experiences. Individual experiences and combined experiences eventually contributed to a conceptual framework endeavouring to understand the experiences of transformation for the person in general. However, hopefully references to unique individual characteristics and unique individual situatedness in an organisation acknowledge and provide space in the conceptual tool for experiences in general to accommodate the person in particular. It is also true that many of the experiences of the persons in particular, slipped as a result of an inability to understand and an inability to interpret the meaning and uniqueness of the experience.

As the development of the conceptual tool iterated between the individual experience, the combined experiences (themes) and the fictitious person in general, trying to do justice to all, so perhaps do people who are responsible for other people during a transformation process need to iterate between the experience in particular and the experiences in general.

Having had the opportunity to share in the truly unique experiences of willing participants, feeling many times like Moses, who had to take off his shoes because the ground he stood on was holy, this study concludes with the words of William James (in Allport, 1981, P.66):

...in every concrete individual, there is a uniqueness that defies all formulation. We can feel the touch of it and recognize its taste, so to speak, relishing or disliking, as the case may be, but we can give no ultimate account of it, and have in the end simply to admire the Creator.

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