

# Perspectives on enhancing the Change Management Competency of South African Senior Public Service Managers

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## ABSTRACT

*The South African Public Service is the implementation agency of the South African Government. Located at the apex is the Senior Management Service (SMS). As leaders, role-models and pace-setters senior public service managers are required to be transformation-based and vision-driven. To support and enable undertaking of this task is the change management competency—one of eleven competencies set out in the Public Service Handbook for the Senior Management Service. Each competency has its own competency criteria, scale and aim. As is the case world-wide this change management competency is bedevilled continuously by a complex set of connected internal and external change forces. It is the view of the author that a keen grasp and deep understanding of the paradigmatic view of change, conceptual and theoretical perspectives of change, change constructs, factors resisting and supporting change, change interventions as well as the role of change agents and change leadership will enhance the change management competency of South African senior public service managers.*

*“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”*

*M.K. Gandhi (in Auster et al. 2005: 175).*

*“An organization, is after all, a collection of people and what the organization does is done by people. Therefore...propositions about organizations are statements about human behaviour”*

*March and Simon 1958 (in Paton & McCalman 2000:121).*

## INTRODUCTION

In order to approach the complex and vibrant landscape of change management in a meaningful and systematic manner, the focus of the initial part of the article is on the Senior Management Service and the change management competency followed by a paradigmatic view of change, change concepts and theories and constructs impacting on change efforts. Thereafter, emphasis is on change resistance, support factors as well as change interventions for facilitating effective change engagement and influence. In the final part of the article the role of change agents and change leadership is highlighted.

## SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICES (SMS) AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY

In 2001 the South African Government introduced the Senior Management Service as a strategy to professionalise the senior management level of the South African Public Service. This was enabled mainly, through the amendment of the Public Service Regulations, 2001 (Van der Vyver 2001:25). Levin (2007:21) argues that this distinct and deployable SMS is fundamental to ensuring the achievement of the goals of the developmental state. It is incumbent upon senior public service managers to manage and lead their respective institutions in an ever changing complex environment of policies and priorities triggered by interconnected external and internal organisational change forces (Schwella & Rossouw 2005:761).

Senior public service managers serve at the level of director (level 13), chief director (level 14), deputy director-general (level 15) and director-general (level 16) of the South African Public Service (Circular 2 of 2008:3). Change Management is one of the eleven management competencies with each competency requiring four proficiency scales basic, competent, advanced and expert (*Public Service Handbook Senior Management Service* 2003: Chapter 5). Each proficiency level has criteria and scale for each competency as indicated in Table 1.

Senior public service managers are monitored and evaluated in terms of their mastery of each competency criteria in line with the competency scales. The competency criteria describes behaviour and activities that need to be demonstrated by the senior public service managers (*Public Service Handbook (Senior Management Service)* 2003: Chapter 5). Change management may be regarded as a core soft skill, the significance of which was affirmed by the 2008 *Report of the Public Service Commission on the Evaluation of Training Needs of Senior Managers in the Public Sector*. In relation to the other ten competencies the importance of focusing attention on the training in change management was strongly validated by all four main needs identification processes namely self-reflection process, performance management systems, HR analyses and organisational triggers (*Public Service Commission* 2008:19–20). Affirming the significance of change management as a soft skill, April *et al.* (2003:154) assert that “(t)he myth has to be dispelled that the so-called soft skill issues – issues relating to people, leadership, and organisational behaviour are easier to do, manage, and comprehend. In fact, would venture to say that it is precisely those things that are the hardest to be successful at, hence, the tendency to avoid them”.



**Table 1 Competency Criteria and Competency Scales**

Basic	Competent	Advanced	Expert
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates status, benefits and issues relating to change;</li> <li>Identifies gaps between the current and the desired situation and reasons for resistance to change;</li> <li>Accepts and successfully performs a supporting role in the change effort;</li> <li>Identifies the need for change;</li> <li>Participates in change programmes and piloting of change initiatives; and</li> <li>Understands the impact of change initiatives on the organisation within the broader political and social context.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs analysis to determine the impact of changes in the social, political and economic environment;</li> <li>Keeps self and others calm and focused during times for change or ambiguity;</li> <li>Initiates, supports and encourages new ideas;</li> <li>Volunteers to lead change efforts outside of own work team;</li> <li>Consults and persuades all the relevant stakeholders of the need for change;</li> <li>Proactively seeks new opportunities for change;</li> <li>Identifies and assists in resolving resistance to change with stakeholders; and</li> <li>Designs activities to enable change that are aligned to the organisational objectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitors results of change;</li> <li>Secures buy-in and sponsorship for change efforts;</li> <li>Designs, develops, evaluates and continuously improves the overall change strategy after wide consultation with the relevant stakeholders;</li> <li>Customises and applies approaches to facilitate change;</li> <li>Capitalises on relationships with various stakeholders in establishing strategic alliances in facilitating change efforts;</li> <li>Leads major change programmes;</li> <li>Benchmarks change initiatives and strategies against best practice;</li> <li>Exhibits sensitivity to dynamics within the organisation which affect how quickly change is accepted;</li> <li>Takes calculated risks and is constantly seeking new ideas from leading edge organizations and external sources;</li> <li>Defines outcomes and measurement criteria for change programmes; and</li> <li>Creates innovative ways of reinforcing change, rewarding change acceptance and discouraging change resistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sponsors "change agents" (responsible for implementing the change) and creates a network of leaders who support and own the change;</li> <li>Adapts current infrastructure to change initiatives;</li> <li>Mentors others on the leadership of change;</li> <li>Viewed as a thought leader in change management; and</li> <li>Inspires change that has impact even wider than the organisation.</li> </ul>

**Description of Competency Scales**

**BASIC:** Applies basic concepts and methods but requires supervision and coaching.

**COMPETENT:** Independently develops and applies more advanced concepts and methods. Plans and guides the work of others. Performs analysis.

**ADVANCED:** Understands and applies more complex concepts and methods. Leads and directs people or groups of recognized specialists. Able to perform in-depth analysis.

**EXPERT:** Sought out for deep specialised expertise. Leads the direction of the organisation. Defines model/theory.

Source: *Public Service Handbook (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5.*

## PARADIGMATIC VIEW OF CHANGE

An important consideration in the management of change and often ignored one is creating, shifting and breaking paradigms (Pascale 1990:14). The origin of the term paradigm is Greek *paradigma*, *para* meaning next to and *digma* meaning measure (Luthans 2005:11); Marias 1992:86). The term was popularised by Thomas Kuhn an historian of the philosophy of science in his book (first published in 1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Luthans 2005:11). Since then it was subject to many modifications and adaptations to possibly mean a set of preconceptions, an intellectual framework, a way of thinking, and a mind set for understanding, interpreting and dealing with reality (a change situation) (Stacey 1996:52; Luthans 2005:52). It is also regarded as enabling the development of a set and combination of solutions for coping and dealing with known and unknown phenomena (change forces) by means of its unique explanatory power (Van Tonder 2006:233). However, it is argued that paradigms flow from shared individual and community experiences and assumptions, and operates tacitly below the level of awareness and clung to tenaciously without question (Stacey 1996:52; Pascale 1990:89). Thus leading to paradigm effect which is a phenomenon that serves as filters in order to prevent data, information, knowledge or experience that is contrary to the accepted paradigm (mind set, mental model or road map) (Goldstein *et al.* 1993:48). Therefore, it is asserted that the real world data, information, knowledge or experiences which are not congruent to the accepted paradigm have a difficult time penetrating through the filters (Barker 1993:86) Even, the extent which they filter perceptions goes unrecognised giving paradigms assiduous power (Pascale 1990:13; 89). This uncritical thinking and unquestioning mindset, disposition toward over determination, absence of inquiry, and automatic acceptance simply means not being aware of and seeing changes that are taking place, and more importantly, not reasoning, making deductions and perceiving changes (Goldstein *et al.* 1993:48; Pascale 1990:13-14). The assertion of Stacey (1996:57) that it is unwise to accept paradigms at face value and need for the managers to make a sense of the dynamics of the real world is captured by Burdett (1998:28) (in Luthans 2005:12) as follows:

*The depth of change required demands that those charting a passage through hurricane-like seas do more than run up a new set of sails. What is involved equates to a quantum shift in, not just learning, but how we learn; not just doing things differently, but questioning whether we should be doing many of the things we currently believe in, at all; not just in drawing together more information but in questioning how we know what it is (we think) we know.*

When a paradigm is all powerful and successful it may result in the paradigm being converted into *the* paradigm resulting in paradigm paralysis which Barker (1993:155) refers to as "A terminal disease of certainty". The disease is also about the failure to understand and accept that concepts and practices cannot continue to be applicable as in the past. Direct opposite to paradigm paralysis is paradigm pliancy which entails active and persistent critical enquiry and regular questioning to ensure the paradigm is relevant and appropriate (Barker 1993:155–157; Venter 1995:515).

As senior public service managers engage in their change management activities such as identifying the need for change, persuading individuals to accept change, and resolving



resistance to change have to take cognisance of the following advice of Barker (1993:86): “What may be perfectly visible, perfectly obvious, to persons with one paradigm, may be quite literally invisible to fathom with a different paradigm”.

## CHANGE CONCEPTS

The notion of concepts may be understood as a broad abstract idea or principle that guides and determines how individuals perceive, understand and grasp reality, attitude, behaviour, disposition, systems, structures, processes and events (change situations, change processes, change initiatives, and change impacts), (*Encarta World English Dictionary* 1999:393). Concepts (tools of thought) as the products and bearers of different methods and ways of thinking, seeing and interpreting assistance in pointing out familiarities, dissimilarities, clarifying changes that were half aware of, and expressing (making sense) completely and in unambiguous terms aspects of relationships that might have been otherwise overlooked and unnoticed (Armson & Paton 1994:139).

Change may be described as a process that causes a difference in varying magnitude over time in the nature and condition of a given entity – which can be a phenomenon (creativity, attitude, behaviour) situation (turbulent organisational environment) person, (public servant) or an object (computer technology) (Van Tonder 2006:230). Therefore, change management may be described as an ongoing vision-driven process and practice that aims to anticipate, respond to, influence and capitalise on and engage with change occurring in connected external and internal environments as well as enable organisational systems, processes and individuals to cope with change (the difference causing factor) (Brewster *et al.* 2010:122); Van Tonder 2006:9).

For senior public service managers the various competency criteria (see Table 1) can be regarded as constituting the processes and practices to achieve the competency aim which may be defined as the ability to initiate and support and enable organisational (departmental) transformation and change in order to successfully and effectively implement initiatives and honour service delivery promises and commitments (therefore vision-driven) (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5). From an overall perspective senior public service managers must serve as leaders, pace-setters and role-models. It is incumbent upon them to create and sustain vision-driven collaborative networks and purpose-driven partnerships with various organs of state, civil society formations, different communities, private sector organisations and international role players and stakeholders (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Foreword). Like their national, local and international counterparts they live and operate “...in times of spiraling complexity, acceleration, and change (and)... the more the turbulence, the more the volatility” (Bean 1993 (a): vii–viii).

A driving force may be explained as that particular factor be it internal or external which has senior management attention as well as significant and momentous influence and pronounced effect and impact upon the organisation and its members (Bean 1993 (b):137). Change drive variables are classified differently by various authors. Grobler 2002 (187–189) for example, refers to interdependent external change triggers as “deep structural uprooting” (political changes); “the 24×7×52 customer” (economic changes);

“the boom is better governance and social responsibility” (social changes), and “the death of distance” (technological change). Authors such as Bean (1993); Auster (2005); Grobler (2003) and Brewster *et al.* (2010) offer further breakdowns of the various change forces. Political stability and/or instability, deference to constitutional and statutory prescriptions as well as continental and world politics and international relations can be factored into the political change force. Economic change force factors include economic growth, service delivery commitment, unemployment levels, workforce skill levels, financial markets and exchange rates. Social change force embraces generational differences, macro-demographics, macro-psychographics, social media, leisure and lifestyle preferences, moral, spiritual and environmental needs, the role of civil society as well as ethics, transparency and accountability. Factors such as e-service delivery, rate of technological change, new technological developments, rate of new technological diffusion, sustaining technologies and disruptive technologies can be included in the technological change force (Bean 1993 (b):140–141; Auster *et al.* 2005:22–26, Grobler 2003:187–190; Brewster *et al.* 2010:262–263).

As in the case of interdependent external factors which originate from different sources a combination of internal factors with different origins can serve as a catalyst and a need for change. The internal factors may also be reflections of external factors (Robbins & De Cenzo 2004:205 & Smit *et al.* (eds.) 2009:216). Internal factors like external factors are classified and emphasised differently. They include inappropriate and ambiguous policies and procedures, deficiencies in existing organisational systems and processes, unmet employee and citizen expectations, dissatisfaction with work climate, increased workforce diversity, non-involvement of employees in decision-making, differing values and assumptions, dysfunctional work ethics as well as pursuit of private interests at the expense of the public interest and failure to implement findings of investigative bodies (Grobler 2003:189; Wood *et al.* 2004:708; Brewster *et al.* 2010:214).

Senior public service managers on reflecting on the root causes of the triggers for change and change drivers as well as formulating solutions have to recognise and explore the circumstances surrounding the triggers for change and change drivers including awareness of relationships and interactions and their potential impacts (Paton & McCalman 2000:30). Paton & McCalman (2000:5) assert that change (the difference causing factor) will not disappear or dissipate, and is inevitable. The following statement by Charles Darwin (in Auster *et al.* 2005:5) is noteworthy:

*It's not the strongest of the species that survives or the most intelligent – but the one most responsive to change.*

In conceptualising the frameworks underpinning the nature and characteristics of change, senior public service managers may be cautioned of the different overlapping classifications expressed as frame breaking change, scale of change, degree of change, varieties of change, and types of change (Van Tonder 2006:35; Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:325). Frame breaking change may be described as a time bound process comprising the activities of tuning, adaptation, re-orientation and re-creation (shifting, breaking and building paradigms) (Van Tonder 2006:92–94; Hayes 2007:15–16). The impact of frame breaking change, to a lesser or greater extent, results in reformulation of mission, vision and core values, altered



power relations, reorganised structures, systems, processes and relationships, redesigned work flows, communication channels and networks as well as decision-making formats and patterns (Senior & Swales 2010: 36). This conceptualisation of change could also be linked to the scale of change classification of Dunphy and Stace (1993:193). Scale type 1 is fine tuning which enables refinement of policies and methods. Describing and explaining a modified vision and mission statement is an expression of scale type 2 namely incremental adjustment. Scale type 3 is modular transformation which is manifested for example, by restructuring of major units within departments. Organisational wide shifts in focus on and the re-creation of vision, mission, systems and processes are examples of scale type 4 namely corporate transformation (Dunphy and Stace 1993:193; Senior and Swales 2010:39).

The degree of change classification focuses on first-order change (single loop learning), second-order (double-loop learning) and deep level change (McMillan 2008:77). First-order change may be described as a quantitative-based rational change with limited scope in a few dimensions while being applicable within and consistent with current mental models (paradigms) (Van Tonder 2006:233). Superficial limited changes without any questioning of fundamental beliefs and assumptions are the characteristics of first-order change (McMillan 2008:77). Second-order change is characterised by a qualitative-based approach to questioning the relevance and appropriateness of existing beliefs and assumptions of individuals and organisations resulting, to a greater and lesser extent, in a paradigm shift in understanding of organisational reality and life (Van Tonder 2006:234). Unlike single-loop based learning (first-order change), double-loop based learning, (second-order change) impacts on the organisation and people with increasing significance resulting in real differences. Change behaviours emerge and are noticeable because through the double-loop learning process individuals not only learn to do things differently, but, also to conceptualise and act in a significantly different way. They have not left their existing beliefs and assumptions unquestioned. Their mental models (paradigms) and internal perspectives have been shifted- a practice not prevalent in first-order change (McMillan 2008:78). In deep-level (paradigm) change existing mental models and internal perspectives are totally shattered, resulting in radically transformed individuals and organisations embracing a vibrant and revitalised self-renewing and self-renewal conceptualisation of change. The existing set of behaviour patterns and relationships as well as organisational structures are dissolved and disappear and new ones emerge (McMillan 2008:78). Enhancing the deep-level degree change classification is the cogent conceptualisation of third-order change which focuses on empowering individuals to enable them to be capable to such a point where they themselves have the knowledge and insight to discover, identify, recognise, adjust, alter, modify or reject their existing mental models, beliefs, assumptions and values (Van Tonder 2006:234).

Under the classification of varieties of change, eight may be distinguished for the purpose of this article (Van Tonder 2006; Stacey 1996). *Closed change* emphasises clear cut and identifiable links between sequences or events which can be recounted in a widespread agreed mode. However, some consequences of events and actions cannot be clearly and unambiguously recounted. Recounting is expressed in terms of probability statements as what happened, why it happened, and what the consequences are. The future direction of the organisation is qualified by probability statements. This is *contained*

*change*. In *open-ended change* current sequences of events and actions never happened in the past. They cannot be related to the past experiences of sequences of events and actions and cause and effect relationships cannot be discerned (Stacey 1996:23; Senior & Fleming 2006:33; McMillan 2008:99). Organisations are close to certainty when individual members face repetitions of sequences of events and actions thus enabling meaningful forecasts for a short time of likely events and actions. Members are therefore facing closed and contained change. An organisation is far from certainty when its members face open-ended change in that they function and act in unique circumstances without the support and benefit of appropriate past experience. Thereby, they cannot be reliable links and connections between cause and effect variables. Predictions of outcomes and impacts of actions occur over the long term (Stacey 1996:26). The *continuous kind of change* may be regarded as perpetual ongoing change driven and directed in line with the organisation's overall framework and existing flow of process and function. The *discontinuous kind of change* is described as sporadic and disruption-based change causing a complete break from established modes of functioning and orientation (Van Tonder 2006:231; Grobler 2003:191; Senior & Swailes 2010:37). The *chaotic kind of change* is an unfolding form of comprehensive change driven and triggered by an insignificant or minor incident or activity resulting in unpredictable outcomes and impacts (Van Tonder 2006:230; Grobler 2003:192).

Van Tonder's (2006:100) cogent conceptualisation of *Type 1* and *Type 11* change is another example of a variety of change. *Type 1* can be described as a distinct and purposeful, steady and stable sequential change occurring and evolving over an extended period of time does not have a disruptive effect and impact on the organisational system and individual members. It is perceived as being within the control of the system. *Type 11* change is explained as a major system-wide disruptive and unpredictable change can be paradigm altering, shifting or shattering. Having a very sudden onset and a rapid escalation it reaches a point where it is perceived as being outside the control of the system. Unlike *Type 1* change, *Type 11* change is not as steady and stable step-by-step. On the contrary it is regarded as radical and revolutionary (Van Tonder 2006:110).

In the exposition of the various change concepts, a cross cutting change emerges from some concepts in the form of transformational change which is embodied in the competency aim of the change management responsibility of senior public service managers. Transformational change can be described and explained as total, complete, comprehensive and profound change in vision, mission, goals, objectives, systems and processes. It occurs as in individual behavioural patterns, relationships, assumptions, beliefs and values therefore regarded as a form of change that is qualitative and metamorphic. A decisive break with the past results in a new order and orientation. Thus, there is paradigm shattering and paradigm building (Grobler 2003:191; Van Tonder 2006:234; Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:283).

As senior public servants engage in ongoing reactive, proactive and anticipatory change actions they have to embrace a collaborative understanding of various change concepts in order to deal with the range of outcomes and impacts as well as various possibilities that change may instigate and trigger (McMillan 2008:79). The following words of Niccolo Machiavelli (The Prince) in Grobler 2003:185 are significant: "Whoever deserves constant success must change his conduct with the times".



## CHANGE THEORIES

A theory may be described as a logical and systematic body of knowledge that is underpinned by a set of interrelated assumptions, principles, concepts and values by means of which specified phenomena within a wide range of situations are understood, described, explained, analysed and predicted (Van Tonder 2006:234; Pascale 1990:88; Carnall 2007:64). For example, in understanding and analysing continuous or discontinuous change, evolutionary or revolutionary change, and change resistance and support.

A distinction is made between a traditional and a mechanistic understanding of change and a new, modern and dynamic understanding of change (McMillan 2008:92; Grobler 2003:196). Traditional theories view change as a linear, static, step by step sequential process within a clearly defined beginning and end which is rationally and purposefully determined in a cause and effect mode. Once the change is introduced and implemented it is embedded in an individual's mindset or mental model and organisational thinking. Everything is regarded as being normal (McMillan 2008:91). An example of a change approach in this category is the clinical approach which can be regarded as a planned approach which is closely linked and associated with practice of organisational development (OD) (Carnall 2007:67). The OD process focuses on applying behavioural science knowledge to enable individual teams and organisations to function effectively within change situations in an ongoing and collaborative manner (Bell 1999:25-26 in Senior & Fleming 2006:342).

Modern theories view individuals and organisations as complex systems. If individual human beings may be regarded to a certain degree as unpredictable so can organisations be understood to some extent as unstable and indeterminate therefore, disorder is regarded as being the reality rather than stability (Haynes 2003:63). Complexity arises because organisational members and organisations operate in rapid and dramatic change. Survival is therefore the norm (Grobler 2003:196). Traditional theories view individuals and organisations operating in closed-loop interactions with relatively stable behavioural patterns and in conditions under which there is the possibility of accurate description, explanation and predictability (Parsons 1951 & Bankes 2006 in Cloete 2006:59).

In terms of complexity theory, despite disorder and chaos, individuals and organisations are capable of finding direction, purpose and order (Haynes 2003:63). This is possible through individual and organisational renewal and self-organisation as well as interdependence and interaction through a variety of networks and relationships, diverse thinking patterns promoting holistic integration, and alternative non-linear explanation (Cloete 2006:58–59). By realising the past, present and future windows of opportunities are available for revitalising learning, evolution, adaptation, modification and adjustment (Stacey 1996:333–334; Cloete 2006:58). Underlying the complexity theory is the dynamics of adaptive systems of which one definition is that individual organisational members act in interconnected and interlinked ways “...without, any command and control framework” (Carnall 2007:84). Coherence, co-operation, collaboration and alliances are therefore spontaneously stimulated by creative tension, contention and conflict (Carnall 2007:84–85).

Senior public service managers have to consider traditional and mechanistic as well as modern and organic theoretical understandings of viewing change. Different change situations and contexts in the nature of the driving forces will also play a determining role. However, it must be noted that rapid changes in information in a networked age may easily

reveal anomalies and therefore weaknesses in theories and project them into a legitimacy crisis (Venter 1995:511).

## CONSTRUCTS IMPACTING ON CHANGE EFFORTS

In order for organisations to adapt, flourish, thrive and survive in a variety of and multiple changing conditions varying in magnitude and pressure, certain constructs which are tacit by nature can play a role in promoting and hindering effects of change initiatives thereby facilitating organisational growth and preventing organisational decline and death (Van Tonder 2006:9; 225; 231–232). The literature suggests organisational culture, organisational learning, and organisational politics (For example, Bloisi *et al.* 2003:661–663; Daft & Marcic 2007:24–25; Auster *et al.* 2005:97–112).

### Organisational Culture

Like all social phenomena organisational culture is not easy to define and is subject to many interpretations (Luthans 2005:110). Organisational culture may be described and explained as a unique pattern of fundamental assumptions that organisational members share, have learned, and collaboratively accept the organisation's values, beliefs, attitudes and norms that shape, guide and give meaning to organisational membership and organisational life (Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:512; Bloisi *et al.* 2003:662). Although, it cannot be tangibly written as in the case of a vision or mission, it can be regarded as the soul of the organisation (Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:458). Organisational culture is subject to slow evolution over time and can be taught to new initiates as the correct accepted way to perceive, understand, think and act in organisational settings (Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:458; Schein in Bloisi *et al.* 2003:662). Luthans (2005:110) explains that in addition to teaching new initiates, they, also seek and aspire to learn about the organisation's culture.

Different situations brought by the rapid modifying change forces and waves of change require altering and adapting the culture of an organisation. (Quick and Nelson 2009:561). Bloisi *et al.* (2003:672–673) argue that while the organisation culture serves a *rudder* to keep the organisation's vision, mission and strategy on track, managers may be *blindsided* by changes that are contrary to the expectations of the organisational culture.

Modifying, adapting and altering organisational culture may be difficult because assumptions are deep rooted and unconscious and therefore often not amenable to confrontation and debate. The reason may be that values, beliefs and norms are well learned and the culture is deeply ingrained by organisational members before new values, beliefs and norms are learned (Quick & Nelson 2009:56). The tricky nature of modifying, adapting and altering organisational culture can be further complicated by multiple subcultures, organisational identity, the source of stability provided by the organisational culture as well as the focus and direction of individual behaviour towards goals facilitated by the organisational culture (Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:467).

In order to effectively modify, adapt and alter organisational culture senior public service managers should be guided by the following (Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:467–468; Bloisi *et al.* 2003:122):



- Assess and understand the current culture.
- Encourage and support employees to bring forth new ideas that may help establish a better culture.
- Discover the most meaningful and effective subculture which can serve as a model for other employees.
- Send a consistent message by making modifications, adaptations and alterations from top down.
- Respect and understand that individuals or groups of individuals will be against any modification, adaptation and alteration.
- Be aware of the timeframe (5 to 10 years) for organisation wide modifications, adaptations, and alterations.
- Realise and treat the vision of the new culture as a guideline and not as an immediate panacea.
- Be realistic, persistent and a role-model for effecting the new culture.

## Organisational Learning

In a unpredictable and uncertain environment of accelerating change coupled with the inability of existing knowledge and experience as well as the lack of well-established formulae and approaches to cope and deal with adaptive challenges originating from situation-based operational challenges, sparks "...the simple logic... that ongoing learning, not only at an individual level but certainly also at an organisational level, constitutes the best and probably the only preparation for an uncertain future" (Van Tonder 2006:72). A learning organisation therefore requires individuals who learn (Smit (eds.) *et al.* 2009:46).

A learning organisation is considered an attitude and philosophy that requires that organisations acquire the capacity and ability to adapt to unforeseen situations in a collaborative and networked way thereby enabling the organisations to thrive, flourish and survive (Wood *et al.* 2004:200; Daft & Marcic 2007:24; Aquinas 2008:376). While it may be argued that a learning organisation will not suddenly adapt, it must, however, respond more quickly, than ever before, broadly and deeply, and through continuous learning assure problems will not occur in the first instance as well as in the future (Bloisi *et al.* 2003:731–732; Dessler 2004:175; Ehlers & Lazenby (eds.) 2010:274).

Through the organisational learning process knowledge is developed and required that enables successful modification, alteration, adaptation and transformation (Bloisi *et al.* 2004:200). Besides developing and acquiring knowledge, enhancing learning also depends on distributing and interpretation of knowledge in different contexts (Schmerhorn *et al.* 2008:418). What needs to be done to learn and how to learn to do can be enabled through various means which could prove useful to senior public service managers (Schermehorn *et al.* 2008:418). Mimicry focuses on copying successful practice of others while experience enables learning from success and failure. Vicarious learning is enabled through scanning and grafting. Scanning involves looking for and bringing solutions from outside the organisations (such as from civil society). The processes of acquiring from individuals and units to provide valuable information to the organisation is grafting (Schmerhorn *et al.* 2008:419). Scanning and grafting are underpinned by curiosity about what is prevailing "out there as opposed to in here" (Moningeon & Edmondson (1996) in Aquinas 2008:385). These organisational

learning capabilities need to be supported by trust, commitment, empowerment, good relationships amongst employees, value placed on individual and group contributions, member ownership as well as acceptance of responsibility and accountability (Wood *et al.* 2004:200).

In creating and driving organisational capability, the efforts of senior public service managers can be enhanced by an understanding and appreciation of the difference between single-loop learning and double-loop learning (Stacey 1996:62). In both these modes learning takes place through discovery, choosing and acting. Learning behaviour for example, will be amended by the consequences of their discovery. Single-loop learning is regarded as simple learning in that there is no questioning of assumptions or the appropriateness of the goals pursued in any fundamental sense (Stacey 1996:62). While there may be different possibilities of discovery choosing and acting in pursuit of the goal, the goal itself remains unquestioned and therefore, simple learning is regarded as single-loop feedback phenomena (Senior & Swales 2010:163; Stacey 1996:62). In double loop-learning the consequences of actions cause the goal itself and its appropriateness being questioned in a fundamental sense with the aim of initiating learning and action through a *double look* (Stacey 1996:65; Morgan 2006:85; Plunkett *et al.* 2008:299). Thus, single-loop learning (adaptive) focuses on maintaining behaviours, attitudes and practices within a conservative, cautious and conventional mindset and in this adaptive process there is a prescription for action with the emphasis on *one* single way of doing things (Senior & Fleming 2006:36; Plunkett *et al.* 2008:299; Blundel 2004:136). This makes the organisation inflexible with no change in behaviour and attitude except in its responses (Plunkett *et al.* 2005:299). In double loop-learning there is deeper reflection and challenging of behaviour and attitudes within the ambit of a critical and innovative mindset with the aim of bringing about radical changes. This is enabled because of the realisation that there are different alternatives for action in order to achieve the goals. Individuals are encouraged to share and challenge assumptions underlying their ideas (Senior & Fleming 2006:346; Blundel 2004:136; Plunkett *et al.* 2008:299). This double-loop phenomenon feedback captures the "...organization's learning how to learn" (Luthans 2005:100). It reinforces the assertion of Parsloe & Wray (2000:176) that "...(l)earning is a skill that, like any other skill, you can develop and improve; learning to learn is the ultimate skill".

Unquestioning philosophy of the single-loop phenomenon feedback is evidence of paradigm paralysis. Thus, the questioning philosophy of the double-loop phenomenon feedback is a catalyst for a paradigm shift (Venter 1995:511). According to Stacey (1996:15) the double-loop phenomenon feedback is complex learning which "...is the shifting, breaking and creating of paradigms".

## Organisational Politics

Failure to acknowledge and accept organisational political behaviour is to ignore the fact that organisations are political systems (Robbins 2005:184). While organisational politics relates to the deliberate use of power and influence to obtain positive and preferred organisational outcomes, political behaviour considered in a positive sense is an act of creative compromise amongst competing and conflicting interests in order to secure those positive and preferred organisational outcomes (Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:267; Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:227).



As a positive force it can play a role in expanding networks, dealing with resistance and building support for change through alliances, coalitions, rational persuasion, inspirational appeals and consultation (Jones & George 2003:561–564; Quick & Nelson 2009:267).

Throughout every change action the dynamics of politics is sure to emerge (Auster *et al.* 2005:111). Senior public service managers in their change initiatives and efforts to create the building blocks for ongoing success should be aware of: which groups have interests? who is enthusiastic about change and who is not? which interest groups and which individuals are most relevant? which groups and which individuals perceive that they will benefit from the change initiative? which groups and individuals perceive negative impact on them and which groups' and individuals' opposition could be particularly detrimental to the realisation of and alignment to change efforts? (Auster *et al.* 2005:99–104).

A continuous collaborative understanding and application of the different constructs can strengthen the efforts of senior public service managers in bringing about modifications, alterations, adaptations and transformation to the organisation's, vision, mission, processes and practices in a uncertain and rapidly changing environment. This continuous approach can enable paradigm pliancy which is necessary behaviour for questioning the relevance and appropriateness of the current paradigm (Pascale 1990:14; Barker 1993:156; Stacey 1996:52).

## **CHANGE RESISTANCE AND SUPPORT**

No matter how organisations are described and explained, their human content makes possible operations and activities and therefore, organisational change inevitably boils down to individual change (Van Tonder 2006:452). Studies on organisational and individual behaviour reveal that organisations and organisation members resist change (Robbins 2005:268). The individuals' innate resistance to change is referred to by Hammer (in Plunkett *et al.* 2008:299), as "the most perplexing, annoying, distressing and confusing part" in the change process.

Resistance to change may be defined as any attitude or behaviour that forms the foundation for the prevention, delay and unwillingness to support or accept specific change initiatives is regarded as either conscious or unconscious behaviour as part of the individual's strategy to ensure self-protection (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:289; Wood *et al.* 2004:645; Van Tonder 2006:184). This may be due to change being perceived as potentially harmful, an injustice, stumbling block for career and personal goals, and source of uncertainty (Van Tonder 2006:177). However, it is also argued that resistance to change has a positive element in that it lends stability and predictability to individual behaviour. In the absence of resistance individual behaviour will take the form of chaotic randomness (Robbins 2005:269). Another positive element is that resistance could add value to the change process by creating a stimulus for feedback and critical questioning and debate (Wood *et al.* 2004:645). The constructive role of resistance in the change process can be regarded as a quality control measure to determine what assumptions, values, beliefs and habits that must be reaffirmed, adapted or abandoned (Van Tonder 2006:182).

The opposite of change resistance is change acceptance, a phenomenon that indicates favourable disposition towards change processes, events, contexts and situations (Van

Tonder 2006:184). Change acceptance is embedded in several factors (Van Tonder 2006:184). One such factor is the likelihood of relative advantage and perceived gains which may not be directly implied in the change effort. Another underpinning factor is the cost (could be financial and/or social) and difficulties (tangible and intangible) associated with accepting the change effort. Disposition could be determined by the level of support and the intensity of the drive towards perceived sustainability of the change initiative by champions of change. The degree of complexity does play a disposition role. The lesser the complexity and application, the greater the possibility of acceptance. Triability which enables step-by-step actions coupled with adjustments as the change initiative unfolds could be a disposition factor. The extent to which the change effort is compatible with past experience and existing values, norms and beliefs of individuals being required to be influenced and engaged could be a disposition factor (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:289; Van Tonder 2006:184).

Considering the fact that organisations as collective entities may also be faced with resistances originating from factors such as design and structure, structural and group inertia, threats to established power relations and bases, established resource allocations, limited focus of change without simultaneous concern that organisations consists of interconnected systems and subsystems, culture, learning, politics as well as inter-intra and extra-organisational agreements (Robbins 2005:270–271; Bloisi *et al.* 2003:712–714; Slocum & Hellriegel 2009:505–507). Individuals who represent the human dimension resist change because of fear and uncertainty and loss of self-esteem, insecurity, resentment towards initiator of change, peer pressure, disruption of interpersonal relationships, social displacement, misinterpretation and ambiguity, habit as well as adherence to *status quo* and cynicism (change initiatives being perceived as realisation of personal ambitions) (Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:233–334; Wood *et al.* 2004:645–646; Senior & Fleming 2006:286; Quick & Nelson 2009:623–624).

Individual reaction to change (resistance and acceptance) is not necessarily a matter of only reaction. Instead it is underpinned by a complex combination and blend of “... psychological, social, emotional and cognitive factors” Antonacopoulou Gabriel 2001 in Van Tonder 2006:181). It is argued that at the individual level resistance is more personal and emotions-based (Dessler 2004:202). In fact, Van Tonder (2006:192) asserts that neglect by the institution (organisation) of emotional dimensions and facets of work and change “... has in effect contributed to an approach that facilitates resistance to change”. Depending on different change contexts and change initiatives, individuals may be receptive and supportive of change by showing excitement, hope and enthusiasm. Others may not welcome change and not be favourably disposed to it by being fearful, sad and angry (Auster *et al.* 2005:115). Negative reactions and emotional expressions may manifest in overt or covert behaviour (Quick and Nelson 2009:482). *Disengagement* as a behavioural response is emotionally expressed as withdrawal which can be dealt with by managers by confronting individuals. Sadness and worry are the emotional indicators of *disidentification* and this feeling of identity being threatened can be dealt with by managers through exploring causes. The *disenchantment* behaviour response is manifested in anger as the emotional expression. Dealing with this response will require managers to acknowledge and neutralise the reaction. *Confusion* is the emotional expression of disorientated behaviour which could be dealt with by managers by explaining the rationale of the change initiative (Quick & Nelson 2009:627–629).



In their attempt to deal with different behavioural reactions and emotional manifestations, senior public service managers can support and enhance *emotional transitioning* by taking possible action steps such as (Auster *et al.* 2005:122):

- unambiguously communicating to individuals the forces and drivers of change.
- consulting and encouraging involvement on purposes and actions;
- highlighting past success to ensure credibility in order to win over skeptics;
- emphasising differences in the nature, process and leaders of change efforts in order to dissociate with previous change initiatives;
- deeply exploring with individuals their reason behind possible mess up and at the same time understanding positive benefits and gains that will accrue to them while uncertainties must be honestly and transparently explained;
- keeping intact high performing teams while celebrating from time to time milestones achieved;
- being realistic about change projections and timeframes as well as their impacts;
- ensuring easy access and be approachable to create the culture of joint consultation and empowerment as well as commitment; and
- being conscious of the emotional climate as well as being sensitive to emotional needs of individuals involved while communicating through multiple channels and methods with utmost integrity and honesty.

Warrilow (2011:1–8) cautions on considerations and factors that can affect the emotional transition. *Firstly*, changes are essentially an emotional business and failure to address and consider the human dimension and human impacts of change efforts is the root cause for most change initiative failures. *Secondly*, a major priority in leading change is realising, acknowledging and addressing inner emotional adjustments individuals have to make in response to change events and situations. *Thirdly*, individuals stuck in the transition process may be construed as resistance. *Fourthly*, taking for granted that individuals can and readily be able to accept change initiatives, and disregarding the addressing of this dimension is a major cause for change effort failure. *Fifthly*, failing to realise that the greater the impact of the human dimension the greater the need for transitional support (Warrilow 2011:1–8).

The fact the individuals fear and want change is indicative of change resistance and change acceptance (Grobler 2003:187). Researchers have categorised individual and groups in terms of their disposition towards change events, initiative and efforts (Van Tonder 2006:184). Insights into these categories can enhance the understanding of senior public service managers of change reactions of individuals and groups in different organisational situations and contexts. Van Tonder (2006:184) distinguishes between *immediate acceptors* and their counterparts *immediate rejectors*. While *immediate rejectors* will show a high degree of resistance and reject change totally, *immediate acceptors* will reveal a high change acceptance rate and thereby minimising change resistance (Van Tonder 2006:184). In between these two extremes are the *rational advocates* whose support is based on merit and the *rational resistors* while being outspoken reject change on rational arguments (Van Tonder 2006:184). Using the behavioural mode of sabotage, Harris (2002) (in Chew *et al.* 2006:59) distinguishes between five change reaction behaviours. *Lip Service: Sabotage by Disregarding* emphasises that while conforming overtly and orally, individuals and groups resent being subjugated. By focusing on and employing stubborn use of lengthy oral

arguments at every possible occasion with the intent of eroding enthusiasm for embracing change initiatives is categorised as: *Prolonged Argument: Sabotage by Erosion. Hijacking: Sabotage by Transformation* is a change reaction behaviour through which individuals and groups endeavour to convert the adopted change requirements into something that is more personally acceptable. Meaningful and purposeful behaviour underpinned by a confrontational attitude is the domain of the category: *Scarcity Creation: Sabotage by Undermining*. Deep and extreme noticeable hostile application which may lead to resignation is the realm of: *Direct Conflict: Sabotage by Battle* (Harris (2002) in Chew *et al.* 2006:59). Using the notion of interest groups in facilitating and hindering change efforts, Auster *et al.* (2005:103–105) suggest the categories of *early adapters*, *laggards* and *outliers*. Alertness and quick adaptation to change situations and ability to mobilise other individuals are the nature of *early adapters*. *Laggards* within interest groups are individuals who resist change based on the genuine belief that there are flaws in the change initiatives. *Outliers* are individuals that are the exception, unlike most individuals in the interest group, are not necessarily and totally aligned with the disposition of the interest group (Auster *et al.* 2005:103-106). Auster *et al.* (2005:104) also uses network concepts for identifying key organisational change influences. “Central connectors” reach out to individuals who have links and influence with a large number of people. Individuals who are well plugged and connected to other networks because of their capacity and ability to offer accessible information are categorised as *information brokers*. *Boundary spanners* are individuals who have far reaching associations, strong relationships and links with and across various groups (Auster *et al.* 2005:104). All these networkers can also play an active and meaningful role within interest groups which are least inclined towards embracing change (Auster *et al.* 2005:104).

Exploring and discovering the rationale for change resistance and acceptance can create a window of opportunity for senior public service managers to be critical and to re-examine their assumptions, beliefs and values underlying the change initiatives thus becoming paradigm pliant, meaning the ability of being flexible and adaptable, and not clinging tenaciously to established ways of doing things. In contrast to being caught in paradigm paralysis which is the failure to realise that there are different ways of doing things (Barker 1993:156; Venter 1995:515; Grobler 2003:193, Dupuy 2003:85–86). The following assertions of Barker (1993:211) are pertinent:

*If you have paradigm paralysis you will be hearing nothing but threats.*

*If you have paradigm pliancy, you will be hearing nothing but opportunity.*

## **INTERVENTIONS FOR FACILITATING EFFECTIVE CHANGE**

It is incumbent upon senior public service managers to ensure that the change management competency be purposeful and meaningful. Effective change management requires that the overall competency definition be realised. This means actual achievement of desired results and cause intended outcomes (*Encarta World English Dictionary* 1999:600). The result of this competency demands the initiation and ability to enhance and support organisational transformation and change so that new initiatives and service delivery commitments



be successfully realised in fact, and in practical terms (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service, 2003: Chapter 5). Literature on change management and leadership suggest interventions that could apply for the enhancement of this competency (Examples, include Hayes 2007; Daft & Marcic 2007; Daft 1999).

## Action Research

Action research may be understood as a committed collaborative inquiry based on rigorous scientific requirements and practices which aim to respond and find solutions to real pressing problems and issues in an engaging and dialogue-based manner. It focuses on multiple ways of knowing and thinking in different forms of presentation and articulation. One example is the meaningful involvement by the action researcher of human persons (organisational members) together with their organisational community (a state department) which creates the collaborative inquiry. Therefore, this empowerment process enables a deep understanding of challenges through co-inquiries both as individual organisation members and as a collective (organisation) as well as participants in a wider ecology (Public Service and the citizenry) (Greenwood & Levin 2007:1; Reason & Bradbury 2008:xxi-xii; Bryman & Bell 2007:428).

Action researchers could be practitioners, academics and outside consultants (Saunders *et al.* 2000:95; Hayes 2007:288). Involvement, dedication and commitment to change intervention is the ethos of this collaborative ongoing process (Saunders *et al.* 2000:95; Bryman & Bell 2007:726).

## Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry like action research is a collaborative inquiry (involvement of diverse members of the organisation) which amplifies positive aspects, best practices, successes, achievements and defining powerful moments. The focus is not on the negative (wrong, not working and non-enhancing), but rather on a positive bright future for the entire organisation. Thus the emphasis is appreciation with the future being the top priority (Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:857; Hayes 2007:306; Reed 2007:2; Krattenmaker 2005:50). Watkins & Mohr (in Krattenmaker 2005:54–57) suggest five steps to enable an effective appreciative inquiry: emphasize and focus on the positive nature of the inquiry; create an environment that brings forth positive stories; story themes must be identified and located; imaging the future must be collaboratively determined, and creating the future must be informed by innovative ideas.

Appreciative inquiry intervention is based on social constructionism (Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:858). This theory advocates that reality is created by individuals and organisations through own interpretation and understanding of as well as conversations and discourse about the world. Therefore, reality is regarded as a social construction (Krattenmaker 2005:50; Hayes 2007:295; Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:858). Several principles have been identified that form the bedrock of the appreciative inquiry process. Whitney & Froston-Blom (2003) (in Bodhanya & Gerwel 2000: 859–860) have identified seven principles. These principles and their requirements are explained in Table 2.

Both the deliberate inquiry methods of action research and appreciative inquiry could be further enhanced by the fostering of creativity and stimulation of innovation.

**Table 2 Principles and Requirements**

Principle	Requirements
Simultaneity	The assertion is that change is impacted upon and influenced by the process of inquiry, itself, meaning that inquiry and change occur simultaneously. Thus, they are linked, penetrate each other and are interlinked, and therefore, the thinking and the acting are not separate activities. The appreciative inquiry process has to ensure that thinking and acting are indeed inseparable activities (Krattemaker 2005:53; Reed 2007:26; Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:859).
Poetic	The “story” of the organisation is revisited and rewritten by various individual members that interact and engage with it. Different interpretations and re-interpretations take place with the authors choosing parts of stories that are most interesting to them. The individual and collective activity needs to be supported by the authoring process of the inquiry (Krattemaker 2005:53; Reed 2007:26).
Anticipatory	Collective imaging of the future of an organisation is a powerful method in that people gravitate towards positive and meaningful images of the future. The appreciative inquiry process must start with determining the future with ideas that work in order to enable positive efforts to be explored and developed further (Reed 2007:27; Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:859; Krattemaker 2005:53).
Positive	Appreciative inquiry that rotates on positive questions and statements (inspiration, happiness and hope) will be more meaningful than negative questions and statements (wrong, not working and overwhelming). A positive approach and mindset will enable people to engage deeply over a longer period of time, thus, contributing to reinforcing feedback loop (Krattemaker 2005:53; Reed 2007:27; Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:959).
Wholeness	The appreciative inquiry considers that the multiple realities, mental models, diverse participants as well as varied experiences and backgrounds are significant. All the facets are essential for ensuring a richly connected, intertwined, complete, undivided, and all-inclusive system of thinking and action (Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:859–860; Encarta: World English Dictionary 2009:2124).
Enactment	This principle advocates that by living in the present one brings forth the future by enacting the future which we most desire. In linking and tying this with principles of Simultaneity and Anticipation the realisation and actualisation of the future is accelerated (Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:860).
Free Choice	This principle is based on the exercise of freedom which states that individuals are creative and thrive when the depth, intensity and extent of their contribution is enabled through free choice (Bodhanya & Gerwel 2009:810).

## Fostering Creativity

Creativity is a process and an ability that generate, combines and connects new ideas in a unique, meaningful and goal-directed manner with the aim of influencing, dealing and coping with the demands of change (Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:217; Daft 1999:435). Factors that enhance this process and the ability is what Pascale (1990:263) refers to as “...tension, passion and conflict”. Hoffer (in Pascale 1990:263) argues that: “the most gifted members of the human species are at the creative best when they cannot have their own way”. Contention does not make one more creative, but, “...propels (one) along the journey of development” (Pascale 1990:263). It is argued that the human psyche thrives in a state of tension with the opposite therefore cultivating opposite sites and constituencies in one’s own

thinking and that of the organisation can prevent organisational failure (Pascale 1990:264). In terms of *Hegelian dialectic a synthesis of opposites* can enable the establishment of a unique configuration (synthesis) (Pascale 1990:142–143). For example, in influencing change, collegial effort (thesis) versus individual effort (antithesis) results in socialised activism – a unique transcendental resolution (Pascale 1990:143). Thus, creativity thrives on focusing on *and/both* thinking rather than on concentrating on the absolute categories such as *either/or* and *for or against* (Pascale 1990:142). “And/both” thinking is the foundation of the dialectic process change when outcomes are the result of contradiction, contention, opposition and conflict (Van Tonder 2006:231; Stacey 1996:68).

Ekvall (2003:99) identifies two levels and kinds of creativity; the higher level radical creativity and the other low level adaptive creative. At the radical level, the creative individual questions existing paradigms, structures, processes and practices. Creative acts are stimulated by looser structures, dynamism, trust, debates, risk taking and freedom of choice (Ekvall 2003:102-103). The radical high level creative personality is *tolerant of ambiguity* and more, importantly, thrives and is motivated by ambiguity and vagueness (Ekvall 2003:105). Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, stable and rigid methods and procedures are the preferences of the low-level adapter personality who is comfortable with finding solutions in tried, tested and understood ways. The adapter is therefore at ease within the existing paradigm resulting in reducing problems and bringing about improvement being done with deep concern for maintaining maximum continuity and stability (Ekvall 2003:106). Both radical and adaptive creative personalities have to be conscious of the fact that they must be able to see “... unique opportunities in familiar situations” (Daft 1999:439).

## Stimulating Innovation

While creativity may be regarded as the process of generating ideas, innovation is the process of turning the ideas for example, into a product or service an enabling method an operational procedure or a different and relevant organisational culture. Thus, an innovative effort is needed to turn the generated ideas into qualitative and quantitative outcomes and impacts. Creativity and innovation are therefore fundamental in ensuring the prevention of organisational decline and extinction in a rapidly dynamic and changing environment (conditions that influence) (Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:341; Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:217).

As in the case of creativity, there are enabling and supporting conditions for innovation as well (Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:218). Understanding and accepting ambiguity prevents too much emphasis on objectivity and thereby constraining innovation. Even impractical or foolish solutions must be tolerated as they have the potential to offer innovative solutions. Risk taking has to be encouraged as it serves as learning opportunities. Multiple and diverse ideas and opinions must be tolerated as it must not be assumed that agreement, harmony and co-operation are evidence of high performance. Focusing on the end rather than on means, will stimulate consideration for alternative attainment paths. Realising and accepting that the organisation is an open system that affects and is affected by the environment can enhance innovation (Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:219).

In fostering creativity and stimulating innovation several factors need to be considered (Goldsmith *et al.* 2003:246; Ekvall 2003:107; Daft 1999:436–438; Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:347; Quick & Nelson 2009:530):

- alignment and linkage of individual interests and actions to the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the organisation;
- awareness and understanding of creative and innovative persons and processes as well as factors blocking and promoting creativity and innovation;
- establish a fertile environment that allows for contrasting ideas, diverse stimuli, disagreements, risky ideas, mutual support and encouragement as well as probing questions and objectivity to evolve, thrive and flourish; and
- valuing and realising that boundaryless, permeable and networked organisations because of their large pool of skills, knowledge and talents, sense of commitment and ever changing interfaces can offer learning opportunities to foster creativity and stimulate innovation.

Action research as a change intervention forms the foundation for dialogical environments that enable critical communicative situations. Scrutiny and positive meaningful contributions in these communicative situations question existing knowledge and enables building new knowledge (Greenwood & Levin 2007:75). Appreciative inquiry is a change intervention that focuses on the positive rather than on the negative, it explores ideas that are valuable and meaningful which form the foundation for ways and means to build on the ideas. A fundamental aspect of appreciative inquiry is that it stimulates questioning and networking on how people work and interact and how change happens and how it manifests (Reed 2007:2). Understanding the creative and innovative person and the creative and innovative process fosters creativity and stimulates innovation. Both these interventions are in themselves complementary, and therefore can enhance and support the contents and processes of action research and appreciative inquiry. All the change interventions encourage organisations and individuals not to become complacent, paralysed and trapped by their past success in a continuously changing environment (Hellriegel *et al.* 2005:341). However, caution is necessary in that action research and appreciative inquiry are time-intensive and their value and usefulness deteriorates when "... (a) major disruptive, unpredictable, paradigm-altering and system-wide change ... (becomes) beyond the control of the system (Van Tonder 2006:234).

A joint understanding and application of the interventions can assist senior public service managers to establish an environment for shifting, shattering, breaking and building paradigms. As Pascale (1990:14) cautions "..., the paradox that confront us is that successful organizations *must* build paradigms-and having done so, are inevitably imperiled by them".

## ROLE OF CHANGE AGENTS

One expert level proficiency requires senior public service managers to sponsor change agents (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5). A change agent serves as a catalyst and assumes the responsibility of introducing, influencing and facilitating the change process towards a desired outcome and impact (Quick and Nelson 2009:621; Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:205). Change agents can be internal (managers and human resource specialists) and external (outside consultants) and the change agent can be an individual or a group (Aquinas 2008:248).



Overall, change agents must have the knowledge and skills to be comfortable with change and particularly with uncertainty and ought to apply their social and intellectual skills persistently to ensure beneficial change opportunities and direct them to actual practice in a credible manner (Kachru 2009:501–502; Wood *et al.* 2004:635). Ideally change agents should be objective and trustworthy as people are suspicious of change which is an emotional experience (Kachru 2009:50; Auster *et al.* 2005:24). Certain advantages of internal change agents include knowledge of the history of the organisation which makes them more careful, thoughtful and cautious. Most importantly, they must render account for the consequences of their change efforts (Aquinas 2009:393; Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:205). While external change agents may not have adequate knowledge of the organisation, they bring new perspectives without being caught up in organisational factions, favouritism and partiality (Aquinas 2008:248; Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:205). However, while the internal change agent has to render account for the change outcomes, the external change agent may be free from such repercussions (Robbins & DeCenzo 2004:205). It is important to note that different change agent (internal and external) competencies may be needed in terms of change focus, change locus, and the change process (Quick and Nelson 2009:62; Hayes 2007:17–18).

## LEADING CHANGE

The strategic capability and leadership competency aims of senior public service managers are that they “(m)ust be able to provide a vision, set the direction for the organisation in order to deliver on the organisational mandate” (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5). Achieving this aim becomes complicated in the current rapidly changing environment and leading change support enables to deal with the idea that the challenges of change are mastered by the organisation while simultaneously establishing and maintaining a healthy, satisfying and meaningful future-focused workplace for all employees (Schermerhorn *et al.* 2008:283). The mastering process is enabled by leaders generating energy for transformation, developing a vision, creating and sharing values, inspiring and motivating people, releasing human energies and driving the breaking, shifting, shattering and building of paradigms with the future in mind (Wood *et al.* 2004:636; Kramer 2003:141). Hayes (2007:170) suggests that in the context of transformational change “leadership... is becoming a more important part of managerial work”, and the leader being the “master ... of situations” (Kachru 2009:499). Achieving this mastery requires crafting future ideals and expectations while being in a unique position to observe, define, describe, explain and interpret reality in a sensitive manner (Kachru 2009:499; Dessler 2004:206). This approach is fundamental to the leadership role of senior public service managers as it enables and empowers individuals to deal and cope with complex and ambiguous change realities (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Chapter 5). This, according to the *Public Service Handbook* (2003) is one of the many leadership soft skills that senior public service managers must possess (*Public Service Handbook* (Senior Management Service) 2003: Foreward). In the context of transformational change “...the leaders themselves transform in the process (as) ... the leader and the follower work together as they

advance these new heights of consciousness (compelling vision, empowerment, inspiration, collaboration, influence and experience sharing" (Diphofa 2003:71–72).

The objectivity of multiple perspectives that change agents bring to the organisation as well as the role of the leader in envisioning, inspiring, influencing and galvanising individuals can form the foundation for challenging and questioning current paradigms as well as their value and relevance in dynamic and uncertain changing environments. However, in all these efforts they have to be guided by South African Constitution, 1996, which inspires total commitment, unrelenting encouragement, generosity of heart, sacrificial service, depth of compassion, and unconditional love (Bean 1993c: unnumbered).

## CONCLUSION

Located at the apex of the South African Public Service, senior public service managers as leaders, role-models and pace-setters have to engage in reactive, proactive and anticipatory actions in order to realise the change management competency. This is essential to ensure that various interconnected internal and external driving forces originating from unknown and unpredictable environments are meaningfully dealt with. An inspiring, animating, and powerful armoury therefore becomes essential. The armoury requires a keen and in depth grasp and understanding of the paradigmatic view of change, conceptual and theoretical foundations of change, constructs impacting on change initiatives, factors resisting and supporting change activities, interventions for facilitating change efforts as well as the role of change agents and change leadership.

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