




# Transitioning through management change: The experiences of community learning centre educators

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**Background:** When Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) were transferred to the Department of Higher Education and Training and renamed as Community Learning Centres (CLCs), educators increasingly experienced insecurity about the continuity and stability of their employment.

**Objective:** This article, which aimed to address this gap, presented a multiple case study design within an interpretivist paradigm. Drawing on Kurt Lewin's three-stage theory as an underpinning theoretical framework, we explored the educators' experiences and the effects of the transitioning.

**Method:** Data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 6 African male teachers between the ages of 35 and 50 years.

**Results:** Our findings suggested that educators became anxious and insecure regarding their jobs. They became aggrieved because they were not consulted on or communicated with regarding the transitioning and management change in the CLCs. Educators experienced dissatisfaction, disillusionment, stress, confusion and depression and feared for the loss of their jobs because of the change in work environment and management.

**Conclusion:** Recommendations that the Departments of Education should ensure that employees have a sound knowledge and understanding of the issues of transition and change management were implied. Consultation, communication, training and development should have been planned for all educators affected by the transitioning to avoid stress and anxiety amongst employees.

**Keywords:** transitioning; management change; community learning centre; educators; Lewin.

## Introduction

Transitioning through management change occurred when Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) were transferred to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and renamed as Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in April 2015. Much has been written on the extent and nature of changes in the world of work and the impact of these changes on workers' and prospective workers' well-being (Urbanaviciute, Udayar, & Rossier, 2018). Workers struggle to deal with transitions and many of them feel traumatised by the change. Yateem and Docherty (2014) and Rundell (2007) agree that transitioning is the passing or passage from one place, condition or action to another or the development, evolution or progression from one state to another. Transition is therefore the process of changing from one situation, form or state to another. The concept of 'transition' is synonymous with change, move, migration, transformation, conversion, alteration, changeover, shift or switch (Holscher, Wittmayer, & Looorback, 2017; Waite & Hawker, 2009). According to Fox and Combley (2014:1953), 'transition' is a change to a new state or the start of using something new. In this article, transition refers to the changing or moving of PALCs from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Turner (2017) claims that change management is a term often used in an organisation to refer to all approaches employed to prepare and support individuals, teams and organisations. To ensure appropriate change, Sidikova (2011) articulates that change management or transitioning aims to apply an organised and efficient approach to ensure that employees affected are fully aware of the need for change in management. Change is inevitable in any organisation. The smooth transitioning in an organisation is dependent on various factors: the need and necessity for change, employee

wellness, communication and consultation and the effects of change on both the employees and the organisation.

This study investigated transitioning through management change. The experiences of CLC educators in the Tshwane South District in Gauteng were probed to answer the specific research question: How did educators experience the transitioning through management change from DBE to the DHET?

## Background

In Gauteng, the PALCs were managed by the DBE for several years until the end of March 2015. On 1 April 2015, the PALCs were transferred to the DHET, and the nomenclature was changed to CLCs (DHET, 2018). The DBE initially managed PALCs and was responsible for its management and governance tasks. These centres were responsible for offering Level 1 (Grade R-2), Level 2 (Grade 3-5), Level 3 (Grade 6-8) and Level 4 (Grade 9) education, as well as an opportunity to rewrite Grade 12 (DBE, 2002). The Ministry of Education decided to reorganise the entire adult education sector, thus transferring the responsibilities from the DBE to the DHET (2012). The reason cited for this is that the basic education sector is responsible for basic primary and high school education (SASA, 1996). The Higher Education Sector is responsible for post-schooling education at tertiary level and carries the hopes of many adults and youths for the redress of education deprivation (DHET, 2012). Thus, educators and centre managers are responsible for assisting adults and youths to achieve their dreams of being educated through PALCs.

This transition from the Basic Education sector to the Higher Education sector had come with numerous changes and challenges. Some of these relate to policy imperatives, nomenclature, roles, responsibilities and delegation of authority. Various critics, Fox and Combley (2014), assert that many organisational changes turn out to be unsuccessful because of the failure of the organisation to implement transitioning smoothly, thus causing employee dissatisfaction and insecurity. Accordingly, career development theorists, researchers, practitioners and policymakers are challenged to rethink and post-modernise the theory and practice of career development (Duarte, 2017; Guichard, 2013; Hartung, 2015; Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2015). Querto (2017) argue that organisational change should be carefully managed from the beginning of the project throughout the implementation process until the organisation is stable or until it reaches the refreezing stage (Lewin, 1951). The transitioning of employees from one sector to another should ensure that employees are satisfied and do not feel insecure and they have been consulted and are aware of the transition.

## Literature review

### Effects of management change on educators

Organisations that need to be successful in implementing transitioning through management change must recognise

the social aspect of the employees. Slack, Corlett and Morris (2015) articulate that an organisation has a social responsibility to its employees. The organisation must ensure and recognise employee morale, retention and wellness. Change has been an integral part of both human and social development (Akinbode & Shuhumi, 2018); therefore, management plays an important role in this change/transformation. To successfully initiate and implement change, there is a need for diligence and skilfulness from the part of organisational leaders. Were (2014) states that change is about altering organisational practice, structure, culture, policy and regulations. It is about becoming different or having a different form. The transitioning from the DBE to DHET addresses the issue of organisational practice, structure, culture and policy.

Green (2019) states that transition or change without proper consultation with the employees may have negative effects on employees' wellness, attitude and commitment towards work, thus causing resistance. Senior management should lead organisational change and involve employees through communication to reduce their fears and uncertainties. Involvement of employees at the early stages of transitioning eliminates resistance to change (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Radical change threatens the job security and economic freedom that employees enjoyed before the transition from the DBE to the DHET (Boikhutso, 2013).

Transitioning through management change is an issue that every leader, employee and management should deal with daily for them to cope with change (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Green (2008) maintained that organisations of the future must show their commitment to becoming caring organisations. The postmodern workforce requires more collaboration, emotional intelligence and worker participation to enhance employee motivation and commitment.

Employees must be committed to the transition, as the employers' expectations are to continue providing a good service to the clientele by raising their performance level higher and changing their attitudes and behaviour at the same time (Green, 2019). Motivated employees should drive successful change; therefore, it is the responsibility of the DHET, as the employer, to keep employees motivated to provide the best educational service with minimal disruptions or resistance to change (Sidikova, 2011).

When fear is reduced, employees become energised and embrace change and performance levels increase. Employees find new reasons to go along with management as they experience new opportunities, learn new tasks and overcome challenges (White, 2016). Mosia (2011) argues that educators' response to change is closely linked with the way the transitioning process is managed and affected. The transitioning through management change of CLCs from the DBE to the DHET is no exception. Department of Higher Education and Training should handle the implemented change with care and sensibility.

Change can be either passive or active. Response to change is met with ambivalence, because there are those embracing it, but on the other hand, those who are angry and frustrated, because they are not aptly informed (Clasquin-Johnson, 2011). Although reform can also become an opportunity to realise novel career prospects (the probability or chance for future success in the profession) (Gotsil & Meryl, 2007), some respond by ignoring, resisting, adopting or adapting and accepting the change (Ferreira, 2016).

Chetty (2015) asserts that policymakers fail to collaborate with educators and do not avail themselves to obtain full cooperation bearing in mind moral purpose. Chetty (2015), Clasquin-Johnson (2011), Mosia (2011) and Mugweni (2012) and found that a definite hindrance to successful curriculum implementation is a lack of resources; furthermore, insufficient professional training of employees hinders transitioning and acceptance of novel ideas. Educators become resistant to change and become stuck in their old, secure ways because they have to make a quantum leap to be able to cope with the new proposals (Mugweni, 2012). They may ignore change because of a gap between policy and implementation (DHET, 2002; Hudson, Hunter, & Peckham, 2019).

According to Chetty (2015), educators interpret change diversely. Whereas some silently resist change, some openly oppose it and treat it with animosity. Transitioning through management change requires strategic planning and sensitivity as educators may become resistant when observing any threat to their freedom and personal parameters (Jalagat, 2016).

Mosia's (2011) findings correspond to those of Shonubi (2012) who believes that educators and centre managers become hostile to change the moment their comfort is threatened in the course of management change. A lack of motivation and uncertainty about the future, because of management change, often dampens the spirit of educators to perform at their optimal level (Shonubi, 2012).

Chetty (2015) corroborates with Drake and Sherine (2006) who assert that the level of educator experience and supportive training influence their willingness to adapt to change. Educators might even embrace the change and go with the proposed suggestions (Chetty, 2015). Educators adopt change through varying degrees, depending on the available resources, their understanding of the transition, the type of educators and the time they need to adjust to the transition (Shonubi, 2012). This study investigated how educators and centre managers adopted or adapted to the transitioning through the management change and how they experienced migration of CLCs from the DBE to the DHET.

Bellah and Dyer (2007), Chetty (2015) and Mugweni (2012) assert successful adaptation to change pivot on educators' acceptance and recognition of the existing challenges and willingness to face initiatives proposed by the DHET to develop their abilities by considering their unique needs. If educators can overcome the fear of change (DHET, 2006), they can enter the information-seeking phase and

successfully adapt to the transition. The study further investigated how educators and centre managers ignore, resist, adopt or adapt to the transitioning through a management change and their experiences of the transition of the CLCs from the DBE to the DHET.

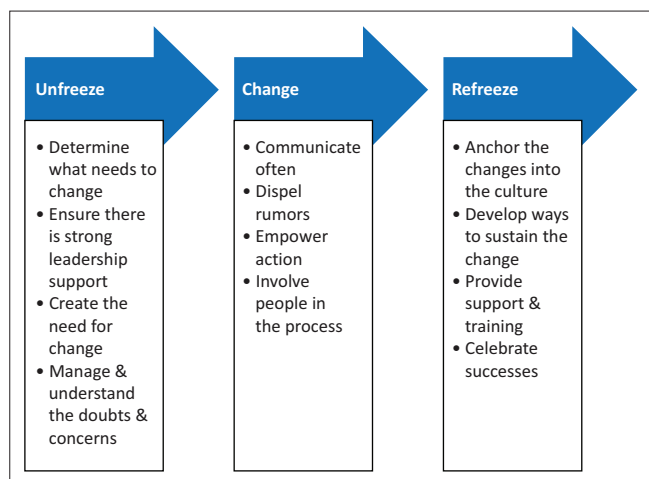
### The need for job satisfaction and security

The importance of the work environment in employee satisfaction cannot be underestimated. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) in their research cite Vroom (1964) and Spielgler (1938) who state that job satisfaction is an orientation of emotions that employees possess. Job satisfaction is an integrated set of psychological, physiological and environmental conditions that encourage employees to admit that they are satisfied in their work environment. Various factors, namely, working conditions, roles and responsibilities, accountability, autonomy, organisational structure and communication between employees and management, affect employees' job satisfaction and security (Lane, Holte, & Anne, 2010). Sanera and Eyupoglu (2015) state that our work environment is undergoing a major shift. Factors such as globalisation, growing economies and improved and advanced technology are constantly presenting new challenges, thus creating insecurities amongst employees.

Hamlin (2020) asserts that job security is a sense of assurance that employees will remain employed for the near future – or at the very least until they decide that they are going to move on. Job security means that employees are confident that the employer will take into consideration their wants and needs. Job insecurity is defined as the perception of a potential threat to continuity in an employee's current job. According to Ashford and Bobko (1989) cited in Jimenez and Didona (2017), insecurity causes a reduction in commitment and reduces satisfaction in the work environment. It was also found that job insecurity decreases job performance and increases job stressors and physical symptomatology according to Rosow and Zager (1985) cited in Jimenez and Didona (2017). Lastad (2015) argues that the perception of job insecurity is, therefore, associated with performance decrease and an overall reduction in organisational citizenship behaviour. Dissatisfied and less committed employees are less dedicated to the organisation and its goals, thus having a negative effect in its social atmosphere. Staufenbiel and Konig (2010) and Lastad (2015) revealed that it is suggested that job insecurity has a predominantly harmful effect on performance, turnover intention and absenteeism. It is therefore important that an organisation, according to Mosley (2020), consulting with employees fosters good relations as well as improving productivity. This will also create a conducive environment whereby employees will experience job security and satisfaction.

### Theoretical framework

One of the most influential planned approaches to managing change is that of Lewin (1951), who described the three stages of change as Unfreezing, Changing and Refreezing (see Figure 1).



Source: Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

**FIGURE 1:** Lewin's change model.

Lewin's three-step change theory was used to gain insight and understanding of the experience of educators transitioning from the DBE to the DHET. The theoretical framework of Lewin was applied to this study by focusing on transitioning through a management change and investigating the experiences of the CLCs' educators from the DBE to the DHET.

According to Lewin (1951), the first phase of unfreezing is characterised by a change of preparedness, prior learning, behaviours and assumptions that are not applicable anymore (Aravopoulou & Malone, 2016). Because this status quo is challenged and broken down, the stress associated with change is extremely likely to be observed. The second stage is the transition for employees from their current to the new state. Dissatisfaction, apathy and negative emotions, caused during the previous stage, motivate employees to change. Finally, the third stage is that of refreezing, in which change is permanent. Employees adjust to their new conditions as new beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are established. For this to materialise, old behaviours, attitudes and beliefs ought to be discarded.

### Stage 1: Unfreezing

Authorities, senior managers and line managers from both the DBE and DHET are responsible for preparing the mindset of the educators (employees) for the transition to ensure that subordinates are ready for transitioning from DBE to DHET. The subordinates are encouraged to do away with the old behaviour and thinking. Unfreezing of the organisation assists in overcoming the forces of resistance to change.

### Stage 2: Change or moving

When transition occurs, there is normally panic and confusion amongst the educators (employees) whilst the authorities execute the intended transition. During this change or moving stage, educators align themselves with the expected changes (Turner, 2017). Authorities persuade or convince subordinates that their old way of behaviour is not advantageous to the organisation; they need to change.

Authorities share the transition process with all stakeholders for buy-ins. The desired change is implemented in this stage.

### Stage 3: Refreezing

The authorities now solidify and convince the educators to accept the transition. A new mindset is instilled in the educators so that they do not revert to their old way of thinking and behaving. Once there is a signal that change has been accepted, the momentum of acceptance should be sustained and reinforced. Reinforcement ensures that the transition or change is permanent.

Lewin's theory proposes three stages for educators to move from the current state to a desired or anticipated future state. A failure to implement one stage may cause imbalances, and the affected educators may resist the transitioning. The theory made implementers of change aware of the need to communicate change clearly. They could then win subordinates' buy-ins, execute the transition according to plan and the drivers of change as the leaders aligned with change and demonstrate that they had a serious desire for the change.

Lewin's change management theory helps account for both the uncertainty and resistance to change that can be experienced at all staff levels within an organisation. The benefits to the Lewin model are obvious in that it is the simplest model out there. This makes it easy to plan around, especially in organisations not accustomed to the science of change management. At the same time, it does try to minimise the difficulty with opposition by addressing its head-on (Hussain, Lei, Akram, Haider, Hussain, & Ali, 2018). Lewin's change model is still frequently used in organisational change. Also in team building trajectories, it is an excellent method to bring about a mentality change amongst employees and creating awareness of the advantages of change.

## Methodology

### Research design

A qualitative approach was utilised employing interpretivism as meta-theoretical paradigm, thereby recognising that individuals' reality is socially constructed in multiple ways and cannot be objectively determined (Kelliher & Menezes, 2011). Interpretivist research is concerned with understanding social phenomena by exploring participants' actions, perceptions and experiences in contextual depth, within their social contexts (Basil, 2010). Interpretivism recognises that values and facts cannot be separated and thus that the social world cannot be understood in terms of objective truths. In following this epistemological framework, we thus considered the experiences of the participants aiming to gain insight into their subjective experiences and understandings regarding the transition, within their unique social environments and contexts (Kelliher & Menezes, 2011).

### Population

The population of the study was the employees of the Department of Education. Participants of the study were six

African males, aged between 35 and 50, purposefully selected from three centres in Tshwane South District in Gauteng. Two participants from each of the three centres were invited to a focus group interview. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify the participants and research sites (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The criteria for selection were that all educators had to have more than 3 years of teaching experience at a CLC and must have experienced transitioning of management change from the DBE to DHET and be willing to participate.

### Research instrument

A semi-structured interview questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. It composed of open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to probe further into the experiences of educators and their attitudes and feelings of transitioning through management change from the DBE to the DHET.

### Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through a qualitative questionnaire. All the data were audio recorded to ensure transcription was free from misinterpretation (Lewins & Silver, 2007). After the collection of the data, the author used the guidelines described by Creswell (2014), namely reading through the data, dividing the data into segments of information, labelling the information with codes, reducing and overlapping the redundancy of codes and collapsing the codes into themes. The transcribed data were cross-checked and compared with audio recordings to ensure trustworthiness and credibility (Maree, 2017). The content of the data was analysed and presented in a descriptive format with verbatim quotes from the participants. The flexibility of qualitative research analysis allowed the conversion of raw data into the credible findings of the study (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2017).

### Ethical consideration

Permission of the study was granted by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, honesty and openness, access to findings and avoiding harm as described by Vanclay, Baines and Taylor (2013). Informed consent was obtained from all participants and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education from the University of Pretoria. Anonymity was explained and applied as agreed between participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The research was open to participants and interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees. The author also explained that withdrawal from the study was possible at any time. Pseudonyms and anonymity were used to conceal the identity of participants. The codes EA, EB, EC, ED, EE and EF were used for the educators from the three centres. Trustworthiness was ensured through treating the participants with the utmost respect throughout the study and aspiring to develop trustworthy relationships built on honesty and transparency (Christensen, Burke Johnson, & Turner, 2015).

## Results: Findings and discussion

The experiences of CLC educators were categorised into two broad themes, namely: (1) educators' knowledge and understanding of transitioning and management change and (2) educators' experiences of the transitioning from the DBE to the DHET and its effects.

Verbatim quotes are used as evidence in the results.

This section presents findings that emanated from the participants' responses using the semi-structured interview questions regarding the transitioning from the DBE to DHET.

### Educators' knowledge and understanding of transitioning through a management change

When the participants were asked about their understanding of transitioning and management change, the responses varied significantly. Some of the participants were aware that changes in an organisation are inevitable; however, most of the participants in this study had a limited understanding of what transitioning between the DBE and DHET actually meant to them as employees. Participant EA mentioned:

'Management change is about having new managers in the work environment.' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

When the author probed further and asked the participant's understanding of 'transitioning through management change', he responded:

'Transitioning is about transformation of an organisation.' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

He further went on to say:

'It is about moving from one department to another.' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

According to EC and EF their understanding of management change is when an organisation decides to appoint someone new into a leadership position within the organisation.

Regarding transitioning through management change, EF indicated:

'It is when employees move from one department to another.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

According to Lewin's theory, transitioning is the first stage of change management, whereby employees have knowledge and understanding of the issues of change or transitioning from one organisation to another. On the other hand, management change is a logical activity for preparing the institution to implement ongoing environmental changes in business operation; it is a deliberate approach to move the institution forward (Boikhutso, 2013; Onyango, 2014).

Management change deals with long-term strategic activities and sudden changes of the governance of the institution that need to be changed, to improve the productivity level of the employees or by complementing the existing systems of the organisation. Onyango (2014) states that management change

can support new working culture and a set of values in any management area. In this study, management change is synonymous with change management.

Regarding their understanding and view of the transitioning from the DBE to DHET, the participants responded as follows. Participant EB stated:

'We are moving from the DBE to DHET. It is when we have to change employers.' (EB, Educator, 07 August 2017)

Both ED and EE were in agreement with EB. They felt that they did not understand why they needed to move from DBE to DHET. They were uncertain as to how the change would affect their jobs, their conditions of employment and whether they would be addressed as educators or practitioners.

Participant EF indicated that:

'When we are employed [by] the DHET, we are under the new Minister of Education. We will now belong to tertiary education. I think the department is seeing the adult learner as a university study. They do not realise that the adult learner cannot read or write. We are teaching them basic education and not higher education.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

The responses of the participants clearly indicate ambivalence. According to Lewin's change management theory, employees need to understand the reasons for change fully. Communication and advocacy are critical issues that need to be well articulated to all employees before any change or transition can happen (Turner, 2017).

The interviewed participants had different views on the transition from DBE to DHET. Participant EA viewed:

'The transition as a wake-up call to educators and the change to DHET can bring new challenges, changes and developments to the sector, which can affect us.' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

Participant EC thought that:

'Adult education was not correctly placed in education system and viewed the change was too quick to be implemented.' (EC, Educator, 07 August 2017)

He further stated:

'This transitioning is making me nervous and very stressful.' (EC, Educator, 07 August 2017)

To this ED added:

'Transition or change is a process, not an event that takes place over-night. It is important that the Department of Education should consult us about this management change.' (ED, Educator, 07 August 2017)

EA interjected and said:

'We should know what is happening in our workplace, because it affects us as employees. Now, I am not sure how my job description is going to change when we move to DHET. This can be very stressful and unsettling for us as educators. What do we tell our adult learners?' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

DeGhetto, Russell and Ferris (2017) agree that quick changes in an organisation can be unsettling to existing employees, causing considerable uncertainty, conflict and stress. They recommend that the change or transition must be managed carefully to avoid resistance from employees.

### **Educators' experiences of the transitioning from the Department of Basic Education to the Department of Higher Education and Training and its effects**

Regarding their experiences of the transitioning of management change from the DBE to the DHET, participants expressed their ambivalence. EA stated:

'I am very nervous and uncomfortable with this change. We were not well informed why we had to change from DBE to DHET.' (EA, Educator, 07 August 2017)

According to EC, he was concerned about his job description as an adult educator. To this EF added:

'Management change is about having new managers, are we going to have a new head of the centre who will now change our job description? What are we going to be called when we are under the management of DHET? Are we still educator?' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

EB voiced his opinion:

'The change could be a positive, and we will be working with a new group of people. We can learn from them.' (EB, Educator, 07 August 2017)

EE agreed:

'Sometimes change can have a positive effect on us as employees. We may get opportunities for career movement and upward mobility.' (EE; Educator, 07 August 2017)

Jalagat (2016) thinks that unplanned change often happens when there is a sudden and surprising event or conditions that make the employees react in a disorganised fashion. This change can be unsettling and create anxiety amongst the employees. Change management requires careful planning, implementing a concrete action plan and involving everyone in the organisation who are affected by these changes (Laurentiu, 2016).

The participants commented on the consultation process of the transitioning from the DBE to DHET with mixed feelings. EF indicated:

'We were not consulted about this change. One day our principal came to the staff room and informed us that we are moving from DBE to DHET. When we asked what the reasons were, he told us that the Department officials would speak to us. That was the end of the discussion.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

EA and ED agreed that they too were not well informed or consulted regarding the transitioning. Participant EC differed from the others indicating:

'We were informed that there was going to be a move from the DBE to DHET, however, they did not ask for our views or opinion. The officials from the Department of Education arrived,

told us what they wanted to and left. We did not have time to engage in a discussion.' (EC, Educator, 07 August 2017)

Most of the participants agreed that they did not contribute to the transitioning from the DBE to DHET. They all felt that they were not respected and recognised as employees of a major organisation. Bucăța and Rizescu (2017) argue that communication and consultation between employer and employees are essential. Good communication and consultation are central to the management process and assume critical importance when dealing with changes in working practices and procedures. Lewin (1951), in his Model of Change, agrees that employers need to consult with employees regarding changes in an organisation. Without proper consultation, any form of change could be met with insecurity, resistance and lack of commitment to their work.

Although the transitioning from the DBE to the DHET did not affect the job descriptions of educators, many educators strongly indicated that these issues should have been clearly communicated with them. They felt that the Department of Education is behaving autonomously. All the participants agreed that they are not receiving the desired support from the DHET regarding the transitioning. However, participants EA, EE and EF said that they were glad that their job descriptions, roles and responsibilities, salary structure, employment status and security were not affected by these changes. However, EB, EC and ED indicated, 'If only the Department was open with us, we would not have experienced such stress and anxiety for months'. There must be open communication between the employer and the employee. Beattie and Ellis (2017) agree that as a management tool, communication intends to establish good interpersonal relationships that are non-confrontational based on the achievement of common goals. The role of open communication is to facilitate relationships between people to establish an environment beneficial to the organisation (Bucăța & Rizescu, 2017).

With reference to management change, all the participants agreed that change is inevitable. Because the process of transitioning from the DBE to DHET did not affect their conditions of employment, participants agreed to embrace the change. Participant EC stated that as educators:

'We decided that we must not be against change, so we should follow the rules and regulations.' (EC, Educator, 07 August 2017)

Moreover, participant ED stated that:

'We are trying to comply with what is being required by the department.' (ED, Educator, 07 August 2017)

According to Lewin (1951), when employees embrace change, they begin to anchor the change into their culture'. Employees need to be 'provided with support and training' to 'celebrate success.

The findings highlighted the gap in communication and consultation between employer and employees. Most educators do not have access to information and rely on their centre managers to provide feedback as articulated by EB and EC:

'We at the lower end of the education structure have to wait for information from our managers. Most of them do not report to us immediately. It sometimes goes for weeks before we have a staff meeting and then told about labour issues.' (EC, Educator, 07 August 2017)

EF also indicated:

'In my centre, the centre manager is not very open to share information with staff. Only certain members of the staff are aware what is happening between the department and the centres. It is very frustrating for people like us who are in the classroom.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

It is therefore recommended that appropriate platforms should be created through technology, whereby educators can retrieve information on the organisation's decision. Management needs to communicate and consult with employees at all levels (Koivula, 2009). Gotsil and Meryl (2007) state that communication and consultation are not a once-off assignment; they should be repeatedly reinforced to educators for them to adjust and accept change. Educators should not only rely on verbal communication from centre managers.

In the case of transitioning, another gap that most educators experienced was insecurity and apathy in the work environment. ED and EE stated that at their centre, apathy towards education is observable. There is a lack of enthusiasm amongst staff because of changes that are happening. ED was vocal when he said:

'I am left in the dark, I feel overwhelmed and anxious whether I have a job or not.' (ED, Educator, 07 August 2017)

According to Artz and Kaya (2015), job security is one of the most important and powerful job characteristics in determining job satisfaction. When employees find security in their jobs, they are willing to go the extra mile to perform optimally (Botha, Marishane, van der Merwe, van Zyl, & Zengele, 2016). It is therefore recommended that the department officials communicate openly with educators to ease any tension or anxieties about their transitioning from the DBE to DHET. When the participants became aware that their roles and responsibilities, job descriptions and salaries were not affected by the transitioning, they experienced a level of security. Job security is recognised as a very important and highly valued attribute for a worker. EF said:

'If we know that our jobs are not on the line, then we can work with much ease and comfort. We will give off our best to our adult learners.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 2017)

The unfreezing stage in Kurt Lewin's (1951) theory needs strong communication strategies for all stakeholders to accept and adjust to change. This will encourage staff

members to abandon their old behaviour and develop a new one (Malek & Yazdanifard, 2012).

Because of the lack of knowledge and understanding of the transitioning process, most educators at the CLCs were reluctant and unwilling to accept the transitioning. The educators were disillusioned, dissatisfied, confused and depressed by the migration from the DBE to the DHET. The voices of EB, ED and EF clearly articulated their knowledge and understanding of the transitioning process:

'I have no idea why we are going through this process of change. I don't see the reasons why an organisation like the DBE must move us to DHET. We are still working with learners, what is the difference?. The DHET is responsible for universities and FET colleges. What does CLC have to do with higher education? If we move to DHET, then we will not get the same privileges as teachers. I really don't know what is the difference between employees at universities and CLC. This is very depressing and confusing to us level 1 educators.' (ED, Educator, 07 August 2017)

It is therefore recommended that training and development workshops are organised to inform educators on the reasons for the transitioning to the DHET. They should also be trained and developed concerning the organisational culture and environment (Bowe, 2011). They should be informed of the new laws, policies and operating procedures to minimise any confusion that may prevail. Ferreira (2016) states that training is often seen as a planned and systematic process of learning in the sense of acquiring, modifying or developing knowledge and skills and abilities of employees for an intended job function. In this instance, educators needed to be fully capacitated to fit into a new organisational culture.

The importance of a stable work environment cannot be overemphasised. The findings in this study clearly indicated that the transitioning from the DBE to DHET has created much dissatisfaction and apathy amongst CLC educators. This finding mirrors the findings of Bucăța and Răzescu (2017) research on *The role of communication in enhancing work effectiveness of an organisation*. Educators felt insecure as EF indicated:

'... not knowing if you have a job is frightening and very stressful.' (EF, Educator, 07 August 1997)

Green (2019) proposed that employees must be consulted and kept abreast with information in an organisation. In this study, most of the participants stated that they were given information on a 'need to know basis', which further heightened their discomfort in the environment. The fear of the 'unknown' has become overwhelming to the participants causing much work place stress. In their study, Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) foregrounded that job satisfaction plays an important role in employees' performance. The participants in this study clearly highlight the high stress levels and anxieties they experienced with the transitioning from the DBE to DHET.

## Limitations of the study

The study adapted a purely qualitative approach as the interests of the investigation lay in the depth of the experiences and feelings held by participants who underwent the transition in management change. The study cannot be generalised and would benefit from a mixed method strategy, which would validate the qualitative findings in his article. The study could also be performed amongst other institutions that underwent transitions.

## Conclusion

All employees in an organisation are seeking job security and satisfaction during these trying times. The ability to change frequently and rapidly is a requirement for survival. An organisation like the Department of Education that intends to implement transitioning from one sector to another should seriously consider planning for change. Consultation, communication, training and development should have been planned to avoid stress and anxiety amongst employees. When educators are empowered with the knowledge and understanding of their conditions of employment, job security, job satisfaction, respect and consideration, there would be minimal to no resistance to change. Transitioning from one sector to another would have been a smooth process. Because unmanaged transitions led to insecurities, employee disengagement and disenchantment, transition management must rank as a key decision-making skill that would be needed in the years to come. The need for a paradigm shift towards providing opportunities regarding online training for managers in the DHET and the DBE on transition and change management has become more urgent.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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All authors contributed equally to this work.

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## Data availability statement

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.



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