



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Does Resistance to Change Lead Inevitably to Negative Implementation Outcomes?

Hope Pius Nudzor

Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Educational Planning and Administration,
College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Francis Ansah

Research Fellow, Institute for Educational Planning and Administration,
College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:

In the change management literature generally, resistance to change is portrayed and discussed negatively as a bad omen for organisations which embark on the journey of change. This article asks the question whether change resistance leads inevitably to negative implementation outcomes. In an attempt to answer this question, the article undertakes four key tasks. First, it contextualises the definition of change resistance to distil its key ingredients. Second, it outlines the symptoms of change to set the key ingredients of change resistance in context. Third, it discusses crisply the reasons for change resistance in organisations to provide a focus and 'evidential grounding' for the article. Lastly, the article highlights the useful roles played by resistance in implementing of innovations, but which change agents and reformers most often 'glossed-over'. Essentially, the article contends that for institutions that are able to lead and manage change initiatives successfully, resistance serves a powerful purpose in ensuring that change is thought through and modelled to take account of concerns of the people on whom it impact as well as the human resource needs of implementers.

Keywords: change management, change resistance, change implementation, educational change

1. Introduction

An appraisal of educational policy and practice suggests, in rather stark terms, the failure of many well thought through change initiatives intended to impact positively on educational processes and the quality of pupils/students' learning outcomes (Everard, Morris & Wilson, 2004; Fraser, MacDougall, Pirrie & Croxfors, 2001; Harris, 2009; Nudzor, 2013; Sammons et al., 2000). Obviously, the reasons for the occurrence of this phenomenon, particularly in education, are complex and differ. However, a critical review of the change management literature pinpoints resistance to change as one major factor which serves to derail change implementation efforts (Everard et al., 2004; Fullan, 1988, 2001; Harris, 2009; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001; Morrison, 1998; Strelbel, 1996; Wallace & McMahon, 1994). According to the literature on change management, change is resisted largely because of the apparent dissonance between the assumptions and perceptions of change agents¹ and the people on whom change initiatives impact. Most often, change agents and reformers tend to replicate change initiatives that seem to be working elsewhere in anticipation that if assimilated, similar, if not better, success would follow. As Harris (2009, cited in Nudzor: 82–83), for example, aptly puts it, during the process of initiating change, little or no account is taken of the specific cultural context in which the 'successful' initiative is taken from, and there is the default assumption that effective policies and change initiatives can traverse cultural boundaries with relative ease.

Thus, as a result of this and other similar reasons alluded to in the literature, resistance to change generally is viewed and discussed negatively as a phenomenon that spells doom for organisations which embark on the journey of change. Through a critical engagement of the literature on change management from disparate sources (i.e. school effectiveness, policy studies, business management, human resource management, organisational development etc.), this article attempts to play what could best be described in both theoretical and methodological terms as the 'devil's advocate' role. It (i.e. the article) begs the question whether resistance leads inevitably to negative implementation outcomes.

In an attempt to answer this question, the article undertakes four key tasks, along which lines it (i.e. the article itself) has been organised. First, it contextualises the definition of change resistance to distil its key ingredients. Second, it outlines briefly the symptoms of change to set the key ingredients of change resistance in context. Third, the reasons for change resistance in organisations are fore-grounded to provide a focus and 'evidential grounding' for the article. Fourth and lastly, the useful roles played by change resistance within the framework of successful implementation strategy, but which are most often 'glossed-over' by change agents and implementers are outlined before the concluding thoughts.

Thus, the contribution of this article to knowledge and understanding of change initiation/implementation lies in its conceptualisation of change resistance positively as a good omen for educational institutions which embark on the implementation of change initiatives. Essentially, by focusing on the crucial but yet 'unsung' positive roles that resistance to change plays, the article exemplifies, although implicitly, the kinds of strategic work that need to be undertaken by change agents and reformers in order to see change 'happen'. Against this backdrop, the article contends that for educational institutions that are able to lead and manage successful change initiatives, resistance serve a powerful purpose in ensuring that change is thought through and modelled to take account of concerns of the people on whom it impacts directly as well as the human resource needs of implementers.

So, whilst the article focuses on change resistance, it is expedient to acknowledge and set in context explicitly from the onset, a couple of issues to enhance its coherence. First, throughout the article there is an implicit narrative that 'change agents' are actually benign and right in their attempts to bring about change, and that employees just need to be managed properly, and are, by implication, the ones inherently in the wrong. This is not always the case in practice. Change processes are known to be much more complex, contested, and at times overwhelming than the simplistic and rationalist approach to change that is portrayed seemingly in this article. It is instructive to note that sometimes, and as the change management literature would indicate, it is the employees of organisations who are right about change, as they understand the context better, and have positive mind-sets than managers or change agents. Second, in a couple of instances within this article, managers, employees, reformers and organisations are held in juxtaposition as if each of these groups sit outside of organisations, rather than being intimate constituents of them. It needs to be emphasised that organisational sciences literature (for example, Iveroth & Hallencreutz, 2016; Stacey, 2001; Weick, 1995, 2001) offer a much more nuanced narrative (than what is offered in this article) which sees both leaders/change agents and workers/employees/professionals as parts of the organisation together, leading to more positive and proactive ways of understanding and negotiating change. These notwithstanding, the insights presented in this article are important as they indicate generally that change resistance is necessarily not a bad omen for institutions and organisations that embark on the journey of change.

2. Defining Resistance to Change

The word 'resistance' in the Oxford English Dictionary is defined loosely and in a variety of ways. The term is defined in a sense to mean "the refusal to accept or comply with something". In two other slightly unrelated senses, the Oxford Dictionary defines resistance respectively as "the ability not to be affected by something, especially adversely" and "the impending or stopping effect exerted by one material thing on another" (Soanes & Stevenson, 2005). In this article, the term is defined in two interrelated ways which are not very different from the dictionary definitions espoused herein. First, it is defined as "any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter the status quo" (Zaltman & Duncan, 1977: 76). Second, the term resistance is taken to mean the refusal or unwillingness to accept or comply with something. In these two interrelated senses, the word resistance is conceptualised as "behaviour which is intended to protect an individual from the effects of real or imagined change" (Alvin Zander, cited in Dent & Goldberg, 1999: 34).²

Thus, contextually, and for the purposes of this article, change resistance is understood, conceptualised and defined as the overt or covert actions and inactions adopted by individuals and/or groups in an organisation when they perceive that a change that is occurring or about to occur is a threat to them. The importance of this definition, particularly within the context of this article, lies in the key words or ingredients it distils, namely: 'overt' or 'covert'; 'actions' and 'inactions'; 'individuals' and/or 'groups'; 'perceive'; and 'threat'.

First the use of the phrase 'overt or covert' in the definition given pre-eminence in this article suggests that the actions and inactions of people who resist change in an organisation could either be explicit or implicit depending on the change in question and the reasons for resistance. Some changes are resisted publicly and verbally whereas others are resisted unknowingly through the actions and inactions that are taken, the words that are used to describe the change and the stories and conversations that are shared in the organisation. Second, by using 'actions and inactions', the definition emphasizes the point that resistance necessarily is not symptomatic of what people do or say in reaction to a particular change initiative. Sometimes people resist change simply by not doing what they ought to do. Third, 'individuals and/or groups' as used in the definition in this article imply that change can be resisted by an individual in an organisation or by an organised group via subtle ways, for example, through gossips, late assignments, forgotten commitments, absenteeism, verbal criticisms, nit-picking details, snide comments, sarcastic remarks, missed meetings, failed commitments, interminable arguments, lack of support verbally, and outright sabotage. Fourth, the use of the word 'perceive' in the definition reiterates the fact that reasons and/or causes of resistance to change need not necessarily be 'real' or something experienced by the 'resisters', whereas the word 'threat' as used in the definition stresses the point that the effects of change (i.e. whether positive or negative) need not be real or large for resistance to occur.

Bolognese (2002: 2), takes all these important ingredients into account when he defines resistance broadly, and drawing upon the work of Piderit (2000), as "a cognitive state, an emotional state and as a behaviour". The cognitive state of resistance, according to Bolognese, refers to the negative mind set toward the change³ whereas the emotional state addresses the emotional factors, such as frustration and aggression, which are caused by the change. The behavioural component of resistance, for him, reflects the actions or inactions of employees towards the change.

From the expositions above, it becomes immediately clear that the intention of resistance efforts in any form in an organisation is to protect employees from the perceived or real effects of change. Be as it may, the pertinent question that needs asking is what is it about change that threatens the security or status quo of employees in organisations to the extent that they react in the ways they do?⁴ Conversely, the question also begs asking why people, most especially employees of institutions resist organisational change? Obviously, the reasons for these are complex and differ considerably on a case by case basis. In the following two sections, we draw

generally on the change management literature to describe briefly the symptoms of resistance to change and to outline some general pointers to the causal factors of change resistance particularly in educational institutions.

3. Symptoms of Change Resistance

Symptoms of change refer to the specific behaviours exhibited by individuals and groups when they are resistant to change. Sometimes resistance is out in the open, but more often it starts out in a more underhand, covert way, thus bringing into sharp focus two kinds of resistance, namely overt and covert resistance. Overt resistance does not try to hide, and is a result either of someone comfortable with their power, someone for whom covert acts are against their values, or someone who is desperate. This may take forms such as open argument, refusal or attack. Covert resistance is deliberate resistance to change, but done in a manner that allows the perpetrators to appear as if they are not resisting. This may occur, for example, through sabotage of various kinds.

Hultman (1995), along these lines, distinguishes between two forms of symptoms of resistance to change, namely: active-resistance and passive-resistance symptoms. Active-resistance symptoms refer to the visible signs, reactions and behaviours exhibited by the people on whom change impinge in reaction to change. In other words, active resistance occurs where people take specific and deliberate action to resist change. It may be overt, with actions such as public statements and acts of resistance. It may also be covert, such as mobilizing others to create an underground resistance movement. Examples of symptoms of active-resistance include fault finding, unnecessary teasing and/or ridiculing, appealing to fear, and manipulating. Passive resistance, on the other hand, occurs where people do not take specific actions. At meetings, for example, they will sit quietly and may appear to agree with the change. Their main tool is to refuse to collaborate with the change. In what is called 'passive aggression, for example, they may agree and then do nothing to fulfil their commitments. Seen in this sense therefore, passive-resistance symptoms are said to be connected to actions and behaviours that are tacit, inherent and subtle. Examples include agreeing verbally but not following through with instructions, feigning ignorance and withholding information.

From the fore-going, a number of interesting points can be established regarding symptoms of resistance to change. First, it is or should be clear that there is a fine line of difference between symptoms of resistance to change and the causes of resistance to change. Hultman (1995) makes this point forcefully when he posits that there is always the danger of identifying a symptom of resistance when you are really looking for its cause. For him, symptoms of change resistance, whether active or passive, resonate with signs, reactions and behaviours of people in reaction to change, whereas to diagnose the causes of resistance calls for an understanding of the person concern's state of mind. The most important factors that go into a person's state of mind, in Hultman's view, are his or her facts, beliefs, feeling, and values.

The second point worth emphasising is that, overt active resistance, although potentially damaging, is at least visible and can be dealt with using formal disciplinary actions (although more positive methods could normally be used first). However, when the active resistance is covert, you may also need to use covert methods to identify the source and hence take appropriate actions. Third, and as the examples above show, covert resistance can be very difficult to address, as resisters may not particularly have done anything wrong. One way to address this is to get public commitment to an action, then follow up publicly, if necessary, to ensure they complete the action. Then keep repeating this until resisters are either bought in or give in.

In the next section, we explore how these variable (i.e. facts, beliefs, feelings and values) cause people to resist institutional change.

4. Reasons why Organizational Change Initiatives are Resisted

The list of reasons why individuals and groups might be resistance to organisational change has grown since Zander's initial work published in 1950 (Bolognese, 2002). It is safe, as a result, to assume that any attempts to cover all the reasons of resistance in one **article** would produce volumes of literature. For this reason, only the prevalent reasons which help to provide a solid basis to understanding resistance to change are outlined crisply in this article. For reasons of succinctness, these prevalent reasons for resistance to change are presented in this section along the lines of three broad perspectives, namely: reformer/change agent reasons, employee/resister reasons, and the characteristics of the change initiative itself. The reason underlying this approach is that the causal factors of change resistance are not mutually exclusive, but rather varied and interactive. Thus, the three broad perspectives are used in this article for reasons of succinctness, and for the avoidance of unnecessary duplication and repetition of the reasons for change resistance.

4.1. Reformer/Change Agent Reasons Underlying Resistance to Change

One major reformer/change agent issue which triggers resistance to change is what the literature identifies as the apparent dissonance and/or disconnect between the assumptions and perceptions of change agents and the people on whom change initiatives impact (Everard et al., 2004; Fullan, 2001; Morrisison, 1998; Newton & Tarrant, 1992; Wallace & McMahon, 1994). Change efforts, according to the management literature, are most often resisted because of the failure of change agents and reformers to address themselves to the world of those on whom change initiatives impact. In their efforts to initiate change, they change agents and reformers, make certain underlying assumptions which differ significantly from the beliefs, hopes, aspirations, feelings and values of beneficiaries of change. Everard et al. (2004), for example, talk directly about this in terms of the rational approach to change adopted by some agents of change. They write thus:

- The first reason why those who initiate change often fail to secure successful conclusion to their dreams is that they tend to be too rational. They develop in their minds a clear, coherent vision of where they want to be at, and they assume that all they have to do is to spell out the logic to the world in words of one syllable, and everyone will be immediately motivated to

follow the lead. The more vivid their mental picture of the goal, and the more conviction they have that it is the right goal, the more likely they are to stir opposition, and the less successful they are likely to be in managing a process of change... (Everard et al., 2004, cited in Nudzor, 2013: 83).

For Everard, et al. (2004) bringing about change is not just a question of defining an end and letting others get on with it. For them, "it is a process involving interaction, dialogue, feedback, modifying objectives, recycling plans, coping with mixed feelings and values, pragmatism, micropolitics, frustration, and muddle" (239-240).

Closely linked to the issue of disconnect between the assumptions and perceptions of change agents and the people on whom change initiatives impact is the failure (mostly by change agents and reformers) to involve relevant stakeholders in the processes of change. One mistake change agents and reformers make is that they forget that people are motivated to work towards goals they have been involved in setting and to which they feel committed. The end result of this is that, perhaps due to their short-sightedness or their over-zealousness to see a particular change initiative through, change agents fail to identify, educate and communicate with relevant stakeholders on whom particular change initiatives impact, resulting in the phenomenon referred to in policy terms as 'imposition of change from the outside' (Nudzor, 2013).

4.2. Employee/Resister Reasons Underlying Resistance to Change

Strebel's (1996), work is particularly relevant here in unravelling the employee/resister reasons underlying resistance to change. He attributes the cause of employee resistance to the violation of 'personal compacts' management has with their employees. Personal compacts, according to him, are the essence of the relationship between employees and organisations defined by reciprocal obligations and mutual commitments that are both stated and implied. For him, any change initiatives proposed by the organisation would appear to alter their current terms and hence trigger resistance. He defines personal compacts as comprising formal, psychological, and social dimensions. The formal dimension, for him, is the most familiar. It is the aspect of the relationship that addresses the basic tasks and performance requirements of the job, and is defined by job descriptions, employee contracts, and performance agreements. Management, in return, agrees to supply the employee the resources needed to perform their job. The psychological dimensions, in Strebel's view, address aspects of the employment relationship that incorporate the elements of mutual trust, loyalty and commitment. The social dimension of the personal compact, on the other hand, deals with organizational culture, which encompasses, mission statement, values, ethics and business practices. Strebel's point is that any time these 'personal compacts' are disrupted it upsets the balance, and increases the likelihood of resistance. He suggests that as a way of leading and/or managing change, management must view how change looks from the employees' perspective, and to examine the terms of the personal compacts in place, particularly at the time of initiating the 'new change'. He argues that unless change agents, managers and/or reformers define new terms and persuade employees to accept them, it is unrealistic for them to expect employees to fully buy into changes that alter the status quo. Also, the argument is made in the change management literature that employees may also resist change because of the fear⁵ of having to learn something new. In many cases there is not a disagreement with the benefits of the new process, but rather a fear of the unknown future and about their ability to adapt to it. As de Jager (2001) puts it, resister employees are human like anyone else, and as such, are sometimes reluctant to leave the familiar behind. Normally they, as all human beings, are suspicious about the unfamiliar. They are naturally concerned about how they will get from the old to the new, especially if it involves learning something new and risking failure.

Coupled with the reason of the fear of learning something new is the issue of low tolerance for change. Low tolerance for change is defined in a sense as the fear that one will not be able to develop new skills and behaviours that are required in a new work setting. According to Kotter & Schlesinger (1979), if an employee has a low tolerance for change, the increased ambiguity that results as a result of having to perform their job differently would likely cause a resistance to the new way of doing things. Similarly, an employee may understand that a change is needed, but may be emotionally unable to make the transition and resist for reasons they may not consciously understand. Additionally, low tolerance for change could also be due to one or several factors, namely: when the reason for the change is unclear; when the proposed users have not been consulted about the change, and it is offered to them as an accomplished fact; and when the change threatens to modify established patterns of working relationships between people. Other potential reasons for low tolerance of employees towards change include: when communication about the change (i.e. timetables, personnel, monies, etc.) has not been sufficient; when the benefits and rewards for making the change are not seen as adequate for the efforts involved; and when the change threatens jobs, power or status in the organisation.

4.3. Characteristics of the Change Initiative Itself

In today's economy, change is all-pervasive in organisations. It happens continuously, and often at rapid speed. Because change has become an everyday part of organisational dynamics, resistance has become equally inevitable⁶. Individuals naturally would rush to defend the status quo if they feel their security and/or status are threatened. As Folger and Skarlicki (1999: 25), for example, put it "organisational change can generate scepticism and resistance in employees, making it sometimes difficult or impossible to implement organisational improvements". Thus, the general characteristics of change itself can be a reason for resistance. Generally speaking, a change initiative is likely to be adopted if it is seen as producing a significant improvement over current procedures and techniques. Even then, the benefits of such an initiative must be perceived as so great as to be well worth the inevitable problems and costs it poses to employees in terms of time and efforts.

In general, the change management literature raises some key arguments regarding the extent to which the characteristic features of change in themselves could be a cause for resistance. First, the literature suggests that many well-intentioned change programmes

have failed to see the light of day because they were viewed either not to have been inexpensive or easy to understand; easy to introduce (as well as easy to abandon if it doesn't seem to be working out), and easy to measure the benefits, whether in money, time, efficiency or some other evaluation measure meaningful to the adopter and/or employee. Second, the literature contends that even when users (defined in the context of this article to refer to employees) agree that the proposed change would be "good", they may not necessarily be enthusiastic if they feel the modalities do not appear to be working in their best interests. The implication of this therefore is that, the characteristic features of change in themselves serve, in most cases, as triggers for resistant behaviours of people, particularly employees, on whom change initiatives impact most.

It is important to note in conclusion to this section that the reasons for change resistance outlined in this article are by no means exhaustive of the list of reasons why organisational change is resisted. Similarly, it needs to be pointed out that the reasons alluded to under the three headings in this section of the article are not mutually exclusive. Most often, combinations of these reasons increase the potency for resistance to change.

5. Does Resistance Play Any Useful Roles in Change Initiation?

Managers often perceive change resistance negatively, and employees who resist are viewed as disobedient and obstacles the organisation must overcome in order to achieve new goals. However, employee resistance may play positive and useful roles in organisational change. This is against the backdrop that insightful and well-intended debate, criticism, or disagreement do not necessarily equate to negative resistance, but rather may be intended to produce better understanding as well as additional options and solutions. In support of this argument, de Jager (2001: 25) makes the claim, that "the idea that anyone who questions the need for change has an attitude problem is simply wrong, not only because it discounts past achievements, but also because it makes us vulnerable to indiscriminate and ill-advised change". Piderit (2000), in the same vein, points out that what some managers may perceive as disrespectful or unfounded resistance to change might be motivated by an individual's ethical principles or by their desire to protect what they feel is the best interests of the organisation. Employee resistance, for him, and in many instances, forces management or employers to rethink or re-evaluate a proposed change initiative. This, for him, is particularly the case in instances when employee resistance to change affects productivity or is likely to result to low productivity or unproductivity.

Closely linked to this, and as de Jager (2001: 26) aptly sums it, resistance is a very effective, very powerful, and a very useful survival mechanism that can act as a gateway or filter in helping organisations to select from all possible changes the one that is most appropriate to their desired situations. Folger & Skarlicki (1999) give credence to this claim. They argue that not all interventions organisations implement may be appropriate. Sometimes, organisations might be changing the wrong things or doing the change process wrongly. Thus, resistance helps as check to re-direct reformers and change agents to alternative and/or appropriate choices to be made in reaching desired ends. Seen in this light, and in the view of Folger and Skarlicki (1999), just as conflict can sometimes be used constructively for change, legitimate resistance helps to bring about desired organisational changes.

Another critical role played by change resistance in organisations relates to the point that it serves a check and/or minimises the phenomenon of arbitrary imposition of change particularly those emanating from the 'outside'. One of the crucial issues the review of the literature on change management identifies as far as resistances to change is concerned has to do with the fear and uncertainty of what the change in question entails and what the future holds especially for those on whom the change directly impact (Morrison, 1998). As Everard, et al. (2004, cited in Nudzor, 2013: 85) succinctly put it, change, no matter what form it takes leads to temporary incompetence. As such, individuals and groups who are not sure about the outcome of the change process because they have not been properly and sufficiently educated, communicated to and helped to conceptualise the process would do everything in their might to resist it. Bearing this in mind therefore, change agents and reformers who are serious about initiating change are aware and careful about the way they go about change processes, particularly those emanating from sources other than the very organisations they belong and/or represent.

Following on from the point that resistance to organisational change results most often from the temporary incompetence employees experience during the processes of change is also the argument that resistance to change ensures that planners, reformers and change agents take steps towards meeting the training and staff development needs of employees who naturally are the actual implementers of change initiatives introduced. Armstrong (1999: 507), for example, identifies this 'human development factor' in the attainment of organisational goals by defining training and staff development together as, the "systematic modification of human behaviour through learning which occurs as a result of education, instruction, development and planned experience". He argues further that the fundamental aim of training and staff development is to help organisations to achieve their purpose by adding value to their key resources (i.e. the people they employ) through investing in them to enable them to perform better and to empower them make the best use of their natural abilities. The point here simply is that in instances where change initiatives implemented are not taking hold in organisations due to the unpreparedness of employees to accept and implement change or lack of skills, expertise or knowledge, resistance offers management opportunities to initiate training and professional development regimes to help employees come to terms with the demands of their work. Everard et al. (2004: 239) identify this effort by change agents and reformers to help employees conceptualise change and thereby adding value to themselves by describing it as 'tilling the ground before planting the seed', or 'tuning the receiver to the carrier wave before the message of change is transmitted'.

Beside these useful points, and as per the discussions on the definition, symptoms and reasons for organisational resistance espoused in this article, it becomes apparent that change resistance may after all not be a bad omen necessarily for organisations that embark on change journeys. Essentially, and as the discussions have shown, resistance to change indicates to change agents, reformers and all who undertake the task of change initiation, reactions of resisters to change, and thus help to bring into sharp focus the kinds of practical and strategic work that need doing in order to bring about desired change. In particular, per the discussions in this article, it is

evident that change resistance forces change agents and employers who are keen to see particular change initiatives 'happen' to rethink and re-evaluate proposed change initiatives, and to undertake appropriate and remedial tasks (for example: educating and actively involving people on whom change initiatives impinge in processes of implementation and institutionalisation; meeting the training and developmental needs of implementers; taking steps to reduce resistance to change; building collegiate culture; and putting in place effective monitoring mechanisms) in order to bring about and institutionalise change successfully.

Undoubtedly, the implications of the insights in this article are many and may differ depending on the context(s) within which change is being initiated. However, in this article it is argued that because change resistance is not generally perceived positively as a good omen for organisations means that for institutions that are able to lead and manage change initiatives successfully, resistance serves as a powerful tool in ensuring that change is thought through, conceptualised and modelled to take account of the concerns and human resource needs of implementers.

6. Concluding Thoughts

The insights in this article have shown that employee resistance to change is a complex issue facing management in the complex and ever-evolving organisations of today. As was illustrated, the process of change is ubiquitous, and employee resistance is identified as a critically important contributor to the failure of many well-intend and well-conceived efforts to initiate change within organisations. This notwithstanding, the article demonstrates that in spite of the negative perceptions and discussions of change resistance, especially in the change management literature, resistance does not lead inevitably to negative implementation outcomes for all organisations. The article makes the point forcefully and succinctly that change resistance rather is a good omen for organisations and institutions which are able to lead and manage change successfully. For these organisations, the article argues, change resistance is an opportunity to rethink, re-evaluate and model change to take account of the needs and aspirations of both the implementers and the organisations themselves.

What this therefore means in practice is that change agents, reformers and managers must understand that change resistance in organisations cannot be prevented but managed. Most importantly, it needs to be borne in mind (by all who embark on the journey of change) that being prepared, communicating effectively and knowing how to handle different types of resistance are the ways to facilitate a smooth transition from the old to the new and thereby building the trust between managers and employees, and perhaps reducing apprehensions toward future change.

7. Notes

1. It is instructive to note that the phrase 'change agents' generally in the change management literature is used normally and widely to refer to and/or include employers, managers, reformers, leaders, employees/workers, professionals and all those involved in initiation, implementation and institutionalisation of organisational change. However, throughout this article the phrase is used deliberately (to refer to employers/managers/leaders) and in juxtaposition to employees or workers of organisations. The rationale for this simply is to problematize the short-sightedness and rationality of the former in thinking that resistance can be overcome by merely educating employees or workers.
2. A perfect example to set this definition in context concerns the recently reported case/incidence of 'Taxis versus Uber' (Bouquet & Renault, 2014) in which drivers of 'traditional' taxi companies blockaded Whitehall, London and Berlin's Olympic stadium for what they perceived to be the threat of competition from Uber (a smartphone app) and other ride-sharing services.
3. Bolognese's view about 'negative mind-set' of workers/employees as a causal factor of change resistance holds true for many organisations and in many instances. However, it needs emphasising that the direct opposite of this is also the case in change initiation and implementation. Sometimes, it is the very positive mind-sets of workers/employees which bring about resistance, as they understand the context better than the employers/change agents or reformers and therefore may want to limit the damage that the 'new' change initiative may inflict on them.
4. Whilst this is a legitimate question worth asking, it needs to be acknowledged that resistance is not necessarily and/or always about keeping a status quo, but may also be about trying to forge a different or better change that change agents (used in a general sense) have not come to terms with or simply do not understand.
5. The issue of resistance due to fear, although not really discussed fully in this article, is a major contributor for employees not wanting to follow change agendas. (See, for example, Everard et al., 2004; de Jager, 2001; Folger & Skarlicki, 1999; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Morrison, 1998; Wallace & McMahan, 1994 for further discussion on this.)
6. Change resistance is presented here as an inevitable phenomenon. This is misleading somewhat, and particularly because resistance comes about as a result of the failure of leaders or change agents to lead change well. On this score, it is important to add that resistance is not a natural state in organisations if they are well run.

8. References

- i. Armstrong, M. (1999). A handbook of human resource management practice. (7th edition). London: Kogan Page Limited.
- ii. Bolognese, A. (2002). Employee resistance to organizational change. Available on line at: www.newfoundations.com/OrgTheory/Bolognese721.html [accessed 21st March, 2017].
- iii. Bouquet, C., & Renault, C. (2014, September 7). Taxis vs Uber: a perfect example of resistance to change. *International Business Times*, p. 1.
- iv. de Jager, P. (2001). Resistance to change: a new view of an old problem. *The Futurist*, 24-27.
- v. Dent, E. & Goldberg, S. (1999). Challenging resistance to change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 25-41.

- vi. Everard, K. B., Morris, G. & Wilson, I. (2004). *Effective school management* (4th edition). London: Paul Chapman Publishing Limited.
- vii. Folger, R., & Skarlicki, D. (1999). Unfairness and resistance to change: hardship as mistreatment, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 35-50.
- viii. Fraser, H., MacDougall, A., Pirrie, A., & Croxfors, L. (2001). *Interchange 71: early intervention in literacy and numeracy*. Available on line at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/ic71.pgf> [accessed 20th August, 2010].
- ix. Fullan, M. (1988). *Research in to educational innovation*. In R. Glatter, M. Preedy, C. Riches & M. Masterton (Eds.), *Understanding school management*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- x. Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd edition). London: Routledge Falmer.
- xi. Harris, A. (2009). Big change management question: does politics help or hinder education change? *Journal of Educational Change*, 10(1), 63–67.
- xii. Huczynski, A., & Buchanan, D. (2001). *Organizational behaviour: an introductory text*. (4th edition). London: Pearson Education Limited.
- xiii. Hultman, K. (1995). Scaling the wall of resistance. *Training & Development*, 15-22.
- xiv. Iveroth, E., & Hallencreutz, J. (Eds.) (2016). *Effective organizational change: leading through sensemaking*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- xv. Kotter, J. P., & Schlesinger, L.A. (1979). Choosing strategies for change. *Harvard Business Review* 106-114.
- xvi. Morrison, K. (1998). *Management theories for educational change*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Limited.
- xvii. Newton, C., & Tarrant, T. (1992). *Managing change in schools: a practical handbook*. London: Routledge.
- xviii. Nudzor, H. P. (2013). The big question: why do change initiatives in education often fail to yield desired results? *Educational futures*, 6(1), 79–94.
- xix. Piderit, S. K. (2000). Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: a multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Academy of Management*, 764–783
- xx. Sammons, P., Power, S., Robertson, P., Campbell, C., Elliot, K., & Whitty, G. (2000). Evaluating the new community schools initiative in Scotland. Available on line at: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00001682.htm> [assessed 15 September 2010].
- xxi. Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (Eds.) (2005). *Oxford dictionary of English* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- xxii. Stacey, R. D. (2001). *Complex Responsive processes in organizations: learning and knowledge creation (complexity and emergence in organizations)*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- xxiii. Strebel, P. (1996). Why do employees resist change? *Harvard Business Review*, 86–92
- xxiv. Wallace, M. & McMahon, A. (1994). *Planning for change in turbulent times: the case of multiracial primary schools*. London: Redwood Books.
- xxv. Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- xxvi. Weick, K. E. (2001). *Making sense of the organization*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- xxvii. Zaltman, G., & Duncan, R. (1977). *Strategies for planned change*. Michigan: Wiley.