ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM:
EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES IN THE EMERGING ECONOMY OF ZIMBABWE

by
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for the degree of
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PROMOTER: PROFESSOR STELLA NKOMO
NOVEMBER 2003
I declare that

ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM:
EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES IN THE EMERGING ECONOMY OF ZIMBABWE

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.
Title of Thesis

ORGANISATIONS THAT TRANSFORM:
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THESIS SUMMARY

This study examines the challenges of organisational transformation in emerging economies with special reference to Zimbabwe. It is an inductive study using grounded theory, rooted in case study methodology, based on Eisenhardt’s (1989) eight steps of building theory from case study research.

A longitudinal multiple case study design is used to capture transformation experiences of four companies (covering four business sectors) spanning from 1980 to 2000.

Fourteen constructs from the within-case analysis form the basis of data collection and these are refined through cross-case analysis. Nine themes and sixteen challenges emerge from the study. The challenges and themes are used to identify points of convergence and divergence. Issues that trigger organisational transformation are spotted and best practices explored.

Ultimately, the nine emerging themes are crystallized into seven. Both the emerging model - the Madzivire Transformation Model (MaTra) - and the elaborated model - the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation Model (MaCoTra) - are constructed from the seven themes.

MaCoTra is a refinement of MaTra with the following differentiating features:

- The metaphor of choruses signifies the centrality of collaboration from an African perspective;
- MaCoTra reflects non-linear and linear linkages between choruses;
- Choruses depict the significance of songs in African bonding;
- A personal commitment to transformation calls for collective bonding around values, visions, missions and strategies;
- MaCoTra is a remarkable departure from steps, phases and stages espoused in most Western change literature;
- MaCoTra’s philosophical base is Ubuntu - ‘I am because we are’- focusing on independence and interdependence;
- Change interventions may be through individual or multiple MaCoTra choruses;
- The organisational song connects all organisational members in a choir of transformation.

MaCoTra addresses the sixteen challenges and exceedingly covers challenges cited in enfolding literature.

MaCoTra was tested in and outside the study sample. I assert that MaCoTra is usable in Zimbabwean companies and may be generalized through replication studies in Africa and other emerging economies. Areas of further study towards the achievement of more generalisability of the theory/model are suggested.

This study addresses the existing knowledge gap and prescribes the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation Model - MaCoTra - for companies in emerging economies.

Key terms

Case study; Challenges in emerging economies; Challenges of transformation; Change; Change theory; Emerging economies; Exploratory study; Organisational transformation; Transformation; Transformation models; Transformation strategies; Transformation theory; Zimbabwean companies.
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ABSTRACT

An intensive literature search on change theories revealed that:

• There is a knowledge gap in terms of the applicability of existing change theories in non-Western, emerging economies;
• The transformation theory arena has been driven by case studies;
• Change theories have tended to be prescriptive, with very little, if any empirical testing; and
• There has been no change theory cited which is a prescription for emerging economies.

This study examines the challenges of organisational transformation in emerging economies with special reference to Zimbabwe. It also develops a theory/model, the Madzivire Transformation Model - MaTra; and elaborates it to become the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation Model - MaCoTra.

A longitudinal multiple case study design is used to capture the experiences (in transformation) of four companies spanning from 1980 when Zimbabwe attained its independence to 2000. The four cases cover four business sectors.

To understand the thought processes underlying major decisions made along the way, perspectives of major stakeholders like business executives, worker opinion leaders, the media, customers, suppliers, government and civic society are included.

The study is, therefore, an inductive study using grounded theory, rooted in case study methodology based on Eisenhardt's (1989) eight steps of building theory from case study research. The product is consistent with Leedy's (1997:163) argument that “the theory is grounded in that it is developed from the data, as opposed to being suggested by the literature; that is, theory is an expected outcome from, rather than the starting point for the study”.

Multiple data collection methods have strengthened the grounding of the theory by triangulation of evidence. Fourteen constructs from the within-case analysis form the basis of data collection and these constructs are refined through cross-case analysis. Nine themes and sixteen challenges emerge from the study. The challenges and themes are used to identify points of convergence as well as divergence. Issues that trigger organisational transformation are spotted and best practices in organisational transformation explored.

Ultimately, the nine emerging themes are crystallized into seven. Both the MaTra and MaCoTra Models are constructed from the seven themes. Case data reveals that organisational transformation revolves around:

• Changing needs and expectations of internal and external business stakeholders;
• Changing promises;
• Changing delivery processes;
• Changing structures and systems;
• Changing capacity and capability to sustain the change(s).

Further interrogation of informants through ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions revealed that two more critical elements are an integral part of the themes:

• Capturing changing needs and expectations of internal business stakeholders;
• Capturing changing needs and expectations of external business stakeholders.
MaCoTra is a refinement of MaTra with the following differentiating features:

- The metaphor of choruses signifies the centrality of collaboration from an African perspective;
- MaCoTra reflects non-linear and linear linkages between choruses;
- Choruses depict the significance of songs in African bonding;
- A personal commitment to transformation calls for collective bonding around values, visions, missions and strategies;
- MaCoTra is a remarkable departure from steps, phases and stages espoused in most Western change literature;
- MaCoTra's philosophical base is Ubuntu - 'I am because we are' focusing on independence and interdependence;
- Change interventions may be through individual or multiple MaCoTra choruses;
- The organisational song connects all organisational members in a choir of transformation.

MaCoTra addresses the sixteen challenges and more than adequately covers challenges cited in enfolding literature.

MaCoTra was tested in one study case and two other companies outside the sample. I assert that MaCoTra is usable in Zimbabwean companies and may be generalized to emerging economies through replication studies in Africa and emerging economies outside Africa. In this study, I suggest areas of further study towards the achievement of more generalisability of the theory/model.

This study addresses the existing knowledge gap and prescribes the Madzivire Collaborative Transformation Model - MaCoTra - for companies in emerging economies.
1.0 Background to the Problem

The modern workplace is full of interesting paradox.

Whereas global companies are looking to emerging markets for growth, companies in emerging markets are searching for ways into the burgeoning global economy.

The globalisation of markets and rapid diffusion of technologies are fast transforming the economies of the world. Clegg and Birch (1998) suggest that businesses employing traditional management techniques are facing increasingly difficult challenges. These challenges daily demand for innovation, flexibility and constant change as well as excellent customer care, inspirational leadership and superb communication.

Secretan (1999:3) summarises the paradox by saying: “There is a growing sense of anxious anticipation in the modern workplace, of impending change: the shadow of apprehension, disenchantment and betrayal conflicts with the light of hope, opportunity and new beginnings.”

There, indeed, is need to cast eyes back on the journey that transforming organisations have travelled in order to draw lessons to pave the way into the future.

Of interest is what has happened and is happening in the world of emerging economies.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of emerging economies is that they have opened up dramatically since the last twenty years. Ramamurti (2000) asserts that this has heightened competitive pressures on national firms. This exogenous increase in firm competition is a cause for change.
Although organisations get involved in change efforts, researchers have consistently sent the disturbing and recurring message that about 70% of change initiatives fail. This has resulted in an increasing number of researchers getting interested in finding out why the failure rate is so high.

Beer and Nohria (2000:133) attribute most of the failures to the rush by managers to change their organisations by “immersing themselves in an alphabet soup of initiatives. They lose focus and become mesmerised by all the advise available in print and on-line about why companies should change, what they should try to accomplish, and how they should do it.” The two researchers suggest that business executives have to understand the nature and process of corporate change much better.

Other researchers share this concern.

Ferreira (1997:86), for example, points out: “over the past twenty-five years, a substantial amount of research has focused on the character, process, and content of organisational change, as well as the circumstances surrounding the change.” The scanned literature confirms that the emphasis of such research efforts has been on antecedents or consequences of change. Ferreira, however, highlights that there is now growing interest in the study of processes relating to how organisational change arises, develops and progresses.

This view is supported by Greiner (1998:68) who argues that “there is still much to learn about processes of development in organisations.” Of significance is the indication by Greiner (1998:68) that “researchers are just beginning to study specific developmental problems of structure, control, rewards, and management style in different industries and in a variety of cultures.”
These concerns imply that an in-depth examination and understanding of challenges related to organisational transformation is warranted. Such an understanding is required in order to improve the odds of success of change initiatives.

In the cited literature, there is a distinct absence of studies focusing on exploring the challenges of organisational transformation in emerging economies.

What is critical is that organisations in emerging economies must become more flexible, more responsive, and more willing to change and adapt, if they are to survive.

Organisations in emerging economies, particularly in Africa, need to enter the global market. This realisation has inspired thinkers like Mbeki (1998), Makgoba (1999), and Mbigi (2000) to search for an African business renaissance.

Mbigi (2000:3), for example, presents Africa as an adolescent continent requiring strong parenting. He argues that “Africa was thrown into the throes and waves of transformation with limited preparation and collective knowledge to meet the challenges”. The implication is that organisations in Africa need to learn faster than the rate of transformation to revitalise the economy.

This may be achieved through in-depth studies of the challenges of organisational transformation of individual companies in Southern Africa. Specifically, the experiences of companies in Zimbabwe (between 1980 when the country attained its independence and 2000) may provide interesting insights into how an organisation can thrive and prosper in a hostile and challenging global world.
The study is also inspired by Dess and Picken (2000:12) who present a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a global company asserting:

Learning is at the heart of a company’s ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. It is the key to being able both to identify opportunities that others might not see and to exploit those opportunities rapidly and fully. This means that in order to generate extraordinary value for its shareholders, a company has to learn better than its competitors and apply that knowledge throughout its businesses faster and more widely than they do.

It would appear sustaining such constant change demands understanding the sources of the challenges of change and having workable strategies to deal with such challenges.

A unique opportunity to learn from histories of companies is presenting itself. As Einhorn and Hogarth (1999) put it, “All decisions are about the future. But deciding what to do and how to do it naturally draws on past experience.” Thus, looking forward involves looking backward in order to avoid making bad decisions relating to change.

On the basis of the foregoing, this study has three major objectives:

(a) To establish the similarities and differences in the experiences of Zimbabwean companies regarding organisational transformation;

(b) To find out whether theories of organisational transformation that have been successful in developed economies have been applied in the selected companies;

(c) To draw lessons from those change efforts that succeeded and those that failed so as to apply these lessons to companies in emerging economies.
1.1 The Statement of the Problem

This research proposes to examine the challenges of organisational transformation in emerging economies with special reference to Zimbabwe and to develop a theory/model to resolve such challenges.

1.2 The Subproblems

1.2.1 The first subproblem. The first subproblem is to examine the experiences of four Zimbabwean companies regarding organisational transformation.

1.2.2 The second subproblem. The second subproblem is to identify the points of convergence of the experiences of the chosen companies regarding organisational transformation.

1.2.3 The third subproblem. The third subproblem is to identify the points of divergence of experiences of the chosen companies regarding organisational transformation.

1.2.4 The fourth subproblem. The fourth subproblem is to identify those issues that trigger organisational transformation.

1.2.5 The fifth subproblem. The fifth subproblem is to explore the Best-Practices in organisational transformation.

1.2.6 The sixth subproblem. The sixth subproblem is to develop a theory/model to resolve the transformation challenges of companies in emerging economies, using the four Zimbabwean companies as anchors.
1.3 The Questions

1.3.1 **The first question.** What have four selected Zimbabwean companies experienced during their transformation efforts?

1.3.2 **The second question.** What are the points of convergence of the experiences of the chosen companies regarding organisational transformation?

1.3.3 **The third question.** What are the points of divergence of the experiences of the chosen companies regarding organisational transformation?

1.3.4 **The forth question.** Which issues trigger organisational transformation?

1.3.5 **The fifth question.** Which are the local and global Best-Practices in organisational transformation?

1.3.6 **The sixth question.** What organisational transformation theory/model is suitable for companies in Zimbabwe and what general theory/model is suitable for companies in emerging economies?

1.4 The Delimitations

1.4.1 The study will focus on the business sector.

1.4.2 The study examines the experiences of four companies in Zimbabwe.
1.5 The Definition of Terms

1.5.1 Change. Change is ‘in its broadest sense, a continuous, planned or unplanned response to pressures and forces’ (Jick, 1993).

1.5.2 Developed economy. A ‘developed economy’ is an economy where most goods and services are easily accessible to most of its members, usually characterised by low inflation rates, high economic growth, relatively low unemployment rates, and good democratic governance (www.google.com).

1.5.3 Emerging/Developing economies. ‘Emerging/Developing economies’ refers to ‘economies characterized by the following six broad features: low levels of living, low levels of productivity, high rates of population growth and dependency burdens, high and rising levels of unemployment, significant dependence on agricultural production and primary product exports, and subject to ‘dominance, dependence, and vulnerability in international relations’ (Todaro, 1985).

1.5.4 Organisations. “Goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, and socially constructed systems of human activity” (Aldrich, 1999:2).

1.5.5 Transformation. Transformation refers to ‘periodic, discontinuous, metamorphic, or frame-braking changes in organisations to overcome inertia or stagnation and to enable better alignment with the environment’ (Ferreira, 1997).
1.6 Assumptions

1.6.1 Africa is in a transformation mode.

1.6.2 There is a need to continue searching for an African business renaissance.

1.6.3 The Zimbabwean company experiences from 1980 to 2000 are a piece of ground to learn from.

1.6.4 Organisational transformation is an intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual journey.

1.6.5 Organisational transformation is achieved through inspiring one person at a time.

1.6.6 An inspired team is composed of a number of inspired persons working together.

1.6.7 Groups of inspired teams become inspired communities.

1.6.7 A growing presence of inspired communities contributes to an inspired world.
1.7 The Importance of the Study

As we grapple with challenges of organisational change and transformation, it appears we need to be in touch with who we are. However, we cannot appreciate who we are and what we want to become if we have no understanding of where we came from.

Africa is endowed with a cultural heritage that draws significantly from spirituality. This spirituality focuses on the existence and significance of a hierarchy of spirits. Only one African thinker, Lovemore Mbigi, has concentrated his work on how an understanding of this heritage may lead to an African business renaissance.

Mbigi (2000:10) argues, “The African Business Renaissance is about our organisations finding innovative ways of doing business by harnessing cultural strengths and inspirations to meet the challenges of global competition”. Mbigi potently suggests that organisations need to embark on a cultural renaissance by dealing with their negative past and grievances.

This stance is consonant with Makgoba's (1999:viii) view that “African knowledge systems, experiences and contributions remain an untapped reservoir of future innovations and solutions to some of humanity’s complex problems”.

This study focuses on gaining deep appreciation of the challenges (including the ‘negative past and grievances’ Mbigi talks about) related to organisational transformation in emerging economies. The key contribution of the study is the addition of new insights on transformation theories, models, techniques and practices needed to create organisations that are inspiring places for employees, customers and suppliers in emerging economies.

The resultant best practice theory/model should provide a practical, experience-based
framework extracted from the actual practice, methods and actions of the chosen Zimbabwean companies. The emergent theory/model should help the companies effectively manage and lead the transformation process. It should provide a new sense of purpose, cultural values, standards and spirits to companies in order to energise them into an African business renaissance.

Overall, the study is an attempt to address the knowledge gap existing in terms of the applicability of existing change theories in non-Western, emerging nations.