The Other Side of Change Resistance

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Abstract

It is generally perceived that resistance to change is negative, and that it is the greatest obstacle to the attainment of change objectives. A survey of a diverse sample of managers in 5 South-Western States of Nigeria confirms this perception as 79% agrees that resistance is the greatest obstacle to change management, 60 % believes that the impact of change resistance is mostly negative while only 26% believes that there are some beneficial elements in change resistance. This paper reviews a growing literature and research to the contrary and highlights the various positive sides of resistance. Resistance offers opportunities to strengthen operational outcomes, offers feedback that improves the quality and clarity of objectives and strategy, provides more information, leads to a more meaningful and useful change process, builds interest, participation and engagement, reveals other perspectives and options and leads to more successful implementation. The paper therefore recommends that managers should be cautious in the use of the term 'change resistance', stop regarding anyone who questions a change programme as a organizational terrorists to be fought to a standstill, view change resistance as a phenomenon that can yield positive outcomes, be open and consultative about it, encourage those who have issues with the change process to come forward and ensure that negative feedbacks about proposed change programmes are evaluated and possibly accommodated, where meaningful. It also recommends two strategies for attaining this objective: building organized disagreement into the change process and effective use of employee surveys.

Key Words: Change, Change Management, Resistance to Change, Change outcomes, Feedback.

Introduction

Change is a regular feature of organizational life and indeed, an inseparable aspect of nature while resistance is itself an inseparable aspect of change. This is primarily because people are uncomfortable with the new, the strange and the unknown and they would rather prefer stability even though progress is never attained by being static. Indeed, Lewin (1947), the grand-father of change management studies, believes that change initiatives always encounter strong resistance, even when there is general agreement on the goals of the initiatives; and that organizations are naturally highly resistant to change due to the human nature (behavior, habits, group norms) and organizational inertia. Pryor et al (2008) insist that resistance is a normal reaction to change and should be expected, a view similar to that of Kohles, Baker & Donaho (1995) who aver that transformational organizations should recognize normal resistance and plan strategies to enable people to work through it. But resistance to change (RTC) is a contentious and paradoxical concept. Robinson & Finley (1997) argue that because change outcomes are always disappointing, participants lower their expectations, dig in and stop changing or find better ways to change and no matter which of these three classic responses people make, change always 'wins'. If we don't embrace it, it overtakes us and hurts like; if we do try to embrace it, it still knocks us for a loop and if we try to anticipate it and be ready when it appears, we still end up on our knees. That is why people hate change; it is always painful even when self-administered (Robinson & Finley, 1997:1)

Marsh (2001) differs a little bit by categorizing the change participants into winners and losers; those who enjoy it and those who suffer it, declaring that only people who instigate change enjoy it while others have to suffer it**.** D'Aprix (1996) states that 55% of organizational citizens is against any change while 85% is not ready to wholeheartedly commit their energies to it because anytime a major organizational change is announced fifteen percent of the staff are angry; forty percent fearful, skeptical, and distrustful, thirty percent uncertain but open; and only fifteen percent hopeful and energized. In effect, the change programme is DOA(dead on arrival). Furthermore, Strebel (1996) and Sopow (2007) insist that managers and staff perceive change differently; the former seeing it positively as a desirable way forward(of course, they are the instigators who would enjoy it-Marsh, 2001) while the latter see it as avoidable and unnecessary pain**.** Thus, for top level managers, change is an opportunity to strengthen the business by aligning operations with strategy, to take on new professional challenges and risks and to advance their careers but for many employees , change is neither sought after nor welcomed; it is disruptive and intrusive. It upsets the balance (Strebel; 1996). Also, while *management says that the goal of change is to change the culture; create new and positive mindset that leads to better performance, employees however hear that those things that make them feel safe and provide a sense of predictability are about to disappear. It means messing with tried/tested traditions and ignoring many years of lessons* (Sopow, 2007).

Most proponents of change also assume that enthusiastic support will be automatic because the objectives are worthwhile and obvious (Brown & Harvey 2006). But the people 'on the other side' perceive things differently. They are forced to alter how they relate to others, their goals, processes, equipment, and reality and all these lead to anxiety (Marsh, 2001). They also continue with familiar strategies and behaviors, which have been successful in the past but which have now become inappropriate and ineffective and wonder why they no longer work while management is convinced that employees will automatically recognize its worth and to embrace it" (Gingerella, 1993). Employees also feel threatened by the impending loss of power, prestige, competence, security and control. This is worse if previous change experiences are not encouraging (Mowart, 2002). So while management expects support and adoption, staff show reluctance and resistance.

But the greatest paradox is that resistance, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder (Ford & Ford, 2009). Okoro, Bola and Adamu have just finished discussing a new corporate policy with their staff and they are comparing notes. Okoro complained that he got a lot of pushback from his staff who interrogated him with several questions and were irritated when he didn't have all the answers. Bola described her staff reaction as stonewalling as there was not a single question while the few comments were shallow. Adamu saw his own people as very receptive because they asked a lot of questions and he promised to provide some of the answers to their questions. He saw the whole interaction as engaging and energizing. It is obvious from this brief example that resistance is a function of the manager's attitude and disposition. For instance, both asking and not asking questions were described by different managers as evidence of resistance. And while one saw asking question as resistance, another saw it as engagement. The staff may also not have seen their behaviors as resistance!

But the negative coloration of RTC is being challenged and several authors are urging a serious rethink of the tendency to see resistance as evil and acceptance as good. Hultman (1979) belongs to this school and regrets that whenever resistance is mentioned, there is the tendency to ascribe negative connotations to it but that that is a misconception because there are many times when resistance is the most effective response available. His views are supported by Leigh (1988) who asserts that "resistance is a perfectly legitimate response of a worker". Kotter, Schlesinger & Sathe (1986) are also of the view that existing managerial mindsets create an image problem for the concept of RTC. Managers believe that a change process with minimal resistance is good and well- managed. This mindset casts resistance in a negative light as the enemy of change, the foe which must be overcome if a change effort is to be successful. The objective of this paper is to examine the nature and scope of RTC and highlight its positive aspects as well as the implications of this mindset for change management practice. The method involves an extensive review of extant literature and a survey of managers on their perception of change and change management in Nigeria

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It is divided into five parts: 1:introduction; 2: nature, scope and causes of RTC; 3: deconstructing RTC: The other side of resistance;4: Lessons from Nigeria; 5: Conclusion.

The nature, scope and causes of RTC

Ansoff (1988) defines RTC as a *multifaceted phenomenon which introduces unanticipated delays, costs and instabilities into the process of strategic change*.., delaying or slowing down its beginning, obstructing or hindering its implementation and increasing its costs. It is also any conduct that tries to keep the status quo in the face of pressures to alter that status quo (Zaltman and Duncan, 1977); the equivalent of inertia and the persistence to avoid change (Padro de val and Fuantes, 2003). Within an organizational context, Waddel and Sohal (1998) see RTC as an expression of reservation in response to change and perceived by management as any employee actions attempting to stop, delay, or alter change. It is thus mostly associated with negative employee attitudes or counter-productive behaviours. Ansoff is of the view that RTC is proportional to the degree of discontinuity in the culture and/or the power structure introduced by the change. Thus, when cultural change is accompanied by power shift, resistance is compounded but groups and individuals whose culture is reinforced by the change and/or who stand to gain power welcome the change and indeed, give it support.

Various aspects of change programmes – doing new things, doing old things in new ways dealing with new people, systems, structure and processes – destabilize people who naturally prefer stability. This leads to resistance, which is present in all types of changes. Because human beings prefer stability to instability certainty to uncertainty; the known to the unknown, there is always some resistance by individuals or by formal and informal groups aimed at frustrating, sabotaging or at least delaying the change process (Muo, 2013).

RTC comes in different dimensions or can be classified severally Piderit (2000) classifies RTC into three as behavioural (intentional actions, inactions, behaviors, commissions), emotional (aggression and frustration, which may affect the behavior) and cognitive (negative thoughts about the change, reluctance). Davies (1977) on the other hand acknowledges two types of RTC: Rational opposition to change based on reasonable analyses which determine that costs are greater than benefits and RTC based on emotionalism and selfish desires that ignores benefits to others and as such is less desirable to organizations. He argues that sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between the two but notes that there are always strong evidences of the underlying forces at work. Ivancevich and Matteson (2002), based on factors that propel RTC classify it as individual and organizational. Individual resistance is propelled by factors like threat of loss of position and fear of the unknown while the organizational variant is propelled by professional or functional orientation of team and structural inertia in the organization.

For Padro de Val and Fuantes (2003), there are two types of resistance or inertia; those that manifest during the formulation stage and those that show up during implementation. This is similar to the views of Ansoff (1985) who in addition to individual and group resistance also recognizes RTC that manifest during and after the change process. Manifestations during the change process include procrastination and delays in triggering the progress of change, unforeseen implementation delays and inefficiencies which slow down change and make it cost more than originally anticipated and efforts in the organization to sabotage the change. Manifestations after the change are performance lag as the change is slow in producing anticipated results and efforts within to roll back the effects to the status quo ante. He also contends that the extent of resistance or otherwise depends the degree of discontinuity in the culture and or the power structure introduced by the change. Thus, when cultural change is accompanied by a shift of power, resistance is compounded while groups and individuals whose culture is reinforced by the change and/or who stand to gain power would welcome the change and give it support. This is shown in the table below where the change that is politically threatening and changes the culture leads to the greatest resistance(box 1), a change that is politically neutral and culturally acceptable leads to least resistance(box 4) while any change that is politically welcome and culturally acceptable is positively reinforced. The greatest source of RTC

are the difficulties created by deeply rooted beliefs (within political and cultural gridlocks in the implementation stage) followed by lack of capabilities needed to implement change and departmental politics. Furthermore, RTC is more powerful in strategic changes than in evolutionary ones; the more radical and transformational the change is, the more resistance.

Table1:Effect of power and cultural implications on behavioral resistance

Implications of Change	Politically threatening	Politically neutral	Politically welcome
Change in culture	**1:**Greatest resistance	**3:**Depends on the size of political change	**5:**Depends on size of cultural change
Culturally acceptable	**2:**Depends on the size of threat	**4:** Least resistance	**6:**Positive reinforcement

Adapted from Ansoff, 1985, p391

Ansoff also discussed the concept of systematic resistance which results from passive incompetence of the organization. He contends that organizations engage in two activities simultaneously: to survive and succeed in the near-term(operations) and in the long term(strategic). As the challenges facing organizations increase, and in the face of lack of capacity, operating activities (short term) attain precedence and priority over strategic activities (long term). Systematic resistance is thus due to strategic overload and is caused by priority conflict which suppresses strategic activity in favor of operations, strategic overload which creates costs, bottlenecks and slippages, strategic incompetence which in addition to costs and slippages produces unrealistic and sub-optimal strategies, mismatch between strategic aggressiveness and strategic capability are mismatched, development of capability lagging behind the development of strategy, mismatch in the components of capability.

Gingerella (1993) believes when change is introduced, there is the initial denial phase is followed by a feeling of danger due to the impending loss of control, territory, competence and direction. If this phase is effectively managed, people transit into the opportunity phase and begin to see greater freedom, power, recognition and reward and this is followed by adaptation and adoption. But when this is not done, the unfortunate outcome is resistance as depicted in the change-curve model below

Figure 1
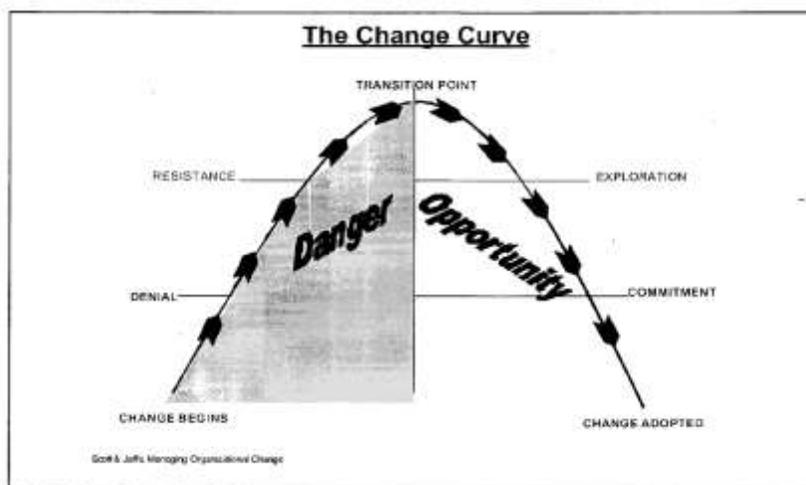
Source: Gingerella (1993)

The causes of RTC are varied and based on the contingency theory; depend on the type of resistance and the circumstances. Padro de val and Fuantes, (2003) group the sources of resistance at the formulation stage into three as: distorted perception, interpretation barriers and vague strategic priorities, low motivation to change and lack of creative response which is due to fast and complex environmental changes which do not allow a proper situation analyses, inadequate strategic vision or lack of clear commitment of top management to change. Sources of RTC/inertia at the implementation stage are broadly two: Political and cultural deadlocks to change like implementation climate and relation between change values and organizational values and other sources like leadership inaction, embedded routines or lack of the necessary capabilities to implement change-capability gap, and cynicism(see table 2)

Table 2: Sources of Resistance or Inertia

		Myopia
INERTIA IN THE FORMULATION STAGE	Distorted perception, interpretation barriers and vague strategic priorities	Denial
		Perpetuation of ideas
		Implicit assumption
		Communication barriers
		Organisational silence
	Low motivation	Direct costs of change
		Cannibalisation cots
		Cross subsidy comforts
		Past failures
		Different interests among employees and management
	Lack of a creative response	Fast and complex environmental changes
		Registration
		Inadequate strategic vision
INERTIA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION STAGE	Political and cultural deadlocks	Implementation climate and relation between change values and organisational values
		Departmental policies incommensurable beliefs
		Deep rooted values
		Forgetfulness of the social dimension of changes
	Others sources	Leadership inaction
		Embedded routines
		Collective action problems
		Capabilities gap
		Cynicism

Padro de Val,M & Fuentes, M.C(2003) 'Resistance to change: A literature review and empirical study.' *Management Decision*. 41(2), 148-155. DOI: 10.1108/00251740319457597

Their empirical study has three powerful conclusions, among others:

1. That this list of sources of resistance is both observable and relevant in practice and all of them have had impact on RTC
2. That the sources of RTC with the highest significance is the difficulties created by the existence of deeply rooted beliefs (within political and cultural gridlocks in the implementation stage), followed by lack of capabilities needed to implement change and departmental politics.
3. That the list is comprehensive enough to be seen as appropriate and complete as sources of resistance/inertia.

Based on an extensive review of literature, Waddel and Sohal (1998) hold that RTC is a complex and multidimensional affair and group the causative factors into five as:

• *Rational factors*: when employees resist or voice concern because the outcome of their own cost-benefit analyses differs from that of management.
• *Non-rational factors:* when individuals react negatively due to their predispositions and preferences like reluctance to relocate or preference for the existing informal environment
• *Political factors:* resistance influenced by factors like favoritism or opposition to the change agent
• *Management factors:* inappropriate or poor management style.

Organizational factors-systems, processes, sunk costs create a kind of inertia that influence the organization toward greater reliability and predictability which, in turn, acts against change

Davis(1977) believes that RTC occurs when three dimensions of change are not properly aligned. These are the logical dimension(based on the technical evidence of economics and science which needs to be presented so that employees understand the technical and economic reasons for change),the psychological dimension(the extent to which the change is logical in terms of human values and feelings) and the sociological dimension(how logical it is in terms of social values: consistency with the norms of the group, impact on teamwork, effect on social bond and interactions)*These three dimensions must be effectively treated if employees are to accept change enthusiastically*. If managers work on/with the technical/logical alone, they have failed in the human dimension and they will reap resistance from the emotional human beings at work!

The gap between perception and reality among the different participants in the change process also accentuate RTC especially, in crises situations (Ansoff, 1985). The originators of change react to environmental signals with unclear but portentous impacts. But the announcement of the change-option comes as a shock and surprise to others who have no prior knowledge of the development, the necessity for change, its desirability or consequences. Quirk (1995) likens that to a CEO who, looking over the landscape from the mountain top sees what is coming and calls down from the mountain to warn his subordinates about the cold winds blowing. But because they are down below, sheltered in the warm grassy environment, they are not able to share his feeling of cold or appreciate the magnitude of the impending changes. The consequence of this, Ansoff (1985) argues, is that there are tendencies to conclude that the change is unnecessary, exaggerate the negative impact, by individuals/groups who will not be affected by the change to assume that they will also suffer, and to underestimate the benefits of the change on the one hand and costs of inaction on the other. Furthermore, when the reality of crises is accepted, there is tendency to overreact, panic and when the organization is in the process of recovering from the crises, there is a tendency for premature resurgence of resistance to the very change that is bringing the solution.

Individuals will resist change if and when there are threats of loss of job, position, level of income power, authority; economic insecurity , fear of the unknown, uncertainty, failure to be recognized or be informed about the need for change, cognitive dissonance caused by new people, processes, technology, expectations, when he feels the risk will make him redundant or incompetent to perform the new role, incapable or unwilling to learn new skills or feels that he will lose face among peers, reduce his influence or access to organizational resources. RTC also arises from professional or functional orientation of the team, unit or department; structural inertia (as the structure ordinarily creates stability), threat of power balance in the organization and failure of previous changes as well as when power of groups are threatened, group norms violated or based on information which the group considers irrelevant (Ivancevich and Matteson. 2002; Ansoff, 1985).

Other factors that lead to resistance include ambiguity that relates to goals, methods, data and criteria, anxieties and uncertainties, sundry inconveniences and disruption of informal social bonds, the influence of unions and professional associations, hostility caused by NIH (Not invented here) mentality; resistance to the change agent, poor articulation of the programmes, and change fatigue (Muo, 1999 & Muo, 2013). There are also situations when the risk of change is perceived as greater than the risk of inaction, reluctance of those connected with others who are identified with the old way, when people have no role models for

the new way, employees who doubt their competence to change or feel overwhelmed and overloaded; skeptics who want to be sure the new ideas are sound or people who fear hidden agenda among the proponents or feel the proposed change threatens their notion s of themselves (Alo, 2010)

But we must acknowledge the fact that because of human diversity, the same change proposition may elicit different reactions in different people. Ansoff(1985)support this assertion when he declares that*… managers are not all alike; some are personally secure, some are prone to anxiety, some are proud, some are less so, some actively seek power and prestige, others are indifferent to the trappings of power.. some are rigid in their set ways; others are open to change and are eager to change… therefore for a change in culture and power, the resistance by a manager will depend on the strength of his convictions, his preparedness to defend himself, his power drive and his predisposition to learn and change-p292.*

Deconstructing RTC: The other side of change resistance

It is generally perceived that resistance is the greatest impediment to change management especially as it introduces costs and delays that are difficult to anticipate but must be accommodated (Padro de val and Fuantes,2003, waddle & shoal, 1998, Ansoff, 1990). Indeed, 79% of managers in South-West Nigeria surveyed as a part of this article believes the RTC is the greatest impediment to successful change management process**.** Maurer (1996) indicates that between 50-66% of all major corporate change efforts fail and that resistance is a critical factor in those failures. Similarly Eisen , Mulraney and Sohal (1992), and Terziovski, Sohal, and Moss (1997), establish that resistance, this time by both management and workers, is the major impediment to the use of quality management practices in Australian manufacturing industry. However, Wadel & Sohal (1998) trace the negative colouration of resistance to classical organization and human resources theories. Early organizational theorists viewed unity of purpose as the hallmark of a technically efficient and superior organization while pluralism and divergent attitudes were seen as greatly reducing effectiveness. Conflicts were thus antithetical to organizational effectiveness. Resistance evidenced the emergence of divergent opinions, the root of conflicts, and is thus undesirable and detrimental, and should be uprooted. The resistant worker was also seen as a subversive element whose self-interest clashed with the collective interest and wellbeing. Seeing resistance as the enemy of change, the foe which causes change efforts to be drawn out by factional dissent and in-fighting, everything had to be done to '*eliminate resistance, quash it early and sweep it aside in order to make way for the coming change*' . Similarly, early human resource theories perceived resistance as a form of conflict that indicated the breakdown of healthy interpersonal and intra-group interactions and the solution was to remove resistance so as to restore harmony (Milton, Entrekin, & Stening, 1984).

The impact of RTC is thus obviously negative and destructive. It leads to delays, truncation, sub-optimal outcomes or outright failure of the change programme. But the impact may also be mild. Giangraco sees RTC in a relatively softer note as a form of organizational dissent to change processes (or practices) that the individual considers unpleasant, disagreeable or inconvenient on the basis of personal and/or group evaluations. *The intent of resistance is to benefit the individual or the group to which he belongs or relates with, without undermining extensively the needs of the organization.* RTC manifests itself in non-institutional individual or group actions in the form of non-violent, indifferent, passive or active behaviors (Giangraco, 2002).

It is obvious from the above that resisters do not set out to sabotage the programme or undermine the organization and that some forms of RTC behaviors have peripheral impact on change programmes and outcomes. Padro de Val& Fuentes(2003) also conclude similarly that with a mean range of 1.6-2.5(out of 5), resistance is not generally so strong as to affect the change process too seriously; there is always resistance but no single source was a severe difficulty in achieving the change objectives. Huy & Mintzberg (2003) also disagree with the extant paradigm that change by definition is good while RTC is bad arguing that 'prolonged and pervasive change means anarchy and hardly anybody wants to live with that…change has to be managed with a profound appreciation of stability. Accordingly, there are times when change is

sensibly resisted; for example when an organization should simply continue to pursue a perfectly good strategy (p79). Ford & Ford (2009) also argue that when we blame resistance for change-failures, there is the risk of overlooking opportunities to strengthen operational outcomes and correct biases.

Table 3: Manifestations of Resistance to Change

Level of participation	Individual	Collective
Indifferent	Indifference Apathy Loss of interest in the job Waiting	Sticking to old ways of doing things
Passive	Doing only what is ordered Not learning Rationalizing refusal Apparent refusal, later turn to old ways Laughter, irony, pleasure about system failures Personal withdrawal-time off & away from work	Working to rule Slow diffusion rates
Active	Reduced performance levels Criticism of top management Grievances Refusal to do additional work	Absenteeism & increased morbidity rate Low output in quantity & quality

Source: Giangreco,A(2002) Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Resistance to Change. Liuc papers No 103, Serie Economica azandale, Suppl.11 March

The preceding arguments (Giangraco,2002; Padro de Val& Fuentes,2003; Huy & Mintzberg, 2003 and Ford & Ford,2009) provide a smooth transition to another paradigm that holds that RTC is not all that negative and that indeed, some positive outcomes are derivable from it. This perspective, which is objective and more positive, views RTC as a natural, acceptable phenomenon and holds that depending on the nature, environment and conditions of change, RTC is not always negative.

Piderit (2000) raises cogent issues and questions about the concept and language of change resistance itself, arguing that the way it is applied paints it in bad light and creates several problems for change management theory and practice:

1. It sees resisters as shortsighted and obstacles to change and progress and dismisses the potentially valid concerns of those who are so classified.
2. Managers create resistance by assuming that there will always be resistance; it thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
3. It is used to blame the weak for the unsuccessful outcomes of change programmes, a kind of attribution mindset.
4. The definition of RTC has also become so sweeping as to mean 'anything and everything that workers do which managers do not want them to do, and workers do not do which managers wish them to do' This obscures several actions and behaviors that merit precise analyses in their own right.
5. Change management researchers are apparently toeing the perspectives of the managers of change, creating a 'we' (the change enforcers) and 'they' (change resisters) paradigm. The perspectives of the other parties are ignored and lost.

He also canvases that the so called RTC may be motivated by individual desire to act in accordance with his ethical principles, get management attention to issues that must be addressed to ensure higher

performance or promote/protect organization's best interest. These are not in any way negative as the resistance-minded managers and practitioners would want us to believe.

Padro de val and Fuantes (2003) build on the works of Lawrence, *(1954)* and Goldstein, (1988) and declare that *resistance is a source of information and helps to develop more useful change processes* while Ford & Ford, (2009:) see RTC as a resource that strengthens the change process in at least 5 ways:

- **Boosting awareness**: when people raise questions about change and these are being answered and discussed, even if it involves 'hot' exchanges, this creates more awareness about the programme and that is positive in itself.
- **Returning to purpose:** while awareness is about what, purpose is about why. People who are not involved need to understand the why of the change and that is how they will become more involved. Most often, it is when people start resisting through questions and other behaviors that this important 'why' is revealed.
- **Changing the change**: resistance can lead to better results. Some people resist by professing options to all or parts of the package which the promoters did not see initially. In that case, their contributions may lead to the total or partial overhaul of the programme and to the benefit of the organization.
- **Building participation and engagement**: resistance may lead to bonding, participation and collaboration between 'us and them' in the change project. The change-master who is aloof may be drawn into discussions with the resisters and better collaborations and engagements can arise from that.
- **Completing the past**: at times, people resist because of their previous experiences. When that comes to the fore, the drivers of the current change may have to go back and correct the past defects (policies, mistakes, etc) so as to move forward. In this case, the present change resistance provides opportunity to complete an inchoate past.

Even emotional resistance which is deemed to be very harmful to change programmes also has desirable outcomes according to Davies (1977):

- It may cause change agents to clarify more sharply their reasons for wanting change and define more precisely the desirable results they expect to accomplish.
- They may examine more carefully the negative side effects that accompany change just as side effects follow antibiotics.
- Change agents may discover that they have unwise plans that may be dropped.
- Emotional resistance may identify pockets of low job satisfaction and poor motivation in the organization.
- It may highlight weaknesses in communication because most often, it arises from inadequate communication about change. Thus RTC brings out the need for clearer, more effective communication of what is going on as regards the change project.
- It may cause change agents to give more attention to improved OB because they see it as necessary for reducing resistance to change.

While traditionally, RTC has been cast in adversarial terms– the enemy of change that must be defeated if change is to be successful-, Wadel and Sohal (1998) are of the view that difficulty of organizational change is often exacerbated by the misunderstanding and mismanagement of resistance and that management will benefit from RTC by looking for ways of utilizing rather than attempting to overcome it. They argue that there is utility from RTC and thus, it should not be avoided or quashed as suggested by classical management theories. They itemize some of the utilities of resistance as follows:

- Resistance points out that it is a fallacy to consider change itself as inherently good since it can only be evaluated by its consequences which can only be known with any certainty until the change effort has been

completed and sufficient time has passed. Consequently, resistance plays a crucial role in influencing the organization toward greater stability.

- Resistance balances the various pressures for change against the need for constancy and stability. This allows the system to stabilize, consolidate, and improve, leading to a level of predictability and control. This balance between change and stability performs two roles. It avoids the dysfunctionality of too much change while ensuring that stability does not become stagnation.

- Since people do not resist change for the sake of resisting change, but because of the consequential uncertainties and potential negative outcomes, then, the problem is not resistance per se. Resistance is thus a symptom, a warning signal that draws attention to aspects of change that requires more attention. Fighting resistance thus becomes akin to shooting the messenger. It is more valuable for management to use the nature of resistance establish the cause of resistance rather than attempting to uproot it.

- RTC also facilitates the influx of energy. Apathy or acquiescence is not a favorable state for growth and development and as par Litterer, (1973) change becomes difficult in an environment characterized by apathy or passivity. While resistance and conflict generate the energy to address problems, lack of energy leads to uncreative, sparsely implemented, and inadequately utilized change. Of course, there must be a balance to ensure that attention is not focused on the conflict at the expense of the issues at stake.

- Resistance is a critical source of innovation as it encourages the search for alternative methods and outcomes and thus synthesizes any conflicting perspectives that may exist.

- At times, favored options are not thoroughly discussed and they are limited to the competence of the proponents. Insufficient number of alternatives and groupthink also impart negatively on these decisions. These shortcomings are ameliorated by resistance and the resulting reevaluation and ensures that the organization does not jump at every change bandwagon that catches the fancy of the dominant coalition.

- The case for resistance is also made strong by the fact that in all democratic legislatures, a culture of resistance, through opposition is institutionalized to ensure that best possible laws and programmes are produced. The process is characterized by more alternatives, greater scrutiny and debate, and vigorous evaluation which yields optimal outcomes

The foregoing arguments and perspectives aver that RTC is not inherently negative and that organizations stand to benefit from it by viewing it differently and making efforts to reap the inherent benefits. We need to decorticate resistance, move beyond the surface and see its inherent goodness. After all, Taylor (1957) reminds us that while C*onformity offers a quiet life, all the changes and advances in history have always come from non-conformists, declaring that if there had been no dissenters(including Jesus Christ), we should still be living in caves!* Indeed, rather than suppressing the resistance and conflict from those who are opposed to the change (the why) or some aspects of it(what, how, when or who), Lehman & Linsky (2012) provide a four-point guideline on how to turn RTC into a catalyst for the change :

- **Build a container to hold the group together** during the high pressure days and weeks ahead. The structure should be seen as a container with a thick wall to prevent the conflict from spilling over and save the group from external threat.
- **Leverage dissenting voices:** dissidents also have 'acutely viable ideas'. Find them, shine the light on them, expose and confront others to their ideas and mine these ideas.
- **Give the work back**: allow the staff to solve the conflicts that arise in the course of change; do not try to provide all the answers, being all things to all men.
- **Raise the heat**: sometimes, heat is required to uncover conflicts that might compromise the change efforts. Bring conflicts in the open and let the heavens fall-and it won't fall.

We conclude this discourse on the other side of resistance with the words of Ford and Ford (2009) *when we pin failure on resistance, we risk overlooking opportunities to strengthen operational outcomes-and to correct our own biases. We also lose credibility in the eyes of change recipients who may in turn withhold their specialized knowledge and sabotage the success of the change initiative. Resistance, properly understood as feedback, can be an important resource in improving the quality and clarity of the objectives and strategies at the heart of the change proposal. And properly used, it enhances the prospects for successful implementation Ford & Ford, (2009:103)*

Managing RTC within the new paradigm

Discussions on the management of resistance are embedded in the 'old' paradigm that views resistance negatively. The focus is thus on how reduce and contain resistance and convert the resisters to apostles of change. With some of the views canvassed above, it is now obvious that managing resistance should also aim at reaping the benefits therein by seeing it as a feedback mechanism and incorporating the perspectives of those who may not be positively disposed to the programme as it is. It is also obvious that change proponents and managers must properly focus on, and plan for, the human side of change because as long as employees only perceive a loss of identity, relationships, disorientation, or a risk of failure they will focus their energy on coping with stress rather than on production and innovation. (Demers, Forrer, Leibowitz, & Cahill, 1996)

Schermerhorn; Hunt and Osborn(1994) list six methods of managing resistance as education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and cooperation and implicit and explicit coercion. These may be actually be broadly divided into two with the first four in one group (participative) and the last two as another group(authoritarian). This latter category is akin to what Judson(1991) refers to as unwholesome, top-down methods and includes coercion, threats, manipulation, intimidation to implement changes that lead to resentment, withdrawal, anger and, covert and unethical behaviours. Ansoff (1985) calls attention to a coercive change process in which the support and influence of top management is used to overcome resistance. In this case, implementation is the first concern followed by recognition of systemic deficiencies while the discovery of the need to change culture and power comes last (if it comes at all). He refers to this as a brute-force approach which is expensive and socially disruptive but offers speed and is used when urgency is high and rapid response essential. Bennis et al (1985) group available methods of managing individual change as educative/empirical-rational, normative/persuasive and power-coercive . It is obvious that the power-coercive strategy (Bennis et al, 1985), brute force approach(Ansoff, 1985), unwholesome (Judeson. 1991) are similar to explicit and implicit coercion as enunciated by Schermerhorn; Hunt and Osborn(1994)

Seth and Frazier (1982) introduce four major approaches to planned social change which are appropriate to four possible attitude-behaviour consistency/discrepancy scenarios. These are reinforcement(appropriate when attitude and behaviour are consistent and positive towards the desired behavior) inducement(appropriate when people possess positive attitude towards the desirable behaviour but do not or cannot engage in that behavior), rationalisation(the ultimate when people engage in appropriate behaviour but they have negative attitude.) and confrontation(appropriate when behaviour and attitude are consistent but in opposite direction from the desired behavior). They further identify the following strategies for facilitating these various approaches: information and education, persuasion and propaganda, social controls(group/peer pressure), economic incentives and disincentives, clinical counseling and behaviour modification and mandatory rules and regulations.

Strebel(1996) insists that a collective revision of the personal compacts between the organization and its employees is a precondition for acceptance and non-resistance of change programmes. Personal compacts are stated and implied reciprocal obligations and mutual commitments that define the relationships between employees and organizations. These compacts have three dimensions: formal (basic task and performance requirement, authority, resources and rewards); psychological(implicit: mutual expectations and reciprocal

commitment that arise from feelings like trust and dependence between both parties) and social (enables employees to gauge corporate culture through mission statements, interplay between company practices and management attitudes towards them. Alignment between words and action creating a context that evokes employee commitment along the social dimension,).

Organizational changes alter the terms of these compacts and unless managers define new terms and persuade employees to accept these terms, they will not buy into the change which alters the status quo and will rather undermine their manager's credibility and well-designed plans. To revise these compacts (and thus ensure collaboration/minimize resistance), managers should draw attention to the need to change and establish the context for revising the compact, initiate a process in which employees are able to revise and buy into the new terms and lock-in commitments with new formal and informal rules. By approaching this process systematically and creating explicit link between employees' commitment and the company's necessary change outcomes, managers dramatically improve the probability meeting the change objectives. Thus the way to ensure acceptance or reduce resistance is to redefine the employee's commitment to the new goals in terms that everybody could understand and act on failing which, employees will remain skeptical of the vision for change and distrustful of management and management will likewise be frustrated and stymied by employee resistance (Strebel, 1996).

Other methods of getting peoples buy-in, obtaining feedback, and softening emotional or rational resistance include attitude transformation, changing group affiliation, getting the people involved and giving them stakes in the change, effective communication, organizing for change,, ensuring that the change passes the basic cost-benefit test, managing the learning process, endangering hope, inducing a change friendly attitude and providing psychological safety for employees while the change process is in progress (Muo, 2013). Furthermore, because sheer speed and scope of change can be overwhelming, resistance or reluctance appears natural. Organizations should therefore motivate change and soften resistance by creating a readiness for it so as to prepare people emotionally (Conger, Spreitzer & Lawler 1999; Brown & Harvey 2006). Of course, the best method to be used will depend on the circumstances and most often, a bouquet of measures will be used simultaneously.

But in view of the arguments in favor of the positive side of resistance, Waddel and Sohal (1998)suggest that the orientation to managing RTC should change. The popular view is that participative management-involvement in change planning and execution- enhances commitment and reduces RTC. But this expects that there would be RTC; that the goal is to reduce such resistance and that the lower the resistance the better. This also means that resistance continues to be viewed as an enemy of change that must be routed and that the adversarial mindset is still prevalent. That is why most often, change managers respond to staff opposition by resisting their resistance (fire for fire) even though they may do so through information overload (Maur, 1996). They suggest that resistance management may improve significantly if the adversarial paradigm is replaced with another mindset that explores the possibility of enhancing organizational benefits by leveraging RTC. Communication, consultation, teamwork and creating the right environment for feedback are steps in the right direction.

But like all operational and strategic decisions, easy consent leads to poor processes and outcomes and change management is not an exception. One of the problems with group decision-making is the situation in which we-feeling and conformity-seeking become so entrenched that decisions become watery and one-way traffic matters. This occurs because people naturally have the tendency to move along with others, do not want to rock the boat or appear to be destructive. In corporate environments, people are wary of raising hard questions that may embarrass or discomfort the boss since that is not the best way to make friends-and get along!(Baum, 1986 & Brooker, 2002). But this gets more worrisome when there is excessive cohesiveness, groupthink sets in and people are directly and indirectly pressurized to conform-because they believe in what is being done or because they have no option than to support the proposal. In this instance, the advantages of group decision-making are lost! (Janis, 1971; Janis, 1972; & Muo, 2006:)

Thus, under this new resistance management paradigm, it becomes imperative to encourage dissent because there is always something fishy about reaching decision in a group without any form of disagreement. In this case, organized disagreement (Drucker 1967) or controlled chaos (Cosier & Schwenk, 1990) should be generated to enrich the decision-making about the change process.

Byrne (2002) advocates forcefully that '*CEOs must actively encourage dissent among senior managers by creating decision-making processes that encourage opposing view point*s'. There is need to encourage *moderated dissension* in the group decision-making process. Cosier & Scwenk (1990:72) actually advocate that rather than hope for dissent, it should be programmed into the process. This could be done through the Devil's Advocate Decision Programe in which an individual or group is assigned the role of Devil's Advocate, to officially criticize a given proposition; and the Dialectic Method which involves a formal debate between the conflicting views on a given course of action (Muo, 2011).

There is also the 'ritual dissent' approach in which parallel teams are assigned the same problem in a large group meeting format and the team rips apart the each other's presentation, no holds barred. This happens severally and by the time they have finished, all the issues have been sorted out as all ideas are dissected and thrashed out(Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Another useful tool is to skillfully adopt employee surveys as instruments of change management. These surveys have become very critical in today's organizations because they are facing change at an unprecedented speed, volatility and unpredictability and their survival and prosperity depends on the ability to manage and respond to these changes. This ability requires a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the organization and its resources, the most important of which is the human capital. Human beings are complicated, inconsistent and unpredictable and a good knowledge of them requires reliable qualitative and quantitative information which can only be obtained through surveys (Walters, 1994).

Change causes anxieties, uncertainties, fears and stress and requires extra efforts on the part of staff. Management therefore requires the ability to manage change while retaining the motivation and commitment of workers and this involves minimizing the uncertainties and trauma associated with change and optimally guiding the staff to face the new realities.

That is why effective change management processes requires clear sense of leadership and direction so that staff understand clearly, the change agenda, clear and concrete justifications for the change, translation of these benefits into individual benefits, the recognition and resolution of personal anxieties arising from the change, provision of additional support/guidance for staff in dealing with the demands of the new situation, the retention of key anchor points as far as possible, *a* perception that change is being experienced equally by everybody, employee involvement in initiating the change process and detailed planning and evaluation of all aspects of the change process. All this requires quality and effective communication between the management and the staff ; understanding of the fears and anxieties of the employees, how they perceive the whole process, their views about the anchor points that should be retained and as to whether the realities are in tune with the expectations. Thus, *effective change management requires substantial access to the accurate and detailed opinions and views of employees and that is why employee surveys are vital.*

Surveys are thus used to plan the content and form of change, identify potential barriers, especially the emotional ones (fears, uncertainties and anxieties) and staff attitudes to change (concerns, expectations and facilitators) all of which vary across individuals and groups so as to respond appropriately. The specific strategies will depend on the outcomes of the surveys but they will contain a combination or variant of the following:

> ➤ Provision of specific support designed to overcome practical barriers (eg, training and development where skill shortage is a major concern)

- ➢ Provision of extra information or more effective communication in areas where the concern is not justified or is over-bloated
- ➢ The provision of counseling support to assist staff deal with aspects of change that are potentially traumatic (eg. job losses and "status devaluation")
- ➢ Amending some aspects of the change process: change in overall scope or change of emphasis.
- ➢ The provision of cultural or attitude change interventions especially if the major concern is on how to manage new processes, values and relationships
- ➢ The application and reinforcement of motivators based on the motivational preferences indicated in the survey
- ➢ The provision of continuing messages about the potential organizational benefits from the programme or difficulties from failure to change (Walters, 1994)

The survey thus gives a clue as to staff attitudes which may not be favorable and these are used to improve on the process

Lessons from Nigeria: Managers perception and attitude towards RTC and its management

200 questionnaires were distributed to managers in the 5 South-West states of Nigeria (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun & Ondostates) between March and June, 2013 and 160 (80%) were returned and usable. 73% of this number was male, 25% had first degrees 43% with Masters Degrees, and 32% with professional qualifications; most of them were from the banking and finance industry(43%), and telecommunication(24%) while most of them were managers in their various establishments (67%) though some were AGMs and above(10%). The essence of the survey was to determine their perception and attitude towards change resistance and its management using a 5-point Likert scale instrument that was analyzed with descriptive statistics.

Table 4: General issues in change management & RTC

		SA/A(%	U(%	SD/D(%
1	Changes are becoming too many in organizations	27	40	33
2	Some of these changes are unnecessary	41	46	13
3	Some of these changes are imitative(me-too tendencies	33	40	29
4	RTC has negative impact on the success of change programmes	60	20	40
5	RTC is the greatest challenge to change management	79	7	13
6	There are benefits from RTC	27	60	13
7	I will manage RTC by sacking the resisters	14		86

Table 4:Preferred strategies for managing RTC

Ranking	Strategy	%
1st	Education and communication	73
2nd	Facilitation and support	60
3rd	Participation and involvement	60
4th	Negotiation and agreement	53
5th	Manipulation & cooperation	46
6th	Explicit and implicit coercion	40

Relationship between type of change and strategies for management

54% agreed that the method used in managing change and RTC depends on the type of change involved and generally, their preferred strategies are related to the type of change as follows:

Table5: Type of change and method of management

	Type of change	Preferred method	Runner-up
1	Change of leadership	Negotiation & agreement(45%	Participation & involvement(22%
2	Regulatory changes	Education and communication(51%	Explicit and implicit coercion(25%
3	Mergers/acquisition	Negotiation and agreement(56%	Manipulation & cooperation(23%
4	Office relocation	Facilitation and support(48%	Participation and involvement(23%
5	Technology/software upgrade	Education and communication(54%	Participation and involvement(38%
6	Staff rationalization	Facilitation and support(49%	Explicit & implicit coercion(23%
7	Staff remuneration	Negotiation & agreement(54%	Explicit & implicit coercion(36%

This survey indicates that:

1. While a reasonable number agree that changes in the environment are too much, unnecessary and imitative, most of them are uncertain
2. 60% believes that RTC has negative impacts on change programmes
3. 79% believes that RTC is the greatest challenge to change management
4. Only 27% believes that there are some benefits from RTC
5. The preferred strategies for managing RTC are education and communication (73%), facilitation and support and participation and involvement (60%)
6. The type of change influences the strategy for its management as indicated in table 5

Conclusion

RTC is real and an inescapable aspect of change. People may resist because of economic, social and emotional reasons; factors that are altruistic or selfish. Even the structure of the organization and the nature of groups are contributory factors. Management also expects RTC and prepare for it, at times, seeing it even when it is not there. Resistance is thus cast in an adversarial picture, the enemy of change that must be defeated if change is to be successful and at times RTC is misunderstood and mismanaged and this complicates the change management process. Even when change managers are unwilling or unable to explain the change agenda, it is all blamed on RTC which becomes the organizational Jesus that carry's on its head, the whole sins (failures) of the programme (Stewart & Stringars, 2003).

It is now evident from several literature and empirical studies that there are some positive sides to RTC; that rather than being the evil, RTC should be utilized to improve the change management process through the various methods discussed above. Thus, this paradigm sees RTC as a positive and useful reaction rather than being criminalized. Under this new paradigm, the principles of change management as highlighted by Maris (1993) are as follows:

- The process of reform has to expect and encourage conflict because it gives people opportunity to assimilate change and develop their own responses.
- Change must respect the sense of autonomy and experience of different groups (and individuals).
- There must be time and patience to allow for the accommodation of diverse interests and realization of continuity of the structure of meaning.

The key issue in this emerging mindset is thus not managing or containing RTC but first revisiting our understanding of and attitude to, the concept; sifting the real from imagined resistance, making the best of it as a value-creating feedback mechanism and using it to optimize the process of articulating, planning, executing, institutionalizing and evaluating change. *Organizational chieftains should be open and consultative about change, encourage those who have issues with the change process to come forward and ensure that negative feedback about proposed change programmes are evaluated and possibly accommodated, where meaningful. Two useful strategies for attaining this objective are building organized disagreement into the change process and effective use of employee surveys*

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