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Literature Review
Psychological Constructs and Organisational Factors Influencing the Acceptance or Rejection of Organisational Change

EVALUATION OF THE
'PREPARING FOR LIFE'
EARLY CHILDHOOD
INTERVENTION PROGRAMME
By
UCD GEARY INSTITUTE

Context

This review has been complied to serve as a guide for the implementation of the service evaluation of the Síolta framework as part of the Preparing for Life programme evaluation.

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1. Introduction

Organisational change is a major source of workplace stress and is associated with a wide range of negative behavioural, psychological and physiological outcomes including job loss, reduced status, loss of identity, interpersonal conflict, threats to self esteem, reduced well being, anxiety and uncertainty (Martin, Jones & Callan, 2005; Terry, Callan & Sartori, 1996, Ashford, 1988, Schweiger & Ivancevich, 1985, Kanter, 1983). The importance of staff acceptance of organisational change is widely recognised by researchers (e.g. Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992). Resistance to organisational change can slow or prevent the success of the change, which may be of utmost importance to the survival of the organisation (Leiter & Harvie, 1998).

This review was conducted in order to determine which factors influence employee acceptance of change in an organisation and addresses the following questions: 1) If a planned organisational change is implemented and is a success, which elements, both of the organisation and of the individual, were responsible for this? 2) If the opposite occurs, what factors influenced non-acceptance and rejection of the change? 3) Which underlying difference(s) is responsible for one company successfully implementing the change and another failing to do so? Examining any potential differences in the success of the change across sites is necessary as the change is being implemented across at least six separate companies.

The change at the focus of this review is the training of nursery/childcare staff across six different preschools in the Dublin 17 area, on a new programme called the Síolta framework developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE). The introduction of this National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education will, in essence, change many of the everyday work practises of the staff and management in order to ensure an enhanced quality of service for children attending the preschool.

Outline of the Review

This literature review begins with a discussion of relevant organisational and contextual factors which have been identified as being important influences on employee acceptance of organisational change in section 2. This will be followed by a review of salient individual factors, including self-efficacy and cognitive dissonance theories in section 3. Section 4 describes two main theories in the psychological and organisational fields, 'Readiness for Change' and the 'Theory of Planned Behaviour'. These theories combine a number of elements in order to explain reactions to organisational change. This division between individual and organisational factors is artificial as there is substantial overlap between the sections-organisational factors exert their influence through individual factors. This division is useful however, as an organising framework for this discussion. Section 5 concludes this review providing a recommendation about which elements should be included in the forthcoming study of pre-schools reactions to the organisational change of the introduction of the *Síolta* framework.

2. Organisational and Contextual Factors

Munton, Mooney & Rowland (1997, cited in Munton & Mooney, 1999) in a study of childcare nurseries, suggest that organisational characteristics can have an influence on a company's ability to change their practises (Munton & Mooney, 1999). Key characteristics of organisations which evidence has shown to influence the success of

change interventions include participatory management styles, i.e. including employees in decision-making, and established procedures for self assessment, i.e. employees assess their own quality of work (Jorde-Bloom, 1995; Stephens & Wilkinson, 1995). Greater staff involvement in tactical decision-making during planned organisational change is associated with increased acceptance of change, work satisfaction, and perceived effectiveness of the change (Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994). Rodd (1994) found that change was less likely to be successful in nurseries where staff felt that they had little ownership of ideas and that change was generally imposed from above. Munton & Mooney (1999) summarise the empirical evidence by stating that childcare centres where change is less likely to succeed are characterised by their staff as having low management support, avoiding taking risks, predominantly authoritarian as opposed to participative, high in control, low in integration and intolerant of conflict.

Effective supervision is also an important contextual factor in organisational change and correlates with higher morale and productivity in hospital sub-unit staff (Shipper, 1991). Hand-in-hand with effective supervision is effective communication which is important for staff morale and change acceptance (Leiter & Harvie, 1998). Leiter & Harvey (1998) in a retrospective study of over 3000 hospital staff, whose working environment underwent significant change and restructuring, found that supportive supervision, confidence in management, effective communication and meaningfulness of work were associated with a positive perception of change. Confidence in management and effective communication were both directly linked to an acceptance of change. Professional efficacy was a mediating variable between meaningfulness of work and change acceptance. This study confirms the importance of the organisational variables of effective communication, confidence in management, supervisor support, and meaningfulness of work in aiding staff to accept revolutionary change.

In addition to intra-organisational variables it is also important to look at the context of an organisational change. Terry, Callan & Sartori (1996) conducted a cross-sectional analysis of aeroplane pilots' adjustment to a merger between a smaller company and a larger more prestigious organisation and found that staff in the smaller company evidenced significantly higher levels of self-efficacy, control and lower levels of stress than the staff of the larger international airline. Self-effiacy refers to a persons expectancies or beliefs concerning the likelihood that he/she can perform a particular behaviour or meet a given set of situational demands (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1977). Terry et al (1996) drew on Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1982) to explain the finding that members of the subordinate group (in this case the smaller airline) were not threatened by the merger because they saw their membership in the new more prestigious company as a way of improving their social identity and as a result, their feelings of self-worth. Enhancing self-worth is seen by SIT as the motivational basis or driving force for intergroup behaviour. Staff from the larger airline rated the organisational change situation as more threatening, used less effective coping resources and exhibited poorer adjustment than members of the subordinate group. Terry et al (1996) again used SIT to explain this difference - the employees of the larger organisation may have felt that their social identity as members of a prestigious international carrier was undermined by the inclusion of the subordinate group in the newly formed airline. These findings emphasise the importance of paying attention to the pre-organisational change status of the company and the intergroup context of the change situation (Terry et al, 1996). This may have relevance to preschools in the forthcoming PFL/CECDE study who may gain increased status through reaching the Síolta standards. Therefore it

may be a motivation for them to embrace the forthcoming change and according to SIT it may lead to an enhancement of employee self-worth.

Martin et al (2005) claim that little attention has been given to the role of environmental and organisational coping resources in organisational change (Martin et al, 2005). Organisational coping resources refer to aids or resources in an employee's work environment that he/she can draw on during times of organisational change. Martin et al (2005) conducted their research into organisational change under the framework proposed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) in their cognitive-phenomenological theory of stress and coping. This theory posits that adjustment during stressful events is a process that begins with the cognitive and affective appraisal or evaluation of the event. Whether the appraisal of the stressful event affects the persons well-being is influenced by the effectiveness of the coping strategies that are available to them in order to deal with the event. Both the initial appraisal of the situation and the coping strategies utilised are influenced by the personal and environmental resources that the individual has access to.

Martin et al (2005) examine the psychological climate of an organisation as an environmental coping resource for employees and define it after Michela, Lukaszwski & Allegrante (1995) as 'the perceptual and experiential components of a reciprocal interaction between the organisational environment and the employee' (pg 265). A positive psychological climate is conceptualised as a potential source of environmental coping resources that can help the employee appraise the change as positive. In their two research studies Martin et al (2005) identified, via qualitative methods, employee relationships and leader vision as 'organisational-specific' dimensions of psychological climate of particular relevance to the organisation under study. They also assessed more general elements of psychological climate such as quality of patient care and supervisor support.

The results of this study supported the notion that a positive psychological climate was associated with positive appraisals about organisational change and in turn, enhanced levels of employee adjustment (Martin et al., 2005). Organisational specific measures of psychological climate were more powerful predictors of change appraisals and adjustment indicators than more general ones. For example, employees who perceived their leaders to display an enthusiastic vision for the organisation reported more positive change appraisals and higher levels of commitment. Based on these results, Martin et al (2005) recommend that researchers examine psychological climate measures that are identified by employees as salient climate factors in studies of organisational change.

Herold, Fedor & Caldwell (2007) discuss how the organisational theory and strategy literature has long recommended that organisational change needs to be understood or looked at in terms of the environment or context of the organisation. In their analysis they controlled for the effects of the magnitude of the change and the fairness with which it was implemented (procedural fairness, i.e. do those affected by the change perceive that it was implemented in a fair way). In addition, their analysis showed an interaction effect in that individual differences in change-related self efficacy interact with the turbulence of the change setting, a context variable (i.e. the number of other changes going on simultaneously) to influence change outcomes such as the employees commitment to the change. The study has shown that an environment of pervasive change (i.e. multiple changes simultaneously) may negatively influence individuals commitment to a given change, especially for those with low self efficacy in dealing with change. This finding held when other important aspects of change such as its impact on

employees and the quality of the change implementation process were controlled for. These results emphasise the importance of examining factors on multiple levels and their interactions, such as individual and context variables, rather than content or process variables alone. The study controlled for other aspects of the change and sampled many organisations, thus enhancing its rigour and generalisability. However, on a conceptual level, it only measured a single aspect of the context (change turbulence), one individual difference (self-efficacy) and one attitude towards the change.

3. Individual/Psychological Factors

a. Self Efficacy

Herold et al (2007) examine individual differences in employee reactions to change. These include change-related self-efficacy, defined using Bandura's definition as a set of beliefs about ones ability to meet a given set of situational demands (Wood & Bandura, 1989) and how individual differences interact with other salient aspects of the change, such as the context within which the change is happening. Similar to Martin et al's (2005) cognitive-phenomenological conceptualisation discussed above, Herold et al (2007) view high self-efficacy as a buffer against uncertainty associated with stressful job conditions such as organisational change (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001; Herold et al, 2007).

A distinction can be made between trait and state assessments of efficacy, that is, self-efficacy that is a trait of the individual across a range of situations as opposed to more setting or domain specific self-efficacy (Chen, Gully & Eden, 2001). Herold et al (2007) argue that domain specific self-efficacy has a greater potential to explain variance in an organisational context. Their hierarchical linear modelling analysis showed that individual differences in change-related efficacy can affect an employee's level of change commitment, for example those with high change self-efficacy showed more commitment to the change. Martin et al (2005) found that change self efficacy was an important mediator between their psychological climate variables and employee adjustment to organisational change, supporting the important role of self-efficacy in mediating reactions to organisational change.

b. Attitudes and Cognitive Dissonance

Neiva, Ros & das Gracas Torres da Paz (2005) describe a cognitive conceptualisation of resistance to change, which involves three types of resistance. The first views resistance as a natural and normal process which occurs because of distorted beliefs held by the resistor such as an individual's tendency to assess situations using extreme categories. A second conceptualisation of resistance views it as an intention to resist and is associated with negative perceptions of the impact of change, irrational ideas and affect. The third viewpoint sees resistance as a negative emotional reaction which becomes activated by a discrepancy between the cognitive schemas of individuals and those present in the proposals for change (George & Jones, 2001). This last model of cognitive consistency, based on cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), is the most widely adopted conceptualisation of resistance and assumes that people strive to resolve inconsistencies between their behaviour and their attitudes (Bartunek, Greenberg & Davidson, 1999). People find it difficult to tolerate ambiguity between their attitudes and behaviours (and expected behaviours) and as change involves moving from the known towards the unknown, those who are intolerant to ambiguity prefer to maintain, rather than change the status quo (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987).

Attitudes are conceptualised as higher order factors, which are mediated through cognitive schemas and which predict behaviour change (Lau & Woodman, 1995). Neiva et al (2005) describe the literature as comprising 'conceptual confusion' and the aim of their study was to construct and validate an instrument measuring individual attitudes to organisational change in order to enhance understanding of the mechanisms that bring about resistance to change. Qualitative interviews with 15 professionals from public and private organisations were subjected to a content analysis and informed the questions for the analysis. The authors validated their instrument with factor analysis and identified three subscales: 1) attitudes of opposition due to cynicism, 2) attitudes of opposition due to fear and uncertainty, and 3) an attitude of acceptance of change. In a sample of 409 workers, it was found that people can simultaneously hold both favourable and unfavourable attitudes. For example, people can score highly on acceptance and yet still score highly on fear and uncertainty. Inconsistent attitudinal patterns predominated in women who had worked in the company for between five and ten years, who were educated and aged 25 to 35. The authors suggest that experience of failures of past organisational change may have affected these women's simultaneous yet divergent attitudes. The authors suggest that this scale can be used to identify attitudes which may hinder organisational change. It can also enable an investigation into their underlying socio-cultural determinants which could then be targeted by management to enhance acceptance of change.

4. Theoretical Frameworks: Readiness for Change and the Theory of Planned Behaviour

a. Readiness for Change

Armenakis, Harris & Mossholder (1993) claim that Readiness for Change (RFC) is an important factor in employee reactions to organisational change. They define RFC as *an organisational member's beliefs, attitudes and intentions* regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organisations capacity to successfully make those changes. Readiness is described as a 'cognitive precursor' to behaviour which can result in resistance to change behaviours or support for change behaviours. The authors make a distinction between readiness for change and resistance to change, thus creating a readiness for change that can pre-empt any resistance to change. Factors relevant to creating readiness for change are conceptualised as individual cognitions and social information processing variables whereby an individual's readiness may be influenced by the readiness of others.

Armenakis et. al. (1993) describe a detailed model comprising several factors which *influence* an employee's beliefs, attitudes and intentions in relation to readiness for change. In this model, employee readiness is influenced by the nature of the message transmitted, the change agent attributes (for example expertise, trustworthiness, credibility and sincerity), and the interpersonal attributes and social dynamics of organisational members. In addition, employee readiness may also be influenced by unplanned media information, existing organisational conditions and significance of the change effort.

Within this overarching Readiness for Change framework, Holt, Armenakis, Feild & Harris (2007) developed a questionnaire to measure the readiness for change of individual employees. A factor analysis confirmed four subscales of the readiness for change construct: 1) Appropriateness or the extent to which workers felt the change was appropriate, 2) Management Support characterised as the worker's belief in whether management supported the change 3) Change Efficacy defined as how much employees

feel capable of making the change successfully, and 4) Personal Valence or the degree to which employees feel the change will be personally beneficial to them. This factor structure was initially determined through exploratory methods in a public sector organisation and replicated using confirmatory methods in an independent private sector organisation. Reliability and validity of the scale was satisfactorily established and the scale also showed discriminant validity by distinguishing between a group who had been involved in designing organisational changes and those who had not (the latter had a significantly lower score on readiness for change-involvement in decision-making promotes acceptance of change as emphasised previously in this discussion: see Munton & Mooney, 1999). The authors recommend that further refinements of the scale should take place, as there was some overlap between the constructs. The authors feel that the instrument would be complementary to an instrument that assessed commitment to organisational change (e.g. Hersocovitch & Meyer, 2002) as, if commitment to change is low, the readiness for change scale may indicate which factors are leading to low commitment.

Armenakis, Bernerth, Pitts & Walker (2007) build upon this work to identify five important precursors to RFC in the form of beliefs that determine the degree of buy-in by organisational change recipients. The importance of precursor variables on employee performance has been demonstrated previously (e.g., Georgopulos & Tannenbaum, 1957; Lewin & Minton, 1986; Koys, 2001, all cited in Armenakis et al, 2007). Armenakis et al (2007) offer a self-report questionnaire that can be conveniently administered to assess change recipients beliefs, which they claim are basic precursors to behaviour.

Armenakis et al (2007) define a belief as an opinion or a conviction about the truth of something that may not be readily obvious or subject to systematic verification. They claim that it is the beliefs of employees that must be influenced in order to promote organisational change. Their research identified the following beliefs, from literature dating to the 1940s, and from their previous work (discussed above) as most significant in determining the reactions of change recipients to an organisational change: 1) Discrepancy or a belief that some change is needed, 2) Appropriateness defined as the belief that a specific organisational change is necessary to eliminate the discrepancy, 3) Efficacy which is a feeling that the individual has the ability to carry out the change effectively, 4) Principal Support characterised as the influence of change agents and opinion leaders on change recipients, and 5) Valence or the attractiveness from the change recipients perspective of the perceived outcome of the change i.e. 'whats in it for me?' (Coch & French, 1948; Ryan & Gross, 1943). These belief constructs build upon and overlap greatly with the subscales of the Readiness for Change measure which Holt et al (2007) identified using factor analysis. Based on these belief constructs, the authors developed a 24-item scale to measure called the Organisational Change Recipients Beliefs Scale (OCRBS) following an extensive questionnaire development process involving four studies. This is an additional scale to the scale mentioned previously which measures an employees level of Readiness for Change (Holt et. al. 2007). Thus Holt et al (2007) developed a scale which measures an employee's level of readiness for change and Armenakis et al (2007) publish a scale which measures the five beliefs underpinning an employee's readiness for change.

The authors state that the questionnaire provides a barometer of buy-in regarding a change initiative (i.e. how much employees are accepting the proposed change and which of their beliefs support or do not support the change) and is useful for tracking the progress of organisational change efforts. The OCRBS is recommended for use in

conjunction with other relevant scales in order to evaluate organisational change (Armenakis et al, 2007). This 5 belief framework has also been used as a tool for coding qualitative interviews with the management team of a company undergoing organisational change (Armenakis, Harris, Cole, Fillmer & Self, 2007). No direct questions related to the 5 beliefs were asked in the interviews. The 5 beliefs were used to code the comments and only 2 out of 121 comments failed to fit under the 5 belief framework. Collectively the results allowed the researchers to provide evidence that the management team were mostly concerned with the appropriateness of the company strategy in the current economic context and had mixed concerns about their efficacy regarding the success of the company. The analysis using the 5 belief framework allowed the researchers to pinpoint the underlying beliefs that were affecting resistance to change and showed that the company was not experiencing resistance to change for fear of change's sake. Instead, the employees were issuing a warning that the strategy was no longer appropriate for the external environment. The authors claim that this framework, which is grounded in theory and research, provides the foundation for understanding why an organisational change is or is not progressing successfully. Future qualitative research may ask questions specific to the 5 beliefs and the authors include examples of relevant questions (Armenakis et al, 2007).

### b. The Theory of Planned Behaviour

Piderit (2000) in a review of studies of organisational change summarises the various ways in which change acceptance has been conceptualised and concludes that any definition of change resistance/acceptance should integrate behavioural, emotional and belief components. Piderit (2000) recommends that this can be achieved by utilising the tripartite view of attitudes. The importance of attitudes has been discussed already in relation to Neiva et al's (2000) research. The tripartite view considers the three dimensions of attitudes as the cognitive (beliefs), emotional and intentional (intentions to behave) (Ajzen, 1984, cited in Piderit, 2000). Yet how these dimensions are defined and how they relate to one another is not clear and requires further clarification (Piderit, 2000).

A key advantage of utilising the tripartite view of attitudes is that conceptualising each element as existing on a separate continuum allows for the possibility of different and conflicting reactions across the different dimensions (Piderit, 2000; Neiva et. al., 2005). For example, an employee may have a positive emotional reaction to change but hold a simultaneous negative belief about the success of the change as he/she may believe that the proposed change is not adequate for the needs of the organisation. This belief may lead to opposition behaviours against the proposed change. Piderit (2000) also recommends assessing the dimensions of attitudes at various time points in order to address their dynamic nature. Piderit (2000) concludes that viewing employees responses to proposed organisational change as multidimensional attitudes allows a richer and more accurate view of the ways in which employees respond to change. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) is one theory which puts forward a multidimensional view of attitudes and their influence on behaviour, within an organising framework.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), outlined in Figure 1 below, provides a useful framework for understanding how attitudes influence behavioural intentions during times of organisational change (Peach, Jimmieson & White, 2005). The underlying premise of the TPB is that individuals make decisions rationally and systemically through

the information that is available to them (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In the TPB, intention is viewed as the most proximal determinant of behaviour. Intentions themselves are seen as a function of three independent determinants, the first of which is the person's *attitude*. The attitude is defined as the persons overall evaluation, either positive or negative, towards performing the behaviour of interest. The second determinant of intentions is the *subjective norm*, which reflects perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour. *Perceived behavioural control* is the third determinant of intentions to implement the behaviour, and this reflects the extent to which the person believes they are capable of carrying out the behaviour. Peach et al (2005) mention a number of examples where the TPB has been used to predict behaviours in organisational contexts for example, the prediction of manager's intentions to improve their own skills following provision of feedback (Maurer & Palmer, 1999).

Fig. 1: Diagram of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2006)
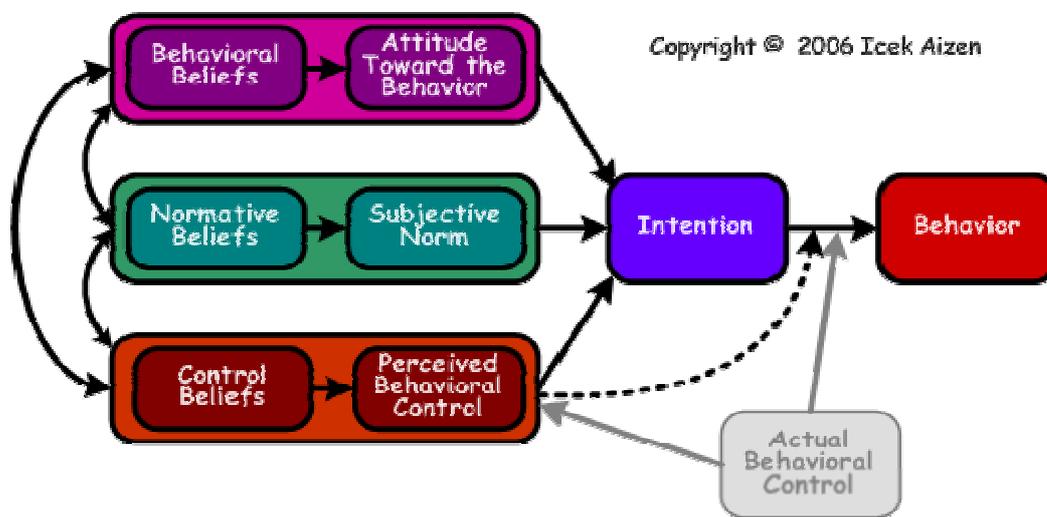
The TPB also identifies the beliefs underpinning each of the constructs of *attitude*, *subjective norm* and *perceived behavioural control* (PBC). An individual's attitude is thought to be a function of salient behavioural beliefs i.e. the belief that certain outcomes (benefits and costs) associated with the behaviour will occur (behavioural beliefs) and these outcomes will be weighted by evaluations of the pleasantness of each of the outcomes (outcome evaluations). Thus the attitude dimension of TPB encompasses both the belief and emotional components of the tripartite view of attitudes discussed earlier. Subjective norms are defined by the extent to which other people would want the individual to perform the behaviour (normative beliefs) weighted by his/her motivation to comply with these wants (motivation to comply). PBC is conceptualised as a function of the beliefs concerning whether resources and opportunities are available to perform the behaviour (control beliefs) and these are weighted by the expected impact that these factors would have if they were to occur (perceived power) (Peach et. al., 2005). A major advantage of the TPB is its ability to identify the underlying beliefs that discriminate between intenders and non-intenders (or those who do perform and those that do not perform the behaviour) for the particular behaviour under investigation (Fishbein & Stasson, 1990). Peach et. al. (2005) developed indirect measures of the TPB variables including attitude, subjective norm and PBC, using an elicitation study as per instructions outlined by Fishbein & Ajzen (1980).

Peach et. al.'s (2005) analysis, using the TPB, produced comprehensive results about the differences between those who intended to engage in pro-organisational change behaviours (intenders) and those who did not (non-intenders). Employees with strong intentions to engage in pro-organisational change behaviours had a significantly different assessment of the benefits associated with carrying out activities that supported the organisational change (which was the relocation of the company offices). Strong intenders showed significantly more positive attitudes towards the change than those with weaker intentions. Intenders believed that they would feel up-to-date about the relocation, would be prepared for the relocation, would be able to identify inefficient work practises and would see improvements in work practises as a result of the change. In addition, they rated these consequences as more pleasant than low intenders. Strong intenders were also significantly more motivated to comply with perceived expectations (subjective norm) and to be less likely to suffer from a lack of motivation. These results provide evidence that there are underlying belief-based differences between employees possessing strong, compared to more moderate, intentions to engage in behaviours that support organisational change (Peach et. al., 2005). Thus there were significant differences found between the two groups (high vs low-moderate intenders) in their underlying behavioural and normative beliefs and in their beliefs associated with perceived behavioural control in terms of perceived motivation.

As already discussed, high intenders differed significantly from moderate intenders in their assessment of how likely benefits would occur if they engaged in pro organisational change activities. High intenders were also more likely to rate the benefits as being more pleasant than low intenders. However, there were no significant differences between these two groups in relation to perceived costs of carrying out organisational change behaviours. It seems that it was the benefits of the relocation rather than the perceived disadvantages or costs that differentiated high intenders from low intenders. Peach et. al. (2005) interpret these findings as support for implementing communication strategies that focus on the positive outcomes of engaging in change supportive behaviours in the early stages of the change implementation process. The authors propose that this would strengthen positive attitudes about impending change and lead to better intentions of carrying out change behaviours.

The subjective norm also emerged as an important influence on intentions as measured by normative beliefs. Employees with strong intentions perceived that all of the relevant social groups (branch manager, supervisor, other branch staff, work unit colleagues and friends in the organisation) would approve of them carrying out organisational change tasks, compared to employees with weaker intentions to carry out these tasks. These significant results suggest that social influence may help to create social pressure among employees to act in change-supportive ways. In an examination of the beliefs which were measured as the underlying constructs of PBC, employees with both high and moderate intentions differed significantly on only 1 out of the 6 barriers considered in the study, that is, a lack of personal motivation. Thus the authors concluded that employees did not perceive many barriers that would prevent them from engaging in pro-change behaviours, other than their own levels of enthusiasm.

It should be noted that a criticism of this research is that organisational change behaviours actually carried out were not measured, only the intention to carry them out. However, the authors point out that the robustness of the intention-behaviour relationship has been demonstrated in a number of studies assessing the utility of the TPB (Armitage & Corner, 2001a). Peach et. al.'s (2005) research supports the application

of the TPB to analysing employee reactions to change and they recommend that the utility of the TPB should be examined in future research as a basis for understanding the beliefs underpinning employee readiness for change.

c. Readiness for Change and the TPB

Jimmieson, Peach & White (2008) conceptualise Holt et. al.'s (2007) Readiness for Change (RFC) construct as an attitude that acts as a precursor to intentions to support change. They appear to assimilate the beliefs of the RFC construct under the attitude dimension of the TPB, although they do not explicitly state this. The two theories contain many of the same elements, however the TPB offers a framework for relating the variables to each other and the overall outcome, whereas RFC theory views them all as equal-status beliefs. As previously described (and see Fig.1 above), according to the TPB, the constructs of attitude, subjective norm and PBC influence behaviour via intentions and also have reciprocal influences on each other. Also, perceived behavioural control is described as indirectly influencing behaviour via intentions, in addition to having a direct impact on behaviour.

Jimmieson et. al. (2008) propose that favourable and positive views about the need for organisational change (which is similar to the Readiness for Change Discrepancy belief, as described earlier) and the extent to which employees believe that the changes will be beneficial to the company and themselves (similar to the RFC beliefs of Appropriateness and Valence) are viewed as beliefs underpinning the Attitude dimension of the TPB. Subjective Norm in the TPB is conceptualised as the social influence which pressures employees to act in change supportive ways (or vice versa). Once again this is similar to the Readiness for Change belief of Principal Support (Holt et al, 2007). In this way, it appears that Jimmieson et al (2008) tailored their belief questions (which underlie the TPB Attitude dimension) and their social norm measure to reflect the theoretical basis of the RFC construct.

One could conceptualise the Readiness for Change belief of Efficacy as having a similar meaning to the TPB's Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) construct, that is, the extent to which employees believe that various factors will either facilitate or obstruct their ability to engage in change behaviours. PBC combines a self efficacy element with the person's belief in whether they will be able to engage in the activity for practical reasons other than self belief. Jimmieson et. al. (2008) propose that the TPB offers an insight into the mechanisms through which change promoting activities on the part of employers (for example including employees in the decision making process and good communication) are related to an employee's readiness to engage in pro-change behaviours. The main effects of communication and participation are thought to be mediated by the more proximal antecedents to behaviour, i.e. attitude, subjective norm and PBC (Jimmieson et. al., 2008).

In a study of public-sector employee reactions to a large-scale building relocation, Jimmieson et al (2008) found that employee perceptions of attitude, subjective norm and PBC (TPB variables) accounted for 30% of the variance in their self-rated intentions to engage in change supportive behaviours. Thus, employees who held a favourable attitude towards performing the behaviour, who perceived pressure from important work peers to perform the pro-change behaviours and who felt that they had control over performing the behaviour, were more likely to intend to behave in the change supportive manner. In addition, employees who felt that they had received information about the

change and who felt that they had been involved in the decision making process around the change, reported higher intentions to engage in appropriate behaviours.

In a discussion of the limitations of their research, Jimmieson et. al. (2008) advise future research to assess the TPB variables at different time points in order to account for changing employee beliefs over the course of the change implementation process. In addition, the researchers advise future research to demonstrate the full capacity of the TPB in predicting both intentions and subsequent behaviours of employees in relation to organisational change. Jimmieson et. al. (2008) also caution in relation to their convenience sample, single item assessment of some variables and the fact that the change in the organisation had many positive elements compared to more anxiety causing changes, for example a company merger. The TPB offers a unique contribution to our understanding of organisational change as it offers a theoretical approach that has predictive power. The TPB is able to identify the underlying beliefs that distinguish between intenders and non-intenders for the specific behaviour under study (Jimmieson et. al., 2008; Peach et. al., 2005). This can help managers to develop a greater understanding of the underlying psychological factors that distinguish between those employees who support change and those who do not. These beliefs can then be targeted in future-change efforts in order to promote the acceptance of organisational change. Jimmieson et. al. (2008) specifically recommend that the utility of the TPB be examined in future research as a basis for understanding employee responses to change.

5. Application of review findings to research study investigating acceptance of the Síolta framework

Many of these factors are relevant to the research project which this literature review was conducted to inform. Due to the necessity of brevity in the examination of the proposed organisational change, these factors must be narrowed down to those that are most relevant. In addition, the sample size (approximately 6 preschools) is too small to do any inferential statistics which rules out a comparison of non-intenders and intenders (if the TPB was used) and of predictive analyses using multiple regression. The following section discusses possible ways of investigating the Síolta change.

A search for 'the theory of planned behaviour' in PsychInfo produced 529 research articles which have the TPB in their title. This figure doubles when the search parameters are expanded to include the abstract. Evidently the TPB is widely used and a closer examination of the literature shows it has been applied to predict intentions and behaviours in many diverse fields, including the use of seat belts (Simsekoglu, & Lajunen, 2008), alcohol consumption (Huchting, Lac & LaBrie, 2008) and level of physical exercise (Hamilton & White, 2008). Armitage & Conner (2001) in a meta-analysis of 185 studies found that the TPB accounted for 27% and 39% of the variance in behaviour and intention, respectively. In organisational settings, the TPB has been used to investigate technology adoption (Rei, Lang & Welker, 2002), willingness to pursue gender a-typical careers (Giles & Rea, 1999), voluntary employee turnover (Van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004) and the prediction of manager's intentions to improve their skills following receipt of feedback (Maurer & Palmer, 1999). Jimmieson et al (2008) claim that the TPB has not been applied to organisational change prior to their own work in the area, but that its use complies with recommendations made by researchers in the field (e.g. Piderit, 2000).

Jimmieson at al (2008) distributed self-complete questionnaires assessing the TPB variables among a sample of employees in an organisation undergoing change (N=147). By following the instructions of Ajzen (2002b) on how to develop a TPB questionnaire specific to the area under study, each separate variable in TPB (i.e. attitude, subjective norm, PBC etc) had a numerical score. Means, standard deviations and correlations were calculated and a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was carried out in order to determine the extent to which the TPB variables predicted intentions to engage in the change supportive behaviours (which were identified by management). Peach et al (2005) on the other hand, examined the underlying belief-based differences between high-intenders and low to moderate intenders. They analysed 149 questionnaires and conducted six one-way multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA's) using 'intentions' as the independent variable and the belief based measures (i.e. the beliefs underlying each of the TPB elements) as the dependent variables. The TPB has also been used as a framework to inform qualitative interviews (e.g. Deskins, Harris, Bradlyn, Cottrell, Coffman, Olexa & Neal, 2006; King & Dennis, 2006). In reference to the use of the TPB as a qualitative research tool, Ajzen (the theorist behind the TPB), states 'like other theories of this kind, (the theory of planned behaviour) can be used as a heuristic framework to guide questions to be raised in qualitative research'. However, the standard methods developed over the years for use with the theory are largely quantitative in nature' (http://www.people.umass.edu/aizen/faq.html). Deskins et al. (2006) used the TPB variables to frame their questions whilst interviewing West Virginians in relation to their attitudes towards participating in cholesterol screening. They conducted semi-structured interviews with 142 participants and interviewers were instructed to elicit information relevant to the TPB variables. The results allowed them to identify the beliefs underlying interviewees' negative attitudes towards screening, which allowed them to make recommendations on how to target these belief-based barriers.

The studies presented in this review which introduce the Readiness for Change measures (i.e. the Readiness for Change scale and the Organizational Change Recipients Beliefs Scale) discuss development of the scales and conduct factor analyses on the scales to determine the underlying dimensions. The scales themselves have not been utilised to quantitatively examine an organisational change similar to the change which is the focus of this review (to the best of this author's knowledge). A citation search produces no articles which state that they have used the Readiness for Change scale or the OCRBS in an investigation of a change. However the RFC five key beliefs have been used to analyse qualitative interviews with the 18 employees of an organisation undergoing a significant change (Armenakis et al, 2007).

6. Conclusion

Based on a review of the literature, the factors influencing organisational change are varied and complex. Organisational elements which have been found to influence employee reactions to change and which have been discussed here include: management style, management support, style of employee assessment, quality of supervision, quality of communication, level of employee confidence in management, meaningfulness of work and the context of the change, which in itself includes the number of other changes occurring simultaneously, potential change in status as a result of the change and psychological climate (e.g. leader vision, employee relationships). Individual variables which have been found to influence employee acceptance of change include attitudes and their underlying beliefs and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in particular has been found to mediate the relationship between organisational variables and employee responses to

change. The Theory of Planned Behaviour offers an organisational framework which specifies how attitudes, the subjective norm and self efficacy (in the form of PBC) influence employee intentions to engage in pro-change behaviours. Readiness for Change can be viewed as beliefs underlying the TPB attitude construct or separately as a composite of beliefs which underlie an employee's level of readiness for change.

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