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WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CHANGE

A Study of change practice and change agency
in higher education.

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WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CHANGE.

A Study of change practice and change agency in higher education.

THESIS FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE (Ph.D.)

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FOREWORD

During the last 15 years, I have worked as an academic developer. The last ten at Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. There, I have encountered many people with a passion for education. They have attended courses and workshops, developed educational projects, conducted the scholarship of teaching and learning, they have written about their work, documented it and have had the very best of intentions on developing their practice. Most often, their work is driven by a desire to improve, and often to explore. At their core, these people are disciplinarians, and not necessarily fully-fledged educators or leaders. My work has been about informing their practice, about driving academic and educational development across campus, and has been about initiating and enabling change in academic, educationally oriented practice.

At the same time, higher education in Sweden has witnessed the introduction of the Bologna process. The higher education sector in Sweden has started to charge a tuition fee for some foreign students and the sector is about to enter a new and novel cycle of national, external reviews under the guise of quality assurance. Higher education finds itself in a constant predicament, where things are always in flow and changing, but still tend to stay the same; the same river, but it keeps flowing. This thesis is concerned with the phenomenon of change practice. As an academic developer, I have witnessed many teachers whom, with enthusiasm, wish to change their own practice, only to find that this is easier said than done. This thesis and research project is driven in part by a wish to understand what makes change so difficult but also how people work with the enhancing and changing their practice. Moreover, it is used as an opportunity to reflect on my own, and others' academic development practice, to see how we can better serve the university, and its stakeholders, and to also pursue independent academic research in the context of academic development in higher education. At the same time this thesis and the research work done within, has allowed me an opportunity to take a look at the way a university works when engaging in capacity building and change practice.

The title of this thesis is adapted from a collection of short stories, entitled: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. There, the short stories play out in common and ordinary settings. In a similar fashion, the studies in this thesis, and the thesis itself presents a number of snapshots or short stories from the practice of change in a higher education institution.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with change practice, particularly in one specific higher education institution. The thesis examines theoretical perspectives of change practice and presents five empirical studies that, in different ways, contribute to our understanding of how universities and its members engage around and view opportunities for change.

The thesis borrows insights from organisational theory, theory of change agency and also theory and the practice of academic development. The thesis views change practice as a predominantly socio-cultural endeavour. The focus of the five empirical studies has been on the meso, departmental or networked level of a higher education institution. Each of the studies is closely connected to the practice of academic development and is thought to enhance the practice that academic developers engage in. At the same time, the focal point is on the academic staff members of the universities.

Study I explores how teachers perceive opportunities and challenges that are afforded in the wake of capacity building initiatives at the university. Studies II and V explore collegial leaders at middle management level practice of working with change practice. These studies look more closely at the particular practice of bringing about change, but also study collegial leaders use of theory in their practice. Study II identifies leaders, both informal and formal leaders who lack leadership training. Study V identifies collegial leaders who have had some training. Study III studies different stakeholders' conceptions of a change initiative. Study IV explores how a group of teachers take on and bring about changes in their practice.

The findings, when taken together suggest that the university and its individual members may have difficulty dealing with the contemporaneousness and the many aspects of capacity building and change practice. The findings suggest that many individuals who attend continued professional development training do not readily see how they can translate their training into practice. It also shows that training, per se, offers them a sense of enthusiasm around the work of teaching. Further they show that when change initiatives come around, the many stakeholders share a nomenclature of change that is potentially incompatible. The findings show how groups of teachers take command of their own practice when working with assessing students' work. Moreover, the findings suggest that collegial leaders often lack systematic and theory-driven approaches to change practice. As a counter-measure to using theory or models of change the collegial leaders rely on dialogue in the context of a consensus seeking collegial culture as a way of bringing about change.

SVENSK POPULÄRVETENSKAPLIGSAMMANFATTNING

Under 15 års tid har jag arbetat som pedagogisk utvecklare. I min praktik har jag träffat många pedagogiskt intresserade lärare, grupper av lärare och kollegiala ledare. Med denna avhandling ville jag undersöka hur dessa lärare, grupper och kollegiala ledare tar sig an förändringar när de vill utveckla sin praktik som pedagoger. Jag har studerat förändringar som utspelar sig på institutionsnivån, där ledningspositioner ofta innehas av personer som saknar formell ledarskapsutbildning och där folk arbetar med en mängd olika projekt, både som individer och i grupp. Min förhoppning är att resultaten kommer att gynna pedagogiskt intresserade lärare och ledare, och vidare att de kommer pedagogiska utvecklare till godo i det vidare arbetet med att stärka universitetens förmåga att jobba för att förbättra undervisning och lärande.

Avhandlingen handlar om förändringspraxis inom högre utbildning; hur individuella lärare, grupper och kollegiala ledare arbetar med att få till stånd förändringar. Avhandlingen undersöker detta genom fem empiriska studier som på olika sätt bidrar till och ökar vår förståelse för hur universitet och dess medlemmar arbetar med förändring. Avhandlingen lånar insikter från organisationsteori, teori om förändrings-agentskap samt teori och praxis som tagits fram inom forskningsfältet om högskolepedagogisk utveckling.

Fokus för de fem empiriska studierna har varit på institutionsnivå, vid i första hand, ett svensk universitet. Var och en av studierna är nära kopplad till min egen praxis som pedagogisk utvecklare. Studie I studerar hur lärare uppfattar möjligheter och utmaningar till följd av utbildning (pedagogiska kurser) inom ramen för kompetensutveckling vid universitetet. Studie II och V utforskar hur kollegiala ledare på mellanchefsnivå arbetar med förändringspraxis. Studierna undersöker hur lärare engagerar kollegor i utvecklings- och förändringsarbete, men studerar också kollegiala ledares användning av teori i sin praktik. Studie II identifierar ledare, både informella och formella ledare som saknar formell, längre ledarskapsutbildning. Studie V identifierar kollegiala ledare som har en oftast kortare utbildning och undersöker hur de erfar och arbetar med förändring. Studie III studerar olika intressenters uppfattningar om ett förändringsinitiativ och visar att dessa föreställningar kan vara inkompatibla med varandra. Studie IV undersöker hur en grupp lärare antar och arbetar med förändring i sin praktik.

Sammantaget tyder resultaten på att universiteten och dess lärare tar sig an förändring och förändringspraxis utan systematik. Vidare, indikerar resultaten att universitetet kan ha svårt att hantera att driva utveckling parallellt med den dagliga verksamheten. Resultaten tyder på att somliga individer som utbildar sig (på arbetsplatsen) har svårt att se hur de kan omvandla sina nyvunna kunskaper i praktiken. Resultaten visar också att utbildning i sig ger dem en känsla av entusiasm kring arbetet med undervisning. Därutöver, tyder resultaten på att kollegiala ledare ofta saknar systematiska metoder för att arbeta med och driva förändringsarbete. Som en motåtgärd till att använda teori eller förändringsmodeller förlitar sig de kollegiala ledarna på dialog i sammanhanget av en samförståndssökande kollegial kultur.

LIST OF SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

- I. **McGrath, C.,** & Bolander Laksov, K. (2014). Laying bare educational crosstalk: a Study of discursive repertoires in the wake of educational reform. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(2), 139-149.
- II. **McGrath, C.,** Barman, L., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Roxå, T., Silén, C., & Bolander Laksov, K. (2016). The Ebb and Flow of Educational Change: Change Agents as Negotiators of Change. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 4(2), 1-14.
- III. **McGrath, C.,** Stenfors-Hayes, T., Roxå, T., Bolander Laksov, K. (2017). Exploring dimenions of change: The case of MOOC concpetions. *International Journal for Academic Development*, (1-13).
- IV. Barman, L., **McGrath, C.,** Josephsson, S., Silén, C & Bolander Laksov, K **Manuscript:** Safeguarding the moral dimensions of assessment - how teachers employ assessment criteria for clinical competencies.
- V. **McGrath, C.,** Roxå, T., Bolander Laksov, K. **Manuscript.** Change in a culture of collegiality and consensus seeking, A double edged sword: A Study of social practice in higher education leadership and management

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KI	Karolinska Institutet
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
CoP	Community of practice

1 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into six chapters:

Chapter 2 serves as an introduction to the thesis and draws upon a number of concerns and potential paradoxes that arise when considering academic development work, change practice, change agency and collegial leadership in higher education. As an introduction, chapter 2 leads to the overview of current research and the literature presented in chapter 3. The framing of the thesis is also clarified in terms of academic and disciplinary positioning. The overall aim and the more specific research questions are outlined, and a short note on the potential audiences is provided. Chapter 2 delineates the problem area that is explored empirically in each of the studies.

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical foundation for the thesis. Key concepts of change and change agency are outlined and previous research is elaborated upon. The predominant theories of change are presented. Chapter 3 also contains a critical discussion of theories of change and change agency. The theoretical underpinnings are presented through a number of throughline questions, i.e. questions designed to bring the reader back to the fundamental issues in the work. They are:

- What is the temporal nature of change?
- What is a change agent?
- What are the types of change?
- What are the cultures of change?
- What is the locus of change?
- What are the theories of change?
- What is the agency of change?

Chapter 4 comprises the empirical work and considerations thereof. Here, the specific research questions and the empirical work are examined. The five studies are presented and discussed in relation to the choice of methods, data collection procedures, and findings. Chapter 4 also includes methodological reflections and ethical considerations

Chapter 5 comprises a discussion in which the findings are refracted and considered through the theoretical underpinnings, the throughline questions and the literature presented in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 6 contains concluding remarks and reflections on future work. Implications for practice and research are also considered and discussed.

Finally, the five papers, in their current state, published, or as manuscripts which constitute the empirical work of the thesis are presented.

2 INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

Higher education is an essential part of our society, a sector that has traditionally enjoyed much freedom and autonomy. In recent years, that freedom has come under increased scrutiny due to a number of potentially transforming forces; among them increased accountability, changing demographics, international competition and external reviews (Kezar, 2001, Askling & Stensaker, 2002; Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012; Karlsson, 2016). Both external and internal forces play a part in the universities' changing nature. These events are concurrent, and have, to some extent, acted as catalysts for a paradigmatic shift in thinking about higher education institutions, from loosely coupled systems to rational organisational actors or agents (Askling & Stensaker, 2002; Bamber, Trowler, Saunders & Knight, 2009; Ramirez & Christensen, 2013; Karlsson, 2016). This thesis is concerned with aspects of change and change agency in higher education, and explores how universities deal with change, how universities and their people respond to change, and more specifically, how individuals, working groups and collegial leaders act in the face of change but also how they drive change practice (Mårtensson, 2014).

Academic developers work in different ways with change. In part, they drive change of their own throughout the university at different levels; at the micro level with individual teachers, at the meso level with education programmes and groups of teachers and researchers. Academic developers also drive change and act as conduits for change at the macro level through collaboration with upper management, for example, in defining the educational dimensions of higher education teachers' career routes. It is believed that greater insight into the practice of change implementation will benefit the academic developer community in its efforts to support academic staff.

Change is placed at the centre of the thesis, as is academic staffs' agency around working with matters related to change in higher education institutions. Change as a phenomenon, however, is Janus-faced. Changes are presented in many different guises; as enhancement, innovation(s), externally mandated changes, natural progression of practice, supra-national policy implementation. Change may also be viewed more insidiously; change as isomorphism or the quiet, often copycat, reformation of practice, done to meet the demands of a new public management discourse (Kezar, 2013; Barman, 2015; Karlsson, 2016). When portrayed in positive and progressive terms, change is often presented as quality improvement (Bamber et al., 2009; Mårtensson, Roxå & Stensaker, 2012). However, while quality improvement involves change, it is not always the case that change leads to quality improvement. In fact, it may be reasonable to assume that much change takes place for the sake of change itself. In its most portentous moments the research on change implementation appreciates that as much of 70% of all corporate changes do not lead to desired outcomes (Higgs & Rowland, 2000, Hughes, 2011, Burnes, 2011). Specific data for higher education initiatives are not available, and while this figure of 70% should, perhaps, be taken with a pinch of salt, it still provides an interesting narrative in the context of change research. In this thesis, change serves as a term for the focus of the processes outlined above, where members of academic staff go about changing elements of their work and practice. Still, change is never a singularity; instead, it usually involves a series or

plurality of events, and involves other people and the insights and perspectives they bring. As will be shown later, there are a number of different stakeholders involved in change projects, and so what may be perceived as enhancement by one stakeholder, or one group of stakeholders, may inevitably be perceived as a deterioration of practice by another (Alvesson, 1993; Trowler, 2008).

Change is omnipresent, a constant part of organisational life (Jackson & Parry, 2008). It is argued that change, not stability, is the norm in social settings (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Nicolini, 2012). Workplaces constitute one form of social setting and may be viewed as a nexus of human activity where people interact, enact and co-create meaning and where, it is argued, organisations come into being (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Schatzki 2002; Howard-Grenville, Rerup, Tsoukas & Langley, 2016) Change, it is proposed comes ontologically prior to organisational stability. Consequently, organisations are always struggling to keep up with change and it is argued that it may be more prudent to build structures that are adaptive to change as opposed to structures that aim to preserve stability (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand how people in social settings deal with the changing nature of these settings (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Alvesson & Spicer (2012) argue that one of the central notions in contemporary organisational theory is that organisations thrive on their knowledge competency, with the assumption that organisations have rational approaches to decision-making and leadership. This, however, bears little resemblance to how decision-making processes actually take place. Reality is much messier and filled with ambiguity (Alvesson, 1993; Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003; Trowler, 2008; Holmberg & Tyrstrup, 2010). In academia especially, many leaders adopt positions due to a sense of responsibility (Askling & Stensaker, 2002) and may be regarded as amateurs, novices or autodidacts when it comes to leadership in matters related to education in higher education institutions (HEI). ‘Amateurs’ in this sense relates to a lack of formal training. Still these leaders make decisions that, in turn, affect other teachers, researchers, and administrative staff within the university. The literature on change initiatives and change practice can be drawn along a continuum, ranging from rational scientific-management approaches to change at one end, and discourse-oriented approaches at the other end. Alternatively the phenomenon can be seen as change-as-centred-practice which is contrasted with agency to change-as-decentred-practice and shared or fragmented agency (Caldwell, 2006; Kezar, 2013). The different approaches to change and change agency will be discussed in more detail later on.

2.1 COLLEGIALLY, ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP, DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP AND PSEUDO-KNOWLEDGE

Universities have adopted and developed different management and leadership styles over time. Distributed or shared leadership is a term used to describe how universities act when acting as loosely coupled systems. Distributed leadership has emerged as an answer to the leader-centric models of leadership which are more common in trade and industry. In distributed leadership, leadership takes into consideration the universities’ special status in society (Bolden et al., 2009). This special status comes from, among other things, the unique culture of academia, multiple power and authority structures as well as shared governance (Kezar, 2001; Ramirez & Christensen, 2013). However, the special status has come into

question in recent years as outlined above, due to demands for accountability, and demands for professional management practices (Ramirez, 2010; SOU, 2015; Karlsson, 2016).

Distributed leadership, while being a somewhat loosely defined concept, (Bolden et al., 2009) evokes the idea of concertive or co-joint action (Gronn, 2000) whereby leadership is spread and shared across the institution with multiple leaders. Distributed leadership is grounded in activity theory and notions of reciprocal influence (Bolden, 2011), it may be said, is also an attempt at an answer to the internal power struggles that are predominant in the specific higher education context characterised by strong teaching and learning, and research regimes and a multitude of different academic tribes (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Trowler & Cooper, 2002; Karlsson, 2016). Another way of expressing this is to suggest that the universities host a number of different social practices (Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012; Nicolini, 2012). Much of the current research on academic leadership focuses attention on leadership of academic institutions rather than leadership of academic work (Bolden et al., 2009). It is argued that leadership takes place in an environment that is both open but also closed, where the environment is best described as being a complex organisational structure, with the co-existence of formal and informal decision-making procedures, and where there is a tradition of appointing special committees for working on themes and policy decisions (SOU, 2015). One of the primary reasons for appointing such committees and appointing leaders from within is associated with the universities' notions of collegiality and academic freedom (Middlehurst, 1993; Bolden, Petrov & Gosling, 2008; Bolden et al., 2009). At the same time, Askling and Stensaker argue that such committees have a tendency to "*blur the actual power structure*" (Askling & Stensaker, 2002). A recent Swedish review of higher educational management structures, points towards the many tensions and difficulties that arise within HEI due to the different ways of managing, both formally and informally (SOU 2015:92). According to the review, it is not uncommon that managerial roles, collegial and also more line-oriented roles, overlap in a troublesome fashion, creating blurred and quasi-formal mandates, acting as a hindrance for the appointed leaders (SOU 2015:92). The practice of using collegial or distributed models of leadership raises the possibility for a number of potential paradoxes or concerns that have, in different ways, acted as a point of departure for this thesis.

1. On the one hand, leaders, simply by adopting leadership positions can be seen as targets for high expectations, demands for demonstrating strong leadership and a clear sense of direction. At the same time, many leaders lack a track record in a leadership capacity and may have little idea of how to generate or implement change and lead an organisation or a group of peers. Recent research suggests that change agents in higher education may lack a conceptual or theoretical approach to change (Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2009; Trowler et al., 2013; Kezar, 2013).
2. Generally, the different governing boards of a university are appointed through a quasi-competitive selection process, and entire governing boards may be replaced within a three to four-year cycle. By their very existence, the boards provide a pseudo-guarantee that the members of the board are experts and to some degree fit for the job at hand, given that they are selected in a competitive process where the selection process is based on an idea of competency and expertise and the expectation of a good academic track record. At best, however, it is a guarantee that the members are experts

within a given specific academic field and so in terms of academic leadership they may be experts only by association. Seminal work by psychologists suggests that expertise within a domain takes substantial time to develop (Ericsson et al., 1993), often many years. Others have demonstrated that it may not be easy to translate knowledge and skills sets from one paradigm to another (Bolander Laksov, 2007). Furthermore, for many, their stay in the role of leader may only be a temporary one. This begs the question; to what extent do we expect leaders in higher education to be experts in the domain of leadership and change practice, and how does this become manifest in their practice of change?

3. A related concern pertains to the leaders' level of expertise and knowledge in the field of leadership in higher education. Questions may be raised as to whether they have the time and ability to engage in profound discussions about education and leadership. Instead of engaging in informed critical discussion, there is a concern that they may be unable to make contextually sensitive decisions due to a "lack of time, information and information processing capacity" (Simon in Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) or also that they have merely pseudo-knowledge (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) in relation to the new field of expertise and will not be able to make well-informed decisions. This is also referred to as the '*decision-making in a garbage can*' problem, where decision-making is characterised by strategic method and also membership uncertainty (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972; Karlsson, 2016) and less by identifying sustainable solutions to real problems.
4. A fourth concern relates to collegial leaders and their academic habitus. In some universities, for example in the context of this thesis, many intermediate board members predominantly represent a post-positivist research paradigm and tradition. Making a transition to a leadership position with responsibility for educational issues involves a shift in focus to dealing with education-oriented matters and questions. This may cause problems for collegial leaders schooled in other paradigms. This could require a change of paradigm awareness (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, 1994; Bolander Laksov, 2007) and may require radically new ways of thinking about knowledge as new concepts are introduced and epistemological assumptions may be challenged. This raises the question of whether or not collegial members have sufficient knowledge and information for making relevant decisions that have long-term implications. This problem is exasperated in contexts that may be predominantly aligned with one specific scientific paradigm. Such is the case in the current context too; one of the world's leading medical research universities, the post-positive paradigm holds a stronghold on the scientific methods practised at the university.
5. Another concern is raised by Stensaker (1999) who discusses the demands put on university leadership in terms of balancing between implementing top-down policy and also adhering to calls for change from within the organisation. Among these demands are the demands of society for efficient governance, demands to implement lean and efficient ways of working (Hargreaves, 2009), demands to implement trans-European policy and demands to keep the university an open domain with respect for collegiality (Bolden et al., 2009).

The situation in which individual teachers, working groups, but also collegial leaders in HEI may find themselves is best described as a complex one. It is important that the academic development community who work closely with leadership and academic staff within HEI striving towards enhancement practice understand the complexity of the situation, but also understand what obstacles stand in the way of academic staff, working groups and collegial leaders. The academic developer community is concerned with how to work with academic staff in change initiatives (Gibbs, 2013; Debowski, 2014; Clavert, Löfström & Nevgi, 2015). The above concerns prompt a range of questions, including: How do leaders in the university, many of whom have little or no experience and limited training as leaders, go about decision-making and working with the process of change? What processes do they follow when working with change initiatives? What can we learn from their practice of working with change? How are capacity-building initiatives best run so as to facilitate the work of individual teachers, working groups, and collegial leaders in higher education in their practice of change?

Other important questions, which relate to the specific work conducted by academic developers include: How can academic developers work best to help teachers and leaders and also to facilitate change processes within higher education? These questions are related to the discourses and challenges associated with university governance but also knowledge governance, and address the tensions that may arise between the rhetoric and reality of leadership in the university (Bolden et al., 2009).

In summary, the introduction has outlined a number of considerations, concerns and potential paradoxes that have acted as a catalyst for this project. They can be summarised as:

- Academic developers are conduits for change
- Change occurs in a highly complex setting
- Change agents or collegial leaders are often charged with the responsibility to address both top-down but also bottom-up changes
- Collegial leaders may find themselves “stuck” in paradigms and may lack necessary training to implement change initiatives
- Collegial leaders at the meso level may lack conceptual and theoretical understanding of how to work with change agency
- Collegial leaders may have only pseudo-knowledge of how to work systematically with change

It is in this rather messy context that one should view this thesis. Stuck in the very middle of it all one finds the academic staff, individual teachers, working groups, and collegial leaders who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the university and who are champions of their subjects, but are perhaps poorly prepared to deal with the challenges of leadership in general and the challenges of change and change management specifically. In order to explore these concerns and understand the practice of change this thesis rests on theory of how organisations develop, theories of change management, and the research on academic development.

In the thesis, the notion and importance of practice is emphasised. The respondents were and continue to be involved in a number of different practices. Practice has a two-fold meaning in the thesis. It is used to denote the different types of activity conducted by the respondents within the different HEI departments or settings explored in this thesis. These activities or practices include teaching, research, clinical or vocational work and to some degree leadership. It is also used to articulate ideas of social practice theory from (Gherardi, Nicolini & Yanow, 2003; Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012), which is explained and elaborated upon later in chapter 3.

2.2 THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM: A BITS AND PIECES APPROACH

The thesis begins by bringing into focus a number of potential paradoxes that arise in the context of higher education institutions that are traditionally driven by a mix of collegial and line manager perspectives and approaches (SOU, 2015). Balancing both informal collegial and formal line manager roles involves complexity (SOU, 2015). This complex situation affords the universities a number of possible solutions or approaches to governance and development. As a way of addressing this complexity, universities often adopt a bits and pieces approach towards change practice and capacity building as opposed to adopting whole institution approaches (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). This bits and pieces approach is characterised by universities offering a range of short-term continued professional development training and leadership courses or programmes, encouraging academic staff to take responsibility but also by introducing multiple committees to facilitate the decision-making process. This research project considers the implications of this bits and pieces approach to change, also asking how the practice of change is experienced and conducted by individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders.

The work conducted in this thesis is in line with recent research on change management in higher education and the calls for more emphasis on context-specific approaches to change as opposed to a generic 'what works for one works for all' models (Healey & DeStefano, 1997; Bromage, 2006; Bamber et al., 2009; Tight, 2012; Kezar, 2013). Throughout the thesis, theories of change and the empirical findings are intended to elucidate each other. This is a way of critically reviewing the existing literature on change practice in higher education.

The research project has an overall aim and two sub-aims. The overall aim is to:

- Explore change at the meso or departmental level of higher education organisations.

The two sub-aims are to:

- Critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice,
- Empirically explore the context-bound practice of change in higher education settings.

A number of specific research questions are presented in relation to the empirical work later on in chapter 3.

2.3 AUDIENCE

This thesis addresses multiple audiences. First and foremost, it is directed at the academic development community. Despite the fact that universities have engaged in formal activities for developing teachers' and leaders' competence since the 1960s (Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004; Bolander Laksov, 2007; Steinert, Naismith & Mann, 2012), the field of academic development is still a nascent one in terms of clarifying its identity, functions and methodologies (Debowski, 2014). There is an ongoing debate in the academic developer community on how to best work with stakeholders; with some scholars suggesting a move away from centralist course-like approaches, where training is offered in the form of courses, seminars and workshops (Bolden et al., 2008; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2008; Gibbs, 2013) to more adaptive, reflective partnership approaches that enable the academic developer community to be invited to and engage with more localized groups, and that accommodates and recognises their specific needs (Debowski, 2014; Clavert, Löfström & Nevgi, 2015). My hope is that the theoretical and empirical work presented herein will offer food for thought on how academic developers engage with their audiences.

Secondly, this thesis speaks to the research community that is concerned with the development of higher education practice. Hopefully the empirical findings and the critical dialogue herein will make a contribution to the ongoing discussion and will also identify possibilities for future research.

Thirdly, the thesis is directed towards upper management at higher education institutions. My hope is that the thesis will act as a theoretical and empirical point of departure for consideration in the work of operating and governing higher education institutions, and that this work will help those working with academic development in higher education to move away from generic what 'works for one works for all' models of leadership (Healey & DeStefano, 1997) outlined above. But even more importantly, I hope that academic leaders and leaders within academia will share the sentiment that change agents, at the micro, meso and macro levels of an organisation require a broader understanding of change theory and practice in order to work with change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2013).

Finally, the thesis invites individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders to engage in dialogue. Yes, it is messy out there (Jones, 2011), but with time and reflection on practice this thesis may serve as a heuristic tool for dealing with change initiatives in the future and allow individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders to develop a *phronesis* on matters of change and a repertoire of approaches and a language of change that may be helpful when engaging in the very important work of collegial leadership and change agency.

3 CHANGING THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE PRACTICE AND CHANGE AGENCY

In the introduction, a number of concerns and possible paradoxes were introduced. These were, in part, based on personal reflection, but also, to some extent on the existing literature on organisational development, change agency and academic development. In this chapter, the theoretical foundation for the research project is elaborated upon further. Key concepts of change and change agency and social practice are introduced, outlined and discussed critically. A short historical exposé is presented as a way of framing the thesis, and the predominant theories of change are outlined. This section also contains a critical discussion of theories of change and change agency. This critical discussion is included to address one of the aims of the thesis; to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice. This aim is achieved in part through chapter 3, but will be discussed again in chapter 5. The theoretical underpinnings are presented through a number of throughline questions; questions designed to bring the reader back to the fundamental issues in the work. They are:

- What is the temporal nature of change?
- What is a change agent?
- What are the types of change?
- What are the cultures of change?
- What is the locus of change?
- What are the theories of change?
- What is the agency of change?

These throughline questions are intended to serve as a map allowing the reader to navigate through the different theories, research studies and frameworks that are used in relation to change practice and change agency in a broader organisational context, but also, and more specifically within academic development theory and practice in higher education settings. As such, the questions are representative of a number of different facets of change. Furthermore, the throughline questions are derived to a certain extent from the work of Van de Ven and Poole (1995) and Kezar (2001, 2013). Consequently, the throughline questions serve three purposes; each question warrants reflection in and of itself as it reflects a facet of change practice, the different theories and studies discussed in this section can be refracted through these questions, and moreover, the questions also drive the chapter towards the question of agency which is the quintessential focus of this chapter. The thesis and the broader research project wishes to avoid nomothetic approaches to organisational change. The research conducted here is primarily idiographic, attempting to understand the practice of change agents in higher education, while also bearing in mind that several cultures of change may potentially exist within a higher education institution at any one time (Alvesson, 1993; Trowler, 2008). The empirical work has been conducted in such a way as to understand the types of approaches and strategies taken by different actors within higher education. The theories outlined below are important as they may outline the types of change that individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders hold among themselves or encounter when working with change practice. Thus, this chapter and the throughline

questions aim to offer a critical reading of some of the existing literature, and serve as an entry point into the empirical work, and also offer the reader a source of recourse when reading the thesis.

3.1 WHAT IS THE TEMPORAL NATURE OF CHANGE?

Change can be viewed as both product and process. However, the concept of temporality has not received thorough attention in the context of change research (Roe, 2008; Dawson, 2014). The focus has been predominantly on time as *clock time* as in terms of how long a change initiative may take (Cunha, 2009) or may relate to the experience of time, as is discussed in the sense-making literature (Dawson, 2014). Time may be viewed as steadily moving forward as in evolutionary theories of change, or conversely, time may be viewed as cyclical where process is the overriding metaphor of change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Dawson, 2014). Recent criticism of the sense-making literature argues that sense-making around change is much more of an immanent, ongoing process, where agents make sense of their environment on a regular basis; consequently, sense-making is ongoing, evolving and a cumulative endeavour. This is strongly contrasted to Weick's early notion of change as being episodic, infrequent and intentional (Kezar, 2013; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Time and change as ongoing facets of organisational being and becoming is an idea that aligns well with the notion of change coming ontologically prior to stability (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

In the literature, time runs across a continuum from stable-oriented perspectives where time and change occur in a state of punctuated equilibrium and is characterised by Lewin's rationalist notion of *unfreeze-change-refreeze*, where change is malleable, something done to an organisation (Lewin, 1947), through more process-oriented perspectives where past events may influence emergent changes (Dawson, 2014), and where change may be viewed not so much as through the products made, but rather as a process in the making (Pettigrew, 2012).

3.2 WHAT IS A CHANGE AGENT?

The term 'change agent' is used in this thesis to identify someone at the university who has been appointed, often through a selection process among colleagues or by volunteering, to work as a driver of change, primarily in relation to education-oriented activity. In the literature, change agents are identified using different terms, as is illustrated in the work of Clavert et al., where they acknowledge that: "*the term 'change agent' has been referred to as an organisational actor with official developer status, such as faculty developer... educational developer... academic staff developer... and professional developer*" (Clavert, Löffström, & Nevgi, 2015) (References removed from original citation). The aforementioned terms are usually used in relation to people who have a specific developer role. As Clavert et al., point out, the notion of change agents needs to be broadened to include pedagogically oriented or pedagogically aware academics. In the thesis, attention is not on academic developers per se, but rather the change agents who work as disciplinarians in their respective departments and who may have a role to play in the development of teaching and learning practice within the department. They may offer pedagogical leadership at different levels of the university and oftentimes facilitate the work of individual teachers or working groups in the organisation. It is likely that they

migrate between different roles of the department, but they may also take part in committees across campus.

In the organisational development literature, the role of the change agents is identified as being an important one, whereby change agents are viewed as being central intermediaries in creating operational impetus for improved performance (Dover, 2002). It is not clear to what extent the people in this thesis view themselves as change agents. It is not a formal academic title, for example, nor is it necessarily one that each of the respondents in the respective research studies described herein may feel comfortable with. There could, for example, be a discrepancy between the way they are viewed in the literature, for example the *hero-like* traits that Dover assigns to them above, and the way they perceive their own role. For example, Askling and Stensaker argues that many leaders in academia adopt positions due to a sense of responsibility (2002). As such, they may view their role as a caretaking one as opposed to a development one. In the thesis, change agents who act without formal appointment have not been acknowledged. This was done as a way of identifying people with a higher education organisation who have a specific role within their department to drive change, but who are not employed specifically at academic developer units for the purpose of driving change.

In the research done in this project, an underlying consideration extends to change agents' ability to exert control on their practice, but also to how they engage as agents of change in environments where they do not have a full mandate in terms of budget and or staff responsibility (Varpio, Aschenbrener & Bates, 2017).

3.3 WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF CHANGE?

According to Bamber, Trowler, Saunders and Knight, change as a concept is a phenomenon laden with positive and negative connotations. Instead of change, they propose using concepts such as innovation or enhancement to capture the intentional efforts involved in changing practice (Bamber et al., 2009). Innovation and enhancements may also involve a return to previous practice and so change may not always be directed towards new and novel approaches (Kezar, 2001). Kezar (2001) argues that professionals within higher education may be more comfortable talking and thinking about change in terms of diffusion of practice or institutionalization. Diffusion and institutionalization may be facets of a change process but do not work as overriding concepts. In the work in this research project, change is the term used to capture a broad range of the processes outlined above. Recently Trowler et al. identified a number of foci of change initiatives (Trowler, Hopkinson, & Comerford Boyes, 2013). There they write about three distinct types of changes:

- Small-scale bottom-up initiatives or projects led and driven by a small number of enthusiastic and committed individuals.
- Larger-scale organisational (top-down) initiatives involving wider institutional support, staffing and/or resources.
- Integrated whole institutional (top-down) initiatives with significant institutional support linking multiple sustainability activities, often with an added dimension around wider cultural change.

Each type of change involves one or a number of challenges. Small-scale bottom-up change initiatives may be too dependent on individuals and their personal engagement in a project. Moreover, these individuals may lack the necessary institutional support, either financial or administrative (Fullan, 2007, Fullan & Scott, 2009) and such initiatives may fizzle out.

Top-down changes, on the other hand, may lack the emotional connection to academic staff members on the floor, and change initiatives may lose traction for that reason. Bottom-up changes, on the other hand, may lead to, at the most, marginal effects (Bromage, 2006). Bamber also introduces the implementation staircase as a way of illustrating not only the process of implementation throughout an organisation but also the risks for displacement and distortion when a top-down policy change is discussed and embodied at different levels of the organisation before it reaches the floor and the people who will be charged with implementation (Bamber, 2002).

A recent thesis outlines the different responses academic staff members take towards broad top-down types of institutional change (Barman, 2015), demonstrating that while some staff engage ideologically in a change initiative, others adopt container-like or technocratic approaches which may not be conducive to change. A number of scholars argue that change initiatives need to represent a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches, attracting acceptance financially but also morally in terms of engaging the followers of change (Berg & Östergren, 1977; Fullan, 2007; Trowler, 2003). Bamber et al., argue that attention must be given to several elements of the change initiative at the same time (2009). A related sentiment is voiced by Elton (2008), evoking the model of *new collegiality* with an emphasis on turning universities into learning institutions. Similar notions are also articulated by Senge (2006) and Tsoukas & Chia (2002) when emphasising the metaphor or the notion of the learning organisation. Both Berg and Östergren (1977) and Trowler (2003) emphasise the importance of organisations' *own thinking* and of re-thinking the difference between change and changing, between innovation and innovating with a clear emphasis on the process of change. This is made even more difficult if we consider that change can be characterised by either a focus on one's own practice or a focus on common collective practice.

In the literature, the different foci for change practice are often referred to as first and second order change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2001, 2013). First order change is generally non-invasive and involves minor adjustments to the individual's, group's or organisation's practice. It does not affect the organisation's core (Kezar, 2001) and consequently may evoke little or no resistance. However, second order change is more transformational and requires a re-thinking of practice at a deeper and more profound level, evoking a need to change practice but also question the assumptions of individual teachers and working groups (Kezar, 2001) and may require double feedback loops involving feedback on both process and outcome (Argyris & Schon, 1974) as a way of monitoring the groups' values and thinking. A number of examples of the different types of changes (Trowler et al., 2013; Kezar, 2001, 2013) and types of engagement that may be required can be viewed in the table below. The table is meant to be used as a point of departure for dialogue.

Table 1. First and second order change in relation to different types of change

				Type Engagement required (Kezar 2001, 2013)
Type of change	Small-scale, individual	Larger-scale organisation	Integrated whole institution approaches	
First order	Teacher changing one element of her practice	N/A	N/A	Requires single loop feedback models to ascertain that things are done correctly in relation to one's own practice
Second order	Course director changing assessment practice, requiring transformation of practice involving a change in practice for other teachers	Driving the department towards developing comprehensive and evidence-based online learning	Using the implementation of learning outcomes to change campus teaching and assessment practice to align with intentions of student-centred learning	Requires deeper review of organisation values and working methods. May prompt compliance or resistance to change

3.4 WHAT ARE THE CULTURES OF CHANGE?

Cultures exist within all organisations, including higher education institutions. In the context of HEI, much work has been done to outline the different cultures but also tribes of the university (Tierney, 1988; Bergquist, 1992; Trowler & Cooper, 2002). Bergquist (1992) argues that organisations are made up of a number of different cultures, identified as the Collegial, Managerial, Developmental, and Negotiating cultures (Bergquist, 1992). The collegial culture is a strongly discipline-oriented culture and values scholarly and collegial management. The management culture focuses on management skills, supervisory skills and financial responsibility and control. The developmental culture values personal and professional growth across the organisation, and the negotiating culture values egalitarian principles, promotes equity and is not shy about confrontation (Bergquist, 1992). According to Kezar, the people who populate the different cultures are generally unaware that they exist, or they may take for granted their way of doing things (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In a similar vein, Alvesson argues that multiple cultures co-exist within an HEI at any given time (1993). Usually these cultures and their domains have untested hypotheses about how they are organised (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The cultures are not self-reflecting entities and they may very well be unaware of their own cultural boundaries as well as the boundaries of other cultures which are likely to co-exist within a department or organisation. For change to happen or for a culture to become aware of its own existence, a catalyst may be required.

Bergquist acknowledges that while any one of the cultures outlined above may be predominant in an organisational or higher education setting, it is likely that all of the other cultures exist within the university setting, and may, in more ways than one, challenge the predominant culture (Bergquist, 1990). Bergquist's work offers an interesting point of departure for further scholarly consideration. Within the framework of the current thesis it

was considered that Bergquist's made broad nomothetic generalisations about managerial cultures (Trowler, 2008). The empirical work conducted in this research project aims at adopting a more idiographic approach to the practice of change and change agency, emphasising individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders and their practice as change agents in higher education.

Broader trait-based management theory is pervasive in management training and courses (Tight, 2012) and it is important to critically consider the value of such approaches, not least in the context of academic developer context. Two recent theses from Lund University (Roxå, 2014; Mårtensson, 2014) acknowledge the importance of micro-cultures in the contexts of HEI. In their work, the strategic, political and cultural lenses (Ancona, 1999; Roxå, 2014; Mårtensson, 2014) when understanding change and innovation and development within groups at the departmental level of higher education institutions are emphasised. The different lenses are outlined below.

The strategic lens¹ relates to how an organisation is designed in terms of what people work with, how information is designed, how the flow of tasks and information are designed. Furthermore, the strategic aspect also extends to how people are sorted into different roles and also how these roles are related to one another within the organisation. The strategic lens also identifies how the organisation achieves its goals through rational optimization. The strategic lens functions consciously by creating structures, but also unconsciously by sustaining several, at times conflicting structures, at once. The emergence of collegial leadership stems originally from structures cognizant with the notion of academic freedom and the idea of universities as loosely coupled systems (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013; Karlsson, 2016). The transition into rational organisational actors as a result of external demands outlined above (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013; Karlsson, 2016) may very well require new forms of leadership and structures. Structures, when seen through the strategic lenses, may then evolve according to the new paradigm of higher education institutions as organisational actors, while simultaneously embracing the notion of collegial and academic freedom associated with loosely coupled systems. The political lens relates to the different relationships within the organisation, formally but also informally in terms of how influence and power are distributed and used with the organisation. Furthermore, it relates to how the different stakeholders express their preferences and to what extent they are included or excluded from the decision-making process. Finally, it relates to how conflicts can be resolved. The cultural lens relates to how people interact, work, what kind of assumptions they have about their workplace, what values and conceptions they may have and how these permeate the work done within the working group. Furthermore, the cultural lens relates to how history or specific histories are formed, not least through, or as a result of structures that come into being over time, either as a result of strategy or as an opposition to strategy. The cultural lens includes the values and assumptions that different people may hold and relates also to how certain practices take on, or gain specific meaningfulness, and also, to some extent to how stories and artefacts shape the feel of the organisation (Ancona, 1999; Roxå, 2014; Mårtensson, 2014).

¹ Lens and dimensions are used as synonyms in this section for stylistic purposes

Work is quintessentially a socio-cultural manifestation (Trowler, 2008) and while it is theoretically possible to distinguish between the different layers or lenses in an organisation it is equally clear that cultural interaction at the departmental level of a higher education institution is contingent, in part, on both the strategic and the political dimensions of an organisation, while simultaneously reflecting also the socio-cultural aspects of the organisation. This is perhaps true in all organisations but maybe even more so in a higher education institution given that people have a tendency to change jobs within the organisation, step into a management capacity and then back to other, more collegial roles; from being led to being leaders to being led again and vice versa, engaging in new power relationships and so on. The rich interaction that constitutes the cultural dimensions of a higher education institution has also been drawn into focus previously. Both Roxå (2014) and Mårtensson (2014) acknowledge the importance of *micro-cultures* at the meso level of a research-intensive university and simultaneously acknowledge the inherent difficulty in separating the three notions of strategic, political and cultural lenses. They acknowledge, as I have suggested already that the three lenses, the structural, the political and the cultural, interact, and are intertwined in the reality that constitutes an organisation's social practice. Resistance to change at a cultural level may, in part, be understood as a clash between the political and the strategic dimensions (Roxå, 2014). Consequently, any effort to understand an organisation's practice will involve asking questions which are relevant to an organisation's strategic, political and cultural lens. As Kezar points out;

although planned change is often a response to external factors, the impetus for the change is usually internal. (Kezar, 2001, pg 31)

3.5 WHERE IS THE LOCUS OF CHANGE?

A recent thesis from Karolinska Institutet acknowledges the importance of the cultural dimensions of higher education institutions, and demonstrates how academic staff members strive towards, among other things, self-governance as a necessary outcome of working with change in a higher education institution (Barman, 2015). The research suggests that when smaller units of teachers self-organise within a higher education institution it is due, in part, or at times, to dysfunctional practice between the strategic and political and cultural dimensions. In other words, decisions are made at one level, for example the strategic level, but their enactment occurs at the cultural level and may be organised autonomously. This also resonates with Bamber's notion of the implementation staircase (Bamber, 2002). Self-organisation at the meso level is a necessary part of working at a higher education institution especially given higher education institutions' tradition of autonomy (Kezar, 2001). Consequently, there may be no open conflict between the strategic or political lenses, but instead small-knit groups may be best serviced by identifying their own course of action, and that course of action may be brought into alignment with the intention of the structures in place at the university. At the same time, if control features are lacking, then alignment may not occur. Syntheses may arise between the strategic, political and cultural dimensions, but it is likely that there will be a degree of organisational ambiguity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Barman's thesis explores how academic staff work on enacting a specific educational reform, the Bologna agreement, which is a top-down policy change and has had many practical implications at the macro, meso and micro levels of the research-intensive medical university under exploration in this thesis too. The thesis

identifies not only the different approaches individuals have towards top-down change implementation but also addresses how groups organise and work with local enactment of policy (Barman, 2015).

The micro, meso and macro levels of a university correspond to the individual (micro), networked (meso), and systems (macro) levels within organisations, and higher education institutions alike (Hannah & Lester, 2009). Hannah & Lester's model (2009) offers a heuristic, allowing scholars to understand interaction at different levels of an organisation. Hannah & Lester's model is, however, a rationalist one (Caldwell, 2006) whereby strong leaders are thought to be able to influence "workers" as individuals (micro), parts of a network (meso) or whereby a systems (macro) perspective is adopted in terms of leadership. The micro-meso-macro nomenclature and taxonomic levels of analysis are by no means new, but offer insight into how and at what levels people operate within an organisation. It should be noted that there is no exhaustive consensus in the research community about how these concepts are used. For example, Bergquists' notion of context-based micro level data is close to the idea of the meso level presented in Hannah and Lester.

In this thesis, the meso level is identified at the departmental level, where working groups engage with each other, within one department or across departmental boundaries. Interestingly, the department may be viewed as one boundary in terms of strategy, but working groups can extend across departments and must therefore negotiate a number of strategic, political and cultural dimensions at the same time. Furthermore, the meso level is where collegial leaders are often found, even though they too work within the higher echelons of the university. In this thesis, the meso level is brought into particular focus. It is the melting pot of the micro-culture (Roxå, 2014; Mårtensson, 2014), it is where top-down policy but also bottom-up enactment of policy meets resistance (Barman, 2015). The meso level is also, potentially, where friction is likely to arise between the strategic, political and cultural dimensions of a higher education institution (Ancona, 1999). It is particularly interesting if we consider the different models addressed thus far in relation to each other; the three lenses presented by Ancona (1999) in relation to the three levels presented by Hannah and Lester (2009). When both frameworks are viewed together they provide a stronger, more powerful way of understanding organisations and how the strategic, political and cultural lenses relate to the micro, meso and macro levels.

Table 2. Micro, meso and macro levels of organisation understood in relation to the strategic, political and cultural lenses of an organisation

	Strategic	Political	Cultural
Micro (individual)	Creates scope for official or sanctioned individual action	Dictates an individual position	Is where the individual interacts with cultural aspects of the organisation
Meso (network)	Creates rules for a network operation action	Dictates relationships and chain of command	Is where individuals engage with working groups
Macro (system)	Creates a framework for how an entire organisation is expected to work	Dictates relationships and chain of command throughout the organisation at large	Is where networks made up of cultured individuals engage with a system's or systematic perspective. Defines action vis-à-vis the political and strategic dimensions

3.6 WHAT ARE THE THEORIES OF CHANGE?

Theories provide a necessary heuristic for understanding how change is perceived at micro, meso and macro levels. They relate to both organisational change and change agency alike, and to understanding the practice of change and individuals' understanding of change practice. Awareness of the characteristics of the different theories may also enable one to understand which theories of change people and organisations align with. The theories presented below are to some extent incompatible with each other in the sense that one may represent a rational and leader-centred approach to change, while others represent decentred and less hierarchical approaches to agency and change. This potential incompatibility is also inherent in the cultural differences addressed above. This section also serves as a way of outlining and discussing that incompatibility. In the last 20 years, a number of people have summarised the broader theories of change that are found in the change literature (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2001, Caldwell, 2006; Kezar, 2013). Van de Ven & Poole (1995) discuss frameworks of change; Kezar (2001, 2013) discusses theories of change and Caldwell discusses discourses on change and more particularly change agency. In this section, I will present and critically comment on the theories outlined by Kezar, and will also discuss Caldwell's discourses of change agency.

Change expressed in the theory of organisational development runs across a continuum from simplistic images of change agents as fully rational beings with almost heroic powers to change agents as brokers in context-specific settings with decentred management structures (Caldwell, 2003; Burnes, 2004, Caldwell, 2005). Some of the criticism of the research done on organisational change has been that scholars have been engaged in chasing a panacea to a very complex question when such a simple solution does not seem viable (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Burnes, 2004; Kexar, 2013). This criticism is further emphasised by Caldwell who promotes a multi-focal perspective addressing change agents' roles in change theory, whereby the change agents need to be aware of competing and incompatible discourses of change agency (Caldwell, 2006). These sentiments are shared independently elsewhere by Van de Ven & Poole, (1995) and Kezar (2001, 2013) as well as in this thesis.

Following Van de Ven & Poole's (1995) classification and framework relating on organisational change, Kezar (2001, 2013) plots six different theories that have developed around change. The theories are presented briefly here, primarily to offer those who may be unfamiliar with them an orientation and quick overview.

- Scientific management
- Evolutionary
- Political
- Social Cognition
- Cultural
- Institutional and neo-institutional

Scientific Management

The scientific management view of change is a rationalist approach to change, where strong leaders identify goals and outcomes, and follow a purposeful, planned and linear development towards achieving these goals. Among the key metaphors for this theory are the hero-leaders or change-masters following from the early *freeze-change-refreeze* work by Lewin (1947). The context of change is generally subservient to the planned change, or at least its importance is downplayed. Scientific management is close to the teleological model proposed by Van de Ven and Poole (1995).

Evolutionary

In the organisational development literature, evolutionary approaches fall under a number of sub-headings; system theories, self-organising, punctuated equilibrium etc. (Kezar, 2013). Another division is between social evolutionary models and biological models (Kezar, 2001). Characteristically, these approaches involve slow, adaptive and non-intentional change. Changes often occur as a result of external forces. Evolutionary models are often deterministic, affording people little or no agency. In such models, structure supersedes culture and change occurs as the present organisation needs to survive and adapt as a response to external forces.

Political

Political models identify tensions as a catalyst for change, where conflicting views or values may trigger a change process. This may happen as a result of a first order initiative, which may have subsequent impacts and necessitate second order change. Second order changes require, because of their transformative nature, a re-evaluation of values within an organisation. Inherent in these models is the fact that values and ideals co-exist in an organisation simultaneously with its opposite value and norms (Morgan, 1986; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2013). Central to this school of theory is that negotiation on the different agendas needs to be brought to the fore. As such, political theory is staunchly contrasted with scientific management approaches to change.

Social Cognition

Social cognition theories have received much emphasis during the last 30 years. They make process and sense-making the main focus and promote the idea of organisational learning and development (Weick, 1995; Kezar, 2001). Social cognition theories are plentiful and Van de Ven and Poole (1995) and Kezar (2001, 2013) provide a comprehensive account of them. A number of key themes have emerged in the social cognition theory towards organisational change and they include, among other things, the importance of feedback loops, the fact that information that runs contrary to prior beliefs can prompt change (cognitive dissonance), and that people are constantly trying to make sense of their world (sense-making).

Cultural

Cultural theories of change argue that people are social and cultural beings and change is a part of being human (Morgan, 1986; Kezar, 2013). In cultural theories, change can be planned or unplanned. Cultural theories emphasise the importance of negotiation and identification of the legitimacy of change initiatives. Cultural theories tend to emphasise, in particular, second order changes as they tend to run deep within the organisation (Kezar, 2013). In particular, in higher education, cultural models have been used to describe the form of change required (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). At the same time, cultures themselves, as was discussed previously, are constructed of implicit beliefs and ways of doing things.

Institutional and neo-institutional

Institutional theories of change may explain how one specific institution may be more prone to certain forms of change than others. Isomorphism (when several independent institutions evolve independently to a similar point) is characteristic of the institutional or neo-institutional approach (Kezar, 2013; Karlsson, 2016).

Table three below presents an overview of the theories of change presented above in relation to some of the throughline questions.

Table 3. Theories of change and their characteristics (adapted from Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Kezar, 2013)

	Scientific management	Evolutionary	Cultural	Political	Social cognition	Institutional & neo-institutional
Temporal	Rational and linear	Gradual change. Non-Intentional	Long-term, slow. Non-linear and unpredictable	Negotiation of power. Fast and slow	Change of paradigm. Slow and complex	Change of norms. Fast and slow. Risk for discrepancy in adaptation
Type	Planned	Unplanned, external	Both planned and unplanned	As a result of different position. Unplanned	Emergent, planned and unplanned	Unplanned, tied to external environment
Culture	Driven by a Leader	Self-producing	Social movement	Social movement	Processual with a group	Iron cage/ institutional drive
Locus	Top-down Macro oriented	In the working group, meso level	In the working group, within and across micro-meso-macro	In the working group, across micro-meso-macro	Micro or group oriented	Across micro-meso and macro

3.7 FOUR DISCOURSES OF CHANGE AGENCY: FROM THEORY OF CHANGE TO THEORY OF CHANGE AGENCY

This section serves to deepen the critical dialogue on the theories above by positioning them in the context of discourses on change and change agency, and also by changing focus from change theory to the theory of agency. Furthermore, it acts as a transition into the discussion on agency.

There is a clear conceptual, albeit non-chronological, development of change agency research from rationalist and objectivist approaches to decentred agency and subjectivist and collectivist team-based orientations (Burnes, 2004; Caldwell, 2006; Albano, Masino & Maggi, 2010). This too can be seen in the six theories of change represented above.

Workplaces are socio-cultural entities and peoples' views and understanding of their world contribute to the reproduction of these workplaces (Schoultz, Säljö, & Wyndhamn, 2001; Fairclough, 2005). Specific institutions and the roles of people in those same institutions are made possible by ways of thinking and speaking (Giddens, 1984; Hodges, Kuper, Reeves, 2008; Trowler, 2008). These assumptions form the basis for adopting a socio-cultural and discursive outlook on practice and organisational being. Caldwell identifies four discourses, or ways of thinking, exploring and talking about agency within organisations. The different perspectives on change agency can be plotted very roughly across a, non-chronological, centred-decentred continuum from Lewin to Foucault

(interpreted and adapted freely from Caldwell, 2003, 2006), see fig 2 below. The perspectives are discursive in the sense that they place agency in different power relationships, or identify agency as something driven by language and practice. The four different discourses are *Rationalist*, *Contextualist*, *Dispersalist* and *Constructionist* (Caldwell, 2006).

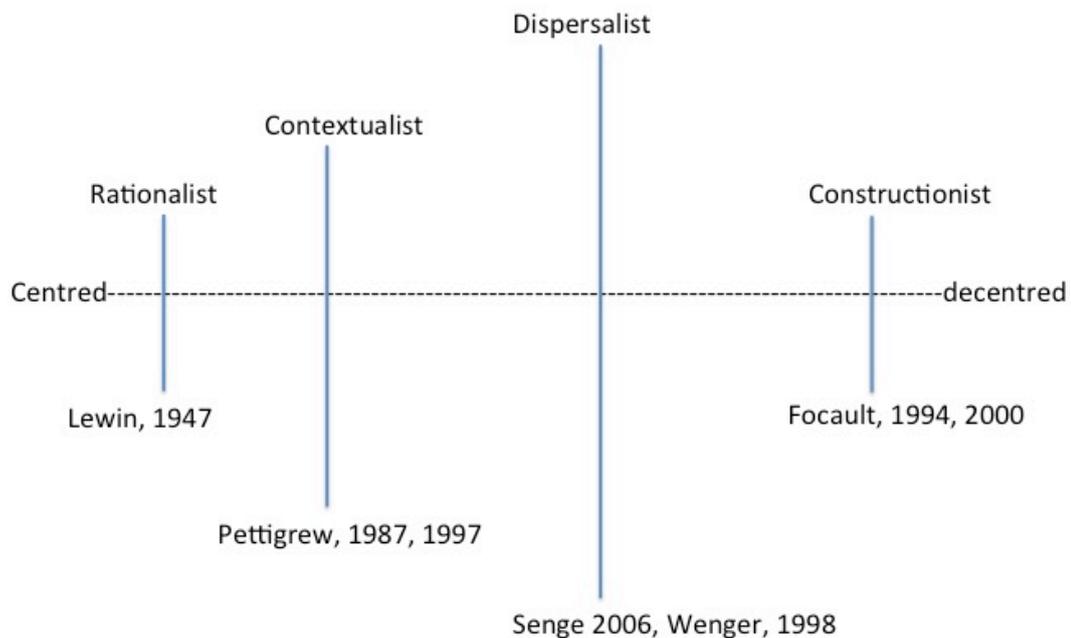


Figure 1. Discourses on Change Agency (interpreted and adapted freely from Caldwell, 2003, 2006)

Rationalist discourse

Rationalist discourses can be traced back to early organisational development research. Bromage identifies these as generic approaches to organisational change (2006). Historically, change agents were identified as rational beings with full agency and the ability to impact planned change in an organisation in accordance with a clearly delineated idea. Very broadly, these are the ideas proposed by an organisational development discourse and they correspond to the leadership roles outlined above. Change agents are identified as champions or heroes of organisational change (Burnes, 2011). The rationalist discourse is characterised by intentional action, rationality and expertise and a strong belief that human behaviour in organisations is part of a functional system that can be expertly designed and re-designed following a number of key principles, including rationality, expertise, autonomy and reflexivity.

Rationality:

Stable, homeostatic groups can be subject to change by way of planned interventions through negative or compensating feedback processes. This is a recurring theme in the central concepts of Lewin’s work: force field analysis, group dynamics and action research (Lewin, 1947). The notion of rationality is such that the change process is driven from one

state to a known other by someone (a change agent) who is an expert and has a clear sense of where and what the outcome is.

Expertise:

Non-reciprocal relationships with strong leadership figures are in focus. Assumptions are made that change agents have an expert role in leading change that the followers of change lack. The idea has morphed throughout a rationalist organisational development perspective into notions of *empowerer*, *process consultant* and so on. The view is one whereby the outsider observer mediates for an internal group and provides objective-neutral interventions (Caldwell, 2005).

Autonomy:

Groups work towards pre-defined ends, lead by a change expert.

Reflexivity:

Reflexivity is framed as feedback from the expert “changer” to the followers of change.

The criticisms of this approach extend to, among other things, the idea that groups work towards pre-defined ends, limiting their own agency to arrive at independent choices. This runs contrary to more decentred models of agency whereby a group’s thinking may run contrary to the organisational developments top-down design. A concern with the generic literature on change management is in part an overemphasis on management and a rational approach to change and change agency (Paton & Dempster, 2002; Bromage, 2006). In terms of reflexivity, there is a tension between the view of change agent as an expert at providing feedback on process to others and a different view of the change agent who is part of the process of change, whereby feedback is brought in from several people changing the actual process itself and where the change agents is merely a conduit of change. This second position does not afford the change agents the same expert status (Caldwell, 2005).

Contextualist discourse

Contextualist discourses place the notion of human agency in the context of *bounded choices* that occur within competing groups’ interests, organisational politics and power struggles.

There are a number of leading figures in the contextualist discourse genre, among them Mintzberg and Pettigrew. In particular, Pettigrew’s work stands out for its emphasis on having a theoretical and empirical basis (Bromage, 2006). Contextualist approaches are concerned with events in their contextual setting. Assumptions have to be continuously confirmed since the context will change and knowledge will need to change also.

Accordingly, Pettigrew focuses on the content, process and context of change as is illustrated below:

- Content refers to empirical arena of transformation
- Process refers to actions, reactions and interactions and
- Context refers outer and inner arena of transformation (Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991).

The model involves a tripartite division into content, process and context and represents a statement against ahistorical, aprocessual and acontextual approaches, in other words change happens and is a reaction against a previous state of being (Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991; Caldwell, 2006; Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012). Contextualist studies often take place in the form of case studies, as a way observing and capturing the actions, reactions and interactions as they unfold (Caldwell, 2003). Concepts and meanings are shared and traded in the research process, and insofar as acceptable definitions of acts in contexts emerge, they are not so much discovered by a process of detached knowing but are created by a process of making in a context (Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991). Studying change means understanding the interplay between these three elements.

Some of the criticism directed at Pettigrew and the contextualist tradition is that it does not identify the temporal nature of change significantly enough but instead tries to identify an ontological entity based on the three elements outlined; content, process and context (Chia, 1999). Viewed as a reaction to Lewin, contextualisation represents a move away from leadership-centric models of change (Caldwell, 2006).

A number of criticisms of contextualist approaches have been identified. One criticism relates to the demarcation of concepts. There is a risk that process and context may become mutually inclusive and so there may be no genuine distinction between the two. Another concern relates to the idea that if agency is entirely contextual as is suggested by Pettigrew then what happens to the relationship between change agents and management or leadership figures? Contextualist approaches may overemphasize the contextual forces, and in doing so may undermine the roles of those in positions of management and leadership who are removed from the specific context. The contextual features and the previous legacy gain a status of their own. The power struggle between the inner context (structure and culture and historical events) and the outer context (its encircling environment) need to be further understood (Bromage, 2006). Furthermore, Caldwell argues that Pettigrew does not sufficiently have *adequate concepts that theorize the organisational structures as systems* (Caldwell, 2006, p65). Notwithstanding these criticisms, it is clear that contextual studies will continue to be an important point of departure for studying change agency, not least for practitioners coming to terms with resistance to change in their local contexts and advancing strategies of change (Bensimon, 2004). In this thesis, the empirical work presented in chapter four are predominantly contextual in response to the need for further context-bound understanding of change outlined above (Kezar, 2013).

Dispersalist discourse

Moving away from the strict contextual approaches, the dispersalist discourse of change agency identifies agency as decentred or distributed, taking the form of self-organising groups who come together in order to cope with policy change, innovation, etc. (Caldwell, 2006). Caldwell uses the dispersalist concept for a wide range of approaches to learning in an organisation, from the learning organisation (Senge, 2006) to communities of practice CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1988) to distributed leadership (Bolden, 2009). Broadly speaking, the dispersalist movement is characterised by flatter, more knowledge-driven enterprises, where leadership has moved away from central governing bodies (Caldwell, 2006). These processes can be self-organising as is the case with CoPs or may

be enforced through more or less natural processes, as is the case with distributed leadership (Bolden, 2009). Study IV in this research project explores specifically one such dispersalist discourse where change is not driven predominantly from above.

Constructionist discourses

Constructionist discourses of change agency are loosely characterised by socially constructed worlds of fragmented cultural discourses (Caldwell, 2006). Caldwell suggests that they are connected by four fundamental principles:

1. anti-rationalism: a constructionist approach does not accept that rationalism is a foundation for truth; instead it is a discourse among others, a way of viewing the world that has no legitimacy
2. anti-scientism: a constructionist approach argue against the laws and facts are too facets of discourse and ways of viewing the world
3. anti-essentialism: in a similar vein, Caldwell argues that constructionist approach hold that there are no essential characteristics inside objects or people. Concepts such as human nature, intentionality and personality do not hold any value outside of humanly constructed discourses.
4. anti-realism: constructionalists hold that there can be no truly empirically objective findings nor is it possible to talk of theoretical or experimental hypotheses outside socially constructed discourses.

Constructionist discourses represent a post-modern approach to organisational structure or non-structure and practice, where knowledge, understanding and action are culturally and historically relative (Caldwell, 2006).

I will briefly summarise and synthesise the overview of the theories of organisational change presented earlier with the theories of agency presented above. Consequently, scientific management models may be viewed as strictly rationalist in Caldwell's framework (2006). Evolution theories would be contextual as each context may develop differently. Political theories would be dispersalist, not so much because they negate leadership, but because they identify a conflict in values between different individuals including leaders and followers. Further political theories are also contextual and to some degree may be constructionist in that some context may include those who hold a constructionist point of departure. Social cognition theories may be predominantly dispersalist and also contextual. Cultural theories are most likely dispersalist, moving agency to the floor, contextual but in some cases, may even be constructionist if and when the discursive nature of agency is brought to the fore. Finally, institutional or neo-institutional theories of change are most likely contextual, but also to some extent rationalist given that they are likely to follow a rationalist model of explanation.

The table below is intended to show the preceding theories of change in light of the discussion on different discourses of change, as a way of understanding the complexity of change theories and theories of change agency.

Table 4. Theories of change viewed in relation to discursive positions outlined in Caldwell (2006).

	Rationalist	Contextual	Dispersalist	Constructionist
Scientific management	x			
Evolution		x		
Political		x	x	x
Social cognition			x	
Cultural		x	x	x
Institutional	x	x		

3.8 WHAT IS THE AGENCY OF CHANGE?

In this thesis, individual and collective agency is situated within socio-cultural contexts. Any change driven by an individual is driven within a social practice of some sort (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2003; Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012). A practice could be characterised by one of the theories or discourses above. However, it is more likely that there are multiple discourses within a practice at any one time. The review of Caldwell's work above outlines different discursive positions in relation to agency in organisational development theory. But how is individual and collective agency to be understood in terms of practice? Social practice theory is an umbrella term for the Study of organised human activity and understanding agency in socio-cultural settings (Nicolini, 2012). In this thesis, it is used as a sensitising device to comment on how people engage at the meso, departmental or network level of a higher education institution. The concept of social practice is itself in one sense tautological; one could argue that all practice is social in that the mere interaction with other people in a workplace is likely to impact the work one carries out. One could also choose to emphasise both social and practice where *social* practice is a practice that has strong social connotations. Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) is predominantly a theory of social practice where the *social* community building practice is emphasised. Conversely, one could think of social practice, where *practice* is the main unit of focus, but where there is a social element. Engeström's activity system could be considered one such social *practice* (Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999). More importantly, as Trowler, Saunders and Bamber point out, social settings are embedded with a history, ways of doing things at certain times, and these histories of doing things can be constitutive for how current practice is performed, but also how an individual's agency becomes manifest (2012). Entering into a new working group could act as a catalyst. Such catalysts may be constituted by discussions that revolve around central themes at their everyday work place, including discussions on curriculum development, curriculum/syllabus design, class planning, criteria design, good work and so on. This has a natural bearing on the work of individual teachers and collegial leaders in their capacity as change agents but also on working groups at departmental level. Social practice theory brings to the fore the value of recognising the interaction between theory and its contextual nesting (Schatzki, 2010) and may give scholars and practitioners a lens to see beyond simple dualisms such as actor/system or theory/action (Nicolini, 2012).

In this thesis, social practice theory is used for this last purpose; to allow the reader to understand action and agency and theory in a contextual setting. This endeavour has been acknowledged and is echoed by other scholars as an important one that one may need to simultaneously observe how theory and action become manifest in practice. Bearing in

mind the theories outlined above, it is clear that any theory of action, agency and practice must be realised or made manifest in a social context or practice. The social practice of higher education is one that is predominantly collegial, and so the theories of change are reified in the social practice. As a way of understanding how social practice moves beyond a simple structure-action dichotomy, I will use some of the broader ideas of structuration (Giddens, 1984). Structuration represents a grand theory of sociology (Mills, 1959) and is used here primarily as a way of conceptualising social practice in a non-dualistic way. For a more extensive review and the meta-theory of social practice theory consult Nicolini, (2012).

3.8.1 STRUCTURATION

Giddens' contribution to the discussion on agency and social practice theory is chosen as it represents a sociological point of departure (Varpio, Ashenbrenner & bates, 2017) and has contributed seminal thinking around organisational thinking and being. In this section I can only begin to approach the depth of Giddens' contribution. For Giddens, agent and structure exist in symbiosis, to the extent that neither is subservient to the other. In sociology, this is seen as a break from both structuralist approaches, which emphasise the power structures have over individual agency, and on the other hand subjectivist approaches, which emphasise the subjective nature of reality. Giddens' theory of structuration can be seen as an attempt to establish a unifying theory, which simultaneously allows for intentional human action and agency while also addressing the structures that govern and restrict the possibility of action (Nicolini, 2012). In Giddens' theory, there is an ongoing interaction between structure and agent, where social structures are the medium and outcome of social action and interaction. This interaction requires a negation of the traditional dualism between structure and agent (Bryant & Jary, 1991).

In other words, a subject is not a slave to structure, nor is structure merely created by an agent, but instead they live in a careful symbiosis. Giddens takes a step away from structuralism in that practice is not a mechanical development *[but] ratheran active constituting process, accomplished by, and consisting in, the doings of active subjects.*" (Giddens in Bryant, 1991). Structuration is a move away from strict functionalist or structural ideas; and is achieved by creating a meaningful interaction between subject and object, between man and structure. Giddens argues for a duality between structure and system. Structure constitutes *"the structuring properties allowing the 'binding' of time-space in social systems"*. These properties make it possible for similar social practices to exist across time and space lending them "systemic" form" (Giddens, 1993). System is constituted of homeostatic causal loops, self-regulation through feedback and reflexive self-regulation, which regulate action and also change structures (Giddens, 1993). This process is illustrated below at two intervals.

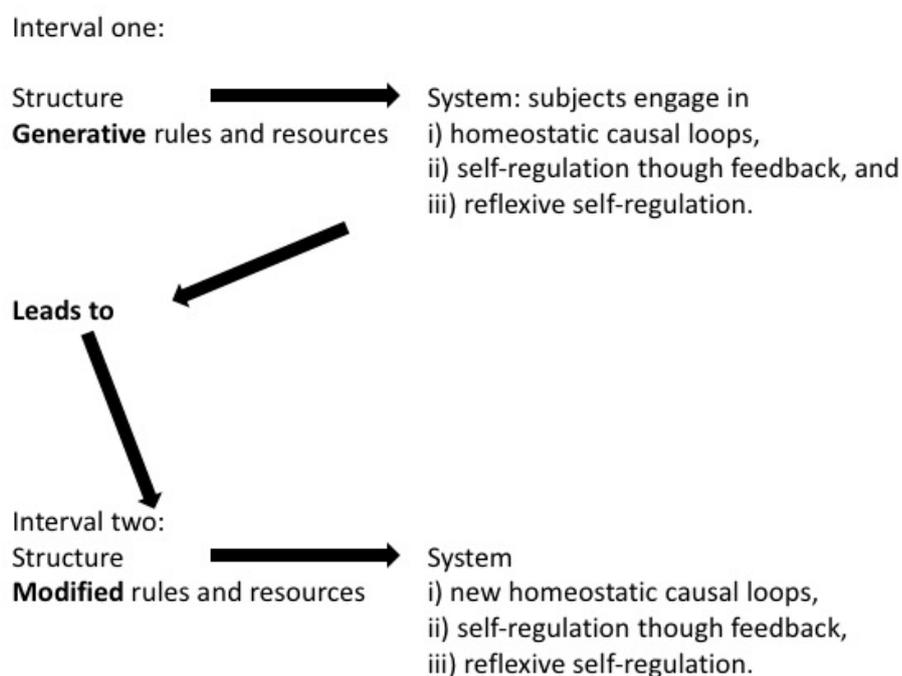


Figure 2. Development of the duality of structure (adapted from Bryant, 1991)

The duality of structure means that there is an ongoing cycle of production and reproduction: rules exist in the periphery and are interpreted in social practices, working groups generate feedback through self-regulatory processes and engage in reflexive self-regulation, which in turn changes the *structure* and leads to new and modified generative rules and regulations. This, in turn prompts new action and new feedback loops.

An example to better understand this is presented by Nicolini, using the concepts of *language* and *speech* to illustrate the interaction between structure and system and to articulate the quintessential idea of structuration (2012). In every language, there is a corresponding practice; speech. A language is a set of rules dictating words and their usage (structure). This set of rules would be meaningless without a spoken practice that complies with, but also challenges the boundaries of that language, its rules and regulations (Nicolini, 2012). Structure and system are simply co-constitutive (Bryant, 1991). A central idea in the theory of structuration is that structures, generative rules, and regulations are also stretched across a time-space continuum as outlined above. Consequently, social activities or practices become 'stretched' across spans of time-space.

Consider for a moment this notion and view it in light of the bi-focal framework addressed earlier in the thesis (Ancona, 1999; Hannah & Lester, 2009). It is plausible to assume that there could be potentially different strategic, political and cultural structures, and by structures, I mean rules and regulations spread over time in the micro, meso and macro levels of an organisation. It is highly unlikely, for example that when new rules and

regulations are introduced at one level of the organisation, then they replace, entirely, old rules and regulations, but these regulations may live on as part of the daily practice conducted within the organisation. This is one of the reasons why context-based studies are needed and why an idiographic approach may provide specific insights into the academic developer community, the research community within higher education but also management research and practice within higher education. The homeostatic feedback loops outlined above are likely to involve repeated interpretation of more than one instance of structure at any one time. This could have some implications for practice in higher education. Different, and to some extent incompatible *structures* could potentially co-exist, simultaneously. Nicolini argues that structure is both the outcome and medium of the reproduction of practice, it is constitutive of and is constituted by social practice (Nicolini, 2012). Giddens argues that structuration is part of a broader project to develop *an ontological framework for the Study of human social activities* (Giddens in Bryant and Jary, pg 201). In terms of social practice, it is argued that Giddens's theory of structuration is relevant in that:

1. *Structures are produced by knowledgeable actors and agents*
2. *Practices are pragmatically situated across a time-space continuum*
3. *Practices, while being inherently contextual are connected locally and globally*

To summarise the main points outlined in chapter 3 above, it is suggested that:

- organisations may have difficulty dealing with radical change and evolutionary change at the same time
- change agents are members of staff who often take up their position due to a sense of responsibility and may lack training and strategies for leading change practice
- change initiatives stem from a number of different perspectives, both top-down and bottom-up, and each type of change initiative may warrant a strategy of its own
- while cultural attributes of work places exist, a closer exploration of the contextual practice of change is warranted
- change practice is enacted at the department level of a higher education institution, and the strategies of change practice play out in this environment
- the theories of change practice are inconclusive, and at times incompatible with each other. Context-bound exploration is needed
- individual agency is contingent upon the surrounding environment and is bounded to certain affordances of that environment

Chapter three presented a palette of theories and approaches to change, agency and organisational development. Not every theory is used or referred to directly in the empirical work, nor are the throughline questions used instrumentally to drive the research questions. Instead, chapter 3 was used to paint a picture of the literature and the different potential points of entry into the empirical work. But chapter 3 also addresses one of the aims of the thesis, namely to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice. However, it should be noted that chapter three only scratches the surface of the literature on change, development and agency.

3.9 AIMS REVISITED & SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research project consists of an overall aim and two sub-aims. The overall aim is:

- To explore change at the meso or departmental level of higher education organisations.

The two sub-aims are:

- To critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice
- To explore empirically, context-bound practice of change in higher education settings.

The overall aim is addressed through the framing of each of the individual studies, but also achieved through engagement in the research community. It involves taking part in discussions and seminars, conducting studies, writing papers and acting as a reviewer, and the compilation of my efforts in the thesis. Ideally, it is a process that extends beyond the research project presented and discussed herein.

Chapter 3 aims to address, in part, the first sub-aim, namely to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice. However, this sub-aim is also addressed in the discussion (chapter 5) where elements of chapter 3 are commented upon again. The second sub-aim, namely, to explore empirically, context-bound practice of change in higher education settings is achieved through the five empirical studies which are presented in the next chapter, chapter 4 and which are discussed via-a-vis the theory presented in chapter 3, and in the discussion (chapter 5). A number of specific research questions are outlined below in relation to each of the studies they appear in.

- How do educators experience the negotiations of meanings around initiatives for educational change in the light of a move towards capacity building? **Study I**
- How do change agents go about enacting change? **Study II**
- What are the different conceptions around change? **Study III**
- How do work groups organise around change? **Study IV**
- How do collegial leaders that have undergone training experience the practice of change, how do they bring about the process of change, and what role does theory play in the practice of change? **Study V**

4 THE EMPIRICAL WORK

This chapter outlines the empirical work in the thesis and comprises the following sections

- Context of the thesis
- Participants and their practices
- Framing of the respective studies
- The findings of each Study are provided briefly
- Limitations in relation to each Study are commented upon
- Methodology; here the broader methodological considerations are outlined, including methodological limitations, ethical considerations, reflexivity, etc.

4.1 CONTEXT OF THE THESIS

The studies were conducted primarily at Karolinska Institutet (KI) which is a research-intensive university in Sweden offering a broad range of educational programmes in medicine and life sciences. KI offers programmes at undergraduate, master's and doctoral level and has about 6000 full-time students. Despite the multitude of educational programmes and research groups, KI is a single faculty university (ki.se).

Study V was co-conducted at Lund University, which is a research-intensive university in the south of Sweden. Lund is a multiple faculty university, and has more than 40000 students per year.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR PRACTICES

KI was the primary site of investigation. It is a medical and life science university. There the participants are teachers, researchers but also clinicians. The clinical work is done at one of the four university hospitals in the greater Stockholm area. Teaching is done, primarily, both at KI and at the university hospitals. In the other site explored in Study V a more general multi-faculty university is in focus. Within each of these sites a multitude of practices are conducted in relation to the broad number of disciplines. So, for example, the respondents had teaching, research and clinical duties and consequently were part of departmental, clinical and research-oriented practices and settings, but also administrative and leadership practices, to some extent. Furthermore, each practice can be seen to take up more or less of their time. Naturally, this is a simplistic or binary view of practice. Within each of the practices there are both discursive and formal boundaries. For example, in the practice of administrative duties, it is possible to divide that practice into course-related or research-specific administrative activities, but one could also argue for the practice of administrative activities or practice that are more related to the concept of managerialism or external quality control (Trowler, 2012). In the same vein, teaching is not simply one practice, nor is research. Each practice is further bound to a set of traditions, norms and values (Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012; Nicolini, 2012).

In Study I, the participants comprised a cohort of teachers and course directors who were attending a continued professional development course. The group of respondents represented several of the education programmes offered at the university. In studies II and V the participants were made up of so-called collegial leaders. In Study II three people

were interviewed on a number of occasions. These people were disciplinarians and had the role of collegial leaders but did not have formal leadership training. They are referred to as change agents in Study II. In Study V, the participants had all attended some form of formal leadership or change management training. In the studies, an ambition has been to choose, when possible, participants from a number of different working environments and education programmes. This was done in the hope that the thesis as a whole would represent the width and diversity of the different institutions. Study III identified stakeholders, who, in one way or another, had been involved or had insight into a specific change initiative at the university. These stakeholders were potentially different to those in the other studies in that only some of them represented their disciplines, and others played different roles at the university; either they were support staff, such as academic developers or ICT support staff, or they were administrative staff at the macro level of the university, or they were leaders at the highest level of the university. Study IV identified a specific group of teachers who embodied a broad number of roles at KI; clinicians, teachers and researchers.

Table 5. Participants in the different studies

Study	Participants	Description
Study I	N=24	Course leaders and teachers attending professional development training
Study II	N= 3	Collegial leaders who did not have formal leadership training
Study III	N=13	Participants were identified among the different stakeholders involved in or with insight into a specific change initiative
Study IV	N= 9	This Study was conducted among a tight-knit group of colleagues; teachers and clinicians
Study V	N=14	Collegial leaders who attended training. Respondents came from both Karolinska Institutet and Lund University

4.3 FRAMING THE FIVE STUDIES

This section connects the literature in chapter 3 to the five studies conducted in the thesis, and acts as a precursor to the methodological discussions later in this chapter.

Earlier in the thesis the importance of understanding the contextual nature of change was articulated. Most of the studies were conducted at KI. This was a way of taking a deeper look at capacity building and change practice of members of the KI environment. Study V expanded the scope of the research project and wished to look also at how change practice at another research-intensive institution was conducted. Limitations of this approach are discussed later on. The different practices conducted at the two sites may have implications for how change practice is conducted. A common theme at KI, but also at Lund, is that members of staff who have an expressed interest in teaching and learning, divide their time between different duties. Often, they are engaged in research, teaching and clinical practice. As such, the participants in this thesis, and the practices they represent, align well with the notions of collegiality outlined elsewhere in the literature (Kezar, 2013; SOU, 2015).

Study I explored how teachers and course directors at different levels of the university deal with and understand opportunities for change in a university setting that is undergoing

multidimensional change. The data was collected in late 2012 while the university was undergoing a drive towards the implementation of the Bologna process, with a specific focus on implementing an outcome-based curriculum across the campus. Each of the respondents in the study had multiple roles, and all were novices to formal training as educators. The respondents in this study represent the micro but also to some degree the meso levels at the university, each person was an individual engaging in first order teaching practice, but in their role of course leader they were also potentially engaged in second order change initiatives, requiring the involvement of others. At the time of the study, the respondents were identified as a group of people who could potentially act as key agents of change. The role that agents of change could play had previously been neglected by the research (Fanghanel & Trowler, 2008; Trowler, 2008; Trowler, Hopkinson, & Comerford Boyes, 2013). The potential change initiatives they could engage in were viewed from two angles: change from above in the form of policy decisions and directives for staff to implement, and change from below, driven by themselves or colleagues from a grass-roots perspective. This has been described previously, but to recapitulate: in the case of Study I, change from above involves a top-down perspective on change and is represented by the implementation of, in this case, supra-national agreements, such as the Bologna process, which had a specific emphasis on the implementation of an outcome-based curriculum and its influence on the planning, execution and assessment of education in a broader *European* way (Keeling, 2006). At the same time, the respondents were exposed to calls for change from below in the form of initiatives from colleagues. Change from below with a bottom-up perspective on implementation has an emphasis on how teachers understand and enact change in daily practice. Both these types of change are often channelled through potential brokers of change.

Study II was concerned with how change, related to educational matters, is brought about in a higher education institution. Here, we emphasised the fact that higher education institutions seldom prioritise managerial roles dedicated only to change practice, and so we argued, on the basis on the existing literature, but also based on Study I, that change practice may perhaps best be understood as a shared venture resting upon strong communication in the organisation in order to build acceptance towards change. The lack of studies on change agents' practice was articulated across the research we consulted (Nicolini, 2012, Caldwell, 2006) but particularly in relation to higher education institutions (Trowler, 2008; Bamber et al., 2009; Trowler et al., 2013). This study pays specific attention to how change agents engage in the process of change at the local or departmental level of an HEI. From a number of people within the university (n =25) who had quasi-specific duties in facilitating change, we identified a number of respondents (n=3) for in-depth study. These people were thought to act as links between the university governance and the teachers and administration at their local department; thus, they played a key role in implementing educational policies but also in facilitating other types of change initiatives at the micro and meso levels of the organisation. The respondents that were approached were known to have initiated extensive changes within their local context. We used the nomenclature of change agents when designing and writing the study, but would today perhaps opt for another term: 'pedagogical aware academics', for example, seems more apt (Clavert, Löffström, Nevgi, 2015). The study aimed at elucidating to what extent the change

agents worked systematically with change and to what extent their reasoning about change was informed by theory and models.

Study III explored how different stakeholders in a research-intensive university deal with one specific innovation. The innovation in question was the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) phenomenon. At the time of the study, MOOCs were being hyped in academia but were also receiving much publicity in the broader national and international media. Some were claiming that MOOCs would be a new and disruptive force in higher education, likely to revolutionize and maybe also threaten traditional higher education (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000; Ross et al., 2014; Yuan and Powell, 2013). This paper uses the MOOC phenomenon to illustrate how different stakeholders conceptualise this new and potentially disruptive force in higher education. This study represents a single case study around one particular change phenomenon.

Study IV is also used as part of another thesis at KI (Barman, 2015). It is being used here as it brings dimensions of the auto-genesis of working groups into the overall research project; that is to say how working groups at the meso or network level of a higher education institution go about self-organising when driving development as a result of a change initiative. The type of change in focus here was change initiated as part of an integrated whole institutional approach outlined earlier, but which, as all changes do, became part of the local bottom-up work that staff do when engaging in change initiatives as a response to a top-down strategy. This way of enacting top-down policy with bottom-up agency is the kind of agency that is mentioned repeatedly in chapter 3 above (Bromage, 2006). This way of working, of organising and of enacting change resonates with what we know about how many change initiatives are planned but also how working groups at the meso level organise and deal with change in the form of implementing a form of top-down policy idea; here in the form of working with assessment criteria *à la Bologna*. This study was designed by the first author. As second author, I came in during the framing of the findings vis-à-vis the research question, and the broader implications for change agency are emphasised here in relation to the questions addressed in this thesis.

Study V addressed, in part, how collegial leaders respond to systematic training and how they implement change in their local contexts based on theories and models that were “acquired” during training. Furthermore, we aimed to explore how change agents’ understanding of change and use of change theory alters over time. This study identified a number of collegial leaders who had attended training and who had, in different ways, engaged in development projects. Still, despite the fact that they had attended training, their time dedicated to leading change and practice was limited and they also shared their time with other duties and practices. This study also tried to understand what happens over time when collegial leaders have been educated towards a specific purpose; being agents and leaders of change. As mentioned earlier, research in other related fields suggests that the informal context is very important for learners’ ability to translate theory into practice, and that many collegial leaders are isolated when they return home to their department. Data was collected recurrently over a period of time and at two different research-intensive universities.

Zooming in and out

The five studies zoom in and out of different contexts and practices. In studies I, II and V a broad contextualisation is carried out with a focus on different members of academic staff at the university. While Study I addresses individual teachers and course leaders, studies II and V explore collegial leaders and their practice. Study III focusses specifically on one initiative and the view of context here is mediated via the object of exploration; that is, the MOOC phenomenon. Study IV explores a group of people who work together and share a very specific practice and context. This design allows the research team to take a number of snapshots of practice, from the individual teachers' perspective, through working groups at the departmental level through the quasi-formal and formal collegial leaders. This approach aligns with and supports the idiographic point of departure taken earlier. Limitations of this approach are addressed later on.

Table 6. Summary of the papers in the thesis with specific emphasis on their purpose, research question, method and principle findings

	Purpose	Primary research questions	Method	Principle findings
Study I	To understand perceived agency in a capacity building context	How do educators experience the negotiations of meanings around initiatives for educational change in the light of a move towards capacity building?	Qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003)	Different stakeholder may not understand each other. Without understanding each other's point of departure, any change initiatives may be rendered futile.
Study II	To understand how change agents strategize around change initiatives	How do change agents go about implementing change? Secondly, how can we understand tensions between these change agents' experiences of change and systematic models of change?	Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988 McCance et al. 2001) & Concept Mapping (Hyde 2000)	Change agents often lack systematic approaches to change. They are "stuck" doing things here and now.
Study III	To understand a specific change initiative: The introduction of MOOCs	How do different stakeholders conceptualise MOOCs? What implications do these conceptions have during change processes?	Phenomenography (Stenfors-Hayes, Hult, & Dahlgren, 2013)	Stakeholders have different conceptions of MOOCs, and different expectations on what a change can lead to.
Study IV	Understanding the auto-genesis of working groups	How do teachers within the health professionals enact assessment criteria for students' clinical competency?	Narrative analysis. (Bruner, 1986; Mattingly, 1998a)	Work groups self-identify needs for enhancement in own practice. Top-down change can act as a catalyst for such change practice.
Study V	To understand how "informal" collegial leaders translate theory into practice and strategize around working with change	How do formal, collegial leaders understand and experience the temporality, politics, environment and theory of change? How do they use theory in their practice of collegial leadership?	Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). ITTD, Interview to the Double, (Nicolini, 2009)	Collegial leaders do not explicitly use theory to drive change practice, but engage in repeated negotiation, which itself is a form of systematisation of change practice.

4.4 METHODOLOGICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

Throughout the thesis, one thought has been reiterated in the critical dialogue with the literature on change and change agency and in particular in relation to Van de Ven & Poole (1995), Caldwell, (2006) and Kezar, (2003); namely, that one theory of change is not enough to represent the actuality of change in higher education (Varpio, Aschenbrener & Bates, 2017). In line with this reasoning, different methods have been chosen. Here, I offer a broader account of the methodological & ethical considerations relevant to the research project as a whole. Furthermore, I offer an explanation of how, I, as a scientist, approach methodological questions of trustworthiness, rigour and reflexivity.

This research project consists of five qualitative studies, which when considered together act as a multi-faceted case study that address different aspects of change implementation and change agency in higher education (Yin, 2013). The studies are qualitative in nature. This approach was chosen as change is conducted at different levels of a higher education organisation and so in-depth studies of change implementation and agency are chosen as a way of gaining deep insight into individuals' understanding and social practice on matters related to change. Furthermore, it was considered important to aim for in-depth insights in order to respond to calls for more emphasis on context-specific approaches outlined above. The studies utilise a number of different data collection and data analysis methods which are shown in the description of the studies above in table 6. A decision was made to explore different methods as opposed to trying to master one. This was done in order to broaden the research method repertoire.

The research project is nested in broader socio-cultural and hermeneutic or interpretive approaches. It is socio-cultural in the sense that human action is grounded in social and cultural settings and that understanding the meaning of actions necessitates taking these settings into consideration (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Cole & Engeström, 1994). In doing so I also align with Gadamer and the Hermeneutical tradition and hold that research is always a matter of interpretation, where my pre-knowledge or prejudicesⁱⁱ play a part. Moreover, interpretation itself may be partly biased or at least influenced by prejudices and that hermeneutically-oriented research does not generate fully objective truths, but instead context-specific observations and understanding (Gadamer, 2004). Adopting socio-cultural and hermeneutic approaches may have implications for how the research can be understood in a broader scientific context; in other words, what may seem plausible in one context may not readily be translated to another. This is, perhaps, a natural and necessary consequence of research which is qualitatively oriented and which endeavours to uncover emic understanding of perspectives and practice (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Socio-cultural and hermeneutically-oriented research requires negotiated consensus across multiple pathways: between researcher and respondent, researcher-supervisor, and researcher-research phenomenon, consequently achieving a form of bilateral understanding of the research phenomenon. In fact, it may even be considered trilateral when taking into account the reader who is also encouraged to become a co-constructor of the outcome of the research and, in the end, the person who is asked to judge and assess the relevance of the research in light of their own practice and context. As such, the findings of the ongoing

ⁱⁱ Prejudices is used hereafter in keeping with Gadamer's nomenclature.

research, while they may not be broadly generalisable in the nomothetic sense, may be viewed primarily as theoretically transferable. In other words, by building up a strong case and offering empirical evidence, the readers of this research can reflect and draw conclusions on how relevant the findings may be in the context within which they work (Bamber et al., 2009), thereof the trilateral dimension.

4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Adopting socio-cultural and hermeneutic stances necessitates, as do all other methodological points of departure, considerations of scientific rigour. Scientific *truths* in this regard are contextualised and co-created by the culture within which they exist, are discovered and become *truths* (Latour & Woolgar, 2013). But the idea of scientific truths in the tradition I outline above is obviously misleading. Truth is social in the sense that we can agree on a number of propositions, and we use rhetorical devices to persuade others of the basis of truth-oriented statements. So instead of embracing truth in a post-positivist sense of the word this research rests on a number of pillars to ensure scientific rigour and establish trustworthiness. They are adapted from Lincoln and Guba's evaluative criteria (1985) and include:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

Below, I specify each of the concepts and reflect on how they are relevant to the thesis.

Credibility - Credibility is established through a number of means including a prolonged engagement with the field of study. Furthermore, it involves not abandoning or radically changing focus during the research project, as well as using data from different sources. Another way to establish credibility and to ensure one remains true to the idea is by inviting respondents to engage in member checks, ensuring that findings resonate with the respondents.

I have extensive knowledge in the field of higher education practice and research and have worked over a long period of time with change agents and development projects, and have also seen first-hand the difficulties change agents encounter. Findings have been agreed upon through a process of negotiated consensus with supervisors, and when relevant, member checks have been used to validate the data procured from the respondents.

Transferability- Transferability relates to the extent with which the findings and findings are made applicable in other contexts. Bamber et al. (2009) argue that researchers can strive for a theoretical transferability, meaning that the researchers can describe the context and the findings and present an interpretation, but essentially any claim to transferability would be made on behalf of the reader and not the researchers. Thus, theoretical transferability can be sought. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) this is brought about by thick descriptions of the context and the findings, and the ensuing discussion leading to a

contextualisation on behalf of the reader. This notion of transferability resonates with the hermeneutic approach outlined above.

A challenge in terms of transferability has been how to offer thick descriptions given the calls for brevity when writing publishable research articles. The focus of my writing has been on identifying a robust idea of who the respondents are, and by placing them in a clearly identifiable context. Then the descriptions of question, context, findings and discussion allow the readers of my research to build an understanding of how the findings may be relevant to their context.

Dependability- In the qualitative, hermeneutic tradition, dependability is not the same thing as reproducibility. Still, careful measures are required and a systematic step-by-step description of the process of data collection and analysis are required in order to offer the highest levels of academic rigour and dependability. Given the above arguments on transferability, it should be also noted that dependability means that the findings are plausible and follow coherently from the methods and research questions and research design, while at the same time it must be acknowledged that another researcher with other prejudices may, in fact, draw other conclusions.

All research requires careful methodological rigour. By stating clearly, the steps followed and by working closely with my supervisors on each step of the design, implementation, analysis and follow-up of my research I believe I have clearly achieved this. Also, the methods have been outlined in as much detail as possible, so as to allow the reader an opportunity to understand the process of data collection and analysis.

Confirmability- defined as a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a Study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. The hermeneutic tradition evokes the merging of horizons metaphor to demonstrate how two people share a common understanding. Essentially, Lincoln and Guba's criteria need to be understood more as a claim for a sense of neutrality and less as a call for post-positivist-oriented truths. The researcher should provide evidence that clearly demarks any prejudices or bias towards the research question in focus. My reflection on confirmability extends into the next section, which deals with reflexivity.

4.6 REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity offers researchers an opportunity to reflect on action while being in the action itself and enables them to call into question the ontological and epistemological points of departure that form the boundaries of the scientific discipline. These points of departure are ontological in the sense that real phenomena are identifiable and real problems exist, and epistemological in the sense that the researcher must establish the boundaries for what constitutes genuine and authentic knowledge about these phenomena. It is essential to ask oneself questions about credibility, trustworthiness, dependability and conformability. It is necessary that one critically reflects on context as well as both ontological and epistemological assumptions outlined above. Harding argues that science that is not self-reflective is poor science and scientists risk simply following the normalising procedures of institutions and conceptual schemes already legitimated as value neutral (1992). The notion

of value neutral science is, according to Harding a chimera; instead values are deeply imbued in the traditions themselves, assumptions are held but the researcher may be unaware of these unless they are brought into focus (Harding, 1992). Similarly, Gadamer argues that qualitative hermeneutic research cannot be “strongly objective” (2004). The steps articulated above by Lincoln and Guba (1985) reinforce the need to be open and honest about one’s pre-knowledge and prejudices instead of claiming strong objectivity. On this Gadamer writes;

“...in hermeneutics, history co-determines the consciousness of the person who understands. Therein lies an essential reversal: what is understood always develops a certain power of convincing that helps form new convictions.” (Gadamer, 2004, pg 570).

This notion is enhanced by Hyland who writes:

“As a result of the rhetorical conventions of each text will reflect something of the epistemological and social assumptions of the author’s disciplinary culture” (Hyland, 2004, pg 11).

During the research project, I kept a log-book to record my progress and thoughts. There, I documented my own thoughts and reflected on these over time as I progressed. In part, they relate to the individual studies but also more broadly to expectations, assumptions and prejudices.

In Study I, I was both a teacher on the course the participants were attending, and at the same time, one of the two researchers taking part of the written, reflective statements. Here, the role of teacher and researcher merged and I needed to be aware of the risks involved. It was considered important to have the participants write statements of their own, as a way of creating a distance between data and interpretation. This I found to be a particularly useful approach in the early work, allowing me to distance myself from a phenomenon that I had potentially strong opinions about. In retrospect, I feel it might have been difficult without proper training in analysis, interviewing and data interpretation to create a necessary distance between my roles as teacher and researcher. The process of analysis, interpretation and write-up of Study I was a revelation, allowing me to see different lines of thinking in relation to the questions and prompts we posed in the instructions to the reflective statements. It also provided me with an awareness of how to tackle bias. At the same time, this study was done serendipitously in conjunction with training on scientific method and theory.

In Study II, I was somewhat familiar with the respondents. We had met across campus, but had not worked together extensively. This was both a strength in that our paths had not really crossed, but also a weakness in that we did not share a wealth of experience with each other of working on projects. This partly inspired the research design; these people were taken from a cohort of 25 collegial leaders that shared a common facilitating role across the university. Given the fact that we did not know each other too well, it was thought that it would be better to conduct repeated interviews with the respondents in order to really dig deeply into the phenomenon, but also as a way of building rapport with the

respondents. Here, we also chose to mirror the narratives of change through a framework of change. Capturing the respondents' experiences of change and their narratives seems today to be an entirely relevant question. At the time of the study, it was felt that because of the extra process of refracting these experiences of change through a theoretical framework, the study was more rigorous.

Study III changed focus and provided new challenges from a reflexivity point of view. At the time the study was conducted I had been the initiator of the MOOC project at the site of the study. At the time of the study I had also worked at the university for almost eight years. Having been at the university for such a long period of time offered me a sense of ethos, or legitimacy within the organisation. At the same time, having been involved with the MOOC project myself also presented a challenge in the form of being an internal member of the community. Here, we reasoned that choosing a phenomenographic approach would enable us to capture the width of experiences in relation to the change phenomena. A test interview was conducted; in part because we were testing a new method of interviewing and analysing, but also to reflect on the analysis process in relation to my own role as researcher. The data collected in this study brought forward a number of potentially different ways of understanding the phenomenon. In retrospect, it is clear that my earlier concerns that my own understanding would be an obstacle to understanding others' experiences were somewhat unfounded. At the same time, reflecting on one's own understanding and potential prejudices was a useful exercise; not only did it give me a chance to reflect on the phenomenon but it was also useful when constructing the interview guide, in collaboration with a method expert.

In Study IV, I came into the process after the initial data collection was done. Here, the process was different. As a research-oriented academic developer, I was able to ask critical questions to the main researcher with respect to the project and the data collection procedure.

Study V was initially planned in conjunction with Study II. The study was conducted at two universities, in part as a way of adding more people and voices to the thesis, in the belief that it would be more credible. Again, this reflects early choices in the research process. At the same time, I cannot help but reflect on how I, as a researcher, have been influenced by the post-positive paradigm that is so prevalent at my home institution. A high *n* (number of participants in a study) is generally considered more credible. Had I performed this study in a different setting, then maybe I would have made other choices. Still, this matter was given careful consideration, and the research team, all of whom are predominantly qualitatively-oriented researchers, felt that there was a point to capturing variation and representation across multiple sites. Consequently, respondents at two universities were invited to take part. I had some knowledge of the respondents who also worked at the same university as I did, and so it was easy to build a rapport with them. Many of them had also met me in different teaching or workshop situations. Building rapport with the participants at the other university was done through one of the research team members who had a similar relationship to the respondents from that university as I did at mine.

As each project was designed I had repeated conversations with my supervisors on the direction in which the research was going, but also from where it was coming, emphasising the importance of not jumping to conclusions and taking adequate time to explore the phenomena. This reflective process was necessary given my long experience as an academic developer, a role that often involves working with individuals, groups and collegial leaders. Here too, the supervisors' complementary skills were essential, offering food for thought and reflection. Reflection was done, not as a way of reflecting on my pre-judgement or prejudices, but instead as a way of being clear and bringing my own assumptions to the fore for critical reflection. This self-reflection enabled me, along with my supervisors, to develop questions for interviews that were not skewed towards expected outcomes or of a rhetorical nature. Concurrent with this, I attended courses in research methodology and practised and gained experience from recurrently working with sample interviews and data analysis to ensure rigour.

In retrospect, I realise that my position as an academic developer has given me a wealth of experience which has enhanced the research conducted in this project. My knowledge of the local context has been vital in understanding and utilising the ideographic approach. In other words, it was easy for me to be context-sensitive. At the same time, I have been careful not to study events that I myself was key in informing or creating or driving or that I was dependent upon their success. For example, in study I, I explored elements of practice related to a course that I was in charge of, but the outcomes were isolated from the course the participants were attending. In studies III and V, I had a partial participation role. In Study III, for example, I was one of the initiators of the project but had no management role in relation to the respondents. Also in Study V, I was involved, to some extent in the training and supervision of the collegial leaders. However, I made a conscious decision not to interview respondents I had collaborated with or supervised. In doing so I feel that there has been a good balance between the up and downsides of studying one's own practice and the necessary scientific rigour that involves.

4.7 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES IN RELATION TO THE DIFFERENT STUDIES

This section reflects critically on the data collection and analysis methods in relation to each of the studies.

Study I addressed the following research question: How do educators experience the negotiations of meanings around initiatives for educational change in the light of a move towards capacity building? Here the experiences of the respondents were collected in the form of written reflective statements, and analysis of the texts was conducted using qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The analysis process consisted of a number of steps.

1. Sentences or meaning utterances were coded.
2. Similar meaning utterances were clustered together and collected into main codes or heuristic devices. This was done in order to differentiate manifest and latent meaning.
3. Main themes were defined based on the relationship between the codes. All the statements were re-coded in order to look for similar descriptions. These codes were grouped according to their commonalities, resulting in several categories. The

categories were seen as representations of the manifest meaning and were discussed among the authors.

4. Negotiated consensus was obtained and a number of themes identified, which were understood as representations of the latent meaning.
5. The original transcripts were re-read again and the themes were compared with and validated vis-à-vis the data.

As outlined above, the respondents were chosen from a group of people attending a foundational course in learning as part of continued development programme, and they all had some experience of implementing change as a result of a shift in policy. The respondents of this study were all attending the same course. As such, there was a potentially unequal power relationship between the research team and the respondents as the respondents were course participants. This was addressed in the study by making it clear to the respondents that the study was being conducted in parallel with the course they were attending, that their participation was by no means a prerequisite for passing the course, and that if they felt uncomfortable with any part of the study, then they could withdraw their participation. Further data analysis was done after the course was completed. Collecting written narratives was seen as a strength of this study, as it allowed the participants to write freely, and in their own time. However, further data collection may have illuminated the research questions even more. Longitudinal exploration, oriented more towards gathering insider data would have been a natural and perhaps also more ethical way of following up this study. Throughout this research project, negotiated consensus between myself and the other members of the research team has been the *modus operandi* for validating and justifying the findings.

In Study II, the following question was addressed: How do change agents go about enacting change? Here, 'change agents' was used to denote the respondents, given their quasi-formal role. Today, other concepts might be considered to be more appropriate, for example pedagogically aware academics (Clavert et al., 2013), or collegial leaders (Mårtensson, 2014). Here the respondents' stories of change were studied to gain insight into the types of conflict and tension they may have encountered, but also to understand how they went about strategizing and planning around change initiatives. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore the extent to which change agents adopted theoretical or conceptual approaches to change agency (Caldwell, 2006; Bamber et al., 2009; Trowler et al., 2013). A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with the respondents. Three interviews with each of the respondents were held in the hope of arriving at deep understanding of their practice. The initial findings of the narrative-oriented interview material were subsequently mapped into deductive prescriptions of how change initiatives are reported to be successfully conducted (Meyer & Stensaker, 2006). Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988) was conducted as well as pattern matching (Hyde, 2000) to determine the respondents' ways of going about and experiencing change implementation and also to consider the processes in the light of suggested change process prescriptions (Meyer & Stensaker, 2006). Bringing forward the narratives of change, as was done in the first part of this study, aligns with the overall methodological approach outlined above. Adding the second phase of analysis was done to see how well the narratives of change aligned with change process prescriptions that are

found in the organisational development literature, but it was also done as a way of adding rigour to the original data collection.

Study III changed focus from the practice of change and explored how different stakeholders conceptualise MOOCs. Furthermore, the implications these conceptions may have during change processes were considered. In order to focus on the possible differences or variation in experiencing what MOOCs are, we chose a phenomenographic approach. The questions were explored empirically using phenomenographic methodology (Stenfors-Hayes, Hult, & Dahlgren, 2013). The phenomenographic method promotes the notion that it is possible to experience a phenomenon, in this case the MOOC, in a number of qualitatively different ways. The data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews that were conducted by the first author, where the respondents were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences of MOOCs. The analysis was conducted using the following steps:

1. **Familiarisation** Reading through the interview transcripts to get a feel for how the interview proceeded. Here, all data in the data set were given equal consideration.
2. **Condensation** Identifying meaning units and marking these for the purpose of further scrutiny. The size of the meaning units could vary, different fragments of sentences could be associated with different ways of experiencing the phenomenon.
3. **Comparison** Comparing the units with regard to similarities and differences.
4. **Grouping** Allocating responses expressing similar ways of understanding the phenomenon to the same category.
5. **Articulating** Capturing the essential meaning of a certain category.
6. **Labelling** Expressing the core meaning of the category.
Steps 3–6 were repeated in an iterative procedure to make sure that the similarities within and differences between categories were discerned and formulated in a distinct way.
7. **Contrasting** Comparing the categories through a contrastive procedure whereby the categories were described in terms of their individual meanings as well as in terms of what they did not comprise.

The conceptions which were identified in the empirical data formed the basis for answering the second theoretical research question: What implications do these conceptions have during change processes? Given that this is the first study we know of that uses the phenomenographic approach to the MOOC phenomenon, and given that MOOCs are a relatively new phenomenon, or were at the time of study, it may be argued that the conceptions could change over time. Furthermore, given that different stakeholders were interviewed, it might be possible that the conceptions within a specific stakeholder group are not articulated here.

Study IV addressed how teachers within a health-care profession enact assessment criteria for students' clinical competency. Data was generated through a combination of methods over a period of one year, during which time the teachers were engaged in an intervention

to enhance their assessment practice. Observations were made in relation to formal meetings and informal talks. Formal meetings were tape-recorded and transcribed. Field notes generated by the first author included facial expressions, body language, the physical room and artefacts, and atmosphere. The field notes were written out the same day or the day after an observation. Teachers' written reflections were gathered on four occasions, and one group interview with four of the teachers was held at the end of the year. The data were analysed from a narrative perspective based on the works of Mattingly (1998a; 1998b). The narrative analysis was based on data as one set, and considered *how* the teachers' 'prevailing discourse(s)' was expressed in their everyday enactment, and also how this discourse evolved over time (Josephsson and Alsaker 2015). This in-depth narrative tells one story of change; other stories would be necessary to describe and elaborate upon the different ways in which groups approach and enact policy.

In Study V, we posed a three-pronged research question; 1) How do collegial leaders that have undergone training experience the practice of change, 2) how do they bring about the process of change, and 3) what role does theory play in collegial leaders' practice of change? Here, a number of collegial leaders were followed throughout a change implementation process at two of Sweden's largest research-intensive universities. The collegial leaders' experiences and reported routines were explored through analysis of written reports and interviews. The study used a novel interview method introduced by social practice scholars; interview to the double (ITTD) (Nicolini, 2009). The ITTD is a novel and robust form of acquiring emic-oriented data from respondents. It has been used mainly in organisational theory for understanding the processual and linguistic nature of organising and organisational change (Nicolini, 2009). The ITTD explores; the social construction of situated discourses, the contextuality of the interlocutory situation, and the language of the interaction (Gherardi, 2012). In this study the respondents were asked to imagine that they would be replaced by a double in their job. They were instructed to issue instructions to the double about how to work with change, but they must also make sure that the double was not revealed. This rendered a number of interview transcriptions. The interview transcriptions were subsequently analysed using a form of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which comprised the following steps:

1. The material was listened to repeatedly in order for the analyst to become familiar with the respondents and the way they addressed the topic.
2. Codes were identified by acknowledging events or significant happenings in the narratives/data. The significant codes were written down. The coding was data-driven and not theory-driven as this was the inductive phase of analysis.
3. Themes were identified from the coded material, seeing patterns that formed an overarching theme and avoiding overlap of themes.
4. Themes were defined and named through negotiated consensus in the research team. The essence of the theme was identified.
5. The themes were written up.

This study was conducted at two different universities. In preparing the material we opted for extensive listening to the recording as a first step in the analysis. Consequently, only the meaning units that were identified as being relevant were brought forward for further

analysis, outlined above.

4.8 FINDINGS

Here the findings from each study are reported briefly and commented upon.

In Study I, (McGrath & Bolander Laksov, 2014) when the respondents were asked to reflect upon peer meetings around matters related to change opportunities, they gave voice to how the work of developing a course under the pretence of ongoing educational reform was confronted, not only by major challenges, but also benefits, all of which were multi-faceted. These challenges and benefits are summarised into three themes: *intrapersonal benefits* (i.e. how benefits were understood and mediated through personal advancement and understanding); *awareness of pedagogical points of departure* (i.e. how theories were related to practice); and *discursive and communicative issues* (i.e. how people discussed opportunities for change with colleagues and peers). The findings suggest that the universities' efforts created enthusiasm for change practice, but that simultaneously the university might not build structures or enable individuals to translate the enthusiasm that comes from attending continued professional development programmes into practice-oriented changes or enhancements.

In Study II (McGrath et al., 2016), in the study on 'change agents' narratives of change four themes were identified: *change as bargaining*, *changes as identifying significant others*, *change as overcoming resistance*, and *change as overcoming territorial boundaries*. It should be noted here that the *change agent* term may be a misnomer in this context, as has been acknowledged above. In the study the term change agents was used to identify people whose role was to act in support of educational change. The notion of agent suggests a certain performativity, which is not intended. More appropriate synonyms are proposed elsewhere, for example 'pedagogically aware academics' (Calvert, et al., 2015). Furthermore, the findings show how the respondents were stuck in a sense of present-ism; stuck in now-ness, stuck in addressing ongoing issues or solving current problems. These findings suggest that the respondents may have been more reactive to change and did not have extensive strategies for capacity building. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the respondents lacked conceptual and theoretical approaches, and furthermore, when presented with systematic approaches to change they were unable to recognise how they would be able to work with such models. Moreover, the findings of this study align with previous research suggesting that collegial leaders as agents of change within higher education adopt their positions due to a sense of responsibility (Stensaker, 1999). At the same time, it is clear that the respondents in this study did not have the time-on-task to engage in systematic approaches to change practice. This is discussed in more detail later. The study also demonstrated the strategies these people adopted in order to engage in the practice of bringing about change, whereby engaging in dialogue around change initiatives and practice was perhaps the most prominent strategy. On the notion of theory, it is not suggested that respondents showed disdain towards theories per se, but they were clearly dismissive, acknowledging that change was context-specific and that models or theories of change were unlikely to help. These findings may be beneficial for the academic development community in particular, as a way of understanding practice, but this is discussed in more detail later on.

In Study III (McGrath et al., 2017), the focus of the paper was on identifying conceptions around the emergence of a new and potentially disruptive phenomenon in higher education. Our aim was to explore and identify the different conceptions that a number of stakeholders within the university have of MOOCs. We identified four overlapping categories focussed on learning and a fifth category focussed more on marketing and institutional positioning: *MOOC as learning a platform, MOOC as content learning, MOOC as a catalyst for educational change, MOOC as moral obligation and, MOOC as institutional positioning*. Furthermore, we reasoned about how these different conceptions could be plotted along different dimensions of change awareness from the myopic to the global and from the causal to the systemic. In this paper, we argue that it is important to understand what conceptions stakeholders have in relation to a change phenomenon both in terms of the scope of the change initiative but also in relation to how change is brought about. Our findings suggest that some of the conceptions may be incompatible with each other and that there is a risk towards implementing change when the language used around a new phenomenon becomes normalised given that there is a potential conflict in what is meant or understood by the underlying concepts. This work aligns with what Alvesson calls ‘multiple cultures’ in the organisation perspective (Alvesson, 1993). In the study, it was argued that that it is important to understand what conceptions stakeholders have in relation to a change phenomenon both in terms of the scope of the change initiative but also in relation to how change is brought about. In Study III, the locus of and temporality of change are further emphasised; different and incompatible conceptions of change at different levels of an organisation may be natural but troubling at the same time. It is not possible to say that the conceptions of MOOC held by the different stakeholders have relevance for the universities’ approach to the MOOC phenomenon, nor is it possible to say that these findings will hold over time.

Study IV (manuscript) demonstrates the auto-genesis of change, how teachers self-organise and take agency, how they go about creating their own framework for understanding and how they self-organise in order to work in an ethically sound way with assessment. Together with Studies II and V, this Study demonstrates the processes of enacting change, the messiness that arises and the challenges involved, but also, how change practice is driven by a desire to do the right thing. It also reflects the power of self-organising groups’ drive to develop an understanding that is primarily contextual. The findings demonstrate how the teachers: 1) *developed a joint culture in favour of continuous assessment and improvements, 2) implemented assessment criteria to ensure fairness in assessments and with a conscious concern for future patients’ care, and 3) experienced a number of dilemmas related to the use of criteria in assessment of students’ performances*. Study IV gives voice to a strong moral dimension which is carried over into studies I, III and V and was often articulated by the respondents, namely that a change had to be pre-empted by a sense that this was meaningful and important, and had to relate to the very hands-on practice of teaching and learning.

In Study V (manuscript) five themes were identified that are related to collegial leaders’ experiences of change, their practice of change agency and how they use theory. In relation to experience of change practice, the collegial leaders reported on *Leadership roles in conflict* and also reasoned about *Negotiating and sometimes giving up*, in relation to

engaging in the practice of change agency. They experienced difficulties in that leadership roles were sometimes unclear, and sometimes conflicting in terms of what their perceived roles were and what they were expected to do. They reported engaging in multiple negotiations in order to move practice forward, and reported that, at times, they felt like giving up or giving in to the demands of the environment. In relation to the practice of change, they reported the importance of *Timing of change*, and also on the driving forces or *Catalysing change*. Here they talked about how long change initiatives needed in order to become part of day-to-day practice. In relation to the final research question, we identified a theme *Obscured Theory* as a way of articulating how the collegial leaders neglected to use theory of change practice in their change practice. The study explores a number of explanations, among them the difficulties of collegial leadership in a context of collegiality and consensus-seeking.

4.9 LIMITATIONS

Here, the limitations of each of the studies are reported. Later on, the limitations of the research project when viewed as an entity will be discussed.

Study I was conducted at one university and the data that was analysed was taken from reflective statements following a course. While the respondents were guaranteed full anonymity the data collection may have implications for their responses given the power relations that exist in a course context. Further data collection may have illuminated the research questions even more. Longitudinal exploration, oriented more towards gathering idiographic or insider data would have been a natural and perhaps also a more ethical way of following up this study. This study was also conducted early in the research project and while the findings may hold true today, the implications drawn at the time may be somewhat different from those that would be drawn today. This was the first study done in the context of this research project, and the friction between different expectations and desires was conceptualised as crosstalk. Subsequent thinking on crosstalk has also enabled me to realise that some crosstalk is necessary. Perhaps it would be more useful to think of a crosstalk continuum. Imagine that colleagues fully understand and agree with each other at all times; this could constitute a zero-crosstalk situation where there is full consensus but perhaps little room for development. At the other end of the continuum there is considerable crosstalk and colleagues cannot engage in meaningful dialogue. Imagine that new ideas or initiatives for improvement arise where there is incentive and dialogue around opportunities for changes. A healthy crosstalk balance may act as a catalyst for change initiatives and may have a dialectic or synthesising function.

Study II aimed at deep exploration of change agents' perspectives, understanding and experience of working with change. Still, using three respondents may be seen as a limitation. Our hope was that the deep exploration would allow for understanding and local interpretation of the findings. The findings have subsequently proved to have good ecological value among course participants and academic developers working in the field but their broader scientific value needs to be further evaluated.

Study III adopted a phenomenographic approach, assuming that the conceptions revealed cover the possible outcome space in relation to the phenomenon in question. A potential

weakness with the method is that one new conception could potentially falsify the findings by adding to them. Furthermore, this study identified a number of different stakeholders at the university, as this was deemed essential to reflect the variation in experience of the MOOC phenomenon. In-depth study of each respective stakeholder category might have identified different conceptions too. However, it was considered to be more valuable to talk to many stakeholders than to look specifically into one category as a way of exploring and making transparent the different ways of viewing a change initiative, especially given the novelty of the MOOC phenomenon.

Study IV was a study of context and collective meaning-making. Consequently, the findings are not intended for broader generalisation. The study identifies collective sense-making and does not consider individual differences in experience and meaning.

Study V was conducted at two different universities. The scope was widened to include two different universities and moved away from the emphasis on one context. The study increased the number of participants and sites, but also lost depth in that perhaps it did not capture participants' practice over time well enough. Adding a more thorough longitudinal dimension would have been beneficial. It is possible that certain cultures may afford collegial leaders different types of agency and this could be the focus of future work, but this was not explored here.

4.10 METHODOLOGICALLY ORIENTED ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The regional board of ethics approved all of the studies in this thesis. However, there are a number of ethical matters to consider. In accordance with Bryman and Bell (2015), three overriding ethical principles are identified as being of importance to the research project:

- Voluntary participation
- Privacy and anonymity (confidentiality)
- Objectivity

Voluntary participation of respondents in research is important. Each of the participants signed an informed consent which stated clearly that their participation was voluntary and that they could end their participation at any time. To date, some people have declined participation but no one has yet ended their participation. The privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of respondents are of paramount importance. A particularly important issue in relation to the research being conducted for this project is the need to protect the respondents' privacy. This is important, not least because the studies in this research project address sensitive issues such as failure and causes of frustration in the context of a limited setting where respondents' identity could be leaked or otherwise identifiable. The research articles have been written in such a way to protect the respondents' identity, and I have had several discussions with editors where I outlined the importance of protecting the respondents' identity. This is made more difficult when doing research on predominantly one site, but is vital.

The research in this thesis aims at achieving the highest levels of rigour through systematic adherence to research methods. The issue of objectivity as described by Bryman and Bell (2015) presents a challenge in a research project that has a hermeneutic point of departure, and may be related to the discussion on strong objectivity and confirmability outlined above. The researcher can aim to be true to the reports of the respondents, document their reports honestly, openly share the assumptions and also the data with other researchers, and engage in a form of negotiated discussion and consensus-seeking on what constitutes a finding in the context of the ongoing research. Still there is an apparent risk that even the research team as a whole may be caught in or push a specific discourse (Hodges, 2009). In this research project, we, the research team, have endeavoured to stay self-critical. This has been achieved by openly sharing the data and the analysis, and engaging in an iterative interpretation process. I have also, when possible, used member checking to share data with the respondents.

4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE INTERVIEW SITUATION

There are other ethical considerations to take into consideration too, not least in terms of the ethics of the interview situation (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005). One concern relates to the inherent power relationships that exist in the university setting. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that academic developers are hired by higher education institutions to enhance teaching and learning initiatives. This is done through courses and consultations, and often the academic developers may have a quasi-academic, quasi-administrative status given that academic development units are often financed by central funds. This form of practice may not comply with the practice of otherwise research-intensive universities, where many scholars, teachers and researchers spend a lot of their time chasing funding to secure their own positions. Consequently, many respondents may see academic developers as part of the mechanism of governance or the *iron cage* (Ashworth, Boyne, Delbridge, 2009), as is illustrated in the quote below.

I see you as being part of the controlling mechanisms of our university, your job is to make sure we do as we ought to, or at least do as someone thinks we ought to. I would find it very hard to open up and offer you straightforward and honest answers to any questions that have to do with my practice. Maybe I could open up to XX, after all we know each other well enough by now, but not you.

(Professor, KI)

This may have an impact on the interview situation, since not only is the relationship potentially power-laden but the relationship may be obscured under the naïve guise of the researcher wanting to achieve understanding through interviews. Qualitatively-oriented, interview-based research is not benevolent by default (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005) as illustrated in the following sentiment:

Armed with good intentions and qualitative ethicism, qualitative researchers may nevertheless fail to be objective—ethically and scientifically—if they fail to situate their means of knowledge production in power relations and the wider cultural situation.
(Brinkman & Kvale, 2005)

Brinkman and Kvale identify a number of challenges, which I outline and respond to below as part of the ethical considerations of conducting research interviews. They consist of:

- The asymmetrical power relation of the interview
- The interview as a one-way dialogue
- The interview as an instrumental dialogue
- The interview may as a manipulative dialogue
- The interviewer's monopoly of interpretation
- The asymmetrical power relation of the interview. (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005)

The asymmetrical power relation of the interview

Traditionally the interviewer holds the scientific higher ground in terms of framing the interview, deciding the interview protocol, and deciding when to interrupt the respondent or interviewee. The interview situation is not entirely symmetrical in terms of power or who is leading the interview. I have endeavoured to avoid following strictly formulated interview protocols, this is in line with the socio-cultural approach (Schoultz, Säljö & Wyndhamm, 2001). Interviews had a tendency to be based on a few selected questions and respondents were encouraged to develop or stay with a thought as long as they felt it was necessary and fruitful. This process was also facilitated by sharing the informed consent in advance, but also, when possible, sharing information about the study in advance (Bell, 2014). During the research project, there was a conscious awareness of sharing as much information as possible with the respondents. At the same time interview questions were not sent out in advance. In Study V, however, I had prepared a short summary of the question areas to share with the respondents at the second site as they little or no knowledge of the ongoing research project. This was done as a form of and a way to give them an idea of what was going to happen in the interview.

The interview as a one-way dialogue

While there is a risk that the interview is reduced to a question and answer session, extensive training, and testing of interview styles is essential in creating a non-invasive and open dialogue with respondents (Jacobsen, 1993). Test interviews were done in order to check for rapport and depth of questions. Also, the ITTD was introduced in Study V as a way of offering the respondents even more freedom and time to elaborate.

The interview is an instrumental dialogue

Brinkman and Kvale (2005) argue that the research interview breaks with traditional conversational dialogue, identifying the interview as a means of communication in itself. While this is a valid concern, my endeavour has been to have deep conversations with respondents about phenomena which matter to them, with a view to enhance practice (Bowden, 2000).

The interview may be a manipulative dialogue.

The interviewer may be looking to access information from the respondent, or may have a hidden agenda. This is the fear articulated by the professor in the above in the introduction to this section. This may be an unsettling experience and may prompt disingenuous

responses. To avoid such suspicion, good rapport is established, informed consent is clearly written and sought in advance, and the interviewer is open and engaged in what the respondents have to say (Jacobsen, 1993; Schoultz, Säljö & Wyndhamm, 2001; Bell, 2014). Silence is also used as a way of enhancing the importance of the interviewee in the research and interview situation.

The interviewer's monopoly of interpretation

There is a risk that in an interview situation the researcher has a monopoly of interpretations. This has been counteracted in this research project in a number of ways; respondents were asked on two occasions to “member check” the data, negotiated consensus was sought among the research team, and no one researcher transcribed, interpreted or wrote up the findings on their own.

In conclusion, there are several ethical aspects of conducting qualitatively oriented research and these require revisiting throughout the research process. Trust and rapport are essential features of the interview situation and take time to build.

4.12 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This research project was conducted parallel with my work as an academic developer and was designed to complement the work I have been doing. My work as an academic developer has provided access to working environments that allowed me to gain insights into the practice of teachers, working groups and collegial leaders. This has also meant that I have gained legitimacy in the organisation under exploration (Clavert, Ljöfström & Nevgi, 2015). However, there is a concern that I have not been able to define my role in the project well enough in relation to the research phenomenon. At the same time, the studies represent a scope that covers many of the different people that work at the meso level in a research-intensive university and no specific groups have been singled out or avoided. Furthermore, there was a breadth of participation among the participants, that include most study programmes within the university.

The five studies in this thesis were all driven by qualitatively-oriented inquiry, where in-depth understanding of specific practices or understanding was in focus. Together, the studies represent a form of a multi-faceted case study (Yin, 2009). Five individual studies were chosen in order to capture the diversity of change practice at a knowledge-intensive research university. This approach involved certain compromises. The research project followed a number of different people and took a number of snapshots of their professional practice. It is hoped that the work done will make a contribution towards a deeper understanding of change practice in higher education in an attempt to better improve academic developers' work in aligning with the universities' needs (Clavert, Ljöfström & Nevgi, 2015). The evidence provides perhaps just a number of short stories or snapshots from practice.

Study I could have been followed up longitudinally, further a follow-up study could have identified what motivates teachers and researchers to become more engaged with educational practice. In a similar vein, Study II and Study V took snapshots of practice, and

were both quasi-longitudinal. More longitudinal work would have added a necessary dimension to the research project. In Study II, only three people were interviewed, albeit repeatedly in order to reach a suitable level of depth. In Study V, a different approach was taken and a larger number of participants were chosen from two research-intensive universities. Here however, action research approaches could have been added to see what could have impacted the practice of the collegial leaders. It could also be argued that more practice-sensitive theories or models may, in fact, lead to a different type of outcome. Study III identified a potential change, the MOOC initiative. Here, an assumption is made that the conceptions are robust and stable over time, but naturally follow-up studies could have been performed to test the robustness of that assumption. Also, in relation to Study IV, more work could have been done to document change processes among working groups as a way of finding out whether other professional groups act in different manners.

In this thesis, an idiographic approach towards the research phenomenon was taken, which allowed me to argue for the value of what are, primarily, context-specific occurrences. The findings and the conclusions drawn may or may not have a broader relevance. The snapshot approach taken in the research project provides real life pictures from change practice that may provide the reader with valuable insights, but that is inevitably for the reader to decide.

5 DISCUSSION

The research project had an overall aim and two sub-aims. The overall aim was to explore change at the meso or departmental level of higher education organisations. Furthermore, the project had two sub-aims: to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice, and to explore empirically, context-bound practice of change in higher education settings.

The main focus of chapter 3 was to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice and in doing so addresses, to some extent, the first sub-aim above. In chapter 3, a number of central throughline questions were introduced to delineate some of the most important facets and concepts of organisational change. Chapter 4, addresses the empirical work and presents the five empirical studies conducted within the scope of the project, and in so doing goes some way to achieving the second sub-aim above, namely to explore empirically the context-bound practice of change in higher education settings. In chapter 4, one can read about the design, contexts, methods and the findings in the five empirical studies. To briefly recap; Study I addressed teachers and course leaders who attend courses, and explored their understanding of change and opportunities that arise in conjunction with training. Here, the focus was on the participants of a continued professional development initiative. Study II explored the experiences and the practice of agents of change when working with and strategizing around changes in their practice. Study III addressed conceptions of a new phenomenon in the wake of a specific change initiative, the introduction of the MOOC. Study IV identified a working group and explored their practice of change in relation to assessment practice. Study V examined collegial leaders who had received training and explored their experiences but also their practice of bringing about change.

Chapter 5 aims to comment on all three of the aims and the points of connections that join the studies together.

5.1 AGENCY REVISITED

When exploring different facets of the context-bound practice of change in higher education, a number of features can be identified. These are presented in the commentary of the findings earlier and are not addressed specifically in linear fashion here. When viewing the findings as a whole, perhaps the most prominent feature to stand out across the five empirical studies is agency. In Study I, agency was seen as an outcome of training when teachers and course leaders felt that they were either empowered or inspired but perhaps also realised that the likelihood of bringing about change was not entirely a matter of their own volition. Some of them even felt that there was little possibility to develop and use the tools they had picked up during training. Their agency seemed constricted, and it appeared that they were unable to act as fully knowledgeable agents in Giddens' sense of the word. Instead, a way of understanding agency bounded to possibilities is needed, and is elaborated upon momentarily. This feeling of not being able to fully utilise tools that were picked up during training was also present in Study V and is commented upon below in the section called 'The Training Paradox'.

The social context of practice in which the respondents find themselves is essentially the melting pot for the homeostatic feedback loops, and so for a transformation or change to take place, the respondents would have to engage in repeated dialogue as a way of engaging in the feedback loops. In Study II, agency was articulated as a feature of being a known face at the department. This meant that when action was required, or change was going to be implemented, then the agents of change often turned to or returned to people they had known before, and worked with before, as a way of enhancing their likelihood to succeed. When new colleagues were recruited into a change process then the respondents reported relying on their goodwill in order to bring about change. This form of practice runs contrary to the scientific management theories of change and the rationalist discourse outlined above. Both Study II and Study V demonstrate how the agents of change did not openly embrace theories or models of change, either as theories of practice or theories of explanation; instead, dialogue was put forward as the driving resource for practice. At the same time, there were some sentiments of conceptual or theoretical inputs in their practice. This is elaborated upon in more detail in Study V and in the section 'The Training Paradox' below. Dialogue may be viewed as a tool for driving agency and is perhaps the foundation of a homeostatic loops, at least when taken together with other artefacts, such as the norms, rules and regulation of the environment. But dialogue in itself needs a driving force, an idea that people can buy into. The driving force in terms of bottom-up changes lies in identifying commonalities and elements of change that have a value for the local context; this was seen in studies I, II, IV and V.

Dialogue and action seem to take different paths in relation to the different types of change. When faced with top-down changes, different pathways could be identified, some people evoked a we-can-do-this attitude, whereas others were less likely to engage in change, given that there were dysfunctional feedback loops in the hierarchical organisation. It was noted on several occasions that feedback from upper management was often lacking and this was perceived to have a knock-on effect on members of the organisation. This was acknowledged in Study I and especially in Study II where the in-depth conversations could bring that to the fore, but elements of this could also be discerned in Study V.

Future challenges for academic development practice lie in helping staff to identify post-training opportunities in terms of first and second order change initiatives, but also in helping junior colleagues to realise the steps needed to bring about change. This is commented upon further below.

Study III identified the underlying conceptions around a specific change initiative, and in doing so demonstrated how different conceptions exist, and how these could drive agency in different and to some extent incompatible directions. Here the agentic aspect of the particular initiative is toned down and focus is on the underlying conceptions that may act as catalysts for change initiatives and have bearing on their success. Also in Study III, it was apparent that the nomenclature around the change initiative remained the same even though the connotations changed. Agency is, to some extent, driven by language, at least to the extent that language is the tool we use to express both conceptions and their meaning. In Study III, it was apparent that the same terms or concepts had potentially different extensions. This made and makes dialogue and agency more difficult. Furthermore, both

the practice of change and the language of change could potentially develop across different trajectories. It takes time to adopt a new language and a new practice. A potential problem is that sometimes practice changes, regardless of whether or not the language changes. Checks and balances of some kind are needed in order to synchronise the language and the practice. These checks and balances could take place within working group or micro-cultures (Roxå, 2014) but it is unclear how the hierarchical dimension of the organisation could be a part of such feedback loops, that is to say how feedback runs from the meso to the macro level and vice versa.

Study IV showed how a group of teachers/clinicians took command of agency when bringing about a change in practice at their own department. Here, we, the research team could see how a group of academic staff took charge of their own practice, largely due to the fact that there was no governing practice. As such, the lack of structure seemed to act as a driver for agency, but does this mean that we should allow groups of teachers more autonomy? Herein lies a future challenge.

Returning to the broader theories addressed in chapter 3; one of the quintessential issues addressed there is whether individuals have agency, or the ability to act, and also how this agency is made manifest in the practice of a higher education setting. Giddens, through the theory of structuration, suggests that the fully knowledgeable have agency and could, if necessary, change their actions in most situations (Giddens, 1984). The empirical work gathered in this research project complements Giddens' ideas. At the same time, while Giddens acknowledges the need for homeostatic feedback loops in social contexts, the view of agents as fully knowledgeable may be viewed as something more spurious or naïve. As was shown earlier and discussed later in the section the Training Paradox, more theory may be viewed as more accumulated knowledge, but the more theory approach does not reflect a deeper level of understanding among the respondents. One of the central criticisms of structuration theory relates to the question of whether all actors are free to act in a non-determined fashion (Bryant & Jary, 1991). The criticism directed at Giddens is that agents, in fact, are not fully autonomous and rational (Caldwell, 2006), nor are they entirely free. The empirical work presented in the five studies in this thesis provides, at least, some friction in relation to this basic tenet. Agency in a higher education institution is also stratified; experienced staff have the advantage of getting to know the system at the university over a prolonged period of time.

Nicolini argues that structuration must be understood in the context of practice, and furthermore, that practices are essentially bounded to a number of given possibilities (Nicolini, 2012). This bounded to possibilities view of choice and freedom does not represent a hard-deterministic view on agency, but rather illustrates that decision-making is bound to the structure and to the temporal nature of a given context. Furthermore, and specifically in relation to this thesis, it is clear that the people I have chosen to focus on, namely teachers, working groups and collegial leaders in the capacity of pedagogically aware academics, will also be acting within a framework or a number of frameworks at the same time, and that while some of the governing structures have been replaced, they leave a residual effect on the practice in a given site as a result of the tripartite influence of time on change initiatives. This was addressed somewhat in the critical dialogue in chapter 3, where

I set out the idea that governing structures may be out of sync due to varying degree of compliance in the workplace setting. So, for example, new directives may not be fully implemented, at which point even newer directives are brought into power. It seems reasonable to assume that changes initiatives need a considerable time to play out or come to full fruition, and that organisational units at the meso level need support to bring initiatives to fruition. This is where individual, working groups, but also collegial leaders could benefit from support from academic developer units, not least as a way of dealing with the ambiguity that arises.

The work conducted here also suggests that there is a residual effect of governing structures and that residual effect potentially impacts change agency. Each framework has a structure (rules and regulations) which is influenced by the strategic, political and cultural lenses of an organisation, in this case a higher education institution. The structure (rules and regulations) are framed temporally, and are constituted by how things were governed (structure) and enacted (system) earlier. This creates either room for manoeuvre, or obstacles obstructing that same room for manoeuvre, which may or may not provide the ability to make choices and perform actions (agency).

5.2 AGENCY & TEMPORALITY

Practice, it could be argued, has a tripartite temporal dimension: it is forward looking, often focussed on what has to be done now, but can never really be free from previous experiences (Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012). This was seen in the narratives in studies II and V, where the respondents reflected on current practice and how it needed to be a continuation of previous work for things to work smoothly, or a radical break from the same in order to create something entirely new. Also in Study IV, temporality played a distinct role, to the extent that some of the former members of staff's presence could almost be *felt in the room*. Some scholars argue that change practice is a highly dynamic process, always ongoing and that stability is, at best, provisional. This position calls into question Lewin's idea that it is possible to unfreeze, change and freeze a practice (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2003). This view of change, as something dynamic and provisional, fits well into an idealised view of how homeostatic feedback loops work, as a dialectic or synthesising process of discussion, which in turn moves the group and the change initiative forward (Giddens, 1984, 1994). This view of change also relates to the cultural dimension of higher education institutions in that in these cultural contexts that changes are negotiated, the negotiation itself has to become a part of the temporal dimension, and the negotiation creates room for manoeuvre for different agents. The temporal aspect constitutes one of the ever-present challenges of change practice where the collegial leaders have to balance ongoing operations while simultaneously driving change (Meyer & Stensaker, 2006). In Study I, for example, time was perceived to be moving fast, the respondents were unable to orient the pace of change, and were upset by the amount of time it could take before an idea could move from idea to action. Studies I, II and V show how the temporal nature of change is influenced by parallel strategies and structures which potentially throw individual agency into a state of disarray. Here resistance and lack-of-mandate prolong uncertainty and create ambiguity in relation to agency. Also, the work done in Study IV, with its longitudinal perspective, demonstrated how both previous cultures still played a part in the thinking of working groups. Identifying and addressing previous conceptions and

misconceptions and calling them into question would seem to be a key feature of working with change. Here academic developers could play a more prominent role, given their subject matter know-how and their extensive experience of facilitating change processes.

It is argued here that dealing with the complexity of several, concurrent structures, but also temporalities, constitutes one of the biggest challenges to agency, presenting individuals, working groups and collegial leaders with *wicked* problems (Varpio, Ashenbrenner & Bates, 2017). As was outlined above, many working groups of knowledgeable agents co-exist across the university, at the same time. It is unlikely that these groups of people are fully aware of the values and norms or the governing structures that exist, which may lead to the working groups reinforcing values, norms and structures implicitly (Kezar, 2001, 2013).

The concept of the timing of change is also something that was addressed specifically in Study V. It was found that change in the context of the university could take a number of years, and during that period there are multiple structures (rules and regulations) some formally mandated, others informally understood, that make agency difficult. This study also demonstrated the tensions arise when knowledgeable agents find it difficult to enact change in their own working environment, demonstrating how collegial leaders negotiate multiple structures at the same time. Here the tripartite nature of time was once again identified as a factor, where structures were sometimes out of sync with each other, or where there were competing rules and regulations at the same time. Culture was identified here in terms of the collegiality that permeates knowledge-intensive higher education institutions.

Looking ahead, I believe it is vital to consider the extent to which agency, when set in terms of change initiatives, is viewed as a predominantly individual endeavour, and to consider whether, instead, it should be viewed as a shared collective responsibility.

5.3 THE TRAINING PARADOX

Universities engage their staff in capacity-building courses and programmes of different sorts, and it is usually done under the pretext of continued professional development, while it arguably one of the basic requirements for professional practice. Training is also the core of academic developers' work. Training was in the background of studies I and V, where the focus was on change practice, but where all the participants had engaged in continued professional training. A major concern for any capacity-building endeavour is the potential risk that the initiative will have little or no impact, or worse still, it may have a negative outcome. Previously, Steinert et al., demonstrated that while academic staff are generally happy to attend courses it is difficult to determine the degree with which continued professional training has an impact on the participants' practice and even more difficult to measure or determine the broader impact across the organisation (2012). Study I illustrates the types of expectations but also tensions staff, across the departmental or meso level, experience when faced with the opportunities afforded by a capacity-building initiative. The initiative here was the Bologna agreement, which was a trans-European educational reform, and the range of courses and workshops and other capacity-building initiatives that were provided as a result of the university's work towards adhering to the Bologna agreement. Study I illustrates both teachers' newly found enthusiasm for development and

enhancement of practice, but shows at the same time the difficulties they have in translating and transforming this newfound enthusiasm for education into development-oriented agency. One interpretation of the findings of this study, when viewed in the light of the literature presented and discussed earlier, is that the university's structures (rules and regulations) or strategies do not allow these newly trained teachers sufficient room for initiative and action following training. This could be viewed as a facet of the bits and pieces approach to training which was outlined in chapter 2 (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). Often, the local working environment does not develop in parallel with those who attend individual capacity building programmes, and ideas may have difficulty getting translated into the practice of the local context. At the same time, it may also be the case that the people who attend training have high expectations of the outcomes of training, but may not realise how they can act on those expectations. In other words, there may be ample opportunities to turn enthusiasm into action, but the staff who attend training are unable to recognise the opportunities. The literature addressed earlier suggests that the informal, post-training working environments may not afford newly trained academic staff the opportunities needed to transform their practice (Steinert et al., 2006). This was also seen, to some extent in Study V.

In Study V, the respondents were identified as collegial leaders, and they had also attended formal training. The training was often quiet brief, although a requirement for the study was that each participant had attended at least five weeks of training in leadership and or with a focus on change management. Study V examined the experiences of collegial leaders in relation to their practice of change. It explored their practice and also to what extent theory impacted their practice. As is outlined above, they experienced frustration over conflicting roles, and found that change practice took a lot more time than expected. They reported that they engaged in repeated negotiations, a finding which was also demonstrated in Study II. Furthermore, they reported that they were not inclined to use theory or models of change. There may be a number of reasons for this, not least the few formal requirements for leading a higher education institution in terms of training. As outlined at the beginning of the thesis, most of the leaders in higher education can be perceived as novices or autodidacts in terms of leadership and change management roles, but they are disciplinarians and context experts. So, what they lacked in terms of training, they may have made up for, at least, to some extent, in terms of contextual know-how.

Herein lies the heart of the training paradox; it would seem that the respondents in these studies did not have the time to invest in the type of extensive training needed to develop expertise in the role of leader, and so the little training may not sufficiently help them develop an active epistemology around the new discipline (Lonka, Joram & Bryson, 1996). A related concern is that limited training may be detrimental if it imposes upon academics, erroneous ways of thinking about theory and the application of theory into practice. Does this mean that collegial leaders who attend training are not able to use theory or translate theory into practical application? There is cause for concern here too, as Bamber (2009) points out:

Less clear is the notoriously difficult process of transferring their studies back into their workplaces. An important question here is how institutions can best ensure that their staff are well prepared for management responsibilities. (Bamber 2009, pp. 104)

This issue is discussed in more detail in Study V, but the thesis does not provide a clear answer, and more work is needed. If, however, training is counter-productive to agency, then there is cause for concern and more research.

5.4 FROM INDIVIDUAL TO COLLECTIVE AGENCY

When taken together, the findings of this research project suggest that individual agency in the context of second order change in a higher education setting faces multiple challenges, some of which relate to identifying structures and strategies, while others concern the politics and the culture of change within the organisation. Individual agents have difficulty negotiating multiple change initiatives while simultaneously dealing with ongoing operations. Those agents with a formal mandate also need to negotiate top-down and bottom-up initiatives at the same time. The respondents across the studies use theory either cosmetically or broadly as a model of explanation. Other challenges come in the form of the temporal nature of change within HEI. Not only does it seem difficult to introduce radical change, but several instances of past and present structures and strategies may co-exist which could render change practice more difficult.

Given these difficulties and the troublesome situations that may arise when informal collegial and formal line management models overlap, then perhaps a new paradigm of practice may be needed, moving the onus or focus from the individual and onto the working groups at the meso level of knowledge intensive organisation and in doing so, acknowledging that people in clusters or working groups are the carries of practices in higher education (Trowler, Saunders & Bamber, 2012; Ohlsson, 2014; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2014).

It is tempting to juxtapose a notion of individual agency against a notion of collective agency. In such a view then individual agency would need to be defined by more distinct role definitions; perhaps the agent would need a clearer mandate, maybe more power to act, not least through more means to act. This could be achieved by enhanced individual, prolonged training. This narrative could be counter-balanced with one that emphasises collective action that emphasises a shared mandate and shared responsibility for failure. The means of achieving this would be through collective training, but in all my years working as an academic developer I have witnessed few such successful initiatives. There is however some recent research that suggests otherwise (Söderhjelm, Björklund, Sandahl, Bolander Laksov, 2016).

Today, we lack a way of understanding how to balance top-down governance and collective leadership in higher education, and we also lack a language to talk about it in a meaningful way. Theory of workplace learning offers some insights, as does theory on organisational learning in knowledge-intensive organisations as well as the work done on mirco-cultures, outlined above. In the future, new ways of perceiving change practice and development will be necessary, utilising multiple theories as a way of approaching *wicked* or complex

problems. This leaves us looking for a third way, one that embraces individual agency in the context of collective practice. How this new paradigm will become manifest will have to be the focus of future work.

6 CONCLUSIONS

At the end of chapter 3, a number of ideas were presented to create a resonance chamber for the empirical work. They are summarised as follows:

- organisations may have difficulty dealing with radical change and evolutionary change at the same time
- change agents are members of staff who often take up their position due to a sense of responsibility and may lack training and strategies for the task at hand
- change initiatives stem from a number of different perspectives, both top-down and bottom-up, and each type of change initiative may warrant a strategy of its own
- while cultural attributes of work places exist, a closer exploration of the contextual practice of change is warranted
- change practice is enacted at the department level of a higher education institution, and the strategies of change practice play out in this environment
- the theory of change practice is inconclusive. Context-bound exploration is needed
- individual agency is contingent upon the surrounding environment and is bounded to certain affordances of that environment

The research project explored empirically, context-bound practice of change in higher education settings. This was done in the five studies outlined earlier. Conclusions that are drawn from the findings of the studies include:

- HEI have difficulty dealing with both radical and evolutionary change. HEI are unable to broker the temporal aspects of change initiatives successfully.
- Strategic, political and cultural dimensions of university governance are at times in conflict. Conflict itself may act as a driving force in change initiatives. These conflicts need to be brought to the fore as a prerequisite for the development of practice.
- Staff in a leadership position may be viewed as change agents. While the training of staff seems to have certain personal benefits, the training of individual staff members may be a futile endeavour from an organisational change perspective in a context where practice is driven by consensus. New ways of training staff are needed, emphasising collective responsibility and mandate.
- Academic developers in particular need to articulate and emphasise a nomenclature of change that allows individuals, working groups and collegial leaders to understand the scope, complexity and the process required to drive change initiatives.
- Training programmes may better serve teachers, working groups and collegial leaders needs if they were driven from a practice-oriented perspective. Here, theory could be used as a way of refracting experience from practice-driven considerations.
- Collegial leaders' agency around change would benefit from greater clarity around roles and mandate. Avoiding the issue of mandate and responsibility is likely to have an effect, adverse or otherwise, on the local culture. New ways of articulating mandate and role sharing may be needed.
- Change initiatives are more likely to succeed when designed around work that drives towards a common good that is decided upon within the local context.

- The practice conducted at the meso level may need a new narrative in the context of upper management. There could be a multitude of ways to achieve campus-wide goals as opposed to demanding that individuals and working groups fall in line with ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches to development and quality improvement. This needs further inquiry.

Apart from the empirical work, the thesis also aimed to critically discuss theory of organisational change and change practice.

Hopefully, the thesis summary represents a critical reading of not only the previous literature, but also the empirical findings. The thesis also contributes and hopefully enhances the existing nomenclature of change management in relation to the work of academic developers in higher education by introducing and discussing concepts such as organisational ambiguity, resistance, practice and practice theory and agency.

6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This thesis has developed along several lines but has focussed on the meso level of higher education, the department level where we find individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders. The empirical findings strengthen findings elsewhere that pedagogically-aware academics and collegial leaders alike lack theoretical knowledge of and systematic approaches to change. Further research is needed in order to determine if a change towards partnerships with academic developers would strengthen individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders in their role as agents of change. This may require both action research and longitudinal studies. Heuristic tools need to be developed with a research perspective in mind to truly allow collegial leaders to navigate the change terrain.

This thesis has touched upon the concept of failure, but only in a peripheral manner. Failed initiatives need to be studied more rigorously in order to better understand failure and to learn from it. Future research in the field of leadership in academic development should identify failures and shortcomings as a way for academic developers to understand how they could avoid them, but also how they could learn from a process that ends in failure. The environment in which this thesis is conducted has shown a disdain for failure, and I have been discouraged from exploring it. Still, I feel there is a lot to be learnt from failed initiatives.

Research could be conducted through case studies with an emphasis on strong connections to theory. Action research should also be part of future research, where academic developers with their educational expertise act as conduits offering help to academic staff in working with educational change, but also carefully documenting the same.

Individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders of higher education institutions were mainly in focus in this thesis work, even though Study III explored conceptions of change among a broader category of stakeholders and Study IV addressed a specific group of teachers. More research is needed to understand upper-management’s preparedness for change implementation and capacity-building. Furthermore, the practice interplay between upper management and groups and individuals at the meso level warrants exploration.

6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings in this thesis suggest three-fold implications for practice and are aimed at the different audiences outlined earlier in the introduction.

My main hope is that academic developers and academic development units, who are, at times, responsible for teacher and leadership training in higher education settings will find the findings useful, when reviewing, planning and executing academic development work. This work may impact, not least, how courses are designed, how interactions are designed with the people at the university who are charged with leadership and change duties. Together with other research, this thesis outlines a number of challenges that higher education institutions face when offering courses and training without full concern for the participants' ability to translate theory into practice.

My second hope is that senior leadership figures will read this thesis critically and that it will also give them an opportunity to reflect on university governance and to reflect on roles and mandate within higher education. It will hopefully provide a source of recourse when considering how change is brought about in higher education and the types of challenges that collegial leaders face, especially those who lack sufficient training for the practice they are expected to undertake. In a related manner, the empirical work conducted herein may also warrant reflection on the practice conducted at the meso level by individuals and working groups and how this is viewed in terms of quality improvement efforts.

Finally, for the individual teachers, working groups and collegial leaders, I hope the findings and reasoning here will offer insights into change practice. Can this research have implications for practice related to change? Perhaps, my hope is that it will act as a point of departure for critical dialogue around change practice and change agency.

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