UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE
IN A DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTRE
IN HONG KONG

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

BY

ALFRED WAI KEUNG MAK

HONG KONG

2010

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

Production Note:
Signature removed prior to publication.

_____

Alfred Wai-keung MAK

10 March, 2010

i

Acknowledgements

Many people made this thesis possible. The first person I would like to acknowledge dedication and support to me was my beloved wife, Siuling, who not only favoured me with generous hours to embark on the study but was always standing by to give me spiritual support to continue with the project whenever I felt frustrated with the long and gruesome research process.

My special thanks must go to my initial mentor, Dr. Bob Pithers, whose guidance was very useful in leading me to engage in the right course of study; and to Dr. Liam Morgan who, after Dr. Pithers' retirement, became the principal supervisor of my study. His patience and sincere attitude in guiding me through the study was a major factor that enabled me to complete the present study smoothly.

I would like to register my thanks to Mr. Peter Pi, the former Executive Director of the Hong Kong Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers (SARDA), who gave me permission and personal support to conduct this study on site of the "S Centre", an institution under his charge, including access to the organization's information. I also would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my friends and colleagues, Mr. Leonard Au, Mr. Henry Wai, and Mr. Seidei Luk, for their encouragement without which I might not have joined the programme at all from the start.

A special thank you should go to my research assistant, Mr. Michael Chan, a registered social worker who willingly and unconditionally gave me support in the data collection process, and took the trouble to translate the raw data into useful information for research analysis. Finally, this study would not have been possible without the support of those staff in the "S Centre" who voluntarily participated in the research exercise and submitted valuable feedback relating to the research questions. Obviously, their comments and observations formed the bedrock of the present study.

Dedication

This Doctoral Project is dedicated to my loving wife Siuling who was always in support of my learning despite my reduced attention of her in the gruesome years of project commitments, to my colleagues and friends who believed in me, to my professors, and peer students who inspired me to continuously face the many challenges in the course of the study, and not the least to University of Technology, Sydney where I developed a true sense of personal development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

1   Introduction

2   Literature Review

3   Methods of the study

Part 1   General descriptions of study methods

Part 2   Methodology Review
Section 1   The review of methods employed

Section 2

4   Presentation and analysis of result findings

5   **Conclusions, Discussions, and Implications**

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Abstract

This is a study about institutional change and development. In the form of a case study, the present study investigated the circumstances under which a closed institution, a drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation centre in Hong Kong, experienced transformational change amidst adverse contextual conditions. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses of data obtained from three research instruments, including a 'Focus Group' and 'Individual Interviews', and a purposely designed questionnaire survey on staff samples, the study aimed to generate a deep and precise understanding of how transformational leadership impacted on the change and development of an institution characterised by an entrenched culture and environmental constraints.

The data provided in this study gave support to past literature that institutional culture impacted significantly on the force of change and might give ground for status quo and resistance to change. The study further suggested that, depending on the intensity of the driving force for change, overcoming resistance was possible, with speed of change determined by leadership quality and contextual factors. This result was supportive of the 'Force Theory' as espoused by earlier researchers such as Lewin (1950), Beckard and Harris (1987).

While revealing the close inter-relationship between the leader and change strategy, and between change strategy and outcome, the present study observed that individual differences played an important part in the makeup of transformational leadership. The study identified some specific characteristics that were consistent with transformational leadership contended by Bass (1978). Empirical evidence of the study further indicated that any leader desiring to achieve institutional change of a transformational nature should possess two sets of leadership attributes – i) competence in professional skills and knowledge, and ii) personal qualities facilitative of team-work, stakeholders' support and effective practices in a given context. The study in the end argued that without strong attributes of the second set, the success of the change programme could be severely discounted due to leadership inadequacy.

The study ended by suggesting a framework of transformational change for reference of change leaders in particularly institutions of similar nature.

Limited by the nature of case study, the present study is by no means an attempt to present a generalized phenomenon. It is however hoped that this empirical study on a site with little public attention would provoke the interest of concerned parties and academics to further explore the multi-faceted experience of institutional change and transformational leadership in different types of institutions.