

International Journal of Communication and Public Relations (IJCPR)

**Influence of Narrative Principles on Organizational Change
Adoption of Blended Learning in Selected Kenyan Universities**

Eliezer Muchiri Namu and Prof. Hellen Mberia



**Influence of Narrative Principles on
Organizational Change Adoption of Blended
Learning in Selected Kenyan Universities**



¹*Eliezer Muchiri Namu

Master's Student: Jomo Kenyatta University of
Agriculture and Technology



²Prof. Hellen Mberia, Ph.D.

Principal, Karen Campus: Jomo Kenyatta
University of Agriculture and Technology

Article History

Received 9th June 2024

Received in Revised Form 14th July 2024

Accepted 16th August 2024



Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study is to analyse the influence of narrative principles on organizational change adoption of blended learning in selected Kenyan Universities.

Methodology: Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with a sample size of 18 full-time lecturers in University of Nairobi (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences); and Kenyatta University (School of Humanities and Social Sciences) for the period between November to December 2023. In each university 9 lecturers were interviewed which is reflective of the saturation point for getting new information among respondents through interviews. Interviews were conducted face to face whereas others were conducted online through Google meet depending on the availability of respondents. Ethical considerations were followed throughout the research process which included collection of informed consent during data collection. The data was then processed using the QualCoder 3.5 software.

Findings: The study revealed that persuasive storytelling had an influence on the adoption of blended learning in selected public universities. The blended learning adoption change was noted as emergent technological change which was sparked by the prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study was anchored on Narrative Paradigm Theory. It showed modern application of the theory in learning institutions. University management need to utilize further the concept of storytelling communication in a similar and even better manner just as they did in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic to navigate resumption of learning by adopting online and blended learning.

Keywords: *Narrative Principles, Organizational Change Adoption, Blended Learning, Kenyan Universities, Storytelling, Communication*

©2024 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

INTRODUCTION

One purpose of communication as a strategic approach during organizational change usually is to prevent resistance to change, or minimise this. Low levels of resistance to change within an organization, increase the effectiveness of the change-effort. The functioning of an organization depends greatly on the actions of its members which means that the organization can change only when the behaviour of its members changes (Elving, 2005)

Change has become a central theme in the study of organizations and has widely become an area of focus in management literature (Akan et al., 2016); Husain, (2013). Agili & Okibo, (2015) point out that today's organizations operate under a high pace for change with ever increasing demands occasioned by market changes such as globalization, strong competition, technical development and a customer-driven market. Some common phrases in organizational talk and literature to describe this phenomenon include: 'There is nothing permanent except change', 'The only thing constant within organizations is the continual change of these organizations', and 'change is an ever-present feature of organizational life'. Despite this growing attention and research, still many of the efforts of organizational change fail (Elving, 2005).

In the recent past, online education which is a key part of blended learning has grown exponentially. One of the reasons is the increase in access to the internet and ownership of smartphones thereby facilitating the remote learning process. Notably, by 2019 more than half of the world's population is connected to the internet (Bahja et al., 2021; Kemp, 2019). The second reason for this growth is the recent COVID-19 pandemic which impacted learning through preventive measures such as closures of education institutions. According to UNESCO, in April 2020, more than 1,000 million learners globally were affected by closures in higher education institutions (HEIs) which spanned 185 countries (García-Morales et al., 2021; Marinoni et al., 2020). The sudden closure of learning institutions which brought to a halt face-to-face learning led the academics and students into online education as the immediate, preferred and effective approach to learning signified by increased student enrollment to online courses and a need to adapt swiftly to e-learning methodologies ((Carolan et al., 2020; García-Morales et al., 2021; Olawale & Mutongoza, 2021).

During the COVID-19 lockdown, unified collaboration and communication platforms which provide options for video meetings, workplace, storage of files, organized classrooms and content sharing were used. These platforms include Google Classrooms, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, and Blackboard (Olawale & Mutongoza, 2021).

The use of student relationship management (CRM applications), learning management systems (LMS), assessment management applications among other technologies are common and current trends that are efficiently used in managing operations in HEIs. Advancement in the integration of technology with education have come up with new innovative solutions including video based learning, blockchain technology, online assessment trends, self-paced learning, artificial intelligence and machine learning, virtual reality, internet of things, chatbots, and open educational resources (Bahja et al., 2021).

E-learning can be classified into synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous learning uses a learning model that initiates a classroom course, lecture, and meetings using Internet technologies. Synchronous learning involves live interaction that brings together all the learners and the facilitators at same time instant engagement and feedback. Asynchronous learning on the other hand, also known as self-paced learning, uses different learning platforms and systems that do not allow for immediate feedback (Ambayo, 2021; Odoyo & Olala, 2020).

As Higher Education Institutions continued to find a better solution for resumption into normal studies, blended learning came up as the most effective considering the social distancing and other health measures required in prevention of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic (Bashir et al., 2021; Ntim et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2021). In a study conducted by Ntim et al., (2021), findings from empirical studies suggest that blended learning seems to achieve more learning outcomes than any other single form of learning. The findings agree with those of other scholars that posit that students who tackle their course work using blended/hybrid modality perform better when compared to peers who may have access to only one form of instruction (online or face-to-face learning, singly) (Powell et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2021). Blended learning is praised for its ability to traverse the normal classroom corners into and is seen as the key for teaching and learning in higher institutions in the future (Ntim et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2021).

There has been an increasing demand for university courses in Kenya due to an increase in admissions. However, Kenyan HEIs have not expanded facilities which has led to online learning as a bridge to the access to education gap created, and to enhance learning flexibility (Nyerere, 2016). Most public universities in Kenya have preferred a blend of face-to-face learning with online learning. Among universities that have gone online include: University of Nairobi (UoN) in 2004 with a platform called Wedusoft; Kenyatta University in 2005 through Moodle as a platform; Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) in 2006 with Moodle as a platform; and Moi University in 2007 with MUSOMI as a platform of choice (Tarus & Gichoya. 2015).

Human beings are storytellers in nature. Their communication and decision making is founded on good reasons; and consequently the utility of these good reasons is influenced by cultural, historical and biographical aspects (Fisher, 1984). The humans as narrative beings have the ability test communication (judge stories) based on rationality. These principles of rationality are narrative probability, and narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984; Trexler, 2013). In his work, Fisher showcases two paradigms: the narrative and the rational. The rational world paradigm uses logic and argumentation for critique whereas the narrative world paradigm extends this idea to encompass values and ethics (Caldiero, 2007; Fisher, 1984)

Narrative rationality is judged based on the principles of probability (coherence) and fidelity (truthfulness and reliability)- “their inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives.”(Fisher, 1984).

Fisher argues strongly against the exclusive use of the rational world paradigm for its exclusion of the common man. Fisher explains that those who are not instructed are disadvantaged in creation of meaning since rationality (the ability to be competent in argument) must be learned, with the public being instructed in the ways of logic and rhetoric (Caldiero, 2007; Fisher, 1984). In support of his position, Fisher posits that narratives that contain fidelity, probability and good reasons are an enhancement and not denial to reason and rationality. For the transmission of meaning to be effective, narratives are to be used rhetorically together with rationality and not as a substitute to rationality. The reason for this is to allow for ‘non-experts’ or public to be included in rhetorical discussions for argumentation (rationality) has allowance only for those equipped with knowledge on the subject of discussion. When good reasons are applied, then, all people acquire the right to participate in the creation of reality through the narrative (Caldiero, 2007; Fisher, 1984)

Narrative probability uses a criteria that concerns the “formal features” of a story such as “the consistency of characters and actions, the accommodation to auditors” (Fisher, 1987; Stroud, 2016). To assess probability, three elements are factored which include: (1) argumentative or structural coherence, (2) material coherence, and (3) characterological coherence. Structural coherence concerns how properly the story holds together its internal consistence. Material coherence concerns how a story compares or contrasts to other stories shared or heard. Characterological coherence relates to the reliability of the characters, both as narrators and actors. A character’s believability is judged by their values and actions. Characters who are considered consistent will be termed as more credible (Dowell, 2003; Fisher, 1987; McClure, 2009; Stroud, 2016).

For a story to be persuasive, it requires to have fidelity. Narrative fidelity “pertains to the individual components of stories—whether they represent accurate assertions about social reality and thereby constitute good reasons for belief or action” (Fisher, 1987; Stroud, 2016).

Fidelity is termed as how truthful a story is founded on on the logic of “good reasons.” The audience is the key determinant of good reasons which critically questions matters of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency and transcendence. Fidelity, which is seen as a “substantive property” (Rideout, 2008) among the two principles, is therefore judged from the audience’s viewpoint (Dowell, 2003; Fisher, 1987) Fisher presents a case of informal logic that gives us a test of reasons better referred to as the logic of reasons. This logic of reasons have five components that are transformed by Fisher into a “logic of good reasons,” or a procedure to see the value in thinking or acting in certain proffered ways and thereby forming the five tests of narrative fidelity.

The steps used are: (1) Determination of whether the story has values (question of fact). (2) Deciding on the appropriateness of the of the values to the moral of the story and actions of the characters (question of relevance). (3) A judgement of whether the values have importance on the lives of people (question of consequence). 4. Evaluation of the compatibility of the story’s values with those of the audience (question of consistency) 5. A conclusion if the values can be used to guide audience behaviour (question of transcendent issue). A persuasively told story will ring as true for audience member. (Dowell, 2003; Fisher, 1987).

Weick (1995) defined sensemaking as “placing items into frameworks, redressing surprise, constructing meaning, interacting in pursuit of mutual understanding, and patterning”. S. C. Reissner (2011) fronted sensemaking as “a narrative interpretive process by which organizational actors attribute meaning to unknown or unexpected events”. Sensemaking can therefore be seen as a process in which meaning for events and occurrences is gained, understood, shaped and attributed.

Sensemaking has been discussed by scholars and is seen to feature as individual-cognitive (e.g., schemata, mental maps), collective-social (interactions between people) and specifically discursive (linguistic/communicative) processes (Brown et al., 2015). This means that sharing meaning of events (making sense) can occur at an individual, social and interactive levels.

Both written and oral stories can be termed as overt efforts by persons or group entities to make sense of complex occurrences which may have unclear repercussions over a long period (Brown, 2005).

Gabriel (2015) argues that stories are effective devices for sensemaking in that they not only give meanings to events but are effective also at helping individuals build on their expectations, needs, wishes to and to debate on them. As a result these individuals are able to share their experiences with others and communicate in a larger context. This argument is congruent with (Boje, 1991) who argued that stories as sensemaking tools allow individuals to fuse their

memories with the memories of institutions. Stories help employees to observe the culture, norms and believes that they hold and how these are consistent with the organization (Mittins et al., 2011). The validity of storytelling for sensemaking in organizations during change has been powerfully demonstrated by various scholars and it shows that members are able to gain a feel of the organization at large (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Boje, 1991; Brown et al., 2015, 2015; Gabriel, 2015; Mittins et al., 2011; S. C. Reissner, 2011; Spear & Roper, 2016)

During change, sensemaking occurs through different stages. Once the change is announced, the meaning of the organizational culture is challenged bringing in a temporary state of lack of meaning. To make sense of the new setting, members share multiple stories which are contested thereby unveiling new frames and a construction of new realities. The contesting of stories continues and acts as a way of releasing pressure. Over time, there grows a uniformity in stories shared and a new culture of shared beliefs, attitudes and behaviour is adopted. This multiplicity of change stories is what makes the change process unique and helps in making sense of the old, changing and new organization (S. C. Reissner, 2011).

Organizational change has been studied prominently and has featured as an area of focus in management literature (Akan et al., 2016; Husain, 2013). In spite of this growing attention and research, still many of the efforts of organizational change fail to produce the desired results (Elving, 2005; Husain, 2013). Organizations in this present era work under high demands brought about by change and this is also true for Higher education institutions which now face changes such a new set of social roles and responsibilities, diverse student population, limited or declining resources, and escalating costs (Agili & Okibo, 2015; Gudo et al., 2011; McCowan, 2018; Muema & Lavery, 2018)

Change initiatives commonly face great resistance, even when agreed on goals for the initiatives are set. Organizations are inherently resistant to change as occasioned by human behaviour. Resistance to change has overtime proved to be a normal reaction and should be anticipated by the organizations and clear strategies to maneuver it are to be adopted (Muo, 2014). Adoption is the major goal for most change initiatives- an aim to see that the change idea and process is accepted and not rejected. Rogers (2003) argues that persuasion and diffusion researchers most often focus on changing attitudes. He terms adoption “a decision to use and implement a new idea” (Rogers, 2003). Scholars on change do agree that the critical aspect is a company's ability to win the buy-in (adoption) of their organization's employees on the change (Agili & Okibo, 2015; Krishnan & Krishnaprasad, 2018).

One purpose of communication as a strategic approach during organizational change usually is to prevent resistance to change, or minimise this and thereby increase buy-in. Low levels of resistance to change within an organization, increase the effectiveness of the change-effort. The functioning of an organization depends greatly on the actions of its members which means that the organization can change only when the behaviour of its members changes (Elving, 2005). Communication during change is quite vital especially in dissolving resistance and has been associated with several organizational outputs including organizational commitment, performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and job satisfaction. (Elving, 2005; Hasanaj, 2017; Husain, 2013; Klein, 1996; Matos Marques Simoes & Esposito, 2014).

Storytelling has been widely adopted as an appropriate tool for communication during change. It has been seen to reveal cultural themes and values, facilitate sharing of tacit knowledge, guiding problem solving and decision making. Storytelling are useful at generating commitment to change by reducing the amount of misinterpretations, informal communication and or communication failures (Mittins et al., 2011). Storytelling has an undisputable influence

on members of a social group regardless of the contexts where they are shared (Spear & Roper, 2016).

The roles of storytelling communication at achieving adoption of the change cannot be underestimated. Storytelling aids at communicating the corporate strategy which in essence guides the behaviour of employees and directs organizational performance. Stories told by managers during change serve to increase the understanding by employees on the corporate strategy with a keenness on the company's philosophy (Chen, 2012; Spear & Roper, 2016). When vision and values are communicated in organizational stories members gain a sense of purpose and are able to comprehend their role in achieving the strategy ((Mittins et al., 2011); Reissner, 2011; Spear & Roper, 2016).

To illustrate the relevance of the use of stories in change management, (Reissner et al., 2011) uses the story titled *Our iceberg is melting* and matches it to John Kotter's eight- step model of change execution. The story is seen to serve as a source of entertainment, explanation, inspiration, education and conviction to its readers. Combined with John Kotter's model the approach assumes that organizational change can be managed through a step by- step process, without necessarily challenging the leadership, and goes further to postulate that effective communication ensures organizational actors' buy-in (Reissner et al., 2011).

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the increasing significance and research, many of the efforts geared toward organizational change fail. Change efforts often prove unsuccessful and some research places the failure rate at one-third to two-thirds of major change initiatives (Elving, 2005; Husain, 2013). Poorly managed change communication results in rumors and resistance to change and exaggerating the negative aspects of the change. However, a well-planned communications process can be most helpful in easing the way to a more effective process (Klein, 1996).

Resistance to change is a major factor in the high failure rate of change. It manifests in the form of procrastination and delays in igniting change progress, unexpected delays in change implementation and other inefficiencies which slow the rate of change making it costlier than it was originally planned. After the change has occurred, resistance can be manifested in performance lag which is noted by the slowness in producing anticipated results and efforts within to roll back the effects to the initial status quo (Muo, 2014). Communication is therefore considered to be vital for the effective implementation of organizational change and to minimise this resistance especially if the right tools are used (Elving, 2005).

Research Objective

The study sought to evaluate the influence of narrative principles on organizational change adoption of blended learning in selected Kenyan Universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Narrative Paradigm Theory (NPT)

Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm, as first articulated in his 1984 work *Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument*, is centred around five assumptions:

First, humans are considered essentially as storytellers. Second, human decision-making and communication is founded on "good reasons" which may differ in form among communication situations, genres and media. Third, aspects of history, culture, biography and character rule the production and practice of good reasons. Fourth, humans as narrative beings test

communication based on rationality. The principles of rationality are narrative probability, and narrative fidelity.(Trexler, 2013)

The tests for rationality are “the principles of probability (coherence) and fidelity (truthfulness and reliability)”. To assess probability, three elements are factored which include: (1) argumentative or structural coherence, the standards of formal and informal rationality; (2) material coherence, the comparing and contrasting of other competing stories that may be internally consistent but ignore salient issues, counterarguments and facts; and (3) characterological coherence, the reliability of character and believability . Fidelity, on the other hand, is assessed by “whether or not the stories they [people] experience ‘ring’ true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” and by whether they are “faithful to related accounts we already know and believe” (McClure, 2009)

Fifth, the world comprises a set of stories from among which humans make choices. Good reasons are the means of choosing among these stories (Fisher, 1984, p 7).

Fisher differentiates the narrative paradigm with dramatism as is proposed in Goffman’s (1974) frame theory. He argues that:

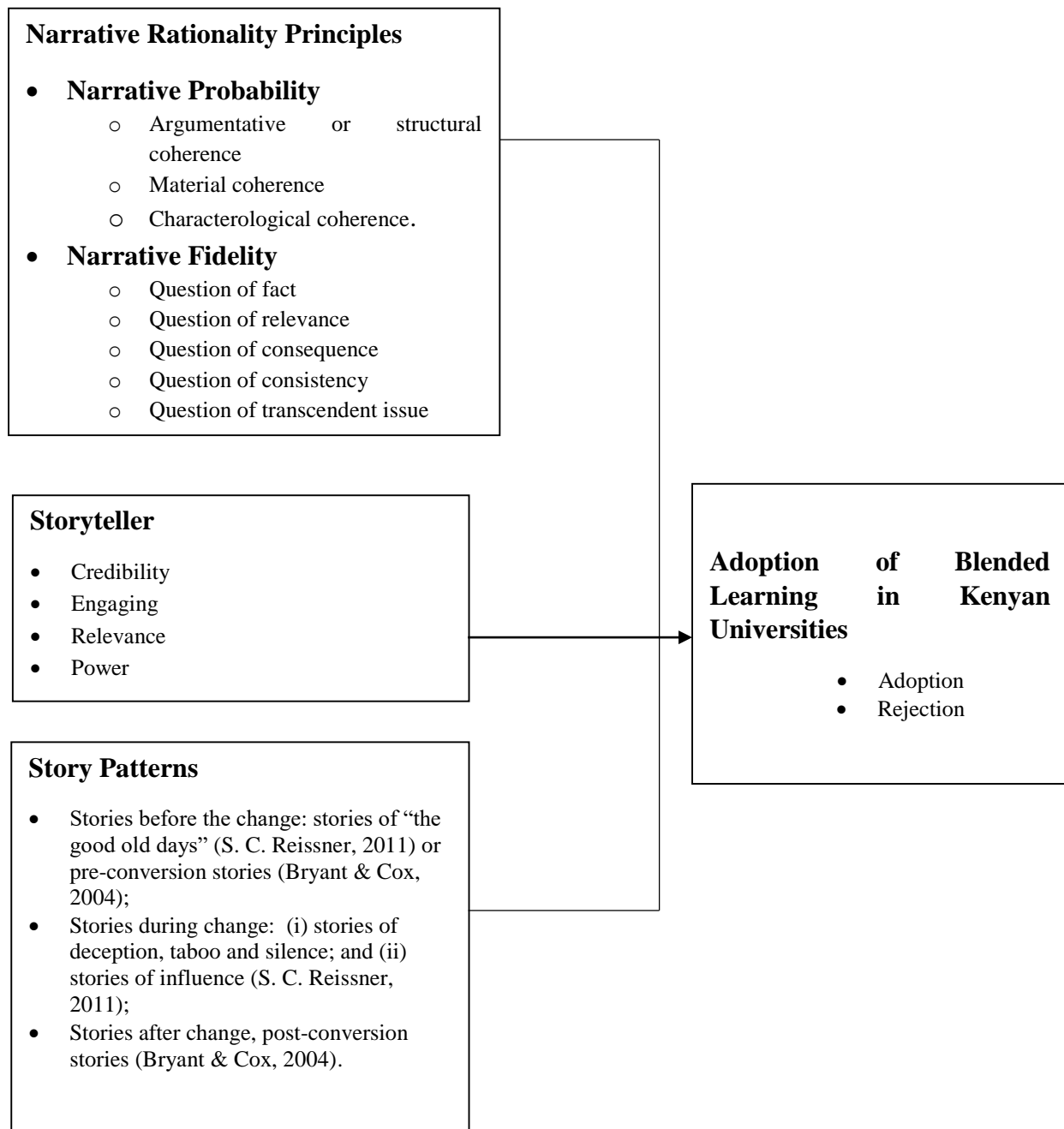
“The narrative paradigm sees people as storytellers- authors and co-authors who creatively read and evaluate the texts of life and literature. It envisions existing institutions as providing “plots” that are always in the process of re-creation rather than as scripts; it stresses that people are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors)” (Fisher, 1985).

Fisher postulates that no theory can ensure successful identification resulting into humane, reasonable action. However, the narrative paradigm strives to further this attainment by showing how people come to adopt stories and adding the concept of narrative rationality where people can assess the stories by principles of coherence and fidelity, thereby differentiating dramatism from the narrative paradigm. (Fisher, 1985)

NTP portrays great power in recognizing that everyone is a storyteller and that rationality and logic are used to assesses stories whereby listeners create reality with value laden beliefs and actions. This exhibits an untapped efficacy of using communication in a dynamic, international business environment. Businesses now pose the need for leaders to look for better ways to communicate efficiently and effectively in the fast-paced business environment. This push has led to the consideration of storytelling which “offers a cross culturally and interculturally familiar and comfortable method to help accomplish this.” (Barker & Gower, 2010)

This theory is relevant in determining the role of the storytellers in the change communication process since human beings are inherently storytellers. It also is useful in gauging the acceptability of the stories based on qualities of narrative fidelity and probability hence persuaders and persuadees are able to judge what stories would be most relevant for change in a dynamic environment.

Conceptual Framework



Empirical Review

(Bryant & Cox, 2004) examined conversion stories as shifting narratives of organizational change with the aim of finding out how employees talk about their experiences of organizational life. The research reported the experiences of employees at Latrobe Valley, an industrial region in Australia, during an expansive organizational change. Before the late 1980s, the Latrobe Valley proved quite a successful monopoly through supply of electricity to the south-east region of Australia. However, there was need for change occasioned by huge debt in the electricity supply industry.

The results revealed a linkage in the narrative plot for stories told by the different participants. The researchers came up with conversion stories focus on the turn-point of a person from one point of view to another and to adopt a new lifestyle by abandoning the old lifestyle. The conversion stories were further broken down into the pre-conversion narratives (often negative) and post-conversion narratives (mainly positive).

S. Reissner, (2008) investigated patterns of stories used by employees for sensemaking during change: stories of “the good old days”; stories of deception, taboo and silence; and stories of influence. Short stories that sparked interest were drawn from the original data. A qualitative and inductive cross-national research into organizational change and learning was applied. The study focused on three manufacturing firms, one each from the UK, South Africa and Russia. Narrative interviews were used for data collection and were analysed an inductive approach borrowing elements from grounded theory and analytic induction. Individual stories of change were found as powerful sensemaking devices for members and also served a role of contesting official change stories. “The experiences and agendas of different organizational actors shape the interests and actions of people in organizations, with decisive implications for patterns of organizational change.” (S. Reissner, 2008)

In Burns (2015) study on the use of narratives as persuasive recruitment tools for universities, he combined the narrative paradigm with the concept of regulatory fit, or how well a student fits with their school of interest. Analysing data from focus groups, he found that stories can be used as recruitment tools and are persuasive once a student has narrowed down his or her list of choices. Burns (2015) also found that using student narratives that are realistic and representative of life on campus makes higher education more tangible for the student.

Research Gap

For change implementation to occur seamlessly communication is a key aspect and not a reactive approach when every other strategy fails. Conventional methods of communication during change have tended to centre around the management with an emphasis on a top-down approach communication. This has created a gap especially where the views of the employees are not considered. The Higher Education seems to change more frequently in the recent past thereby posing a need to carry out research. Finally, the methods by which data is collected and analysed to come up with conclusions continues to be variant which poses a methodological gap.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used was a descriptive case study. The target population of this research was 2700 academic staff in University of Nairobi (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences); and 1500 academic staff in Kenyatta University (School of Humanities and Social Sciences). The study used purposive sampling. Stratified sampling technique was used. The researcher used a sample of 9 respondents per case study. The research used semi-structured interviews for data collection. Each interview averaged at least 35 minutes. Data recorded when conducting interviews was transcribed resulting in 411 pages of data in Microsoft Word format. The interviews were recorded via iTop Screen Recorder and transcribed through Fireflies.ai- a software that enables transcription by artificial intelligence. During transcription, the researcher opted to use pseudonyms for the respondents. Names were obtained on the website Baby Name Voyager. To guarantee the safety and confidentiality of the data, both the transcribed data and the recorded data files were password protected and stored in a secured folder. The researcher cleaned the copies of transcribed data and coded the work by use of QualCoder version 3.5, a free- resource Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Rationality Principles

Narrative Fidelity

Alison, KU: “Well, I'm just trying to think about a few cases where I've handled a course that I felt it would benefit more particularly. I do creative writing with my students for the course. There are times I felt that, as much as I'm excited and I love this online teaching, there are times I felt like with that particular course, actually two courses, there is that one and there is oral literature. There is a way that those courses would benefit from a face to face class, because in a creative writing class, I would want my student probably to sit in circles, and we take like 15 minutes to just draft something and we do a reading. We read together. And reading has something to do with expressions. You get to know where someone is coming from. So there is a way. I feel like, oh, no, it's really not catching on if I'm to do it online. The same thing with oral literature, because oral literature has an element of performance. I would want them to perform. I would want them to perform something even if it's for five minutes or so. And, you know, performance in the virtual space. Because, again, performance is not just the voice. It also has the extra linguistics and verbal. So when you're not really taking care of those, you don't really feel like you're achieving. Now, I don't know what I've said, and I don't know what that has to do with fidelity. Did you understand where I'm coming from? ... Okay. The fidelity. So I would say that here, it's not purely a yes. It's also not a complete no. We would say something like 50, not neutral. It varied. Yes, actually, the term is varied.

Okay, so now explain how I'm going to talk about adoption. Now, what I've said in terms of fidelity, how does it relate to the relative advantage? ... No, I think they decreased. I think they decreased because I also felt like that was not compatible with a particular situation that I'm talking about or particular topics is actually particular topics within the entire course. I feel like element of compatibility also decreased, and that also didn't make it simple in the sense that I'll be forced to do what, I'll be forced to be more creative, to try new ways of keep experimenting, to see how that works. I had to be creative. So I'm putting the complexity and the fact that it became more complex then I would try with new methods of doing this. In the case of writing, then I will ask them to write. Ask them to write. And then after you write, then you project it. You know what I mean? You project it. ... Now, those particular elements that require performance and writing, I wouldn't recommend the online. I would recommend them being taught face to face so that then the course instructor does not entirely take the course online. They have arranged, even where if the course is offered fully online, they can actually have a few hours arranged for the face to face so that there is maximum benefit for the students involved. “

Christine, KU: “Increase relative advantage, yes...Yes, it became compatible... Complex, very simple. Very simple. Because now, you see, if you go to class and you have your students here and you are scared, in fact, if one copies, you begin now wondering, why is this one copying? I have to look for another corner where someone is not copying. So you can understand now how complex that was. But now with the innovation, now I am sitting in my office with my house teaching. I'm not scared that I'm going to interact with anybody. Yes... Opportunity for you to try the innovation? Yes... Observability, it increased.”

Clarence, KU: “Stories ring true to myself? No not all of them. A majority no. Relative advantage? Yeah, yes. Yes some of the things we have to do Bbecause it's work... The Innovation, yes, the Innovation was I would say compatible and I would say 50/50 about that one... Yeah, when it was conflicting you are not sure, they did not simplify. Sometimes they made them complex, especially with the modules some saying it's not mandatory then it's

mandatory then you're in between. Yeah... Trialability, Yeah, I tried. Okay. I feel like I would try and see. Yeah curiosity... Observability, that one increased.”

Layla, UoN: “Did the stories ring true? Yeah.... Relative Advantage, Yes. Yes. Yeah, I actually prefer online to physical... Compatible, Yes... Simpler, Yes... Trialability, Yeah, yes... Observability, Yes. “

Question of Fact (Does the Story have Values?)

Alison, KU: “I would say for me, the communication was okay because we got a memo. We got a memo from the DVC. If I remember, that must have been the DVC AA. Of course, it is the DVC academic. We had a few memos, by the way, even from the VC, telling us to embrace change and just do whatever we got to do to ensure that learning continues, because we had been on a break for a long time. So the way that the change was initially communicated was very. I would say it was welcome. It was welcome. The way I remember it is that they embraced it. And of course, the reason that we all embraced it was because that was a new normal. It was happening everywhere in the world. We had realized that even with family members or family meetings, were attending them virtually.”

Amy, KU: “Meanwhile, I think at the university they were planning now the new ways of teaching, now that there are no students. Because you see, you cannot stop, you have to keep going. So I think what the senate did is the senate is composed of the management, which is the management of the university, of course, the VC, the DVCs, the registrars, the deans, that's the management. Then there comes the deans, the chairman of department who come into the Senate and usually such decisions are made at the senate level where the management is the members of the Senate, which include, as I mentioned, deans and chairmans of departments. So the management has to make a decision that we need to develop new ways of teaching. There was also the queue that governs all universities. This is commission for it.”

Keanu, KU: “So that is what was happening before COVID Yes, after Covid, of course, the mode of operation had to change. We had to readjust our mode of delivery because were not sure when Covid would end. That uncertainty was all over, and there was no way of telling when the disease will finally be conquered. And so because we didn't want to remain in that state of waiting forever, we thought we could start offering these programs virtually. At first, we started by doing modules. There was a lot of training, lecturers being, capacity built on how to do modules. And later the same modules were uploaded, and then teaching started.”

Layla, UoN: “So when covid hit in 2020? I think were in the middle of a gap semester. Though there were some classes that were ongoing. And of course, we didn't know how to proceed for a while as learning platforms were being activated because learning platforms for their Odel when already existing So all we needed to do was to learn how to use and to put material on them and for that material to also reach the students meaning the students also had to be trained but that is when the use of email I believe became the most important because all information was flowing through the email. So went through different types of trainings even now we do every now. “

Lisa, UoN: “Okay. Yes when covid came. We were actually and we pride ourselves as one of those universities that really adopted online learning very fast at that time. We could not obviously do Blended, but were very receptive of the online platform and when it was suggested that because everybody was looking for options that can make them move ahead without having to you know to stop their business. So what happened in our case is we had some meetings. We had a lot of communication in emails and so on regarding the reception of learning through the online platforms. One of the online platforms that we were using was Google meet. That is what mostly we have used. Of course, we have used Zoom for in some

instances. But the first meetings that we had we never did any, You know any physical meeting and we all did the online meetings and then what followed was training so that was still during covid. That was 2020.”

Sterling, UoN “...the pandemic struck in early 2020. And things changed. Things changed dramatically because actually the university was evacuated. The vice chancellor issued a notice for everyone to vacate the university.... No, the first announcement was that they were going to institute online learning. They were going to institute programs for the university, would purchase online teaching programs, so people would teach online and interact with our students online. And then after they made that announcement, then the next thing we had was that we would be trained on how to teach online on those university platforms... Yeah. I think that hybrid began in 2022. Early in 2022, some staff members began to insist on, because I think I need to say this, that as the online teaching continued, concerns began about quality, especially in terms of exams. We began to see a tendency where it was difficult to control and ensure students are not cheating, because when you are administering exams online, there is no way to be able to tell whether the student on the other side is the one doing the exam themselves, number one, or whether they are not being assisted. Because the camera can only show you and you cannot be one student for long because you have so many other students and the screen cannot show all the students. So if you have over 100 students, really, it's going to be very difficult for you to even 50, it's difficult for you to be able to follow all of them on the screen over the two hour period or three hour period they are doing the exam. So we have concerns about the quality of the exams performance because of the lack of surety that the students are themselves doing the exam in a manner that is transparent and that they are not cheating. So when those concerns began, some staff began to push during the period exams, and again others feeling it is cheaper and it's convenient to continue to teach online. “

Question of Relevance (How Appropriate are the Values to the Moral of the Story and Actions of Characters?)

Keanu, KU: “So that is what was happening before COVID Yes, after Covid, of course, the mode of operation had to change. We had to readjust our mode of delivery because were not sure when Covid would end. That uncertainty was all over, and there was no way of telling when the disease will finally be conquered. And so because we didn't want to remain in that state of waiting forever, we thought we could start offering these programs virtually. At first, we started by doing modules. There was a lot of training, lecturers being, capacity built on how to do modules. And later the same modules were uploaded, and then teaching started. Yeah. But then it didn't take so long before they realized that it can be blended.”

Wendy, UoN: “The context of the University of Nairobi. I feel like initially at the beginning period there was a lot of communication by all levels of the university in terms of communicating this new change. There was a lot of, I think I would call it carefulness in how they present it. It was communicated very well. We were briefed on the progress. We were briefed that, okay, now we are going to virtual learning. This is the system that we'll use. This will how we'll use them. But most recently I feel like that very good top down directive from higher management is missing, especially with evolving ICT changes changing from one new system to the other. You're not really briefed, you're just told by the chair this is what's happening. We have to transit. So ICT trainings begin and you're not explained the why behind everything.”

Question of Consequence (Do the values have an importance on people's lives?)

Basil, KU: “

They were informed about the changes in terms of learning, and they embraced it on the basis that there was no other way of ensuring that learning continued during the COVID period. So there was that form of communication by, and also for some of the changes, whereby your students had to have face to face. Then, of course, they were scheduled to be campus in different sessions. There are some areas in terms of teaching, you find that, like in many signal, and they had to attend classes in main campus. So there was a faced out way of coming to university in small numbers for purposes of learning and also doing exams. So what I'm saying is that there was that kind of form of communication both to the students, to the staff members, mostly in terms of the new way of teaching and learning, and also language students. ...It was an engagement to the students. And of course, you see for the teaching staff, of course they also knew that now work has to continue because these students have to come on board. Then of course they knew that they still have their jobs even during COVID they have to put in work in. So it was a reprieve in a way, in terms of technology could have come on board to mediate learning and to ensure that at least that disruption came to an end. “

Garrett, UoN: “I think university did its best because I remember there was a lot of this online training. Lecturers were called and they were trained and these trainings, they were done per department and they were repeatedly undertaken. There was a lot of that was going on and yeah, I think university did its best to do that. We can say there were some communications done there. However, there were some confusions were still there because I think the major issue with that was that it found or it unveiled a lot of digital unpreparedness of most university staff. I think university realized how, or we realized how most of us are digital illiteracy. Digital illiterates. There's a lot of digital illiteracy.”

Question of Consistency (Are the Story Values Compatible with Those of the Audience?)

Amy, KU: “At first I said there was resistance because resistance comes basically from lack of knowledge or how to deal with the situation. So no one wants change. People want to do things same as old. So resistance to change, basically it's a human thing. It has nothing to do with just the university. But being told from tomorrow you are going to teach in a different way, it was a bit daunting because you don't even know where to begin from creating this content. You cannot even find all the content that you normally do when you're doing one one teaching. So yeah, there was the resistance change, but eventually people realized this is the only way out.”

Zendaya, UoN: “Trained on a synchronous learning, you know, like record your content put it in the planning platforms students will access it when they want they listen to the recording. So there was a lot of and I think and They felt they anxiety people thought they were going to lose their jobs. Yeah, I think that those fears among lecturers just about quality losing jobs. And they also said their health was at risk because of looking at screens for long. Now that we are looking at we are working from home. We we need to be paid. Is its office? No, they need to be paid for you turning their homes into offices. Yeah, so all of those stories now of the months management. For the management, I think what some of the things that they say they told us is that online teaching is good because then you can even lay us with our colleague from another University who can come in and call teach for you. They also yeah with... Yeah. Yeah, we also told if you know a lecture and care, you can teach a topic very well. You don't have to be the one to teach it. Let's the other person come and teach it for you or our colleague within the department. You don't have to teach the entire course someone could come in at any time and teach a topic. So that was they say that was a positive thing. And and I think actually people

did use that there are lecturers who set up online meetings and the lecturers from other universities in the UK and Australia were invited to teach so there are there was that advantage of I mean people would teach from you didn't have to the one teaching you could invite a colleague to come and teach for your particular topic. We did that and it was a good thing. So that's what they told us that we need to appreciate technology because of the advantages it comes with We also from management, I think. I remember when they were talking about a synchronous and people asking are we going to lose our jobs? We were sure no one was losing their job. So I told you just need to record quality lectures and put them in the learning platforms. Where students could access them and learn their own time? ... I think were not given a chance to observe on so like the merits or the merits of online teaching something like that. No, no, I think there was no we didn't have the luxury of time for that. Mmm, so I for that one, I think no... At least for me personally. Yes. It's made me want to adopt the change. And and I still appreciate everything online.”

Question of Transcendent Issue (Can the Story Values be Used to Guide the Audience?)

Keanu, KU: “Well, of course, maybe we actually took it up like I had said earlier, we did not take it like we had another option. We took it like this is the way, the new way of doing things. This is going to be our new normal. Since the story I would say was relayed to us in a way that were able to understand where clarity was required. It was offered. We took it, maybe, I think that is now we adopted that adoption. It took place well. So I don't know whether we can attribute that to how well the story was relayed. But for me, I would say it's just together with how it was passed to us or maybe how the person who was narrating did it.”

Annie, UoN: “But I've accepted that we've turned, especially our university, we decided that Virtual is here to stay and we can have the blended virtual for those who still want to come to class and especially for the first years who never know what a university looks like or the university environment. The fact that you have classmates for the next four years, so for them, it is important for them to appreciate that. Sorry. Yes, so I was saying that we've accepted yes, okay, yes.”

Garrett, UoN: “You know, in one way or the other? Yes, in one way or the other. There was that, how do we call it? People enlightening one another. And in so doing, it enabled the transition. There was a lot of also people asking one another, conversations around the table, how are you using it? How do you find it? What is this and that? And it was shaping attitudes around how lecturers go about adopting these digital spaces into learning spaces. Yes.”

Change stories analysed revealed the presence of narrative fidelity. The key value that cut across respondents in both KU and UoN was the need for learning to continue despite the COVID-19 Pandemic outbreak. In fact, the pandemic served as a trigger for the sense of urgency of the change. The change stories showed the relevance of the change by the common reference by organizational members that going online and blended was the only way of navigating learning during the pandemic. The consequence of the value of continued learning as proposed by universities' management led to a series of communication on the change, resumption of teaching and learning, trainings and also aims to address technological challenges experienced. However, organizational members felt that most decisions were communicated top-down and did not really have the time to evaluate their importance. At the beginning of implementing the change, the values seemed incompatible with audience members values due to minimal information. There were fears, apprehension, uncertainties as regards how long the pandemic would last where some people felt that the change could wait and others saw an urgent need to start learning online. As a last determination, the values can be seen guiding audience response since a general sense of acceptance of the change was

embraced in the beginning stages, students resumed to class and lecturers resumed their teaching roles, challenges were navigated and finally the overall adoption of the online learning and blended learning change was achieved.

The analysis follows the criteria laid out: (1) Determination of whether the story has values (question of fact). (2) Deciding on the appropriateness of the of the values to the moral of the story and actions of the characters (question of relevance). (3) A judgement of whether the values have importance on the lives of people (question of consequence). 4. Evaluation of the compatibility of the story's values with those of the audience (question of consistency) 5. A conclusion if the values can be used to guide audience behaviour (question of transcendent issue). (Dowell, 2003; Fisher, 1987).

Narrative Probability

Narrative probability was analyzed by looking into already coded themes to see how they agreed and tied up together. The forms of coherence analyzed included characterological coherence, material coherence, and structural coherence:

Characterological Coherence

Based on the findings of the main storytellers, it can be observed that characterological coherence was achieved. A commonality in the sources of communication mentioned by respondents was seen to correspond among respondents in each particular case (KU or UoN) and also across the two universities. Notably, the Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors (DVCs) – especially DVC Academic Affairs (DVC AA), Chairpersons of departments, Deans, ICT departments, Registrars, and other internal resource persons are evidenced across the different stories.

Material Coherence

In comparing and contrasting the stories shared by different respondents, the researcher was able to reveal the presence of coherence. A few extracts are as shown below shown below :

Material Coherence: Storyteller

Alison, KU: "...Vice chancellor, and particularly the vice chancellor academic, and at times, deputy vice chancellor administration. those two are the common ones. And then, of course, very key to that communication is the chairpersons of the department. Because sometimes the memos come from those two and they are copied to the chairpersons of the departments who copy them to us, like they are told: 'make sure that the staff in your department implement these changes.'"

Amy, KU: "Then once the DVCs now send out those emails through our KU corporate emails then the individual mails that comes to all of us because it's sent to all members of staff. There's a way they do the bulk emails so the chairmen don't have to do that again. But there is some information which goes to the dean that sends to the chairman and once the chairmen have it then they share it to the members of staff. And there's the teaching and the non teaching as well."

Annie, UoN: "What I've seen the Dean doing is whenever there's an issue, he calls for meetings, usually calls for meetings, virtual meetings, where he's able to communicate about the progress of the faculty and some of the things that may require changes that may have come through the Senate. Because from the Senate, then the Deans and Chairs of Departments are usually given information so that they distribute it to the rest of the members of they also yeah."

Material Coherence: Tools of Communication

Basil, KU: “So some information maybe is only for the chairs of department. So that was done maybe through emails. Through emails majorly. And also, even if it was a memo that time, you see a memo could not serve, that is the hard copy. During COVID that memo was scanned and put on email. So communication that time was more or less on email and also even voice call, telephone and also texting message. But face to face was limited.”

James, KU: “Tools of communication included emails, and memos as well as the university’s social media pages. WhatsApp was widely used, and the practice has continued post-Covid. We use WhatsApp to manage large student groups, and exchange information about meetings and notices among departmental staff.”

Charlotte, UoN: “Email, yes email was the main thing even when there was a memo it would be scanned then resent via email. The WhatsApp group that I mentioning were actually, you know their voluntary. And for WhatsApp, you can never tell who's participating.”

Material Coherence: Challenges

Basil, KU: “No, the observations there actually we can talk about not even observations as such, but maybe challenges in terms of the IT infrastructure. Remember that as you're aware, our students are spread across the country and even outside the country, you also have international students. But let's talk about our students when the country and in different regions, and you're talking about the ICT infrastructure, Internet connection. It was a challenge for students maybe to be able to log in and attend classes because of graduating tomorrow interview. What I was saying is that it was just issues internet connectivity in some areas, like when it comes to northeastern northern part of Kenya, we talk about also other parts of the country whereby Internet connection is a challenge. So they were not able to get the signal and be able to join classes, because during COVID the university also acquired license for use of the Google Meet. So we have Google Meet classes. So that is a platform which we embraced during COVID and we are still embracing it for learning as well. Yes, Google Meet. So you find that was a challenge then the other one is in terms of the ability, the technical know how...”

Sterling, UoN: “People were like, how will it work? How effective will it be? Given some classes are so big, and given that some students come from very remote areas, then the cost of. The cost of data, the cost of data for students laptops, the availability of laptops and the computers on which to conduct this online learning, those were very many questions that people didn't have answers for, and they sought clarification. So the university said that they bundles for students and staff from a specific provider. I think it was. I don't know that it was Airtel or this government owned one. Telecom. And there were concerns about the strength of the telecom network visa vis that of Safaricom. People were like, why not Safaricom, which has a wider reach and is more effective? Personally, I never went for my telecom line. I just used to buy my own bundles or use my Internet at home. But I think overall the transition was smooth. We began to teach online smoothly, and despite challenges of students complaints and so on, I think the transition was fine.”

Material coherence was also observed in other instances where KU respondents spoke of making modules; there was also general coherence on the COVID-19 breakout and closure process of the universities and resumption of studies. Further, communication done on the universities websites was also traceable during data analysis which allowed for triangulation with the findings from interviews. For instance, a memo downloaded from Kenyatta University website is dated 14th December 2020 and carries the subject: “Adoption of Blended Mode Teaching/ Learning and Phased Reporting of students to the university”. The memo starts with a story that draws you in on the events leading to the adoption of the blended mode of teaching/

learning. This similar approach is also evidenced on the University of Nairobi website. A case in point is communication posted on Monday, April 6, 2020 and is headlined as “Status of Learning at UoN during the Covid-19 Lockdown”. The communication starts with explaining covid-19 pandemic and measures taken by the university to ensure learning continues. Other sample extracts are attached in the appendices and are coherent with the interview findings.

Structural Coherence

The stories were found to be internally consistent. Analysis of each respondent showed a consistent flow in the events narrated, their view of the storytellers across different timings of the interview and also their knowledge and recall of the events that occurred during the change process.

To assess narrative probability as discussed, three elements were factored which include: (1) argumentative or structural coherence, (2) material coherence, and (3) characterological coherence. Structural coherence concerns how properly the story holds together its internal consistence. Material coherence concerns how a story compares or contrasts to other stories shared or heard. Characterological coherence relates to the reliability of the characters, both as narrators and actors. A character’s believability is judged by their values and actions. Characters who are considered consistent will be termed as more credible (Dowell, 2003; Fisher, 1987; McClure, 2009; Stroud, 2016).

Narrative Sensemaking

Upon testing, the narratives shared by different respondents added up which gave room for the research to coin a one paragraph summary of the flow of events in each university as a way of making sense of the change to blended learning.

University of Nairobi (UoN) Change Process

Prior to COVID-19 pandemic, most learning was physical. There was also a digital school – ODEL. Upon the breakout of COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya, UoN management closed the university from physical learning according to the Government of Kenya (GoK) Directives. The university socials were active. UoN took a short while to resume studies and was among the very first in Kenya to adopt online learning. Communication to its lecturers was done via emails to resume duty. Trainings were done on how to use Google Meet for online classes, and later Google Classroom and Mtihami – a UoN platform. Teaching and examinations were done online. At the implementation of change various reactions to change like anxiety, uncertainty, sense of loss and stress contributed to organizational change stories. Also, a number of challenges to the adoption of the change were addressed. Vaccination was done mid 2021 and blended learning was adopted especially for first years who studied physically with a blend of online learning. The other classes have mainly been online even to 2023 when the researcher collected data. However, plans to adopt physical learning for all classes with online blending was underway at the time of research.

Kenyatta University (KU) Change Process

Before COVID-19 pandemic, KU had four modes of study. The first is the regular mode of study where people used to study physically during the day mostly. The second one was the part-time mode which included evening study or weekend study and mainly catered for postgraduate students. The third mode of study was the Continuing Education Program (CEP) or the school-based program where people learnt online for three months and came to the university during the holidays, to learn for two weeks and do exams. The final one was the Digital School for Virtual and Open Learning (DSVOL) which was purely online through the digital school portal. The physical contact was four hours, and then they would do CATs and

Exams. The KU Learning Management System was called, Kusoma. In 2020 March, when COVID-19 pandemic broke out in Kenya, communication was made by the government of Kenya leading to closure of universities physically including KU. The university took a while before resumption. In the initial stages, the university communicated to its members, provided training for modules development and online teaching. Lecturers were involved in designing modules and uploading them to the KU digital portal and afterwards teaching online began. During the initial stages, change reactions of fear, uncertainty, resistance to change among others were experienced. A number of challenges were navigated which together with other events contributed to change stories. In September 2020, courses that had practical aspects were allowed to resume physical classes albeit with social distancing measures as per the health protocol set during the pandemic. In May 2021, vaccination against the COVID-19 disease was done which paved way for blended learning for the entire university with online teaching taking the prominent part. In 2022 the university resumed physical classes with an electronic hour for each unit a week thereby carrying on with a blended approach.

The story plot outline drafted for KU and UoN change process seeks to show that sensemaking was achieved throughout the interview process. During change, sensemaking occurs through different stages. Once the change is announced, the meaning of the organizational culture is challenged bringing in a temporary state of lack of meaning. To make sense of the new setting, members share multiple stories which are contested thereby unveiling new frames and a construction of new realities. The contesting of stories continues and acts as a way of releasing pressure. Over time, there grows a uniformity in stories shared and a new culture of shared beliefs, attitudes and behaviour is adopted. This multiplicity of change stories is what makes the change process unique and helps in making sense of the old, changing and new organization (S. C. Reissner, 2011).

Organizational Change Adoption

Initial Change Reactions

Acceptance

Alison, KU: “There are really the members of staff who are techie savvy and they jumped into it. I remember most of my colleagues really liked this new thing because, yeah, you could be far away from campus and you would still teach. Many people were ready to, both staff and students, were willing to change”

Charlotte, UoN: “Yeah, yeah. Your acceptance for me was evidenced by people upgrading their gadgets. People helping each other out. You see people talking and saying, oh the other day I was unable to do this and somebody tells, you know switch on to this it works. Or just people giving each other tips of how to perform better. How to stop students locking you out of class and your lecturer, you know... when you see people now asking for help, I would want to do this better, what can I do?, and the others are helping you - to me that's acceptance.”

Battles of Influence

Christine, KU: “Yeah, of course, these things what happens even in very conflicting circumstances, there are still some benefits they are in, because when we talk about scaling the ladder, my understanding of the interpretation of the same is such that they would create other benefits outside the circumstance. Yes. Like we have said that some people got those who understood that they could be able to engage people, students online. There are some, many people who hype now to put their. They could market what they do online. Like say, for example, if you are a psychologist or you are a counsellor, you decide that you market your

skill online and you could talk to people out there, you're not giving them counsel, strengthening them, or you could even have students that you can begin teaching online.”

Layla, UoN: “Okay, I cannot quite tell but I do know like for our Communications and IT team they became very important and the people who roll out exams online. We had to get contacts and to know them personally so that when issues that came up with look for them, so I cannot quite say there was a battle for influence, but there was a push for us to know our IT team. Yeah, there was a push for us to be aware of who to call if you needed to if you had issues putting uploading an exam who to call when you needed a zoom link or it's not working properly. Yeah. Yeah.”

Readiness for change

James, KU: “..included stress among lecturers, and unreadiness for the change required on the part of the management with most focus on covid prevention than provision of academic services and facilities such as connectivity in lecture rooms, reduction of student numbers in a given room, and such. Parents suffered loss of income and from spending more time than usual with their children who often are in boarding school or university. Freshers were denied an important induction experience due to the closure of campuses.”

Resistance

Keanu, KU: “Of course, like I said, generally human beings, we are a bit reluctant in taking changes, especially those changes that are perceived to bring to come with a bit of inconvenience. And now that this was something very new, I moved from the tradition. There was a bit of feeling. This one, it may not even work. And like for us, in language, there are certain units that you want to teach to people who are listening to you and who can hear you, because we deal with matters pronunciation. And of course, we had a bit of a challenge and members expressed a bit of reservations in handling particular topics. There is a phenomenon in language called McGurk effect...It's a phenomenon where if I told people, I talked to people or even pronounced a certain word to people when they are listening to me, and then I tell another group to listen to me but with their eyes closed. And these are two different groups I'm addressing at different times. And then after that, I ask them, can you pronounce the word I pronounced? Chances are very high that the people who listened to you while their eyes were closed, they might give you something that varies from the people who listened to you with their eyes open”

Sense of Loss

Layla, UoN: “Especially when the first years were reporting and you're wondering whether we are going to have a virtual orientation how that would look like. So because most people want that physical experience, so that was across the board. There was a sense of loss also during events like graduation.”

Uncertainty

Keanu, KU: “Yes, after Covid, of course, the mode of operation had to change. We had to readjust our mode of delivery because were not sure when Covid would end. That uncertainty was all over, and there was no way of telling when the disease will finally be conquered. And so because we didn't want to remain in that state of waiting forever, we thought we could start offering these programs virtually.”

Morgan, KU: “... So how will you have the exams? How long will a semester last? What would you do now that you are through and you cannot move on without the exams? There was something like uncertainty because of the new thing that was coming in. And also you find

that it was not easy shifting because not everybody is tech savvy. There are some people who are not very well versed when it comes to technology.”

Apart from the highlighted reactions, there was also anxiety, excitement, drama, confusion, shock, and stress at varying occurrences. Most of these initial reactions such as fear and resistance were addressed by the consistent communication passed by the management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Results of the qualitative research revealed the presence of narrative fidelity and narrative probability. Fidelity has to do with stories having values and ringing true to the audience members whereas narrative probability has to do with how stories tie up together and come up as coherent. The stories analyzed proved that the change stories had values that were advocated (question of fact); (2) the values had the appropriateness to the moral of the change stories and actions of the characters (question of relevance); (3) the values have importance on the lives of people (question of consequence); (4) most stories showed compatibility with the values of the audience although this grew with time as the change was executed (question of consistency); and finally (5), a conclusion was that the values in the stories we used to guide audience behaviour which included adoption of the change (question of transcendent issue). Narrative coherence was observed in that the stories had characterological coherence (relates to the reliability of the characters, both as narrators and actors); structural coherence (concerns how properly the story holds together its internal consistence) and; material coherence (concerns how a story compares or contrasts to other stories shared or heard). Also, narrative sensemaking was achieved and allowed the researcher to make a sense of the flow of change from data gather across different respondents. Further, data triangulation revealed consistent patterns of interview findings coupled with information posted on the university websites.

Storytelling during change was seen to serve the roles of communication, learning, sparking action, transmitting values, fostering working together, sharing and saving tacit knowledge, leading people into the future, making information easier to remember and more believable (Denning, 2006; J. K. L. Leung & Fong, 2011; Trabucchi et al., 2022)

Recommendations

This study established that storytelling when used effectively can have a great influence in the adoption of organizational change just like in the case of blended learning adoption in universities. Specifically, the following recommendations were suggested from the findings of this study:

University management need to utilize further the concept of storytelling communication in a similar and even better manner just as they did in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic to navigate resumption of learning by adopting online and blended learning.

The practice of storytelling can be employed into planned change efforts. The approach worked well with emergent technological change during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Its use in planned change may work better since the universities will have had a plan to develop stories that resonate with organizational members.

The narrative principles contained in the Narrative Paradigm Theory were seen as applicable in storytelling efforts in the selected universities. This concept can also be tested in a variety of organizations.

REFERENCES

- Agili, J., & Okibo, W. (2015). Factors Influencing Implementation of Change in Selected Public Universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, iii(5).
- Akan, B., Ülker, F. E., & Ünsar, A. S. (2016). THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION TOWARDS RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: A CASE STUDY IN BANKING SECTOR. *Journal of Economics and Business*, 1, 15.
- Ambayo, J. O. (2021). A model for the implementation of online learning in Kenyan public universities during the covid-19 pandemic. 79.
- Bahja, M., Amin Kuhail, M., & Hammad, R. (2021). Embracing Technological Change in Higher Education. In *Higher Education—New Approaches to Globalization, Digitalization, and Accreditation* [Working Title]. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.100431>
- Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. (2005). From intended strategies to unintended outcomes: The impact of change recipient sensemaking. *Organization Studies*, 26(11), 1573–1601.
- Barker, R. T., & Gower, K. (2010). Strategic Application of Storytelling in Organizations: Toward Effective Communication in a Diverse World. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(3), 295–312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943610369782>
- Bashir, A., Bashir, S., Rana, K., Lambert, P., & Vernallis, A. (2021). Post-COVID-19 Adaptations; the Shifts Towards Online Learning, Hybrid Course Delivery and the Implications for Biosciences Courses in the Higher Education Setting. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 711619. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.711619>
- Boje, D. M. (1991). The Storytelling Organization: A Study of Story Performance in an Office-Supply Firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1), 106. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393432>
- Brown, A. D. (2005). Making sense of the collapse of Barings Bank. *Human Relations*, 58(12), 1579–1604.
- Brown, A. D., Colville, I., & Pye, A. (2015). Making sense of sensemaking in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 36(2), 265–277.
- Caldiero, C. T. (2007). Crisis storytelling: Fisher’s narrative paradigm and news reporting. *American Communication Journal*, 9(1), 2.
- Dowell, S. (2003). Uncovering the storytelling power of communication: Applying Walter Fisher’s narrative theory to three presidential crisis speeches. *ProQuest*, 95.
- Elving, W. J. L. (2005). The role of communication in organisational change. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 10(2), 129–138. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563280510596943>
- Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs*, 51(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180>
- Gabriel, Y. (2015). Narratives and Stories in Organizational Life. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis* (pp. 273–292). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118458204.ch14>

- García-Morales, V. J., Garrido-Moreno, A., & Martín-Rojas, R. (2021). The Transformation of Higher Education After the COVID Disruption: Emerging Challenges in an Online Learning Scenario. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 616059. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.616059>
- Gudo, C. O., Olol, M. A., & Oanda, I. O. (2011). University Expansion in Kenya and Issues of Quality Education: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(20).
- Hasanaj, R. (2017). Importance of Communication During Change: A Case of the Municipality of Vlora. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 4(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejms.v4i1.p15-19>
- Husain, Z. (2013). Effective communication brings successful organizational change. *Management Review*, 2, 8.
- Kemp, S. (2019). Digital 2019: Global digital overview. Retrieved from Datareportal: <https://Datareportal.Com/Reports/Digital-2019-Global-Digital-Overview>.
- Klein, S. M. (1996a). A management communication strategy for change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 9(2), 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534819610113720>
- Klein, S. M. (1996b). A management communication strategy for change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 9(2), 32–46. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534819610113720>
- Marinoni, G., Van't Land, H., & Jensen, T. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 on higher education around the world. *IAU Global Survey Report*, 23.
- Matos Marques Simoes, P., & Esposito, M. (2014). Improving change management: How communication nature influences resistance to change. *Journal of Management Development*, 33(4), 324–341. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-05-2012-0058>
- McClure, K. (2009). Resurrecting the Narrative Paradigm: Identification and the Case of Young Earth Creationism. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 39(2), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773940902766771>
- McCowan, T. (2018). Quality of higher education in Kenya: Addressing the conundrum. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 60, 128–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.11.002>
- Mittins, M., Abratt, R., & Christie, P. (2011). Storytelling in reputation management: The case of Nashua Mobile South Africa. *Management Decision*, 49(3), 405–421. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251741111120770>
- Muema, E. M., & Lavery, M. R. (2018). Redefining Quality in Higher Education: The Concept of Juakalization. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 15(9). <https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8072/2018.09.001>
- Muo, I. (2014). The Other Side of Change Resistance. *International Review of Management and Business Research*.
- Ntim, S., Opoku-Manu, M., & Addai-Amoah Kwarteng, A. (2021). Post COVID-19 and the Potential of Blended Learning in Higher Institutions: Exploring Students and Lecturers Perspectives on Learning Outcomes in Blended Learning. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, 2(6), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.6.162>

- Odoyo, C. O., & Olala, S. O. (2020). Covid-19 Pandemic as a Catalyst to E-Learning Acceptance in 2020. *International Journal for E-Learning Security*, 9(1), 610–616. <https://doi.org/10.20533/ijels.2046.4568.2020.0076>
- Olawale, E., & Mutongoza, B. (2021). DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: ISSUES OF FUNCTIONALITY AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. *South Africa*, 12.
- Powell, A., Watson, J., Staley, P., Patrick, S., Horn, M., Fetzer, L., Hibbard, L., Oglesby, J., & Verma, S. (2015). *Blending Learning: The Evolution of Online and Face-to-Face Education from 2008-2015. Promising Practices in Blended and Online Learning Series*. International Association for K-12 Online Learning.
- Reissner, S. C. (2011). Patterns of stories of organisational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 24(5), 593–609. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811111158877>
- Rideout, C. (2008). *Storytelling, Narrative Rationality, and Legal Persuasion*. 14, 35.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed). Free Press.
- Singh, J., Steele, K., & Singh, L. (2021). Combining the Best of Online and Face-to-Face Learning: Hybrid and Blended Learning Approach for COVID-19, Post Vaccine, & Post-Pandemic World. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 50(2), 140–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395211047865>
- Spear, S., & Roper, S. (2016). Storytelling in organisations: Supporting or subverting corporate strategy? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 21(4), 516–532. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-02-2016-0020>
- Spear, S., & Roper, S. (2016). Storytelling in organisations: Supporting or subverting corporate strategy? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 21(4), 516–532. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-02-2016-0020>
- Stroud, S. R. (2016). Narrative Rationality. In K. B. Jensen, E. W. Rothenbuhler, J. D. Pooley, & R. T. Craig (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (1st ed., pp. 1–8). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect050>
- Trexler, C. (2013). *Advertising and storytelling: An examination of Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm and its impact on the success and failure of brands*.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations* (Vol. 3). Sage.