Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

ABSTRACT

x	Master´s thesis
	Licentiate´s thesis
	Doctor´s thesis

Subject	Leadership and Organisation	Date	27.7.2017
Author(s)	Henrika Ekholm	Student number	505034
		Number of pages	76 p. + appendix
Title	Organisational Change Experienced by HR Professionals – Case Nordea		
Supervisor(s)	Ph.D. Markku Jokisaari		

Abstract

During the past decades, human resources managers have recognised the need for change, and the transition within the HR function combined with today's highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment has led to changes in roles and responsibilities, as well as expectations and the positioning of HR professionals today.

Although HR professionals most often see the concept of the change in HR as logical, many are discovering the difficulties associated to implementing extensive changes. However, the irony is that there is a demanding need for change management expertise from HR to support change in the business. Although HR professionals may often have experience in implementing change in the business, change can be just as challenging when it is targeted at the HR professionals themselves.

In this study, HR professionals' personal experiences are explored, shedding light on the factors that affect a change initiative in an HR department. The overall goal is to explore HR professionals as change targets and initiators taking into account how previous experiences with change might affect reactions and sensemaking towards change in the future.

To ensure an understanding of the experiences related to the organisational change in question in this study, the research method used is a qualitative case study. The empiric study consists of seven semi-structured themed interviews with HR professionals from various teams and roles within the department.

The research findings imply that in some cases too much is relied on the fact that HR professionals manage with less change management, because they should be professionals in change. In other words, change targeted at HR professionals themselves is no different from any other group of professionals. However, the results also indicate that previous experience with change can ease the change in the future, enhancing sensemaking of the change.

Key words	Organisational change, sensemaking, HR professional
Further information	

Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

TIIVISTELMÄ

x	Pro gradu -tutkielma
	Lisensiaatintutkielma
	Väitöskirja

Oppiaine	Johtaminen ja organisointi	Päivämäärä	27.7.2017
Tekijä(t)	Henrika Ekholm	Matrikkelinumero	505034
		Sivumäärä	76 s. + liite
Otsikko	Organisaatiomuutos HR-ammattilaisten kokemana – Case Nordea		
Ohjaaja(t)	FT Markku Jokisaari		

Tiivistelmä

Viime vuosikymmenten aikana HR-esimiehet ovat tunnistaneet tarpeen muutokselle, ja nykypäivän jatkuvasti muuttuvan toimintaympäristön myötä HR-ammattilaisille on tullut uusia rooleja, vastuita ja vaatimuksia.

Vaikka muutos on käsitteenä HR-ammattilaisille usein tuttu, monet kokevat ongelmia laajojen muutosten toteutuksessa. Ironista on kuitenkin se, että muu organisaatio odottaa HR-ammattilaisilta yhä enemmän osaamista ja tukea muutoksen johtamisessa. Siitä huolimatta, että HR-ammattilaisilla on useimmiten kokemusta muutoksen johtamisessa, voi muutos olla aivan yhtä haasteellista, kun se koskee heitä itseään.

Tässä tutkimuksessa tutkitaan HR-ammattilaisten henkilökohtaisia kokemuksia muutoksesta ja niitä tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat HR-osastolla tapahtuvaan organisaatiomuutokseen. Päätavoite on tutkia HR-ammattilaisia muutoksen kohteina ja läpiviejinä, kiinnittäen huomiota myös siihen, miten aiemmat kokemukset muutoksesta voivat vaikuttaa reaktioihin ja muutoksen merkityksellistämiseen myös tulevaisuudessa.

Varmistaakseen mahdollisimman hyvän ymmärryksen organisaatiomuutokseen liittyvistä kokemuksista, on tämä tutkimus toteutettu kvalitatiivisena case-tutkimuksena. Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus koostuu seitsemästä, eri tehtävissä ja tiimeissä olevien HR-ammattilaisten kanssa käydystä, semi-strukturoidusta teemahaastattelusta.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että toisinaan luotetaan liikaakin HR-ammattilaisten selviävän vähemmällä muutosjohtamisella, koska he ovat itse muutoksen ammattilaisia. Toisin sanoen, HR-ammattilaisiin kohdistunut muutos ei olennaisesti eroa muihin ammattiryhmiin kohdistuvista muutoksista. Toisaalta, tutkimustulokset myös viittaavat siihen, että aiempi kokemus muutoksesta voi helpottaa tulevissa muutoksissa ja siten samalla edesauttaa muutoksen merkityksellistämistä.

Asiasanat	Organisaatiomuutos, sensemaking, HR-ammattilainen
Muita tietoja	

Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE EXPERIENCED BY HR PROFESSIONALS

Case Nordea

Master's Thesis
in Leadership and Organisation

Author:
Henrika Ekholm

Supervisor:
Ph.D. Markku Jokisaari

27.7.2017
Turku

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In today's highly competitive and constantly evolving global business environment, change has become a norm for organisations; not only to sustain their success, but to secure their existence (By 2005, 369). Rapidly changing environments require organisations to generate equally fast responses, and it can be said that organisational survival and an organisation's success in general depends on its capability to adapt and transform. Still, the successful management of change remains a key issue for organisations. (Porras & Silvers 1991, 51; Ashurst & Hodges 2010, 217.) To specify, organisational change in business can be defined as the restructuring of business processes, the development of products or services, and changes in organisational structure or culture to improve performance (Guimaraes & Armstrong 1998, 74).

It is a widely accepted fact among scholars that organisational change is extremely challenging and complex in practice, and organisational change is unfortunately still often associated with failure (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijn & Christe-Zeyse 2013, 772). Beer and Nohria (2000, 133) state that up to 70 percent of all organisational change initiatives fail, and despite some successes, only few organisations manage the change process as well as they would like. This poor success rate can indicate a fundamental lack of a valid framework of managing and implementing organisational change (By 2005, 370). Moreover, numerous methods and approaches have been suggested to manage change; still, an integrated approach to driving systematic, constructive change is yet to be completed (Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 234). Furthermore, currently available theories and approaches to managing change are, to a large extent, contradictory. The lack of empirical evidence, combined with the support of unopposed hypotheses concerning contemporary organisational change management, form an incoherent entity, making it nearly impossible to reach a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Nonetheless, there seems to be a consensus on two important issues. First, the speed of change has never been greater than in today's business environment. Secondly, change comes in all shapes, sizes and forms, and can be triggered by both internal and external influences. (By 2005, 369–370.)

During the past decades, human resources managers have also recognised the need for change, and the transition within the HR function combined with the rapidly changing business environment has led to changes in roles and responsibilities, as well as expectations and the positioning of HR professionals today (Kesler & Law 1997, 26; Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 874–875). Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals are shifting from a more operational and traditional administrative focus, to one in which HR is considered as more of a strategic partner and change agent (Anson 2000, 21). Although the concept of the changes in HR are most often seen as logical by HR professionals, many are discovering the difficulties associated to implementing extensive changes (LaMarsh 2004, 17). However, the irony is that there is a demanding need for change management expertise from HR to support change in the business. Thus, HR leaders must exhibit high levels of change management skills to change themselves. (Kesler & Law 1997, 27.)

Organisational change practices have been increasingly popular subjects of research, not only among scholars, but practitioners alike. Throughout the years, many well-designed studies have been conducted, and scholars to this day strive to gain a better understanding of the widespread subject. Evidently however, organisational change in practice is still a subject worth researching, and HR professionals being the specific point of view of the experiences explored, is yet to be thoroughly researched. In this case study research, HR professionals' personal experiences will be explored, shedding light on the factors that affect a change initiative in an HR department in practice. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to increase understanding of how HR professionals make sense of organisational change and what impacts these may have. Consequently, the central objective of this study is not to offer a comprehensive view on organisational change and how to implement it successfully, but rather to provide valuable insights into experiences of change and how it unfolds in practice. The subject of this study is especially relevant because extensive changes in the business industry are a reality that many organizations are currently facing, and the need for change management expertise from HR is only growing. While the study will be concentrating specifically on the case company's change initiative, it can be implied to a larger audience, and will for its own part, contribute to the widespread and fragmented collection organisational change research has to offer.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

As briefly stated before, the purpose of this study is to examine experiences related to an extensive organizational change initiative, during which the case company's human resources processes and services have been realigned and restructured. The objective of this study is to thoroughly explore experiences related to an extensive organisational change within an HR department. Based on these objectives, the main research question for this study is as follows:

- How do HR professionals experience organisational change?

Sub-questions to support the main research question are as follows:

- How do HR professionals make sense of an organisational change initiative?
- What elements support a change initiative in an HR department?
- What are the main challenges that HR professionals can encounter during a change initiative?

To ensure an in depth understanding of the experiences related to the organisational change in question in this study, the research method used is a qualitative case study, as it provides the researcher with the opportunity of focusing on the complexity of business-related experiences in their unique contexts (Gummesson 2000, 1). The research on the subject will be based on a literature review as well as an empirical study conducted within the Nordea's human resources department. Academic literature concerning organisational change and change in the human resources field as well as sensemaking during organisational change will play a large role in the literature review. As the study is a qualitative case study, the empirical study consists of semi-structured themed interviews. As the change initiative effects Nordea's whole HR department it is most beneficial to interview management and employees from various teams and positions within the department, hence, gaining a wider perspective on the subject. The study has, however, been limited to focus only on the Finnish HR department, excluding the other Nordic countries taking part in the change initiative. Themes to be explored in the interviews will form around each individual's own experiences regarding the change and its implementation.

1.3 Structure of the study

This study will be divided into six main chapters. This introduction has served as an overview of the study, which will be followed by a literature review in the second and third chapters. The literature review will provide a theoretical framework for the study, with the goal of offering a comprehensive overview of the academic literature concerning the main themes of the study; organisational change and sensemaking. The fourth chapter will concentrate on the methodology of the study, describing the empirical data collection and analysis. In the fifth chapter, the research findings will be analysed. The study will conclude in the sixth and final chapter, which will contain the conclusions of the study by intertwining the empirical data with theory. The final chapter will also include managerial implications as well as limitations and suggestions for further research.

2 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

2.1 Overview of organisational change literature

2.1.1 The mixed framework of organisational change theories

Change is a continuing process in organisations, and explaining how and why organisations change has been a dominant and persistent pursuit of scholars not only in management but various other disciplines as well (Van de Ven & Poole 1995, 510; Van de Ven & Sun 2011, 58). Planned organisational change to environmental shifts should be guided by unified and generally accepted theories of organisations and organisational change; however, neither of these presently exist (Porras & Silvers 1991, 51). A review of the diverse literature on organisational change shows that there is no comprehensive, widely-accepted theory in the field, and no agreed rules for action by change agents (Dunphy 1996, 541).

Over the past 100 years, a variety of theories on how to manage change and organise work have emerged, failing to provide any long-lasting answers, and despite the great range of research and theory on organisational change, a contemporary, holistic analysis of the topic is missing; undoubtedly being due to the complexity of the phenomenon. Relevant reviews about organisational change have been made, although their analysis has been presented from specific perspectives, for example, reactions to change, or duality characteristics in organising or sustaining organisational change. (Dawson 2003, 11; Jansson 2013, 1005.) Key questions in the field of organisational change research are to resolve why so many organisational change initiatives fail to deliver, and how organisational change processes should be implemented in ways that guarantee success. On the other hand, there is little consensus on how organisational change processes should be evaluated (Jacobs et al. 2013, 773–774).

To understand how organisations change, scholars have derived concepts, theories and metaphors from different disciplines (Van de Ven & Poole 1995, 510). Research on organisational change spreads across numerous different disciplines of change, such as sociology and psychology; management and leadership; and industrial engineering and engineering management (Al Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 236). Moreover, Jacobs et al. (2013, 774) imply that academic disciplines typically called on in organisational change literature include social psychology, sociology and economics. The variation in disciplines has created a theoretical diversity which uncovers novel ways of explaining organisational change and development processes. However, this mixture in theories and models derived from different disciplines often urges compartmentalisation of perspectives that fail to enhance each other, producing isolated lines of research. (Van de Ven & Poole 1995, 510.) Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron (2001, 697), on the other hand, argue that considerable advances in change literature have been made. They state that numerous writers have recognised, for example, that change context and action are inseparable, that change theories must explain continuity, and that time is an essential part of investigating change processes. Nonetheless, they too agree that the field of organisational change is far from comprehensive knowledge, lacking the understanding of, for example, the dynamics and effects of time, process, discontinuity and context.

Organisational change is typically triggered by a significant environmental shift that leads to an intentional response once sensed by the organisation (Porras & Silvers 1991, 52). It is characteristically defined as moving from the current situation to a new, desired structure that better matches the environment, and involves an effort to modify the current way of thinking and acting. In other words, change can be considered as a departure from the standard, or instead, as a natural reaction to environmental and internal circumstances. (Nelson 2003, 18; Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 433.) Van de Ven and Poole (1995, 512) define change as "an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organisational entity". This can mean change in an individual's job, within a work group, an organisation's strategy, a product or program, or the overall organisation. Change can be measured by observing the same object over different points in time on a set of characteristics and identifying the differences in these characteristics over time (Van de Ven & Sun 2011). There are, however, contrasting views on whether change can be directed strategically or whether change is emergent; caused by the interchange of competing interest groups rather than being planned and logically implemented (Dunphy 1996, 551).

2.1.2 Different features of organisational change and change management

Lewin, often regarded as the "father of change", developed the first model of change process, called the "Force Field Analysis", to support his theory that change was characterised by the pressure of opposing forces acting on a situation. According to Lewin's concept an organisation's current situation is pressured by *driving forces* that support change, and *restraining forces,* which are obstacles to change. When behaviour in a group or organisation is stabilised, the driving forces pushing for change and the restraining forces against change are equal. (Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 236; Fossum 1989, 13.) Lewin's "changing as three steps", on the other hand, is generally regarded as the classic and central approach to managing change, and provides a general framework for understanding organisational change. According to this model, change is managed in three steps: *unfreezing, changing* and *refreezing*. Lewin suggested that the change process starts with unfreezing the current organisational state by creating incentives and then executing the preferred changes by choosing the right leadership style. The change ends with refreezing the state when the required organisational change has been reached. Lewin's model recognises that before new behaviour can successfully be adopted, the old must be discarded, and only then can the new behaviour be accepted. The model has, however, been criticised by scholars for over-simplifying the change process. The three steps being relatively broad has also lead to further development of the model, in attempts to enhance the practical value of the approach. (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown 2016, 32; Al Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 248–249; Burnes 1996, 12.)

Fossum (1989, 4) implies that during any change process, three important roles can be identified. *Change sponsors* are the individuals or group with the authority to determine a change to occur. In most organisations change sponsors are usually upper level management, who legitimize the change by sanctioning or announcing it. *Change agents,* on the other hand, are the individuals or group responsible for implementing a previously determined change, normally carried out by the middle or lower level management. The third role implied by Fossum (1989, 4) is the *change target;* the individuals or group who are advised to undergo change. Responding to the change, change targets are required to adjust for example their knowledge, skills, attitude or behaviour. Beer and Walton (1987, 357) highlight the role of the manager, stating that change should be managed by those who are ultimately responsible for organisational consequences. However, change targets, being the individuals that are affected by organisational change, have also been involved with some success in planning and implementing that change (Beer & Walton 1987, 358).

All in all, in order to understand organisational change, it is essential to recognise the fact that change comes in many different forms and types. (Mills, Dye & Mills, 2009, 32.) Change types can be defined as the fundamental characteristics that describe the form of the change and the prime qualities that make change what it is (Al Haddad & Kotnour, 2015, 242). Al Haddad and Kotnour (2015, 242) suggest that with a clearly identified change type, the manager can choose the most appropriate method of change. Meyer et. al. (1990, 93) propose that the inconsistencies of managerial implications in the organisational change literature can be resolved by classifying change types according to two primary elements. Thus, organisational changes can, according to Meyer et al. (1990, 93), be classified based on the primary mode of change (continuous or discontinuous) and the primary level at which change occurs (organisational or industry).

Mills et al. (2009, 32), on the other hand, suggest that organisational change can broadly speaking be categorised as planned, unplanned, emergent, incremental or quantum. To specify, planned change can be described as change that the organisation consciously thinks about and decides to engage in, with the goal of specifically changing organisational outcomes. Unplanned or emergent change, on the other hand, is change that the organisation had no control over planning and did not initiate themselves. (Mills et al. 2009, 32.) Planned models of change are best fit for somewhat stable and predictable situations where change can be driven from the top down. Rather than being driven from the top down, emergent models of change tend to see change as driven from the bottom up, highlighting that change is a continuous and open-ended process of adaptation to changing surroundings and conditions. Change is also seen as a process of learning, not just a method of transforming organisational processes and structures. (Burnes 1996, 13–16.) Incremental change is most often targeted at fixing specific departments or specific problems of the organisation, while quantum change affects the entire organisation. By its nature, planned change is therefore likely to be either quantum or incremental, while unplanned change is more likely to be emergent. (Mills et al. 2009, 32.)

Beer and Walton (1987, 356), however, state that change does not occur solely by following a grand master plan, instead direction and goals should continually be readjusted. Furthermore, it has been argued that organizational change should not be conceptualised as a linear practice moving from states A to B (Nelson 2003, 25). Burnes (1996, 16) argues that instead of seeing the argument among planned and emergent approaches to change as two fundamentally contradictory theories, they should rather be viewed as approaches which address different situations. The type of change an organisation engages in often ultimately depends on forces that are both within and beyond its control. Furthermore, planned changes are heavily influenced by several factors which can be disrupted by forces managers haven't even considered, and many things cannot be anticipated and planned for in advance. These forces include, for example, how the change is made sense of by the organisational members or how the change is managed. (Mills et al. 2009, 33; Grieves 2010, 75.)

Acknowledging the fact that change is an essential factor in the survival and success of organisations has resulted in the development of ways to manage organisational change (Mills et al. 2009, 9). It is clear that change is an ever-present element that impacts all organisations, and therefore, the successful management of change is an extremely essential skill (By 2005, 378). In response to the extremely rapid rate of economic, social and environmental change, scholars and senior managers have produced an abundance of articles, research, books and consulting programs offering numerous methods for adjusting to the new conditions (Schaffer 2010, 87). In general, change management can be defined as an intentional plan to change a company's direction from the current position, towards a preferred future position in response to new challenges and opportunities (Bhatt 2017, 34).

One change management model worth mentioning, however, is Kotter's (1995) eight-step model. Kotter (1995) proposes an eight-stage process for effective change that is perhaps one of the most known and popular prescriptions for planned organisational change (Mills et al. 2009, 52–53). Moreover, Kotter (1995, 60–67) also proposes eight errors which may occur during a change process, both shown below in Table 1. Kotter (1995, 59) states that few corporate change efforts are very successful, and while not all change efforts are complete failures, most fall somewhere in between, clearly leaning toward the lower end of the scale.

	Eight steps to transform an organisation		Why transformation efforts fail
Step 1.	Establishing a sense of urgency	*Error 1.*	Not establishing a great enough sense of urgency
Step 2.	Creating a powerful guiding coalition	*Error 2.*	Not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition
Step 3.	Creating a vision	*Error 3.*	Lacking a vision
Step 4.	Communicating the vision	*Error 4.*	Undercommunicating the vision by a factor of ten
Step 5.	Empowering others to act on the vision	*Error 5.*	Not removing obstacles to the new vision
Step 6.	Planning for and creating short-term wins	*Error 6.*	Not systematically planning for and creating short-term wins
Step 7.	Consolidating improvements and producing more change	*Error 7.*	Declaring victory too soon
Step 8.	Anchoring new approaches in the culture	*Error 8.*	Not anchoring changes in the corporation's culture

Table 1 Kotter's eight steps and eight errors (Kotter 1995, 60–67; Mills et al. 2009, 53)

The various studies and methods for organisational change management in scholarly literature can be overpowering, and applying a method that is suitable has proven to be difficult for most organisations (Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 254). A said, there is a large variety of methods available for change managers to approach change, and advocates of particular change methods often claim their model is universally applicable. However, there is an equally large variety of situations in which change occurs, and turbulent times demand different responses. (Burnes 1996, 16; Dunphy & Stance 1993, 905.) In other words, the issue facing managers and other members involved in change is to ensure that the adopted method matches the circumstances. This means that at times organisations must move away from their desired mode of managing change, while sometimes they may choose to keep their current approach and influence the change situation to accommodate it. Furthermore, change management is not about managers implementing the "best practices" of the latest experts, nor is it about mechanically adopting a change method which matches their circumstances. Instead, change management is about exercising choice in terms of what must be changed and under what circumstances change takes place and what approach is implemented. (Burnes 1996, 16–17.)

2.2 Organisational change in an HR organisation

2.2.1 HR at the midst of change

For the past few decades, human resources managers have recognised the need for change and the drive for major change in HR has been inevitable (Kesler and Law 1997, 26). This transition within the HR function together with the rapidly changing business environment has led to changes in roles, responsibilities, expectations and the positioning of HR professionals today (Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 874–875). Against the backdrop of ongoing organisational change, countless companies have transformed their HR function by introducing new HR technology and shared service centres, by involving and encouraging more line managers in traditional HR activities and by restructuring HR professionals to fulfil different roles, including a more strategic role of HR business partner (Hennessy & McCartney 2008, 17). Moreover, it is not surprising that in times of drastic change, top management has increased the pressure on the HR function to play a more strategic, value creating role, and HR's role in engineering business change is more important than ever (Svoboda & Schröder 2001, 262; Goodge 2011, 41). The roles and responsibilities of HR professionals are indeed rapidly changing from a more operational or traditional administrative focus to one in which HR plays the role of a strategic partner and change agent (Anson 2000, 21).

Kesler and Law (1997, 26–27) highlight the need for a hard-hitting, action-oriented outline for change that goes beyond vision and unclear initiatives when implementing change in the human resources function. Many HR organisations today are actively engaged in initiatives to revitalise the HR function, and although the concept of the required changes are seen as logical by most HR professionals, many are discovering the difficulties related to implementing extensive changes within HR. (Kesler & Law 1997, 27; LaMarsh 2004, 17.) The irony is, however, the demanding need for change management expertise to support fundamental and continuous change in the business. Consequently, it is clear that especially HR leaders must show high degrees of change management skills to change themselves. (Kesler & Law 1997, 27.)

LaMarsh (2004, 17) points out that few know better than HR how challenging it is to make change happen in a productive and successful manner, and implies three reasons why some individuals might resist the transformation of HR. Firstly, some might not see any reason for change as they don't see any problem with how HR currently operates. It might be unclear why HR must change and some may perceive the process to attain the change or the potential outcomes of the change undesirable. Thirdly, LaMarsh (2004, 17) points out that the task of changing might simply be too difficult, resulting in resistance to the change. These potential resistors to change can be, for example, the senior management of HR, the HR professionals, the business units HR serves or the vendors and consultants that serve HR. Nevertheless, the drive for change in HR is inevitable, meaning appropriate steps must be taken in order to overcome resistance.

A major driver for changes in the HR function is discontent with the extent of the value adding role of HR. Hennessy and McCartney (2008, 17) state that in general HR has been perceived as more reactive than proactive, and far too few report that HR adds value. Moreover, driving forces for change are often, for example, major changes in business strategy that demand significant changes in competences and culture, the need for HR to make a more strategic contribution, and major reengineering efforts across the business that require more people strategies. Learning to transform the HR function is a major step toward supporting transformations in the business. Hence, Kesler and Law (1997, 29) have defined three major factors for transforming human resources functions effectively in large multinational corporations:

1. It is essential that the added-value proposition is clearly defined for the business, guiding the overall change process.
2. Four design tracks should be planned and executed:
    a. Contract a new vision/mission with line management
    b. Redesign work processes
    c. Redesign jobs and organisation structure
    d. Build new competencies
3. A roadmap for change is needed to turn the strategy into a set of action items that can be carried out by line and HR people.

Firstly, having an added-value proposition emphasises the need to force a critical look at HR work, not only concerning the processes and how well they are completed, but in terms of a second element that defines to what degree process excellence adds economic value to the business. Kesler and Law (1997, 30) have divided the role of HR into two separate dimensions, which are critical HR processes and value-adding performance behaviours. The key processes and practices of an HR organisation are most often easily defined, and can often be summarised as, for example, strategic staffing, learning and education, performance management, rewards, organisation design and communications. When implementing a planned change within HR, Kesler and Law

(1997, 30) add that there must be an agreement between HR and line executives regarding the redesigning HR processes to add value. Certain HR processes are fundamentally important for any HR organisation, and meeting these commitments is often the base when establishing credibility as the change process progresses. However, the fulfilment of the basic obligations consumes the majority of resources available in most HR organisations, and as few "customers" ever ask for less or suggest that work should be eliminated, value is rarely added to the level possible. Furthermore, without major redesign of mission, processes, competences and structure, this reality will hardly change.

Common challenges and obstacles facing a change initiative in an HR organisation can be the poor alignment of expectations between key line managers, who manage different teams throughout the whole organisation, and the HR organisation regarding the nature of the role of HR or the fact that inadequate HR processes and information divert already scarce resources into labour-intensive, transactional tasks. Furthermore, so called HR generalist roles can often turn into clusters of fire-fighting, administration and general service-fulfilment responsibilities, diverting lose to all time and energy away from proactive work. Kesler and Law (1997, 31) suggest four design levers in order to provide an actionable approach to change that confronts these issues. Contracting a new mission supports the need for HR functions to have clear expectations with line management. In many companies, the line organisation expresses the need for a stronger strategic support from the HR function in the competitiveness of business. Expectations often become confusing, and in many cases, too little communication is aimed at sorting out these expectations. Change, however, requires an agreement on what processes should be eliminated or changed in order to shift resources from manager or employee services, towards enhancing business competitiveness, for example. (Kesler & Law 1997, 31–32.) Hennessy and McCartney (2008, 18) agree by suggesting that HR should develop a shared vision and understanding of HR's purpose and role, and its strategic relationship with the business' objectives. In addition, HR should be closer to the business, by developing HR solutions together with the business managers, while balancing HR core services and the needs of the business units. However, challenges regarding the role of HR can often stem from within as there can be different views about HR between different HR teams. These differences often surface at times of change, obstructing and complicating the process. (Goodge 2011, 40).

In addition, the effective redesign of HR processes and the redesign of jobs and organisational structure form important tracks to breakthrough change. This requires the decision of what HR transactions should be eliminated, combined, returned to line managers and teams, or redesigned. Furthermore, it may be necessary to create new organisational structures and re-staff the HR unit to create a division between business partner work and important transactional work that should be continued. It is, however, often the case that transactional work expands to consume most of the resources available.

Ultimately, changing HR can mean returning some of the transactional HR tasks back to the line organisation. As part of the change strategy, and similar to different business units, focused HR structures should be created in order to dedicate an appropriate combination of resources to transactional tasks and partnering based on the needs of the business. (Kesler & Law 1997, 32–33.)

HR competences should be revised in order to produce lasting change. A radical transformation in the HR function in response to the new business environment must go hand in hand with a major upgrading of the talent of HR professionals (Svoboda & Schröder 2001, 272). Studies have highlighted the need for greater business knowledge and change-agent skills. Building HR know-how can be a slow process, and some companies rely on recruiting numerous external higher-level managers and employees into the function to accelerate the change process. Moreover, competences within HR can be developed by combining internal development strategies with recruiting external talent. (Kesler & Law 1997, 32–35.) Critical questions to be asked are what competences are valued as critical for HR professionals, how new staff with these capabilities can be recruited, how the existing employees can improve these competences, and how HR leaders who can work in a challenging business environment can be created (Svoboda & Schröder 2001, 268). Svoboda & Schröder (2001, 268) continue by stating that HR often concentrates on delivering products and knowledge for staff development. However, there has not been much emphasis in the past on the development of the HR professionals themselves. Kesler and Law (1997, 36) conclude their proposition for implementing change within an HR organisation with the need for an effective road map. This includes a structured series of strategies built on the four change tracks previously discussed, and mobilised by involving a critical amount of line and HR professionals.

Similar to Kesler and Law's (1997) definition of three major factors for transforming an HR function discussed above, LeMarsh (2004, 24) proposes a simplified timeline for transformation in HR, consisting of four main subjects of change, shown below in Figure 1. According to LeMarsh's (2004) timeline for change, HR must change its structure, process, people and culture. The change process is divided into ten milestones, starting from defining the desired state of HR, and finishing in the organisation redefinition being complete.

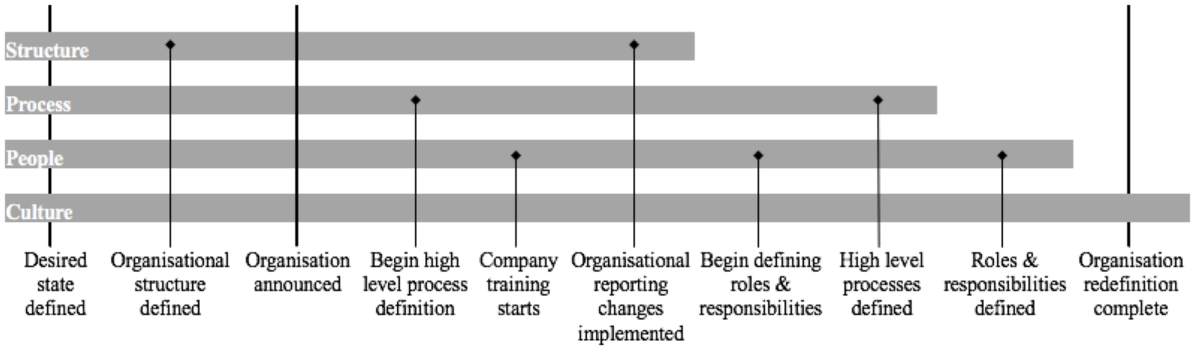

Figure 1Timeline for change: The HR transformation (LaMarsh 2004, 24)

2.2.2 Why HR must master change

It is clear that HR should understand the issues related to change within the function, as they often apply to all business change in general. As HR executives are increasingly called upon to lead business change, plenty of opportunities can be found within their own organisation. (Kesler & Law 1997, 36.) Furthermore, prior research in the field of organisational change highlights the critical role of HR during organisational change, and as Ulrich (1997) points out, HR professionals play an important role during organisational change because all change management activity is centred on people (Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 872–873; Alfes, Truss & Gill 2010, 109). As said, managing organisational change remains one of the most central challenges HR professionals are facing today (Anson 2000, 21). By having the competencies to manage change processes, HR professionals are better able to help other organisational members in managing change, hence, creating an overall organisational capability for change as a key source of competitive advantage (Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung & Lake 1995, 476).

Maheshwari and Vohra (2015, 877) argue that the changing business environment has resulted in an increased significance and need for HR professionals to play a positive role during organisational change. HR should, according to them, support organisational change by introducing and implementing HR practices which influence such employee behaviour that enhances readiness and lowers resistance to change. They continue by stating that most change implementation efforts fail due to the lack of understanding of people-related issues. Sherriton and Stern (1997, cited by Edgley-Pyshorn & Huisman 2011, 612–613), on the other hand, suggest that HR plays a critical role in change, highlighting that HR must confirm that they set a good example for other departments to follow, meaning they must look within and use their knowledge to their own department. Edgley-Pyshorn and Huisman (2011, 622) point out that HR must demonstrate that they themselves can implement change and follow a change initiative in their own department, as they are often perceived the one department which finds change most challenging. Only then can HR be considered a valid player in the implementation of change in other functions of the organisation. With a proven track record of change within HR, HR can provide other functions with motivation to follow; creating an actual example with methods that work can inspire others with confidence to follow.

3 SENSEMAKING

3.1 Defining sensemaking

The previous chapter provided insight on the broad literature regarding organisational change, change management, and organisational change specifically in the field of HR. Sensemaking, on the other hand, offers a method for understanding organisational processes through the utilization of a series of interdependent social psychological properties, providing a way of understanding how individuals make sense of complex environments (Thurlow & Mills 2009, 461). As a central activity to organising and critically important subject in the study of organisations, sensemaking has been the subject of extensive research, which has only increased over the last decade (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 57–58). It has been argued that change should be understood from a holistic perspective; providing both a theoretical grounding and a practical application. Sensemaking provides a helpful approach for understanding organisational change, as it not only uncovers why individuals think and act, but it provides insight into potential problems that managers may encounter during the change process. (Mills, Dye & Mills 2009, 16.) Hence, the aim of this chapter is to explore the concept of sensemaking.

The complexity and scope of the sensemaking literature poses definitional challenges, and while the idea of sensemaking is present in much of the organisational literature, there is considerable variation in how it is used. (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 62.) Although there is no single theory of sensemaking, a seminal piece often referred to when examining sensemaking is Weick's *Sensemaking in Organizations.* In 1995, Weick developed an alternative approach for understanding the process of organising, called "sensemaking". In generak, sensemaking has to do with understanding how different meanings are given to the same event. Sensemaking is said to be continuous and never-ending, and is triggered by uncertainty or ambiguity, which cause us to find meaning. Instead of focusing on organisational outcomes, sensemaking offers insights into how individuals and organisations give meaning to events. (Mills, Thurlow & Mills 2010, 182–183.) Weick (1995, 17) implies that sensemaking is set apart from other explanatory processes, such as interpretation, understanding and attribution, by at least seven distinguishing characteristics. These seven characteristics act as a rough guideline for understanding sensemaking as they aim to clarify what sensemaking is, how it works and where it can fail. Hence, sensemaking is understood as a process that is:

1. Grounded in identity construction
2. Retrospective
3. Enactive of sensible environments
4. Social

5. Ongoing
6. Focused on and by extracted cues
7. Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

The establishment and maintenance of identity is a core concern in sensemaking. Sensemaking is *grounded in identity construction*, which builds upon the understanding that each individual's identity is formed out of the process of interaction, meaning no individual ever acts like a single sensemaker. In other words, behind an individual's identity, are several different selves, and shifting among interactions is to shift among definitions of self. The sensemaker is a constant puzzle undergoing continual redefinition, coincident with presenting some self to others and deciding which self is appropriate. Depending on how the sensemaker defines themselves, the definition of their surroundings will also change. This causality works both ways, meaning it flows just as often from the definition of self to the definition of the situation, as it does the other way. Individual sensemaking in organisations is affected by the processes that develop and maintain a person's sense of self. These processes are driven by three self-derived needs: need for self-enhancement (seeking and maintaining a positive cognitive and affective state of self), self-efficacy (the desire to perceive oneself as competent and effective) and self-consistency (the desire to sense and experience consistency and continuity). (Weick 1995, 18–20.)

Weick (1995) states that possibly the most distinguishing characteristic of the conceptualisation of sensemaking is *retrospective*. Being retrospective means that sensemaking is a comparative process; in order to interpret current events, we rely on past experiences. In order to give meaning to the present, we compare it to familiar or similar events from our past and rely on our past to make sense. (Mills et al. 2010, 184.) Thurlow and Mills (2009, 462) continue by stating that meanings are understood through a lens of past understandings and experiences. Events and language that have been meaningful to an individual in the past will help in shaping that individual's sensemaking in future events. From this perspective, identities that were meaningful in the past, will affect the construction of, or loyalty to identities in the future.

Being *enactive of the environment* implies that sensemaking is about making sense of an experience within our environment. The word *enactment* implies that in organisational life, people often produce part of the environment they face. Sensemaking can therefore either be constrained or created by the environment it has created. In other words, individuals create their own environments and these environments can then constrain their actions. This also means that the environment that has been created by the sensemaker strengthens their own sense of credibility. (Mills et al. 2010, 185; Weick 1995, 30–31.)

Weick (1995, 38) continues by stating that sensemaking is a *social* act. This characteristic acknowledges the fact that sensemaking is dependent on our interaction with others, whether physically present or not. In addition, an organisation's routines, rules, language and symbols will impact an individual's sensemaking process and provide practises or scripts for appropriate behaviour. However, when appropriate practices do not exist, the individual must rely on their own ways of making sense. (Mills et al. 2010, 187.) Studies on sensemaking pay a lot of attention to talk, discource and conversation due to the fact that these are how a great deal of social contact is mediated. However, although it is important to conceptualize social activities of sensemaking, it is also essential to maintain a distinguished understanding of the forms social influence can take. While a shared meaning or social construction are often linked to social sensemaking, sensemaking is also social when joint actions are organised by equivalent meanings, distributed meanings, overlapping views of ambiguous events, or nondisclosed intimacy. (Weick 1995, 41–42.)

Weick (1995, 43) implies that sensemaking never starts, the reason being that pure duration never stops. Thus, sensemaking is an *ongoing* process. Mills et al. (2010, 186) supports this by stating that sensemaking is a consequent process that never stops because sensemaking flows are continuous. Although sensemaking is said to occur in events with shock and ambiguity, Weick (1995, 43) implies that people "chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments". In other words, we are continuously making sense of the events around us by isolating moments and cues to make sense of the current situation, which we must deal with due to the break in routine (Mills et al. 2010, 186).

Extracting ques and focusing solely on certain elements highlights the fact that sensemaking is process that is *focused on and by extracted cues.* While focusing on certain elements and cues and completely ignoring others, we support our interpretation of an event. Extracted ques are simple, familiar structures with which we develop a larger sense of what may be occurring. As stated before, sensemaking is retrospective, which means that past experiences determine what cues we extract when making sense of a situation. However, individuals tend to focus on key elements of a situation by eliminating the details perceived not as important to the big picture. In organisations, this can mean that when focusing on the key elements of a strategic plan, organisations may ignore other cues to stay on track. The sensemaking process can also allow individuals to focus and understand cues in ways that support their beliefs. (Weick 1995, 49–51; Mills et al. 2010, 185).

Weick's (1995, 55) concluding characteristic of sensemaking is that sensemaking is *driven by plausibility rather than accuracy.* This means that we do not rely on accuracy when making sense of a situation, but instead search for cues that make sensemaking appear plausible (Mills et al. 2010, 185). Plausibility essentially refers to the idea that one specific meaning is more important than others; it feels correct within the range of potential explanations presented to a sensemaker in a particular situation. There is no exact definition for what makes a specific explanation plausible. Nonetheless, certain explanations make more sense when others are enthusiastic about it, there are no better alternatives, others have taken the same perspective, and/or it suits most closely with existing perceptions and identities. (Thurlow & Mills 2009, 462.) When making a certain situation plausible, we may mislead or completely disregard what is accurate and consequently rely on faulty decision making when determining right or wrong. This characteristic can also result in inconsistency of sensemaking among organisational members, and different meanings may appear plausible for different members of an organisation concerning a shared action, event or policy. (Mills et al. 2010, 185.) Initially, Weick claimed that the seven characteristics of sensemaking described above are equally important to the sensemaking process (Mills et al. 2010, 186). However, Weick's (1995, 17) seven characteristics of sensemaking are not equally noticeable in the process of individual sensemaking; depending on the situation, some characteristics may play a more important role in influencing sensemaking than the others. These characteristics may also simultaneously influence individual sensemaking. (Thurlow & Mills 2009, 462.)

Central to organisational sensemaking are schemata, which form the cognitive structures or frameworks by which common perceptions derived from past experiences are stored in our memory. Schemata act as data reduction devices enabling individuals to negotiate a confusing and complex world. (Balogun & Johnson 2004, 525.) Organisational members often share interpretive schemes or schemata; these being shared ways of understanding important features of their organisational experience. New schemas are most often required during organisational change, during which especially change recipients are likely to experience dissonance between old and new schemata. (Bartunek, Balogun & Do 2011, 15.)

3.2 Sensemaking during organisational change

As stated in the previous chapter concerning organisational change, change is a central part of everyday life. While the traditional approach to the study of change management focuses mainly on issues such as adoption, implementation and outcomes, sensemaking offers a scope for exploring the reasoning behind these issues. Sensemaking can be used when asking questions such as, what factors encourage managers to perceive a need for change and how do these perceptions influence the change process? What happens when a company adopts a certain change program, and what can be learned from this? (Mills et al. 2009, 16.) Initially, sensemaking occurs as a result of shock or a break in routine. Therefore, the study of sensemaking during, or as a result of an organizational crisis, offers valuable insight into the processes involved. (Mills et al. 2010, 183–184.)

Furthermore, Mills et al. (2009, 19) imply that sensemaking allows a more critical view on organisational change by encouraging the focus on organisational change as a sense of situation, rather than a concrete fact. Organisational change is, therefore, both an interpretation and an outcome of interpretation. Sensemaking questions the notion of organisational change as a linear, entirely rational or obligatory process, while requiring the analysis of the skills needed to successfully implement or resist the organisational change. (Mills et al. 2009, 19.)

3.2.1 Triggers of sensemaking during organisational change

Change creates disturbances, forcing people and organisations to re-think their current and future situation. As previously discussed, to preserve the ability to perform in unclear situations, people develop a subjectively acceptable story of what cause, meaning and consequence a certain change has, and what the suitable course of action would be; widely known as sensemaking. (Steinberger 2015, 432.) Changing conditions offer powerful occasions for sensemaking, as individuals' current habits are disturbed, compelling them to ask not only themselves, but those around them, what is going on (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 554). Change typically motivates change participants to make sense of what is happening by collecting information and managing it cognitively to create meaning. Essentially, it is through these meanings that change initiatives have the effects they do. (Bartunek, Rousseaum Rudolph & DePalma 2006, 186.) Furthermore, Bartunek et al. (2006, 186) imply that sensemaking during change involves an array of information, including participants' understanding of the nature of the change and personal impacts of the change. When facing change, individuals experience a "gap" between their expectations and their previous experience, and start to act in a more conscious and less automatic sensemaking mode. This involves, for example, interacting with each other in order to make sense of their surroundings and determine how they should respond in that situation. (Balogun & Johnson 2004, 524.) Bartunek et al. (2011, 15) suggest that particularly in situations in which organisational members' schemas are in transition, change recipients are usually in an unsteady state containing several alternatives, different meanings, or courses of action, lacking enough understanding of any of them.

In contrast to sensemaking followed by an organisational crisis or other unforeseen changes in the organisational environment, sensemaking can also be activated by events that are expected and planned. Despite initial planning, planned change interventions regularly break expectations and result in considerable uncertainty, ambiguity and confusion for those involved. Planned organisational change processes and changes is structure and practices may also directly target organisational meanings, such as culture or identity, hence, triggering sensemaking. Numerous studies have examined sensemaking initiated when a new CEO or leader conveys a vision for the organisation that challenges existing beliefs, or when existing leaders commit to a new vision in response to environmental changes. A common finding is that leaders attempt to trigger sensemaking by expressing the importance of adopting a new direction for the organisation, partly by undermining the viability of the previous direction. Consequently, sensemaking by organisational members occurs as a reaction to leaders' *sensebreaking* (as leaders defy the viability of the current situation) and their *sensegiving* (the shaping of members' understanding of a positive way forward). (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 75–76.) Furthermore, there have been a considerable amount of studies on sensemaking during organisational change driven by major restructuring initiatives. Research suggests that changes in organisational structure, roles and responsibilities create inconsistencies and paradoxes for organisational members, initiating sensemaking about difficult questions such as what their jobs now require and how to do them (Lüscher & Lewis 2008, 227; Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 77).

3.2.2 The cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving

Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991, 434) suggest that the initiation of strategic organisational change can be viewed as a process whereby the change initiator, most often the CEO, makes sense of a new vision of the organisation and engages cycles of negotiated social construction activities to influence organisational members to accept that vision. Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991, 442) analysis is based on two explanatory frameworks: *sensemaking* and *sensegiving.* In the context of this study, and as previously described, sensemaking involves meaning construction and reconstruction by the members involved in order to understand the nature of the intended change. Sensegiving, on the other hand, has to do with the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others in order to achieve the desired redefinition of organisational reality. Sensemaking and sensegiving occur essentially in sequential and reciprocal fashion, as presented below in Figure 2. In Figure 2, stage 1 (*envisioning*) is a sensemaking effort by the change initiator, wherein he or she attempts to make sense of the new situation by creating a guiding vision for the organisation. Next, stage 2 (*signalling*) is a sensegiving effort by the change initiator, during which he or she tries to communicate this vision to the organisational members. Stage 3 (*re-visioning*) is a sensemaking effort by the organisational members, as they seek to figure out the meaning of the planned new vision and modify their understanding. Lastly, stage 4 (*energising*) is a sensegiving effort by these members, wherein they react to the proposed vision and try to influence its realised form. Stage 4 also includes the occurrence and communication of an organisation-wide promise to action toward the new vision. The feedback loop, however, implies that the sensegiving activities of the various members may also lead to some adjustments to the adopted vision (*re-visioning*) on the part of the change initiator and top management team. (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 442–443.)

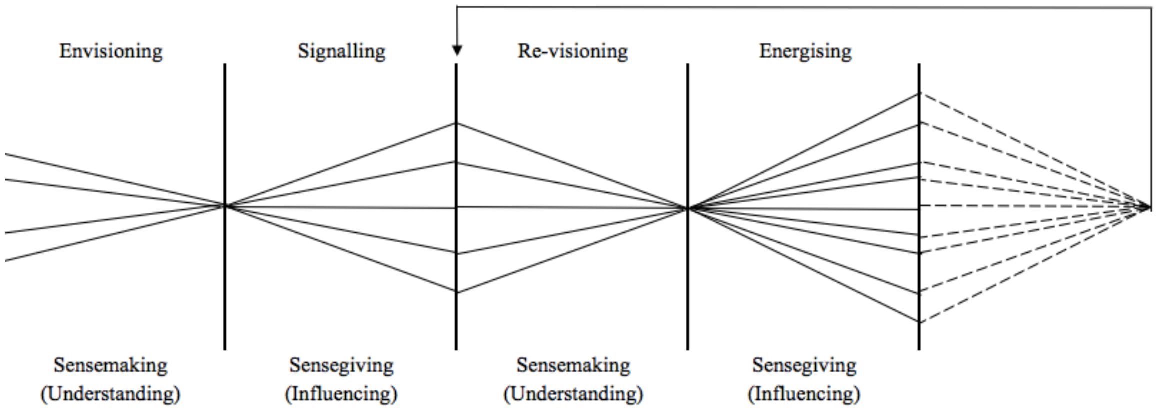

Figure 2 Processes involved in the initiation of strategic change (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 444)

The phases in the sensemaking and sensegiving cycle described above, resemble periods controlled by understanding and influence individually. Furthermore, the sensemaking phases have to do mainly with processes of understanding, while the sensegiving phases concern the attempts to impact the way that another member understands or makes sense. (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 443–444.) Maitlis and Lawrence (2007, 76–79) continued Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) research by examining triggers and enablers for stakeholder and leader sensegiving. According to research, stakeholders are motivated to engage in sensegiving when the issue is perceived as having significant effects on themselves or the organisation as a whole, and in situations where their leaders lack competence in relation to the issue. Leaders, on the other hand, are motivated to engage in sensegiving when the situation is perceived as unpredictable and uncertain. With regards to sensegiving enablers, stakeholders are more able to engage in sensegiving when they possess issue related expertise or legitimacy, and when organisational processes enable sensegiving. Similarly, leaders are more able to engage in sensegiving when they posess required expertise and when their organisations are already performing efficiently. Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010, 559) point out that Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) research underlines top management sensemaking, and brings into attention how top managers make sense of the external environment in order to design change strategies, while just as importantly, influencing others' meaning constructions through sensegiving.

3.2.3 The effects of organisational roles and participation on sensemaking

While top managers play a significant role in change efforts, the literature has more recently expanded to highlight, for example, the role of middle managers during change (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 559). Also, particularly in its beginning stages, organisational change is an uncertain process, not only for change recipients, but for change leaders as well (Bartunek et al. 2011, 13). The sensemaking processes of change leaders and change recipients have been studied by scholars, although the focus has been more on leaders than recipients. However, the sensemaking processes of change recipients is just as critical in the implementation of change. (Bartunek et al. 2011, 15.) Still, change research gives little notice to understanding the individuals who implement and live with change they did not initiate, and the experiences of these change recipients are often perceived as resistance without further examining. The primary focus being on change agents and the lack of attention to the variety of recipient experiences implies that the recipients understand the change in a similar way that change agents do. (Bartunek et al. 2006, 183.) Nevertheless, Bartunek et al. (2006, 183) imply that there is no reason to assume change agents and recipients share the same experiences and understandings of change. Furthermore, Bacharach, Bamberger and Sonnenstuhl (1996, 502) suggest that top level management often react to external conditions that are less significant to other organisation members, and may consequently have drastically different ideas than lower level members concerning the best way to achieve the goals of change.

It is evident that sensemaking during organisational change should be examined at all organisational levels. Furthermore, literature recognises the fact that an individual actors context affects and shapes their sensemaking about the organisational change (Lockett, Currie, Finn, Martin & Waring 2014, 1104). Top management provides important details about the change, whereas middle managers are left to construct their own meanings about the change. Hence, middle managers play a crucial role regarding how the change ultimately passes on to frontline employees. Furthermore, research shows that middle managers enact organisational change by mediating the sensemaking between top management and frontline employees in order to affect both actions and cognitions. (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 559.) Balogun, Bartunek and Do (2015, 974) continue by stating that a team of managers are likely to play both recipient and change agent roles during organisation-wide strategic change initiatives. Nevertheless, while focus on top and middle managers is important, frontline employees are often responsible for actually implementing the bulk of change efforts. A recent development in literature has been uncovering how sensemaking of frontline employees differs from management. Moreover, when employees develop their own sense of the change, that might drastically differ from the management's, they may essentially be enacting a change that differs from those of top management. In looking across all members of change, from top management to frontline employees it becomes evident that change is a multi-vocal process and as a result, sets of shared meanings develop around it. However, the extent to which these meanings are shared across different organisational levels may differ significantly. (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 559–560.)

Additionally, the degree of participation or involvement in a change initiative is said to influence sensemaking about the change. The effects of participation on sensemaking are likely when actively involved change recipients derive information from experiences with change and due to their greater exposure to the influence of change agents. (Bartunek et al. 2006, 187.) Overall, change recipients are not merely passive recipients of change, as they do play active roles in the change processes by making sense of them, having feelings about them and judging them (Bartunek et al. 2006, 203). These activities encompass much more than just change resistance, and Bartunek et al. (2011, 14) suggest that change recipients may often actually be more sensitive to the uncertainty related to organisational change, than to the change itself. Balogun and Johnson (2004, 546) imply that change leaders should indeed pay more attention to the sensemaking that occurs in the absence of senior managers, recognising the fact that recipient sensemaking and therefore change itself, may not fully lie within their control. Change recipients actually create change, as they determine its outcomes through social processes of interaction and the resulting meanings they develop. Consequently, Balogun and Johnson (2004, 546) suggest that the term “change recipient” with its implication of passive acceptance, may be unsuitable.

3.2.4 Sensemaking and change management – accomplishing change through sensemaking

In addition to exploring sensemaking triggered by organisational change, the relationship between sensemaking and organisational change is recursive. In other words, sensemaking by leaders and other members can also accomplish change. Moreover, Maitlis and Christianson (2014, 90) state that research shows that sensemaking at all levels of the organisation is important in producing change. When leaders successfully influence the sensemaking of organisational members, these members are motivated to make changes in their own practices and roles. Strategic change is initiated and can advance through cycles of leader and member sensemaking when leaders successfully encourage others to understand the future in a way that is consistent with their redefined reality. Furthermore, change actors create new organisational order through sensemaking about strategies and structures, in the form of a guiding vision and new meanings for organisational members, and offering a suitable response to environmental changes.

Sensegiving is also used to convince others of the value of the changes and to describe how they can be implemented. On the other hand, when sensemaking or sensegiving fail, may a change initiative consequently fail as well. (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 89–91.)

3.3 Summary of the theoretical framework

3.3.1 Organisational change and the changing field of HR

The purpose of this study was to gain an in depth understanding of the experiences and sensemaking processes of HR professionals during organisational change, by conducting a qualitative case study research. The overall goal was to explore HR professionals as change targets and initiators taking into account how previous experiences with change might affect reactions and sensemaking towards change in the future. To support the research questions the theoretical framework was divided into two chapters: organisational change and sensemaking.

The theoretical framework began with a look at the vast amount of research concerning organisational change. In summary, organisational change can be defined as redesigning of business processes, improving products or services, and changes in organisational structure or culture in order to improve performance (Guimaraes & Armstrong 1998, 74). Change has become a norm for organisations today, and organisations and their leaders are continuously changing in response to the vast changes in the growing global business environment (By 2005, 369; Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 254). Organisations must change not only to sustain their success, but also to secure their existence (By 2005, 369). However, a widely accepted fact is that organisational change is and extremely challenging and complex reality in practice, and still over 70 percent of change initiatives fail (Jansson 2013, 1003; Beer & Nohria 133). Numerous approaches and methods for adjusting to new conditions have been suggested and produced by scholars and senior managers, however, an integrated approach to driving efficient, constructive change is still missing (Schaffer 2010, 87; Al-Haddad & Kotnour 2015, 234). In order to understand organisational change, it is necessary to recognise the fact that change comes in various different types and forms (Mills et al. 2009, 32). Furthermore, there is an equally large variety of situations in which change can occur, and different situations call for different responses (Dunphy & Stace 1993, 905).

Another main theme of the first theory chapter was change in the human resources field. During the past decades, human resources managers have also recognised the need for change, and the transition within the HR function combined with the rapidly changing business environment has led to changes in roles and responsibilities, as well as expectations and the positioning of HR professionals today (Kesler & Law 1997, 26; Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 874–875). Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals are shifting from a more operational and traditional administrative focus, to one in which HR is seen as more of a strategic partner and change agent (Anson 2000, 21). Although HR professionals most often see the concept of the change in HR as logical, many are discovering the difficulties associated to implementing extensive changes (LaMarsh 2004, 17). However, the irony is that there is a demanding need for change management expertise from HR to support change in the business. Thus, HR leaders must demonstrate high degrees of change management skills to change themselves. (Kesler & Law 1997, 27.) Managing change remains to be one of the most important challenges for HR professionals, and by having the competencies to manage change, HR professionals are better prepared to help other organisational members to manage change (Anson 2000, 21; Ulrich et al. 1995, 476).

3.3.2 Sensemaking during organizational change

The second theory chapter of this study focused on sensemaking during organisational change. To summarise, sensemaking starts when people experience violations of their expectations, or when they face an unclear issue or incident that is significant to them (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 77). Sensemaking provides a way of understanding how individuals make sense and comprehend complex and changing environments (Thurlow & Mills 2009, 461). Furthermore, sensemaking provides a useful approach for understanding organisational change, as it uncovers why individuals think and act, while also providing understanding of possible problems that managers may confront during the change process (Mills et al. 2009, 16).

Sensemaking during organisational change is most often triggered due to the fact that change creates disturbances, forcing organisations and people to re-think their current and future situation (Steinberger 2015, 432). The initiation of organisational change can be viewed as a process during which the change initiator makes sense of a new vision of the organisation, and experiences cycles of discussed social construction activities to influence organisational members to accept that vision. The process of initiating change can therefore be seen as a cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving, shown in Figure 2. (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 434, 442.) Sensemaking can also be affected by organisational roles, and the sensemaking of top managers, middle managers and employees can differ quite drastically (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 559–560). Additionally, the degree of participation or involvement in the change initiative is said to influence sensemaking about the change (Bartunek et al. 2006, 187). Lastly, sensemaking can be examined as an enabler of change. While sensemaking is usually explored as being triggered by organisational change, sensemaking by leaders and other members can also accomplish change. When leaders successfully influence organisational members, these members are motivated to make changes in their own practices and roles. (Maitlis & Christianson 2014, 89–91.)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research strategy

Research methodology can be defined as the choices a researcher makes concerning methods and data collection, case selection, and data analysis while planning and executing a research study. In other words, methodology defines how the researcher goes about studying a phenomenon. (Silverman 2001, 4.) Furthermore, research methodology, often also referred to as research design, is not just a research plan of the empirical part of a study. Instead, it consists of various decisions and issues concerning, for example, theoretical reading, methodological choices, empirical data gathering, analysing and writing processes. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 35.)

Qualitative methodology and case studies provide powerful tools when researching management and business subjects, providing the researcher with the opportunity of focusing on the complexity of business-related experiences in their unique contexts. It produces new information on how things work in actual business settings, why they work in a certain way, and how we can make sense of them in a way that they can be changed. (Gummesson 2000, 1; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 3–4.) A range of different theories, methods and methodological thinking can be applied to qualitative research, as it does not rely on unified theoretical and methodological concepts. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 30) do, however, imply that one unifying element in the qualitative research process is reflexivity. In practice, this means that researchers themselves are an integral part of the research process, and should take an important part in the knowledge production of the research, not excluding it form the research process or reporting. Furthermore, this means that the subjectivities of the researcher and those who are being studied are an essential part of the interpretation. It has even been said that qualitative studies are a subjective way of producing knowledge (Eskola & Suoranta 1998).

Over the last few decades, qualitative case study research has become increasingly recognized as a valuable tool in management research, and to ensure an in depth understanding of the experiences related to the organisational change in question in this study, the research method used is a qualitative case study. One reason for the popularity of case study research is its ability to present hard-to-grasp and often complex business topics in a comprehensible and vivid format. However, a source of criticism against case studies has been their ‘real-life’ dimension, often marking them as unreliable descriptions lacking scientific precision. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 116.) A qualitative case study research strategy is relevant for this type of study, as it is based on studying individuals’ experiences and views. It is important to recognize that the experiences explored in this research are subjective and don’t therefore represent the case company as a whole. Instead, the objective is to gain an in depth understanding by focusing on seven individuals that represent different positions within the HR department.

A widespread number of information-gathering methods can be used in case studies (Gummesson 2000, 83). Moreover, there are several ways of doing case study research, depending on numerous issues such as the nature of the research questions, the purpose of the study and the research design, as well as the number of cases to be studied. Case study research can, however, be divided into two types: *intensive case study research* and *extensive case study research.* Extensive case study research pursues elaboration and testing or creating generalizable theoretical concepts by comparing several different cases. Intensive case study research, on the other hand, aims at understanding one distinctive case from the inside; offering a complete and contextualized description. Moreover, intensive case study research draws on the ethnographic and qualitative research traditions, while underlining the understanding and interpretation of a particular case. The explanation of sense-making processes and cultural meanings are also emphasized. The aim of an intensive case study is not to produce knowledge that can be generalized to other contexts. Instead, it aspires to understand and explore how the case in question works as a structured and ideographic unit of analysis. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 118–119.) This research has been conducted as an intensive case study, as the objective is to explore one particular case and gain an in depth understanding of the experiences of the case company's employees.

4.2 Case selection

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 124) imply that there is no single rule regarding the minimum number of cases chosen for a case study research. Instead, the number of cases studied is often influenced by the study aims and research questions. Selection of the case can also be influenced by pragmatic concerns, such as access and achievability. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 124.) The case company selected for this case study research, Nordea, is a large company operating in the financial sector, in which the human resources department has gone through extensive changes within the past two years. The researcher gained access to this specific case while being employed by the company's human resources department; making it a clear and natural choice. As the objective of the study is to gain an in-depth view of the change initiative specifically at Nordea, this is the only case company research for this study. Next, the background of Nordea's change initiative will be briefly discussed, followed by a description of the respondents in this study.

4.2.1 Background of the case company's change initiative

Starting from early 2015, Nordea's HR has been going through extensive changes within all its functions. The Future HR initiative has a goal of developing a new operating model ensuring that all HR functions work smarter and more efficient, by adopting common solutions and using people and their competences to support this. As Nordea in whole is going through a transformation towards the future relationship bank, the HR department must use its resources in the most efficient way possible. Nordea's HR change initiative has the ambition to affect and support not only the HR department itself, but the management's ability to execute their business plans as well as achieve their strategic goals. By delivering the best possible HR solutions that are provided effectively and conveniently, more capacity to focus on long-term, value-adding and proactive support to managers can be achieved.

The HR change initiative covers the full HR at Nordea. It was decided to initially focus on the HR value proposition and deliveries when developing the target picture for the future of HR. In short, the objectives for the change initiative include to:

1. Build an agile organisation with align processes and services across HR to meet the future business requirements
2. Deliver best in class HR solutions by securing that services are provided in the most effective and convenient way for the business (managers & employees) and by that free up capacity to focus on long-term, more value adding and proactive support to managers
3. Develop a role model HR organisation by building on the strengths of current people and close possible competence gaps towards the future roles.

In practice, the change initiative included the restructuring of new teams, roles and responsibilities within HR, affecting close to all employees within the HR department. Numerous new teams were built and the HR Partner role shifted to a consultancy role. While previously each business area had their own HR partner, the new model relies on a one point of contact for all enquiries related to HR, meaning all employees and managers contact the same phone number and address. As a result of the changes, some of the administrative tasks previously handled by HR partners, have now been assigned to managers themselves. Concurrently however, previous HR partners now have more time to concentrate on strategic tasks in supporting the business.

4.2.2 Description of the respondents

Seven respondents were interviewed for this case study research, each employed by Nordea's human resources department and working in different roles. Although the human resources department operates as a Nordic organisation in Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, this study was conducted with interviews only from Finnish employees. Three of the respondents are in a managerial role, while the rest work as experts in their own teams. In order to gain a full understanding of the experiences related to the change, it was suitable to interview both managers and employees. As seen from the table below, three of the respondents were involved in planning the change initiative and six out of seven of the respondents had a clear change of role due to the organisational change. In other words, each respondent was involved and affected by the organisational change in one way or another.

Respondent	**Manager**	**Involved in planning the change initiative**	**Role changed due to change initiative**
Respondent 1	Yes	Yes	Yes
Respondent 2	Yes	No	Yes
Respondent 3	No	No	Yes
Respondent 4	No	No	Yes
Respondent 5	No	Yes	Yes
Respondent 6	No	No	Yes
Respondent 7	Yes	Yes	No

Table 2 Overview of the respondents

4.3 Data collection

Silverman (2001, 11) proposes that there are four major methods for qualitative researchers to use: observation, analysing text and documents, interviews, and recording and transcribing. These methods are often combined, and in this case study research the respondents were first interviewed, the interviews were recorded and transcribed and the transcribed text was then analysed. The research data for this qualitative case study was collected through semi-structured interviews conducted within the case organisation.

Silverman (2001, 86–87) implies that emotionalist interview research approaches, on use interviews as a way of exploring participants' authentic, subjective experiences. Hence, the particular concern is in lived experiences, emotions being central. (Silverman 2001, 90. An emotionalist interview is does not emphasise information, instead people's perceptions, conceptions, understanding and emotions are in focus (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 79). As the objective of this study is to explore employees' experiences and sensemaking processes in during organisational change, the interviews follow an emotionalist interview research approach.

Interview studies most often pursue to figure out how a specific group of people perceive things (Silverman 2010, 190). For the most part, qualitative interviews are open-ended and less structured, and assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways. (Merriam 2014, 90.) Furthermore, many qualitative interviews within business research fall into the category of guided and semi-structured interviews, which are used to study “how” and “what” questions. A semi-structured interview involves preparing an outline of topics, themes or issues to be discussed, but leaves room for rearranging the order and wording of questions to fit with the particular interview. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 82.) The questions are most often adaptably phrased or the interview is a mix of structured and unstructured questions. Usually, however, precise information is required from each respondent, which also requires a more structured part in the interview. (Merriam 2014, 90.) The main advantage of a semi-structured interview, according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 82), is the fact that while the interview materials are systematic and comprehensive, the tone of the interview can be kept fairly conversational and casual. Choosing semi-structured theme interviews as the data collection method for this study gave the interviews structure, while allowing the respondents to elaborate and conversation to flow naturally. A semi-structured interview format allows the researcher to respond to each interview situation, the different views of the respondents and the new emerging ideas in a suitable way (Merriam 2014, 90).

The list of interviewees was predetermined by the case company including employees and managers from within the HR department. Each individual that was interviewed had been influenced by the organisational change, and could therefore give a comprehensive view on the subject. The seven employees interviewed from within the HR department represent an inside point of view of the organisational change. Initially the list consisted of nine possible respondents, from which two were unable to participate. Each employee that was interviewed is situated in the case company’s Finnish human resources department. The data collection process started in January 2017, when the interviewees first received an email with initial information about the upcoming interviews. A few weeks later the interview dates where scheduled, and all interviews were held during the last two weeks of February, 22.2.2017–28.2.2017. The interview questions were sent to the respondents one week before the interviews commenced, giving them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the themes of the interview. However, the interviews being semi-structured, no prior preparation was required from the participants. Before scheduling the interviews, each respondent was assured that their identities will remain confidential and not be exposed at any time. Most of the interviews lasted about 30 minutes, whereas two of the longer interviews lasted 40 and 52 minutes.

The interviews were all held in Finnish, due to that fact that each respondent and the researcher herself speak Finnish as their mother tongue. This allowed a more natural and spontaneous conversation during the interviews, neither the researcher or interviewee having to search for words or expressions. All but one interviews were held face to face within the case company's office premises in a private meeting room to prevent distractions. One interview was held through Skype, as the respondent was situated in another country at the date of the interview. Prior to starting the interview, each respondent was asked for permission to record the interview, to which each respondent replied positively. As previously mentioned, the researcher was employed at the case company at the time of the interviews and had previous knowledge concerning the organisational change in question, allowing the interviews to focus mainly on the precise themes of the study, and eliminated the need for general background questions during the interviews. The interviews followed the predetermined interview questions, however, some additional questions were also asked as new thoughts and ideas arose during each interview. Some interview questions were also slightly modified to fit the respondents' own background and role in the change initiative.

There are several ways of recording interviews, such as notes written during or after the interview or tape recording the interview. Transcribing the interviews is good way of retaining all the information from the interviews, as well as familiarizing oneself with the data while doing so. In business studies it is often enough to have a transcription that includes everything that has been spoken during the interview, sometimes including the pauses as well. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 85.) To ensure that nothing was left out of the interview data in this research, each interview was recorded using either a mobile phone application or Skype. The recorded interviews were then transcribed word for word by the researcher, while at the same time highlighting and categorising the most important parts of the interviews.

4.4 Data analysis

The objective of analysing qualitative data is to clarify and produce new information about the research subject. By analysing the data, the research material is summarised into a clearer from, without losing of the information it holds. In other words, data analysis aims to increase the information value of the research material by reshaping scattered data and creating a clear, structured entity. It has been said, however, that the analysis of qualitative data is the hardest part of qualitative research. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998.) Merriam (2014, 173) continues by stating that data analysis is the method of making sense of the data, which includes combining, reducing and interpreting what interview respondents have said. Data analysis is a complicated process, involving moving back and forth between pieces of data and theoretical concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between interpretation and description. Overall, data analysis is the process used to answer the research questions. (Merriam 2014, 176.)

The process of data analysis begins with identifying sections in the research data that are responsive to the research questions. These segments are units of data which are potential answers or parts of an answer to the research questions. The objective is to compare different units of information with each other while looking for recurring similarities in the data. (Merriam 2014, 176–177.) Eskola and Suoranta (1998) continue by stressing the importance of becoming familiar with the whole interview data and reading through it more than once. Merriam (2014, 181) states that the challenge is to create themes and categories that capture a recurrent pattern that cuts across the data. Furthermore, the categories are abstractions derived from the data, not the data themselves. Merriam (2014, 173) implies that some system for organising and managing research data should be developed early in the study. This involves coding, which means assigning a short description to several features of the data in order to easily retrieve specific pieces of data. These designations can be single letters, words, numbers, phrases, colours, or a combination of these. (Merriam 2014, 173.) Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 128) define coding as a way of classifying the features, instances, issues and themes in empirical data with a specific label or code. In case study research, pre-planned coding is commonly used when research is built upon existing theory and attempts to develop or test the theory (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 128).

The data analysis process of this research study began when the interviews were being transcribed. As the interview questions were mostly segmented according to the research questions, most of the categories were easy to spot. Eskola and Suoranta (1998) state that the themes of the interview often form an initial way of categorising the interview data which helps the categorisation process especially in the beginning phases. Straight after transcribing an interview, the transcribed material was read through once more in order to highlight the relevant pieces of information. As the interviews progressed, different subcategories for the research questions emerged, forming the categories for analysis. Some of the original categories became subcategories, and some of the subcategories became categories during the analysis process; and as Merriam (2014, 182) states, the analysis process involves continuous revision, which continues through the writing of the findings. Once the key categories were identified and formed, they were organised into different files, each one including the interview data that belonged in that category. Each piece of data placed into a category included original identifying codes with the respondent's name and question number, allowing an easy return to the original transcript if needed. The analysis was done by carefully revising the collected interview data and different categories; finding recurrent themes and searching for the connections within the empirical data and between the empirical data and the theoretical framework. In order to gain a full overview of the categories and which respondents had the same views, a table with each theme and respondent was pieced together, which will later be presented and discussed in the sixth chapter.

4.5 Limitations and trustworthiness

One of the challenges confronting qualitative research is assuring the readers of the scientific nature of the study, its quality and its trustworthiness (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 290). Eskola and Suoranta (1998) imply that researchers who use qualitative research methods and qualitative studies in general have been criticized over the vagueness of the trustworthiness criterion. Merriam (2014, 209) however, continues by underlining that all research is concerned with producing reliable and valid material in an ethical manner. The basis of qualitative research is the researcher's open subjectivity and accepting the fact that the researcher themselves is a central part of the research. Hence, the researcher is one of the main criteria of trustworthiness meaning that evaluating the trustworthiness of a study concerns the whole research process. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998.) Moreover, several concepts used to evaluate qualitative research originate from quantitative research, and have been modified to fit qualitative methodology (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 291). It has, for example, been said that reliability and validity do not apply to qualitative research in the way that they are originally perceived for quantitative studies, and qualitative researchers and method books are divided by their opinion of whether the accuracy of interviews, for example, can be evaluated using the classic criteria of reliability and validity. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 292). However, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 291) do state that the three concepts of validity, reliability and generalizability provide a basic framework for evaluating social sciences research.

Reliability typically refers to the extent to which a procedure, measure or instrument yields the same result when repeated (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 292). Furthermore, reliability means that two or more researchers examining the same phenomenon with similar purposes should have similar results (Gummesson 2000, 90). Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which research conclusions give an accurate explanation or description of what happened. In other words, validity evaluates if the findings accurately represent the phenomenon in question and whether the findings are supported by evidence. In qualitative studies, the aim of validity is to provide research with a guarantee that the description or report is correct. Generalizability evaluates whether the research results can be stretched into a broader context; in qualitative research, it implies a well-argued and well-grounded selection of cases. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 292–293.) When viewing qualitative research as purely descriptive, generalizability is not an issue. This can be the case when conducting a purely intrinsic case study, when the case of interest is studied in its originality and particularity. However, contradicting views do exist, as many researchers believe qualitative research should produce explanations which are generalizable, or have a wider resonance. (Silverman 2010, 249.)

Gummesson (2000, 185–187) has identified eight quality criteria for case study research, however, stressing that these criteria are not always applicable or of the same importance in all case studies. Firstly, readers should be able to follow the research process and draw their own conclusions. In other words, a case study research should be a well-written and intelligible report with a comprehensive account of the research process. Researchers should also present their paradigm and preunderstanding, meaning for example the theories and concepts that direct the project with explanations for choosing these specific theories and concepts. In addition, a case study research should possess credibility by selecting methods and techniques that are appropriate to the problem, purpose and research questions. Furthermore, it is essential for the researcher to have adequate access during the research process. This includes used methods and techniques that ensure adequate access to the processes being studied, as well as account of any difficulties in deploying desired access methods. Gummesson (2000, 187) continues by stating that a case study should include an assessment on the generality and validity of the research, and the research should contribute to increased knowledge while dealing with relevant problems. A quality case study's research process should be dynamic to the extent in which the researcher has continuously learned through personal reflection and dialogue with others. Lastly, the researcher should, according to Gummesson (2000, 187), possess certain personal qualities and commitment to the task of research. When reflecting on the quality of this case study against Gummesson's criteria it is reasonable to say that each criterion has been considered and fulfilled in a suitable manner.

Silverman (2010, 272) states that whatever the theoretical model of the study, it is good practice to address how the relationship between the researcher and respondents affect the findings. Furthermore, being too personally involved with the respondents can result in difficulties related to objectivity. As the researcher was employed at the case company during the time of the study and was acquainted with most of the respondents to a certain extent, this was of course taken into account when analysing the data and forming the conclusions. Another matter to consider, in addition to objectivity, is the possibility that being employed in the same company as the respondents, and the research being presented to the case company might lead to respondents hesitating in being as up-front and candid as possible about their experiences. However, acknowledging these limitations and considering the validity, reliability and overall trustworthiness of this research, it can be stated that this research follows the principles that are required regarding its quality.

5 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Organisational change in an HR department

5.1.1 From change in the business to change in HR

The interviews began with general discussion concerning the change initiative and the respondents' feelings towards the change. It quickly became quite clear that the still ongoing organisational change was one of the largest, if not largest, organisational change initiatives most of the respondents had previously encountered in their work history at Nordea. One respondent described how though the change was said to be one of the most extensive changes made in Nordea's human resources department, it did not feel. Looking back, however, the respondent realised how important and extensive the size of the change actually was. Another respondent supported this by stating that this indeed was an extremely large change, but one which must be made, and a step in the right direction. The respondent described the change as follows:

> *Well this is an extremely large change, and in my role, I have of course discussed a lot with the business and there is a lot of scepticism. But I see that this is a step we must take anyhow, and rather earlier than later. This is the direction in which we must go, just like our customer service is going in this direction. And it's always a big challenge when changing. But this is the way of doing this in the future, and this is the right direction.*

Similar to this respondent was another respondent's view on the change, stating that the direction was right, but the ability to take a step back if needed, is also important. Another respondent also stated that this is definitely the right direction for HR.

> *We are heading in the right direction, as long as we use common sense. Of course things must always move forward, but then we also have to take note if something isn't working. I still haven't heard anyone from the business applauding this change, so we still have a lot of work ahead of us.*

We are definitely going in the right direction, this is surely the current way of providing this service, and the recent change which aims at bringing the mobile and digital world to this side is definitely important.

All seven respondents felt like they understood the meaning behind the change initiative; why the organisation must change. The change on the business side made it clear for the respondents that also the HR department must change their ways of operating, and furthermore, helped the respondents in understanding ahead of time that change would come to them eventually as well. This was also in line with literature, as the changes in the business have indeed resulted in drastic changes in HR as well (Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 874–875). One respondent described the situation as follows:

It has probably supported [the change] that a lot of us in HR have seen the change in business, and probably many of us have known that the change will come to us as well, and many have possibly noticed that this isn't the optimal way of supporting the business. – A lot of people have been supporting the business with the change, so they understand the current situation here as well.

One respondent described how although the change overall was slightly unclear, the changing business required change in HR as well.

To be honest this wasn't very clear to anyone at the start, but of course I understand that this is coming from our strategy. If our field is changing then of course we have to change with it as well. So in that sense I understand the change overall. But it's not very clear.

In general, the respondents viewed the change from the business' perspective, acknowledging that the main role of HR is ultimately to support the business. One respondent stated that although new changes will always come, the needs of the business will never disappear.

The world is never completely finished. And when it starts to be close to complete, it will change again. The needs of the business will never disappear, however. Of course I just hope that we can implement this in a way that the business doesn't feel like their life has become more difficult.

One respondent saw the change as an opportunity to truly form the HR into one that functions well and supports the business effectively. The change allows the readjusting of what actually belongs in the HR and what can be handled in the business by line managers themselves. This goes in line with Kesler and Law's (1997, 29) and Hennessy and McCartney's (2008, 18) suggestions that HR must contract a new vision together with the line management to form a collaboration that supports the business most effectively.

> *What is positive in my opinion is that we now have to really think from the perspectives of management and line managers, and take responsibility of HR leadership. And how before it was so easy, that the HR partner or someone from HR will take care of things, but now we must draw the line between what belongs to HR and what belongs to the business.*

Two other respondents continued with similar views, stating that while the HR is now deepening their expertise, they need be able to listen to the needs of the business.

> *I hope that while we deepen our own HR expertise we can hear the needs of the business and understand it from the point of view of knowledge and support, meaning what we offer and how suitable solutions we provide the managers with.*

> *It is important that we understand the changes happening in the business and what the business strategy is and how we can support it, that is ultimately why we are here – we are supporting business and a part of it.*

Furthermore, all seven respondents had hopes for HR becoming an even more value-adding function after the change. One respondent highlighted the need for HR to become a value-adding function, which is in line with Kesler and Law (1997, 30), who emphasise the value-adding role of HR.

> *Of course I hope that HR will be a value-adding function, and [the business] will actually gain from this and that this is something they can benefit from… There's still some way to go…*

On the other hand, respondents also saw flaws in their old operating model, and felt that there was a clear need for changes. All seven respondents recognised that the old operating model was not as effective as possible:

> *This has been quite easy to sell, there was a need for the new model and few have said that the old model was better.*
>
> *The objectives of the change have been clear. We started with A, we have a huge change ahead, and we have an extremely decentralised model, so the workload was really uneven between business areas. And another reason behind this was that we realised we are recruiting so much, that we have to think of a better model. We also realised that the way of working was so different in the different areas, and we weren't getting the economies of scale.*

The old operating model was not steady enough, as the role of the HR partner was becoming too wide, resulting in uneven workloads between business areas. The old model put too much pressure on one person making it hard to manage. Six respondents stated that the old operating model was not supporting the business in the best way possible. One respondent explained the situation as follows:

> *The pace of change and amount of change was so great that with the [HR partner] role and focusing all the tasks to one person, that was no longer possible or smart… it was a bottleneck. In that sense, this has been an extremely positive change in the right direction and analysis of the situation.*

Then again, many respondents did say that the old model functioned fine, however, might not have worked that way for long anymore. Two respondents stated as follows:

> *There was a lot of positive in our old operating model and it did work, but I don't know if it would have worked for long anymore, so we had to do something so that we are able support the business surely and in a timely manner.*
>
> *I believe we didn't really have any other options, but I have to say that our old model where we had our own business areas worked well. Then again we were constantly in a hurry. We still are, but it's not the same. – We couldn't have continued in that way I think. So, in that sense the change was positive, but the pace of the changes could have been slower.*

5.1.2 HR professionals as change agents and targets

An interesting theme that came up in the first few interviews was the fact that implementing an extensive change initiative particularly in a human resources department can pose a presumption concerning the recipients' readiness for change. One could assume that operating in a human resources department, with employees who are likely to have experience in supporting or implementing change in other departments, could mean that change is somewhat easier to understand and accept. However, this proved not to be the case, as one respondent stated:

> *One of our senior HR managers said quite well in the beginning that HR can be a specialist in change management and can coach managers in how to do it. But now we are talking about changing our self and that isn't always very easy.*

Another respondent supported this by stating the following:

> *This could have been handled a lot better. Maybe too much was relied on the fact that we are HR professionals, who would manage with a lot less ourselves. That we have managed so many change processes in the business, that our own change process doesn't need that much effort put in. And the outcome was that it was exactly the opposite. That we should have put a lot more effort especially in our own HR professionals, and not assume that they understand this only with their own experience and fill the communication gap with it.*

The same respondent was surprised by the fact that although the change recipients are human resources professionals with experience in implementing changes in other business units, the case was completely different when the change was concerning themselves. HR professionals are often involved with change initiatives in other business areas and have experience with implementing change in the business. However, when the change is targeted at you, the view changes completely.

> *I also was perhaps surprised by how in the end our own HR professionals, when the change is concerning themselves, question things they might themselves have completely calmly as HR representatives supported in the business. And when you yourself are a part of the change, you might question some procedures, and maybe some things that we have considered completely clear, for example how we can move employees*

> *from one position to another, suddenly aren't so clear after all, although we have operated in this way for years. You begin to look at it completely different than with these HR professional's eyes.*

One respondent stated that although working in HR might provide knowledge about change management and change in general, experience with being the target of change is more important. However, respondents were unsure if change is something you can become used to, and that if it becomes easier the more you have been affected by it.

> *I have often been a target of change myself, and that has taught me more [than being in HR]. I am quite surprised that some have reacted so strongly, but it's hard to say, you become accustomed to change. – But then again, maybe it hasn't taught that much when it concerns yourself. That is why I have in a way just followed from the side and wondered, but it could be that I would have reacted in the same way if I hadn't been a target of change before.*

> *When you think about that your own position is the target of change, I think it's quite hard. Then again we do have people who have been a part of numerous changes in the bank, maybe they are able to see things before us others. But I don't think that it helps your own change.*

Two respondents stated that although HR professionals should have the skills and knowhow about how change should be implemented correctly, this was not the case now. According to these two respondents, the change was apparently not handled properly even though one could assumed otherwise. They stated as follows:

> *We probably have the knowledge of how things should go according to laws and regulations, but in practice it hasn't gone like that, I think we have kind of forgotten about it. It's more like we know how it should be, but then we think that we don't have to do that here. In a way, it's the opposite.*

> *It does have an effect, but I can say that this hasn't gone completely by the book, how these processes really should go when changing an organization, it should have been done differently. – I mean we should do things right, but that didn't really happen for us. But maybe I'm not as positive with these things as others…*

However, one respondent firmly stated that the fact that the targets of change are HR professionals doesn't mean that the change would be any different than in any other business function. Furthermore, that should not be required or even assumed. However, there is the possibility that when the rules and guidelines for change are well-known, more focus is directed at following the rules, and less on the actual contents of the change. The respondent follows by stating:

> *We are only humans as well, that is my answer. – It can't even be required from us.*

> *In the end it is quite generic, people are people… and when the change is targeted at you, although you are a professional at change and know how to facilitate changes, but when thinking about your own change curve, I don't think it will affect that. The feelings are in a way still the same.*

Below in Table 4, the key findings regarding organisational change in HR are presented. As shown, central themes from the theoretical framework concerning change in HR are supported by the empirical evidence collected from the interviews.

Suggestions from the theoretical framework	Respondents' experiences	Supporting citations from the interviews
The transforming field of HR together with the rapidly changing business environment has led to changes in roles, responsibilities, expectations and the positioning of HR professionals today (Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 874–875).	The change on the business side made it clear for the respondents that also the HR department must change their ways of operating.	*A lot of us in HR have seen the change in business, and probably many of us have known that the change will come to us as well, and many have possibly noticed that this isn't the optimal way of supporting the business.* *It is important that we understand the changes happening in the business and what the business strategy is and how we can support it, that is ultimately why we are here – we are supporting business and a part of it.* *If our field is changing, then of course we must change with it as well. So, in that sense I understand the change overall.*
A major driver for changes in the HR function is dissatisfaction with the extent of the value adding contribution of HR (Hennessy & McCrartney 2008, 17.	Six out of seven respondents mentioned that the old operating model was not supporting the business in the best way possible. Four respondents showed some scepticism as to whether the new model adds value to the business yet. However, all seven respondents hope that the change turns out to be value-adding.	*Of course, I hope that HR will be a value-adding function, and [the business] will actually gain from this and that this is something they can benefit from… There's still some way to go…* *I hope that while we increase our HR expertise, we are able to hear the needs and desires of the business, and take them into account through our expertise and understanding.*
Although the concept of the required changes are seen as logical by most HR professionals, many are discovering the difficulties related to implementing extensive changes within HR. (Kesler & Law 1997, 27; LaMarsh 2004, 17.)	All seven respondents supported the change and the new direction for Nordea's HR. However, all respondents felt that the change could have been done better. Four respondents mentioned challenges specifically relating to the change being targeted at HR professionals.	*One of our senior HR managers said quite well in the beginning that HR can be a specialist in change management and can coach managers in how to do it. But now we are talking about changing our self and that isn't always very easy.* *This could have been handled a lot better. Maybe too much was relied on the fact that we are HR professionals, who would manage with a lot less ourselves. That we have managed so many change processes in the business, that our own change process doesn't need that much effort put in. And the outcome was that it was exactly the opposite.*

Table 3 The key findings related to organisational change in HR

5.2 Sensemaking during the change process

5.2.1 The effects of previous experience and participation on sensemaking

The second research question of this study was to explore the sensemaking process of the respondents, as well as elements that affected their sensemaking. Each respondent was presented with a question regarding their own sensemaking process. The aim was to figure out how each respondent made sense of the situation, and how they reacted in situations with drastic change and uncertainty. As the group of respondents consisted of three managers, out of which two had a role in planning the change initiative, and four experts, out of which one had a role in planning the change, another objective was to explore the differences in sensemaking between these groups.

Two respondents stated that they had previous experience with an operating model similar to the one being implemented in the case company currently, which seemed to be a significant advantage in making sense of the change process. This is in line with Mills et al. (2010, 184) stating that sensemaking is a comparative process, and in order to interpret current events, we rely on past experiences. However, one of the two respondents admitted that previous experience of a similar situation helped in shortcutting some of the change steps, making it difficult at some times to understand the pace of other members. The respondent described their own experience as follows:

> *I have a kind of advantage, compared to my colleague for example, that when started working at the bank and started working in HR, that organisation had a completely centralised recruiting unit, and they had a completely centralised service model that helped managers in all matters, and we had a role similar to the HR Business Partner – I had these types of gripping surfaces to mirror on. I had the advantage that I could reflect that this has worked before, so it can't be complete rocket science what I am suggesting here. But then again what was hard for me were the gripping surfaces, which resulted in me kind of shortcutting the change steps. When I for example think about Denmark, where they never had that operating model, and the thought of it was extremely difficult, I maybe didn't have enough empathy to understand why we still have to go through why we are doing this, and we had to do that quite many times.*

Another respondent had similar experiences and described how previous experience helped with making sense of the new operating model.

> *In a way I am very familiar with this new model – so in that sense, I can benefit from my previous experience. – And I have worked in organisations that have changed and transformed before, and you see a lot of the same elements. – You sort of see things beforehand, such as how something should be handled, and of course I have tried with my own team when implementing this new model – you are sort of able to predict that that might be challenging, and I have been able to utilise my previous experiences and that has helped.*

Then again all respondents had previous experience with change in general, and three stated that being involved with change or the target of change helped with accepting the current changes as well. One respondent describes this as follows:

> *I have been a part of numerous changes, so in that sense the theories of change management are familiar. – This has surely [helped when the change is targeted at me].*

Four respondents showed clear signs of sensegiving as well. Three of these respondents were, however, in a managerial role, making it almost necessary that some sensegiving was present. Having previous experience from a similar type of change initiative helped in giving sense to others. Another respondent who, however, didn't mention having previous experience with an operating model similar to the one being implemented, described their role as one who supported others when they needed someone to talk to, which in a way can also be considered as sensegiving, as the support given during those discussions helped others cope with and understand the change.

> *A lot of people have come to talk with me and I have always tried to pause my other work and if needed we went into a conference room to talk, and talked as long as that person wanted to talk. You don't always have an answer right then and there, but if the person is having trouble, it often helps just to be able to talk about it.*

Another similar example of sensegiving was one respondent who communicated the change towards the business and line managers and in that way helped these stakeholders make sense of the change.

> *On my part it has mostly been communicating the new model and then guiding the line managers with the new operating model.*

Three of the seven respondents participated in officially planning the change, however, only two of them showed signs of this helping their own sensemaking process. The two respondents who's own sensemaking was affected by the participation also, however, had previous experience with a similar operating model. This makes it difficult to interpret whether the participation or the previous experiences were significant in their sensemaking processes. When comparing to the respondents who were not involved in planning the change, they did definitely have more challenges with the uncertainty of the change. However, they did not specifically state that their sensemaking would have been affected by this. However, previous experience with a similar operating model or just change in general clearly helped with sensemaking.

5.2.2 Change as a norm – no longer a trigger for sensemaking?

However, respondents felt that they didn't have the need to particularly make sense of the situation, instead they accepted the change and the uncertainties that came along with it, basing this on the understanding that change is inevitable in today's business environment. Respondents felt like change was no longer something new and instead, they had gotten used to the fact that change happens often. One respondent stated that there wasn't a distinct need to explain the situation, and another respondent had a similar view on the matter:

> *I don't think I really needed to explain this to myself because this is how changes go…*

> *I have kind of gotten used to the fact that big changes happen, and I don't feel that explaining it to myself would result in anything, and because when the change comes we immediately have to start living according to the change, and not think about whether it is positive or negative for myself personally. If we want to be productive and make this bank good, we must make changes.*

Then again, four respondents felt that it was better to adjust to the change, to go with the flow. Change happens so often, that it is easier to go along with it than put enormous effort in understanding all the details and objectives behind the change. Three respondents described the situation as follows:

> *Sometimes the changes might be quite hard, but we just have to look forward, and I don't think everyone even has to understand why, because the change can personally feel so bad. We must, in a way, just adapt to the change and believe that everyone will eventually, when they have found their new place, understand the meaning as well.*

> *I have just gone with the flow, this is how it is that sometimes we centralise and sometimes we decentralise. On the long run it is completely natural that we do this, and it applies to many other support functions in the bank.*

> *When you aren't in a position where you can impact a lot of things, it's just better to accept what is given. So much is going on and so many changes are happening today that nothing is permanent, and if it is permanent then that's only for a while, so you just have to adapt to it.*

Then again, respondents often mentioned collaboration between teams and colleagues as a positive element of the change. Mills et al. (2010, 187) and Bartunek et al. (2011, 15) state that sensemaking is a social act and shared schemata being important ways of understanding an organisational experience. Considering these views, the sensemaking of the respondents could have been positively affected by the support of other organisational members; other teams, colleagues and HR managers.

However, organisational change seems to have become more of a norm for the respondents, as it no longer triggers sensemaking at a level that they can recognise. This is contradictory to the literature that states that changing conditions offer powerful occasions for sensemaking, as individuals' habits are disturbed (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 544). Then again Weick (1995, 43) and Mills et al. (2010, 186) state that sensemaking is an ongoing act and one that never stops. The fact that respondents fail to recognise sensemaking triggered by the change could be due to the fact that sensemaking is ongoing, and change being so common nowadays, it no longer poses as a trigger for

In general, previous experience seemed to affect sensemaking positively. It also triggered sensegiving. However, sensegiving was also visible in cases where the respondent acted as a supporting figure for other change targets, and where the respondent explained the change to the business. Then again, many respondents stated that they had no need to make sense of the change, and rather felt that change was so usual that they went along with it without a problem. The key findings are shown below in Table 5, from which can be seen that some of the findings are supported by the theoretical framework.

Suggestions from the theoretical framework	**Respondents' experiences**	**Examples from the interviews**
Sensemaking is a comparative process; in order to interpret current events, we rely on past experiences. To give meaning to the present, we compare it to to similar events from our past, and rely on our past to make sense. (Mills et al. 2010, 184.)	Two respondents in a manager role expressed they had previous experience with an operating model similar to the one they were now implementing. Both stated that their previous experience helped with the current change as well.	*I had these types of gripping surfaces to mirror on. I had the advantage that I could reflect that this has worked before, so it can't be complete rocket science what I am suggesting here.* *In a way I am very familiar with this new model, so in that sense, I can benefit from my previous experience. – You are sort of able to predict that that might be a challenge, and I have been able to utilise my previous experiences and that has helped.*
Sensegiving has to do with the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others, to achieve the desired redefinition of the organisation (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, 442).	Four respondents showed signs of sensegiving, two specifically with support from previous experiences. All four, however, were in a role in which sensegiving was necessary.	*A lot of people came to talk to me – you don't always have and answer right then and there, but if the person is having trouble, it often helps just to be able to talk about it.* *On my part it has mostly been communicating the new model and guiding the line managers.*
Sensemaking never starts as it never stops; sensemaking is an ongoing process (Weick 1995, 43). Sensemaking is a consequent process that never stops because sensemaking flows are continuous (Mills et al. 2010, 186).	Respondents didn't seem to feel the need to necessarily make sense of the change, and instead just went along with it. However, this might be due to the fact that sensemaking is ongoing, meaning that one might not even notice it happening in a situation which doesn't trigger too much uncertainty.	*I don't think I really needed to explain this to myself, this is how changes go.* *I have gotten used to the fact that big changes happen, and I don't feel that explaining it to myself would result in anything.* *I have just gone with the flow.*
Sensemaking is a social act; it is dependent on our interaction with others (Mills et al. 2010, 187).Organisational members often share shemata or shemes; these being shared ways of understanding important features of their organisational experience (Bartunek et al. 2011, 15).	Respondents often mentioned collaboration and good team spirit as a positive element during the change. This might have helped the sensemaking process of the respondents.	*Working together with others that have done my tasks before has been extremely positive. I have always gotten help and it feels like everyone is in this together all in all, that's positive.* *Probably our team, that everyone is on board, and then our manager is good – I believe it' s these things [that helped the change].*

Table 4 The key findings regarding sensemaking during the change initiative

5.3 Supporting elements and challenges related to the change initiative

5.3.1 Supporting elements of the change initiative

The two last sub research questions of this study were to explore the supporting elements and challenges regarding the change initiative. During the interviews, each respondent was asked to describe the elements that supported the change initiative in their own opinion. All seven respondents had an overall positive experience about the change, and said that they mostly supported the change. Although most recipients had felt resistance towards the change at some point, the general atmosphere was quite positive. As previously discussed, all seven respondents supported the change initiative on a general level, and felt that they were going in the right direction. Two respondents described their feelings towards the change initiative as follows:

> *I personally see this as a positive thing, this really is the direction in which we must go, and now we are going in the right direction. We just need to get everyone on board.*

> *The general atmosphere has been more positive towards this change – having previously seen a lot of change resistance, compared to that the atmosphere has been positive and it has been fun to create new things.*

> *There were a lot of real feelings and a strong will to do good things and change, and the will to become better, and that was positive in my opinion.*

Three respondents mentioned the use of insider expertise as a fundamental element for supporting the success of the change initiative. The fact that people from inside HR worked together and planned the change, instead of hiring outsider consultants, showed trust towards the expertise of the HR professionals at Nordea, and ensured that the changes made were heading in the right direction. One respondent, who was in charge of initiating and planning the change described the support of insider expertise as follows:

> *The model that we chose was that we had insider people working on this. We didn't do what we could have, which was to take an outsider consultancy firm to help us for a year and then the know-how would leave. We*

chose to do this with our own resources, we have enough expertise, and we hired project managers who started to lead this project. We really invited people to join in, a kind of co-creation, like come and give input, how would you see this new role. At times, it was actually quite a heavy process because it was quite slow. But we recognised that we have a lot of expertise and we want it all in the new model, which meant having a lot of people working with this.

Two of the three respondents who mentioned co-creation as one of the supporting elements, said that especially when planning the new roles, involving insiders was essential. Especially concerning the changing role of the HR partners, the value of involvement was underlined. One respondent described the benefits of involvement as follows:

With the new role of the HR consultant, they held a workshop, in which the consultants, existing consultants and future consultants, have themselves thought about what the role should look like. That's when it goes in the right direction and that's when the role becomes meaningful, and one that supports the business.

Similar to co-creating as a supporting element, the organisational change required collaboration and cooperation between the new teams, and helping others came up as another supporting element of the change. Six respondents mentioned collaboration as a supporting element, and had either helped other teams themselves, or received help from another team. One respondent stated that close collaboration with another team did not take up a lot of time and pays off on the long run. Positive collaboration within HR results in positive support for the line managers, further supporting the change initiative. The same respondent also pointed out that if the first experiences with the new operating model are bad from the business side, it will take longer for the change to succeed. Another respondent described the change as follows:

Change starts from people – we constantly communicate with each other about how we can support everyone to have a positive feeling about the change, and we have succeeded well in that in my opinion.

One respondent, on the other hand, saw that the dedication and will to succeed was a fundamental part of successfully changing:

I think that the amount of dedication and will to succeed and focusing [on the change] – the enormous will to succeed.

As the change involved roles and responsibilities being altered, respondents felt the support from others who had previously worked in a similar role was essential in changing successfully. Then again, respondents who had previous experience with something someone else might have been struggling with in their new role, felt that helping was an important part of achieving change. One respondent brought up great teammates and a supportive manager as the main supporting element of the change initiative, while others described how they either received or gave help to others.

> *Probably our team, that everyone is on board, and then our manager is good – I believe it's these things.*

> *We have had [collaboration] as we luckily sit close to each other.*

> *One thing I did in the beginning was support with recruitments myself as well, when they simply didn't have enough hands available, so I tried to help them with that resource problem.*

> *Working together with others that have done my tasks before has been extremely positive. I have always gotten help and it feels like everyone is in this together all in all, that's positive. I don't know if that's because of the changes, or if it's always been like that.*

Then again, in addition to support from colleagues within HR, support from the business was also mentioned as an important factor for the change:

> *I feel like we have had strong support from the business and management, and I feel that that is extremely important, that we have strong support that we must reorganise and how HR-services should be organised – I feel that it is important to anchor the change with this kind of support.*

The change initiative affected different teams in the HR on a different schedule, and some teams experienced the change earlier than others. One respondent felt that being further on the change curve gave the opportunity to help others, who were not quite that far yet.

> *You can see that our whole team has recognised that we have already practiced this and progressed in the change, and we understand that*

someone else might be going through the same processes that we went through last April or May, and I have highlighted to the team that we can help out our colleagues and understand what they are going through because we went through the same things a while ago.

Communication, on the other hand, was mentioned in all seven interviews. However, while communication was stated as a supporting element for the change initiative, it was also clearly a challenge as well. One respondent described the amount of communication as enormous, stating that there were numerous different channels of communication, and the change was communicated often, sometimes even on a weekly basis. Still, some felt that the communication was not enough:

We communicated a lot. I mean we communicated monthly, we came out with some kind of letter probably almost every week, and we had different forums where we talked about this. And now that I look back, the amount of communication was enormous, but still when we asked what went well, we received the comment that you could have communicated more. And that was kind of like, ok nothing is enough, there is always someone who says that they still haven't gotten everything.

Another respondent had a quite similar experience:

In general, the communication has been good and we have had different levels of communication, in teams and for the whole HR. – But that is also something we can never have too much, and some people need more than others. And sometimes no matter how much we communicate, the message isn't always positive… – Of course, something can always be done better, but all in all, communication has been quite good.

As stated previously, the objectives of the change were clear to the respondents and all seven respondents felt that they were effectively communicated. The fact that communicating was stated as a supporting element of the change correlates well with Kotter's (1995, 60–67) eight steps to transform an organisation, where communicating the vision is stated as one of the steps. Then again, some respondents felt that the first phase of the change initiative was communicated better and the next one was not as clear.

I think they [the objectives] have been communicated well, and that the business is changing so intensely, that we wouldn't have been able to support the business with our old practises.

The first change was communicated well. This second phase has been a bit confusing.

One respondents highlighted that communication especially to senior management was emphasised during the change initiative, and although it was not an easy task, it paid off in the end. This came up slightly in another respondent's experiences as well, as communication between the manager and team was stated as a positive element of the change.

We used quite a lot of time in the commitment of senior leadership management. It wasn't like they came into the room in the beginning saying yes I think this is really nice, I am currently leading 30 or 70 people, and now I will have only five subordinates. It wasn't like they instantly said that this is great, I want to do this immediately. We really devoted a lot of time into explaining why we are doing this, and the preliminary meetings that took weeks and even months, they really started to pay off in the end.

Communication has been good, and our manager has been good, probably everyone's managers have been good at communicating what they know. Communication has supported this [change].

In general, the experiences concerning the change initiative were more positive than negative. All respondents said that they had more of a positive feeling towards the change than negative, and although there were challenges related to the change, respondents were overall optimistic about it.

5.3.2 Challenges related to the change initiative

When discussing challenges related to the change process, communication was one theme that emerged more than often. Communication being a challenge corresponds with Kotter's (1995, 60–67) eight mistakes in managing change, which states that transformation efforts often fail with one reason being under communicating the vision. Although, as previously discussed, most respondents stated communication as a supporting element of the change, it seemed that communication posed a lot of challenges for the change. When discussing this with one respondent who was one of the leading managers behind the change, the response was that the need for repetition should never be underestimated:

> *One of the biggest lessons for me was to not underestimate the need for repetition. When you have the feeling that now I have repeated this enough times, that's when you should still repeat it at least five times. Now that I think back, it was extremely good that we had people who were professionals in communication, who could explain that now we are telling this story for the twelfth time, and there are always people in the audience that won't hear this, who think this is completely new news.*

Although information was available and communication was frequent, the type of communication was something respondents felt could have been handled better. One respondent stated that communication should have been more personal and face to face, claiming that too much was done solely through the intranet. Then again, one respondent felt that changes should have been communicated first to the ones it affects the most, and then to the rest.

> *Information has been available – a lot of information has been shared on the intranet. – Although, the higher-level management have seen the light earlier, and us others have required a bit more time, and we would have needed a bit more of top down communication, or events during which these things are reviewed verbally, more than just through intranet.*

> *Communication has been the biggest challenge. Communication within HR. – We should have succeeded better in our own communication, by communicating first to the ones that the change will affect most, so that they would feel that they receive the message personally, and not at the same time as everyone else.*

> *More personal communication and group or one on one communication.*

Then again, one respondent felt that the communication was not transparent enough, and five respondents stated that they felt lost at one point or another during the change initiative.

> *We should be more transparent, so that everyone knows what is going on. I don't believe that anyone necessarily wants to conceal information,*

> *but that's just how it goes. – I don't think it's deliberate but that's how it goes when the pace is fast.*

One respondent felt that team managers should have been communicated to better beforehand, in order to provide more support for their teams when the information is communicated to the whole HR. Furthermore, different types of communication seemed to work for different levels of management and employees, as one respondent described. Then again, what failed was communicating what the changes would mean in practice.

> *The managers [in HR] should have been briefed well beforehand, so that they are aware and able to answer questions when we hear about something.*

> *We had different levels of communication, so if I start with communication for higher level management, a certain type of communication works for them, for example things like efficiency and economies of scale and becoming more compliant. What we were unable to do was to tell what it means in practice, things like freedom, and standardization really meaning standardization, that was kind of the other side of the coin.*

Communication to the business was also mentioned numerous times, as it seemed that the change was not communicated effectively enough towards the business. Furthermore, as the new operating model affected the business and line managers as well, respondents felt like they could not communicate enough towards the business, as they themselves were did not have enough information about the new changes and how they would work out in practice. Three respondents mentioned challenges specifically relating to communicating the change towards the business:

> *I believe that quite many of those whose role is changing have had the challenge that they have had to communicate to their own stakeholders about matters that even they themselves do not feel very good about, and that has put some people in a difficult position.*

> *It has to do with the fact that you would like to tell how they [the business] will function with the new model, but I can't tell anything more than just on a general level – I have been quite helpless.*

> *The communication has been lacking, and that has affected how I have been able to communicate [to the business]. And as it has of course af-*

fected me personally, communicating in a neutral way and highlighting the benefits has been challenging. Maybe I have sort of communicated in a mechanical way, sort of straight from the paper.

Challenges caused by the new roles were also mentioned by three respondents when discussing the challenges of the change initiative. Respondents often mentioned that especially at the beginning, new roles and responsibilities were unclear. This is no surprise, as Bartunek et al. (2011, 14) suggest that change recipients may often be more sensitive to the uncertainty related to the change, than the change itself. Some respondents felt that they lost their touch or expertise when starting their new role. In the previous operating model business areas were addressed to different people, while in the new model, all business areas contact the same HR team, meaning that everyone answers to all business areas. One respondent mentioned this specifically as a challenge:

The touch is kind of lost, although we are the same questions [from the business]. But when you don't know the business areas, and they might have some special cases. Although that shouldn't be the case. But then again it might not be clear to the business area that there shouldn't be special cases.

Furthermore, one respondent felt that not enough emphasis was put in sorting out the change at a practical level and how the new roles and responsibilities would actually take shape. This resulted in unclear division of roles and responsibilities, and sometimes even in some responsibilities being completely forgotten.

Nobody has really thought of the practical meaning; we are constantly realising as we go, how should this be and how are we going to tackle this, things like that… Of course, changes should be made first with the big picture and then start thinking about the smaller details, but there are so many details and an enormous number of things that should be considered. Things like how is this thing handled as they were done like this before and what do we do now, our management doesn't know that.

This kind of wondering what the expert's role is and what belongs to who has probably been the hardest. The roles are not clear – that has been the most challenging.

Although, as previously discussed, the change resulted in a lot of collaboration and working together between different teams and colleagues, one respondent felt that still not enough emphasis was put in bringing the HR together. Another respondent also mentioned that the new roles and responsibilities resulted in some people immediately giving up their old responsibilities completely and following the new role guidelines too literally, when instead the role changes could have been managed smoothly and more flexibly.

> *Management could have concentrated more on bringing us together, so that we don't immediately form silos, everyone having their own agendas. To come up with a way to increase collaboration even more than we have now.*

The rapidity of new changes came up numerously in the interviews, and as said in the literature review, the speed of change has never been greater (By 2005, 369–370). However, some respondents felt this was a challenge, one respondent stating that during this change initiative, too many changes were made simultaneously:

> *The fact that we have so many changes simultaneously has complicated the change.*

Two respondents mentioned that the pace of the change was too fast and three respondents mentioned that the ability to take a step back and readjust was lacking. This is also in line with Beer and Walton's (1987, 356) proposal that change does not occur merely by following one grand master plan, and direction and goals should be continually readjusted.

> *I wish that when we realise that a process is not working or instructions on what is supposed to be done isn't working, that we could actually do something about it and someone would listen. Not so that we continue straight ahead, as if this is absolutely correct, although we realise that it isn't. – I wish we would concentrate more on being ready to listen to people if we realise that something isn't working, and that something could be done about it faster.*

> *This could have been done at a slower pace. Usually these things are rushed and have to be done by a certain date, and haven't been completely thought through. And thinking about the most recent change, we didn't even try or test the model that was implemented last May for very long, how that would have worked in the future, until now it was slightly changed again – we could have used more time for that.*

A general opinion was the hope that after this change, no further changes would have to be made soon, unless something is clearly unsuccessful. One respondent stated the following:

> *I hope that we will stick to this for a while, that we wouldn't change again immediately. Of course if we must, and something is not working then that is a different case, but that we would stay where we are now for a while.*

It is inevitable that change can bring out an enormous amount of mixed feelings, and three respondents mentioned that one challenge was finding the ability to consider all the different reactions and feelings towards change. One respondent highlighted the need for empathy and understanding that change does not happen in one day, and people need different amounts of time to adjust to the change and accept it. One respondent also mentioned that the mentality some people had about wishing others would change but they wouldn't have to, was a surprise.

> *We have different stakeholders and everyone approaches the change from the viewpoint of what it means for them, and few people think about what it means for my organization or the even the whole company. There were a lot of feelings. It was, in my opinion, an interesting observation how strongly people react with feelings towards leadership, in good and in bad. But one challenge in my opinion, and the same probably goes for change in general, was sometimes the mentality that I wish the others would change but I wouldn't have to.*

> *We have to understand that everyone experiences change in a different way, meaning that someone might already be far ahead and someone might still be at the first step.*

As with all change initiatives, change resistance was a challenge during this one as well. Resistance to change was mentioned in five interviews, however, it was not emphasised as one of the main challenges. One respondent working in a manager role, felt that the resistance was so major at one point that it should have been tackled faster.

> *One big challenge was that I tolerated resistance for quite a long time, I even tolerated complete resistance from units for much longer than others. Looking back, I think I should have flagged it faster, that the re-*

> *sistance we had at the time was at a level that we have to take care of it immediately and not let it set.*

Two respondents admitted to being resistant towards the change as first. One of the respondents stated that the resistance was due to the fear of losing expertise in the new role. Then again, according to one respondent's experiences, no major change resistance was noticeable during the change, especially in comparison to other previous changes the respondent had witnessed.

> *I was [resistant] at first, probably like most of us, I was slightly against it because I thought we would lose our expertise.*

> *I haven't noticed a lot of resistance. I have seen a lot in the past in different management teams, and this went better than average.*

In general, the change initiative did have some challenges, however, as previously discussed, the respondents had an overall positive feeling about the change. What seemed to have caused the most challenges was communication, although it was often also mentioned as a supporting element. The most supporting element, on the other hand, seemed to be the overall positive attitude and understanding that the new direction of HR was one in which they must go. An overview of the supporting elements and challenges related to the change initiative are shown below in Table 6.

Supporting elements of the change initiative	Challenges related to the change initiative
• Overall positive feeling towards the change, and recognising that the change is moving the HR in the right direction. • Involving insider people in planning the change. • Good collaboration between teams and colleagues; supporting and helping each other. • Adequate amount of communication.	• Wrong types of communication, and communication that was not personal enough. • The lacking communication within HR made it difficult to communicate towards the business. • Challenges with new roles and responsibilities being unclear. • The fast pace and the lacking ability to take a step back when needed. • Considering that everyone experiences change differently. • Change resistance.

Table 5 Overview of the supporting elements and challenges regarding the change initiative

6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Organisational change experienced by HR professionals

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences related to an extensive organisational change initiative at Nordea's human resources department. The aim was to explore HR as a specific setting for change and how HR professionals experience the change in practise. In addition, the sensemaking processes of the HR professionals were explored; with the objective of uncovering if previous expertise or experience with organisational change affects sensemaking. Additionally, the supporting elements and challenges related to the change initiative were explored in detail. In summary, the organisational change was experienced as mostly positive, but change targeted at HR professionals did seem to pose some difficulties. The sensemaking processes of the HR professionals, on the other hand, were supported by previous experiences with change, and in some cases, the respondents did not feel the need to make sense of the change.

The first and main research question of this study was to explore HR professionals' experiences related to organisational change at the case company Nordea's human resources department. Drawing on prior literature it comes as no surprise that the HR department at Nordea is going through drastic changes, as the rapidly changing business environment of Nordea requires for a transformation not only in the business, but in HR as well. Organisational change has become a norm for organisations (By 2005, 369), and this became quite clear in the interviews as well, as respondents stated that the change came as no surprise due to the constantly changing business environment. Rapid changes in the business truly require HR functions to transform their ways of supporting the business, and the focus has turned towards HR playing a more strategic role. The new operating model of Nordea's HR is in line with Anson's (2000, 21) suggestion that the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals are rapidly changing from an operational and traditional administrative focus, to one in which HR plays the role of a strategic partner and change agent. All respondents understood the objectives of the change initiative, and the changes in the business made it clear that changes would need to be made in HR as well. Furthermore, the overall experiences towards the change initiative were positive and drew from the aspiration of supporting the business in the best way possible.

Although some respondents did imply that the old operating model functioned well, it was clear that changes needed to be made. Faults mentioned in the interviews about the old operating model were, for example, that the role of HR Partner was becoming too wide, resulting in uneven workloads between business areas, and that the old operating model not being as effective as possible. In addition, the respondents who implied that the old operating model was fine recognised the need for change and predicted that the old model would not have functioned for long. As Kesler and Law (1997, 32–33) suggested, transformation within HR requires the decision of what HR transactions should be eliminated, combined, redesigned or returned to the line management; also Nordea's HR change initiative resulted in the redesign of processes as well as some processes being returned to the line management. This resulted in some scepticism among the respondents, but one respondent highlighted that the change was an opportunity to truly form the role of HR into one that adds value and supports the business. Altogether, the change initiative, its background and objectives, were in line with academic literature concerning change in HR.

However, an interesting theme arose already in the first interview and without being in the initial interview questions, the same theme came up in the other interviews as well; the false idea that HR professionals would cope with change better due to their previous expertise in the area. The results imply that too much was relied on the fact that HR professionals would manage with much less, because they should be professionals in change management. Academic literature suggests that HR professionals should master change, as they are often called upon to support change initiatives in the business (Maheshwari & Vohra 2015, 872–873; Alfes et al. 2010, 109). However, no previous studies can be found that would suggest that change would be easier for HR professionals when it concerns themselves. Furthermore, LaMarsh (2004, 17) implies that many transforming HR functions are discovering the difficulties related to change within HR, and that few know better than HR how challenging productive and successful change can be. The irony is, however, that especially HR should be an expert in change due to the demanding need for change management expertise to support changes in the business (Kesler & Law 1997, 27).

The research results state that although HR professionals most often have the expertise how organisational change should be handled in practise, the knowledge was not always used during this change. Respondents described that some change steps were skipped during the change process, relying on the fact that HR professionals would manage with less. Nevertheless, respondents were unanimous that too much cannot be relied on just the fact that the change targets were HR professionals. Change is always experienced differently when it concerns yourself, compared to when you are supporting the business in implementing organisational change. One respondent summed this up by stating that HR professionals are humans just like anyone else, and being an HR professional does not necessarily help in coping with change.

However, through detailed analysis of the empirical evidence, it is possible to assume that prior experience in organisational change can positively affect future experiences with organisational change, whether it is as a change agent or a change target. Then again, assuming that organisational change would be easier or more successful in the context of an HR organisation is incorrect. As seen in the empirical evidence from this research, HR professionals often have previous experience in supporting or initiating change in the business. Nevertheless, when change is targeted at yourself, these past experiences can only help to a certain extent. Rather than focusing on whether the change is targeted at HR professionals, the focus should be on how much previous experience someone has in overcoming organisational change that is targeted at themselves. Expertise in implementing or supporting someone else's change does not necessarily help in coping with your own change. Instead, previous experience with change targeted at yourself can, according to the findings in this study, can help when coping with change in the future.

6.2 HR professionals' sensemaking processes during organizational change

The first sub research question of this study was to examine the sensemaking processes of the managers and employees during the change initiative. Two distinct themes related to sensemaking arose in the interviews; either the respondent had previous experience with change, assisting the sensemaking process, or the respondent did not feel the need to make sense of the change. Empirical evidence from the interviews implies that previous experience with either organisational change in general, or a similar operating model as the one being currently implemented, effects sensemaking positively. This can be supported by Mills et al. (2010, 184) who state that sensemaking is a comparative process, meaning that we rely on past experiences in order to make sense of an occurring situation. Two respondents had previous experience with an operating model similar to the one being implemented during the change initiative, and stated that those experiences helped in making sense of the current change. Other respondents had experienced change previously as well, and stated that that helped in making sense of the change now.

The results showed that some signs of sensegiving, meaning the attempt to influence the sensemaking of others, were present (Gioia &Chittipeddi 1991, 442). The sensemaking was, however, mostly visible when in a managerial role, making it almost necessary that some sensegiving was present. In contrast with Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991, 444) process of initiating strategic change as a cycle of sensemaking and sensegiving (shown in Figure 2, pp. 27), no such cycle was clearly visible from the interviews. However, respondents did state that support from managers was an important when coping with the change, which could, however, support the process model suggested. Furthermore, two respondents mentioned that feedback was collected regularly, which also correlates with the process of sensegiving and sensemaking as a sequential cycle; managers use the feedback to support sensegiving.

When comparing the sensemaking processes of respondents who planned the change, with respondents who were purely targets of the change, no distinct differences could be found. The results show a connection between planning the change and making sense of it; respondents who participated in planning the change appeared to have had no trouble with making sense of the change initiative. In contrast, the results also show that having a role in planning the change appeared to result in difficulties with making sense of the change. Furthermore, when comparing the sensemaking processes of managers and experts, no distinct correlation could be made between being in a manager role and sensemaking. In other words, being in a manager role did not necessarily mean sensemaking was easier. What can, however, be assumed, based on the empirical findings, is that being in a manager role and participating in planning the change can help with sensemaking. Ultimately, each respondent had a different background and unique approaches to the change, making their sensemaking processes different as well. In that sense, the findings of this research support, to some extent, Locket's et al. (2014, 1104) suggestion that an individual's context affects and shapes their sensemaking about the organisational change.

While previous sensemaking literature suggests that organisational change acts as a trigger for sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein 2010, 544), most respondents failed to notice any specific need for sensemaking during the change initiative. Instead, the change was accepted as it came and respondents felt that it was easier to go along with the change, rather than specifically explaining the situation to themselves. Respondents stated that organisational change happens so frequently, that there is no need to make sense of every situation. This can partially be explained by Weick's (1995, 43) and Mills et al. (2010, 186) suggestions that sensemaking is ongoing and never stops. Because sensemaking is something that is constantly happening, and in the case that respondents did not experience the change as enough of a shock that would trigger a higher level of sensemaking, no specific distinction of sensemaking could be made. Evidently, the findings suggest that organisational change is so common that it does not cause such a disturbance that it would require a higher level of sensemaking than ordinarily. The findings can, however, also result from the fact that sensemaking is so natural that respondents were not able to see and analyse it as a specific process.

6.3 The challenges and supporting elements of the organizational change

The two last sub research questions of this study were to explore what elements supported the change initiative, and challenges the change initiative faced. As discussed previously in this research, organisational change can be extremely challenging and complex in practice, and is still often associated with failure (Jacobs et al. 2013, 772). With regards to academic literature concerning organisational change and change management, Beer and Nohria's (2000, 133) well-known statement that 70 percent of change initiatives fail does seem to have some truth to it. However, the change initiative at Nordea's HR department explored in this research was not unsuccessful from the point of view of the respondents. Although respondents had no trouble in naming and discussing the challenges, the experience altogether seemed to be more positive than negative.

The main supporting elements of the change initiative, described by the respondents, were, firstly, the overall positive atmosphere towards the change and the fact that the change initiative was moving the HR in the right direction. Another supporting element was the use of insider expertise when planning the change, and participation and co-creation were highly appreciated by the respondents. Collaboration and working together between colleagues and teams was also mentioned as a supporting element of the change. Respondents valued the support they had received from others, and similarly they had helped other teams and colleagues as well. Lastly, one element which was brought up in each interview was communication. According to respondents, communication was an important element in supporting the change initiative. More specifically, respondents felt that the amount of communication was adequate and enough information was available. However, communication was also stated as one of the major challenges related to the change initiative.

The challenges related to communication during the change initiative actually stemmed more from the type of communication, than the amount of communication or information available. Respondents stated that enough information was indeed available, but more personal communication would have been appropriate. Too much was relied on communication through intranet, whereas respondents would have hoped for more one on one or communication within smaller groups or teams. Furthermore, respondents felt that team managers should have been informed about larger changes in advance, in order to provide more support for the team. Also, changes affecting a certain group of people should have been communicated to these people first, and not to the whole HR organisation simultaneously. Communication to the business was also lacking, according to respondents. Challenges with communication are, however, no surprise, as one of the eight mistakes why transformation efforts fail, listed by Kotter

1995, 60–67), is under communicating the vision. Other challenges related to the change initiative were challenges related to new roles and unclear division of responsibilities and the fast pace of the changes. Respondents also hoped for a better ability to take a step back and readjust when needed, and the ability and empathy to understand that everyone experiences and reacts to change differently. Another challenge, however, apparently not a substantial one, was change resistance, which also comes as no surprise as resistance is a natural response to change.

In summary, the change initiative at Nordea's HR department, as experienced by the seven respondents, was relatively successful considering the challenges and successes described. The fact that the change did not go completely without was no surprise, as that is how organisational change goes.

6.4 Managerial implications

This research explored in detail experiences related to an organisational change initiative in Nordea's HR department. With the theoretical implications discussed above, this research provides valuable managerial implications as well, with insight for future change initiatives within HR organisations. Firstly, the results of this research have proved that like any other function, a human resources department is no exception to change being an extremely challenging and complex reality in practice. Although HR professionals do often possess higher-level skills in change management and have previous experience in supporting the business in change initiatives, change targeted at HR professionals themselves is no different from any other group of professionals. There is even the possibility that HR professionals require extra careful, thought out planning, and executing of change as they, if someone, know how change should occur by the book. However, change in HR can at times be quite the opposite. As the saying goes, the shoemaker's child goes barefoot, meaning that the ones closest to you does not benefit from your expertise.

There is a distinct need for competences in change management from HR professionals, and a strong focus on successfully changing within HR, enhances HR's capability to successfully support the business in any upcoming changes. Furthermore, HR professionals have the opportunity of learning the most about organisational change when being the target of the change themselves. While normally initiating and supporting change in the business can seem like an easy task for some, learning from own experience can give change management a completely new perspective. The results also indicate that previous experience with being the target of change can ease the shock of change in the future. In other words, no amount of HR expertise can make someone a professional in organisational change, until they have been targeted with change themselves.

Additionally, the results show signs of organisational change becoming a norm for HR professionals; no longer triggering extreme emotions, but rather being something that just happens every now and then. Then again, the results also show that change is always personal, and no matter how experienced you might be, it will always trigger some emotions, either positive or negative. The need for an adequate amount and appropriate type of communication should never be underestimated, even in an HR organisation where members often have an idea of how change uncovers in practise. Communication is key when implementing an extensive change initiative, like the one implemented in Nordea's HR. Communication should be frequent and multileveled, meaning it should be targeted at different levels and groups individually and together.

Evidently, no grand master plan for organisational change exists, and as often stated in change literature, few change initiatives occur without any challenges. Each individual experiences and reacts to change differently and these unique reactions to change ultimately make change what it is. If something positive could be said about change resistance, is that it forces management to rethink original plans and readjust it needed. Change hardly ever goes exactly as planned, and furthermore, that should not even be expected.

6.5 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Although this study contributes to the wide selection of organisational change literature and change in HR, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged when interpreting the results. The findings of this study can only be generalised to a certain extent as they represent only one part of a large organisation's human resources department in one country. Hence, one main limitation of this study is that it is based on just one case company's HR department, with the results being based on just seven respondents' experiences. The seven respondents have offered an in depth look into the experiences of HR professionals during organisational change, but they cannot, however, be generalised to apply to all HR professionals. Furthermore, no prior sorting of respondents was done based on their experiences with managing organisational change as an HR professional. It is also essential to acknowledge that the respondents described their experiences as individuals, not necessarily through the lens of and HR professional. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of previous experience with change management or experience with change targeted at the respondent, it would have been appropriate to choose respondents based on their past experiences. Then again, it would also be suitable to interview HR professionals from different companies with different organisational cultures, as organisational culture can also largely effect organisational change.

Another limitation to this study was the fact that no prior research regarding the sensemaking and sensegiving processes of HR professionals in specific was available; preventing the comparison of the results of this study with previous similar studies. Furthermore, while sensemaking is an essential theme to examine when exploring experiences related to organisational change, the lack of prior research findings concentrating specifically on HR professionals, resulted in a minor gap between the two theories of this study.

Nevertheless, this study has provided a basis for further research on the specific characteristics of an HR professional as a change initiator or change target, as well as an HR department as the specific setting of change. This research indicates that an HR department requires just as much change management as any other organisational function. Organisational change research will surely never be complete, but the implications of this study to broaden organisational change research in HR are clear. Further research should focus in more detail on how HR organisations can best support the business in their change, and what competences are required from HR professionals in order to master organisational change. Further research is also needed to explore the relationship between own experiences with being a change target, and readiness to facilitate change among others. Then again, the sensemaking of organisational change professionals during organisational change should be further examined.

REFERENCES

Alfes, K. – Truss, C. – Gill, J. (2010) The HR manager as change agent: Evidence from the public sector. *Journal of Change Management,* Vol. 10 (1), 109–127.

Al-Hahhad, S. – Kotnour, T. (2015) Integrating the organizational change literature: a model for successful change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 28 (2), 234–262.

Anson, B. (2000) Taking charge of change in a volatile healthcare marketplace. *Human Resource Planning,* Vol. 23 (4), 21–23.

Ashurst, C. – Hodges, J. (2010) Exploring Business Transformation: The Challenges of Developing a Benefits Realization Capability. *Journal of Change Management,* Vol. 10 (2), 217–237.

Bacharach, S. – Bamberger, P. – Sonnenstuhl, W. (1996) The organizational transformation process: The micropolitics of dissonance reduction and the alignment of logics of action. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Vol. 41 (3), 477–506.

Balogun, J. – Johnson, G. (2004) Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol. 47 (4), 523–549.

Balogun, J. – Bartunek, J. – Do, B. (2015) Senior managers' sensemaking and responses to strategic change. *Organization Science,* Vol. 26 (4), 960–979.

Bartunek, J. – Rousseau, D. – Rudolph, J. – DePalma, J. (2006) On the receiving end: Sensemaking, emotion, and assessments of an organizational change initiated by others. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science,* Vol. 42 (2), 182–206.

Bartunek, J. – Balogun, J. – Do, B. (2011) Considering planned change anew: Stretching large group interventions strategically, emotionally, and meaningfully. *The Academy of Management Annals,* Vol. 5 (1), 1–52.

Beer, M. – Nohria, N. (2000) Cracking the code of change. *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 78 (3), 133–141.

Beer, M. – Walton, A. E. (1987) Organization change and development. *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol. 38 (1), 339–367.

Bhatt, R. (2017) Theoretical perspective of change management. *International Journal of Research in Commerce & Management,* Vol. 8 (2), 34–36.

Burnes, B. (1996) No such thing as… a "one best way" to manage organizational change. *Management Decision,* Vol. 34 (10), 11–18.

By, R. (2005) Organisational Change Management: A Critical Review. *Journal of Change Management,* Vol. 5 (4), 369–380.

Cummings, S. –Bridgman, T. – Brown, K. (2016) Unfreezing change as three steps: Rethinking Kurt Lewin's legacy for change management. *Human Relations,* Vol. 69 (1), 33–60.

Dawson, P. (2003) *Understanding Organizational Change: The Contemporary Experience of People at Work.* Sage Publications Ltd, London.

Dunphy, D (1996) Organizational Change in Corporate Settings. *Human Relations,* Vol. 49 (5), 541–552.

Dunphy, D. – Stance, D. (1993) The strategic management of corporate change. *Human Relations,* Vol. 46 (8), 905–920.

Edgley-Pyshorn, C. – Huisman, J. (2011) The role of the HR department in organisational change in a British university. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol 24 (5), 610–625.

Eriksson, P. – Kovalainen, A. (2008) *Qualitative Methods in Business Research.* Sage Publications, London.

Eskola, J. – Suoranta, J. (1998) *Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen.* Osuuskunta Vastapaino, Tampere.

Fossum, L. (1989) *Understanding Organizational Change: Converting Theory to Practice.* Crisp Publications, Inc. United States of America.

Gioia, D. – Chittipeddi, K. (1991) Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 12 (6), 433–448.

Goodge, P. (2011) How to transform HR: Practical advice for HR professionals. *Strategic HR Review,* Vol. 10 (2), 40–41.

Grieves, J. (2010) *Organizational Change: Themes and Issues.* Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Guimaraes T. – Armstrong C. (1998) Empirically testing the impact of change management effectiveness on company performance. *European Journal of Innovation Management,* Vol. 1 (2), 74–84.

Gummesson, E. (2000) *Qualitative Methods in Management Research.* Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Hennessy, J. – McCartney, C. (2008) The value of HR in times of change. *Strategic HR Review,* Vol. 7 (6), 16–22.

Jacobs, G. – van Witteloostuijn, A. – Christe-Zeyse, J. (2013) A theoretical framework of organizational change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 26 (5), 772–792.

Jansson, N. (2013) Organizational change as practice: a critical analysis. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 26 (6), 1003–1019.

Kesler, G. – Law, J. (1997) Implementing major change in the HR organisation: The lessons of five companies. *Human Resource Planning,* Vol. 20 (4), 26–38.

Kotter, J. (1995) Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 73 (2), 59–67.

LaMarsh, J. (2004) Building a strategic partnership and HR's role of change manager. *Employment Relations Today,* Vol. 31 (3), 17–26.

Lockett, A. – Currie, G. – Finn, R. – Martin, G. – Waring, J. (2014) The influence of social position on sensemaking about organizational change. *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol. 57 (4), 1102–1129.

Lüscher, L. – Lewis, M. (2008) Organizational change and management sensemaking: working through paradox. *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol. 51 (2), 221–240.

Maheshwari, S. – Vohra, V. (2015) Identifying critical HR practices impacting employee perception and commitment during organisational change. *Journal of Organisational Change Management,* Vol. 28 (5), 872–894.

Maitlis, S. – Lawrence, T. (2007) Triggers and enablers of sensegiving in organisations. *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol. 50 (1), 57–84.

Maitlis, S. – Sonenshein, S (2010) Sensemaking in crisis and change: Inspiration and insights from Weick (1988). *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol. 47 (3), 551–580.

Maitlis, S. – Christianson, M. (2014) Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *The Academy of Management Annals,* Vol. 8 (1), 57–125.

Merriam, S. (2014) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation, 3rd Edition.* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco CA.

Meyer, A. – Brooks, M. – Goes, J. (1990) Environmental jolts and industry revolutions: Organizational responses to discontinuous change. *Strategic Management Journal,* Vol. 11 (4), 93–110.

Mills, J. – Dye, K. – Mills, A. (2009) *Understanding Organizational Change.* Routledge, New York.

Mills, J. – Thurlow, A. – Mills, A. (2010) Making sense of sensemaking: the critical sensemaking approach. *Qualitative research in organizations and management: An international journal,* Vol. 5 (2), 182–195.

Nelson, L. (2003) A case study in organisational change: implications for theory. *The Learning Organization,* Vol. 10 (1), 18–30.

Pettigrew, A. – Woodman, R. – Cameron, K. (2001) Studying organizational change and development: Challenges for future research. *Academy of Management Journal,* Vol. 44 (4), 697–713.

Porras, J. – Silvers, R. (1991) Organization development and transformation. *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol. 42 (1), 51–78.

Schaffer, R. (2010) Four mistakes leaders keep making: How to overcome deep-seated obstacles to change. *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 88 (9), 86–91.

Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text and interaction, Second Edition.* Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Silverman, D. (2010) *Doing qualitative research, A practical handbook, Third Edition.* Sage Publications Ltd, London.

Steinberger, N. (2015) Emotions in sensemaking: a change management perspective. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 28 (3), 432–451.

Svoboda, M. – Schröder, S. (2001) Transforming human resources in the new economy: Developing the next generation of global HR managers at Deutsche Bank Ag. *Human Resource Management,* Vol. 40 (3), 261–273.

Thurlow, A. – Mills, J. (2009) Change, talk and sensemaking. *Journal of Organizational Change Management,* Vol. 22 (5), 459–479.

Ulrich, D. – Brockbank, W. – Yeung, A. – Lake, D. (1995) Human resources competences: An empirical assessment. *Human Resource Management,* Vol. 34 (4), 473–495.

Van de Ven, A. – Sun, K. (2011) Breakdowns in Implementing Models of Organization Change. *Academy of Management Perspectives,* Vol. 25 (3), 58–74.

Van de Ven, A. – Poole, M. (1995) Explaining development and change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review,* Vol. 20 (3), 510–540.

Weick, K. – Quinn, R. (1999) Organizational Change and Development. *Annual Review of Psychology,* Vol. 50, 361–386.

APPENDIX 1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your current position at Nordea?
2. Has your position changed due to the organizational changes occurring in Nordea’s People Services? If so, how?
3. What has been your role during the change process?
4. What does the Future HR initiative mean to you, what are your thoughts on the change?
5. How have you rationalized the change process and what has helped you make sense of it? (e.g. co-workers, supervisors, training...)
6. Are the objectives of the change initiative clear to you? Have they been communicated effectively enough?
7. How would you describe Nordea’s human resources department before the change initiative versus now?
8. In your own opinion, what elements have supported the successful change process?
9. How have you contributed to the change in your own everyday work?
10. In your own opinion, what elements have complicated the change process, and what have been the main challenges?
11. Is there anything you wish would have been done differently regarding the management of the change? If so, what?
12. Is there anything you wish *you* would have done differently during the change process? If so, what?
13. Has the change process lived up to your expectations?
14. Have there been any unexpected consequences during the change process, and what has surprised you the most during the change process?
15. At what stage is the change process now and what are your hopes for the future of the change initiative?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add?