LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CHANGE - THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL IDENTITY ON THE DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF REALITIES FOR MANAGERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a case study about the engagement in change processes of ten local government managers and their community in an Australian regional city. The meaning of 'engagement in change' and its associated processes by staff and the community took on different guises as managers tried to navigate through the complexities of multiple interpretations and realities. This often resulted in frustration and disengagement and made implementing change more confronting. Compounding these complexities were policies and practices that often left community members confused and disengaged. While children held strong self-identities as community members, conflicting adult images of children as vulnerable and immature emerged as an influence on the levels of engagement for children.

The research found that when managers' values were in conflict with the organisation, they went through a process of reframing, whereby they deconstructed and reconstructed their realities in an attempt to make sense of the change and to align their values. However, the study revealed little nexus between organisational values and those held by the community to which managers' served. This study deepened the understandings of the ethical dilemmas faced by managers in a rapidly changing social and political environment.

The thesis argues that in order to facilitate positive change outcomes for managers and the community there needs to be changes to policy and practice

within local government and investment in growth and development opportunities for managers. The study presents a model for supporting managers in their quest to become authentic leaders principled with a strong sense of community.

In addition, the thesis explores the reflexivity associated with undertaking ethical research where the researcher, also a manager in the local government in this study, was embedded in the culture, processes and outcomes of the organisation.

The findings and recommendations have implications for the public good as it informs both policy and practice that exists within local government. Furthermore, these outcomes present the opportunity for application and transferability to the broader public and private sector.

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