



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 21, 2021

**A new decade
for social changes**

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798



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Change Leadership Practices at the University of Khartoum, Sudan

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Abstract. This study aimed to examine change leadership practices at the University of Khartoum with a major purpose of enhancing the importance and understanding of change leadership practices at the University of Khartoum. This study tried to capture staff members' perception of the creating a climate for change, engaging and enabling the whole organization and implementing and sustaining change. In doing so, a survey research design was employed. Data were collected using questionnaire from university's staff members. The result shows high level of change leadership practices in the University of Khartoum with its different dimensions. Consequently, creating a climate for change has practiced in the University of Khartoum. The University of Khartoum has engaged and enabled the whole organization in the change process. The findings indicate that the University of Khartoum has implemented and sustained change process. Besides, no statistically significant difference between the male and female groups in the extent of change leadership practices. Therefore, it was reflected that the university leaders should make a strong case for the necessity of the change prior to implementation. Overall, the vision, strategies and objectives of the University of Khartoum should involve the importance of change. In addition, extra efforts should be made to maintain change leadership culture in the University of Khartoum.

Keywords. Change leadership, Kotter's change model, University of Khartoum.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world have faced increasing complexity and change due to a range of external social, economic, and political pressures (Drew, Ehrich, & Hansford, 2008). In this respect, Kondakci, & Kurtay (2019) discussed many of the pressures for a change facing higher education. They stress on the need for effective leadership to respond effectively to the change (Lamidi, & Williams, 2014). In the same way, Universities are changing in today's world because the world itself is changing, and complex problems confront

us daily (Ramaley, 2014). So, Universities now find themselves in a new era and environment in which they operate are confronted with many arrays of challenges and forces for change (Zhu, & Kurtay, 2018). This shows that major changes in Universities need to be prepared, enforced, and sustained to turn the universities into institutions that can be functioned effectively and efficiently in the tumultuous climate (Ghasemy, & Hussin, 2014).

One of the oldest Sudanese HEIs is the University of Khartoum (U o K) which was adopted the changed policy in its system earlier as a result of the academic and administrative expansion. Over time, several schools have been created, many students and staff have swelled, and administrative burdens and dealers with the various university facilities have increased, the urgent need for more reform has emerged by reviewing the current administrative situation (Ramadan, 2009). The major change took place and serious consideration began to be given to the distribution of administrative pressures that the university administration started to face every day, where work started in decentralization by delegating colleges' deans and encouraging them to enforce their budgets and hire staff, etc. The goal was to spread administrative responsibilities, reduce administrative pressure, and simplify procedures (Ramadan, 2009). This new environment needs leaders who encourage trust and learning and who can effectively lead themselves, their constituents, and their divisions, departments, and universities into the future (Brown, 2001). In other words, needs leaders who thrive on the challenge of change. Drew (2010), and McMurray (2001) reflected that the ability to deal with change in universities is a critical challenge for leaders because many change initiatives have been introduced to HEIs at different times even though it is hard to say the changes promised at the beginning are achieved.

Change has often been associated with leadership. According to Hooper & Potter (2000), change leadership is creating a vision for the organization, making strategies that enable that vision to become reality, and ensuring that the people in the organization are driving towards the same goals. Robbins (2001) (as cited in Genie, 2019) stated that building and communicating a shared vision, building supportive environment, redesigning/adjusting the organization and performance are dimensions of basic leadership behaviors and competencies that all successful leaders should behave while leading change. Moreover, Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu (2008) proved that most of the change leadership behaviors such as communicating the plan for the change, building a guiding coalition, developing a sense of urgency or a compelling rationale for the change, and providing support are linked to support for the change.

Furthermore, Kotter (1996) in his theory discussed the practices of change leadership in terms of creating the climate for change by creating a sense of urgency, forming powerful guiding coalition, developing and communicating a vision; engage and enable the whole organization by removing obstacles; and implementing and sustaining change by building on change. In creating a climate for the change process, practical leaders need to create a climate for change by creating a sense of urgency; this Step involves helping employees to see what the need for the change is? What is driving the change? People need to know the context (Kavanagh, n.d). Change will not occur if only a few people are on board with the idea (Magnúsdóttir, 2018). According to Kotter, creating a sense of urgency is making people in the organization see that the change is needed, and it is needed now (Kotter, 2012).

Kotter therefore, confirmed that engaging and enabling the organization, is a process in which the practice leader and the steering team need to formulate plans for implementation that will include all levels of the organization in the process of change. Specifically, the practical leaders need to accomplish: communicating a vision; the management has to engage and enable the rest of the organization to communicate the vision after building the climate for change (Kotter, 2012). Following the engaging and facilitating process, management needs to

implement and maintain the change by building upon the change (Kotter, 2012). This Step involves using increased credibility. It takes courage to change systems, frameworks, and policies which do not match the dream. It also includes recruiting, encouraging, and cultivating workers who are willing to execute the vision and re-energizing the organization with new initiatives, concepts, and agents for change (Kavanagh, p.3).

Accordingly, based on Kotter's change leadership theory, this study has tried to examine change leadership practices with a major purpose of enhancing the importance and understanding of change leadership practices at the University of Khartoum. With this purpose, the following basic questions were developed to guide the study:

1. How do the change leadership practices at the University of Khartoum look like?
2. Do the change leadership practices differ based on staff members' gender?

2. Research methodology

The study applied survey research designs. Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2012). Hence, the quantitative data was collected through questionnaires to offers answers to questions of the frequency of a phenomenon being tested, or the extent to which the phenomenon affects the population of the study.

The population of this study was targeting all staff members in the University of Khartoum. The University has 20 faculties and colleges with a total population of 2103 staff. The staff members were selected by proportional stratified random sampling to guarantee proportional representation of sex in the sample of staff members. In other words ensures that the strata (males and females) will be represented in the sample in proportion to that existence in the population.

The desired sample size is 336 (16%) of the 2103 staff members; according to Yamane's (1967) formula to calculate the sample size " $n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$ " " $n = 2103 / (1 + 2103(0.0025)) = 336$ ", where: n = sample size, N = population size 2103, and e = level of precision 0.05. The variable of interest is sex of staff members, with two subgroups—male, and female. The researcher classified staff members into the subgroups, and used the formula ($n_h = (N_h / N) * n$) to calculate the sample size for each strata _male and female, where n_h =sample size for h^{th} stratum; N_h = population size for h^{th} stratum; N = size of entire population; and n = size of entire sample. Of the 2103 staff members, 60%, or 1254, are male staff members and 40%, or 849, are female staff members. We want 336 staff members. Because we want proportional representation, 60% of the sample (202 staff members) should be male staff members, and 40% (134 staff members) should be female staff members. After the distribution of the questionnaire, the researchers got 306 respondents, 161 male staff members and 145 female staff members. However, the sample size 306 (14.5%) is considered one way or another representative of the population; according to Gay (1981), ten percent (10%) of the accessible population is enough for a survey.

To answer the research questions raised in the study, a closed-ended questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data from the staff members. The researchers developed this questionnaire according to Kotter change leadership model and after back to some related literature like Hurd (2007), Liu (2010), Herold et al. (2008). This questionnaire consisted of three phases: create a climate for change, engage and enable the whole organization, and implementing and sustaining change. Respondents were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) that was used for all items under change

leadership practices which comprises 27-items (nine items for each dimension of change leadership). All items were positive.

The pilot study was conducted with 40 of staff members, and the reliability was found to be 0.95 for creating the climate for change, 0.94 engaging and enabling the whole organization, and 0.96 for implementing and sustaining change. The overall Cronbach's alpha of change leadership practices was 0.98. Churchill (1979) stated that high values of alpha indicate that the items are highly correlated with true scores. The data collected was analyzed using one sample t-test.

3. Results and discussion

We have tried, in this section to present the results of the study obtained from questionnaire and a discussion of key findings.

3.1 The extent of change leadership practices in the University of Khartoum

The change leadership practices in the University of Khartoum were the first research question set for empirical explanations. To this end, one sample t-test was computed as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. One sample T-test for the extent of change leadership practices

Change leadership practices	N	Mean	Test Value	SD	df	T	Sig.
Create a climate for change	306	30.19	27	8.472	305	6.592	.000
Engage and enable the whole University	306	29.41	27	8.531	305	4.939	.000
Implementing and sustaining change	306	30.27	27	8.357	305	6.855	.000
<i>Overall change leadership practices</i>	306	89.88	81	24.397	305	6.364	.000

The result in the Table 1 shows that, the mean values of each dimension of change leadership practices (create climate for change M = 30.19, engage and enable the whole University M= 29.41, and implementing and sustaining change M = 30.27) were statistically and significantly higher than their respective test values which were (27) for all of them with their respective (t = 6.592, 4.939, 6.855) and p < 05. This result implies that the Kotter change leadership dimensions "create climate for change, engage and enable the whole University and implementing and sustaining change" were practiced in the University of Khartoum.

It is clearly evident from Table 1 that the perceptions of staff members in the creating a climate for change had mean score that was statistically and significantly higher than the respective test values with (sig. 0.000 at p < .05). This indicates that the University of Khartoum has created a climate for practicing change leadership according to the Kotter change leadership principles. This can be explained by the fact that the University of Khartoum made it clear up front to those in each college, department why the change is necessary. The result of this study agreed with the result of Al-Thubaiti (2017) in that the first dimension of the Kotter model for change, "create a sense for urgent change", came with a high degree in Saudi universities. Magnúsdóttir (2018) revealed that change will not occur if only a few people are on board with the idea.

Supporting this result, Sidorko (2008) showed the need to create numerous leadership coalitions on multiple occasions to tackle various aspects of the change process. This can be explained by the fact that the resistance to change is a common phenomenon for individuals in

any organization. So, leaders need to convince the followers with the necessity of change. According to Kotter, even if the early stages can be successful, there will always be resistance, and the team cannot stop working to their main goals (Kotter, 2007).

As shown in Table 1, engage and enable the whole organization in the change process has happened in the University of Khartoum as mean score was statistically and significantly higher than the respective test value at (p. value <.05). The meaning is that the University of Khartoum has engaged and enabled the whole organization in the change process according to the Kotter change leadership principles. Penrod & Harbor (1998) stated that the change will not come unless the frontline staff engages in adaptive behavior of change.

Supporting this result, Zec & Shurrab (2013) stated that enlists others it may clear that it takes a long time to achieve major and serious transformations. But, it is quite possible to avoid employee resistance over a long period of time required to achieve such a long transition successfully. In this respect, Bordia et al. (2004) stated that communication is a crucial element of the cycle of change leadership because it can minimize confusion. This result can be explained by the fact that unclear communication may influence the form of positive or negative response to changes in the organization (Nelissen, & Van, 2008). Kotter (2012) confirmed that leaders are also incredibly important in helping workers resolve their challenges during implementation. Kotter (1995) further states that leaders must find ways to communicate the information “broadly and dramatically” in the organization to keep the employees up to date. We can say establishing a clear communication system in the university between staff members is important for successful changes and lead to avoid many troubles as well.

As presented in Table 1, the perceptions of staff members about implementing and sustaining change in the University of Khartoum had mean score that was statistically and significantly higher than the respective test value at (p. value <.05). This indicates the University of Khartoum has implemented and sustained change dimension according to the Kotter change leadership principles. The result of this study agreed with the result of Rowland and Higgs (2008) in that 50% of the variance in change success can be explained by successful change implementation. Haas (2016) found that the change implementation process can be strategically structured in various ways to effectively implement change; stakeholder buy-in, support, and quality communication are paramount to effectively implement change.

Furthermore, University of Khartoum needs to keep everyone informed during the change implementation. This result can be explained by the fact that the successful implementation of change in organizations requires a wide range of facilities and leadership behaviors. Some of the behaviors involve political and administrative aspects, and others involve motivating, supporting, and guiding people. Even the people who initially endorse a change will need support and assistance to sustain their enthusiasm and optimism as the inevitable difficulties and setbacks occur (Yukl, 2010).

In sum, the mean of the aggregate score of change leadership practices (89.88) was also statistically and significantly greater than the expected test value (81) with (t= 6.364) and p<.05. Since the aggregate mean value was significantly higher than its test value, the result shows that the change leadership was practiced in the University of Khartoum with its different dimensions.

This result can be explained by the fact that the University of Khartoum has developed a clear vision for what is going to be achieved by deferent colleges, departments and work unit. Kotter stated that a vision is crucial for the success of the change initiative. Repeating the change vision in discussions with employees on all levels and leading by the example is important for a permanent change (Kotter, 2012). Thus, the vision has to be clear and frequently communicated as well as implemented into the day-to-day work, applying the vision in all

operations from training to performance reviews (Kotter, 2007). Also, the University creates strategic alignment among all elements of the university and encourages the group to work together as a team.

The result of this study agreed with the study of Saqqa (2011) in that the change leadership of the academic leaders from the point of view of the faculty members was high in the Umm Al-Qura University. Al-Lihyani (2011) found that the heads of departments in the Faculties of Education practice change to a high degree. The empirical study of Abu Samra (2014) also indicated the degree of practicing change leadership to the heads of academic departments in Palestinian universities from their prospective was (4.01) and rated (%80.27), and this meant that there was a high degree of approval. Another study by Al-Qarni (2016) revealed that the reality of the practice of the heads of academic departments at Tabuk University for the change leadership from the viewpoint of faculty members was high. In contrast, the result of this study opposed to the result of Al-Thubaiti (2017) in that the degree of change leadership in educational administration departments in Saudi universities was moderate.

3.2 Gender difference in the extent of change leadership practices

Independent sample t-test analysis was conducted to see the difference between the male and female perceptions about change leadership practices at the University of Khartoum. To see this difference, the results were summarized and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Difference between the male and female perceptions about change leadership practices

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	P .value
Male	161	87.78	24.462	-1.585-	304	0.745
Female	145	92.20	24.196			

As it is clearly indicated in Table 2, the p. value of the respondents is higher than the level of significance (0.05), this indicated that, the value is not statistically significant as p. value = 0.745. This indicates no statistically significant difference between the male and female groups in the extent of change leadership practices. The result of this study agrees with the result of Abu Samra (2014) aimed to identify the degree of practicing change leadership in the Palestinian universities. He found no statistically significant differences between the participants estimate the degree of change leadership due to the variable gender (male, female).

4. Conclusion and recommendations

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of university's staff members regarding the practices of change leadership in the University of Khartoum, based on Kotter change leadership theory. Kotter's change leadership model is one of the broadest recognized change leadership and management models (Pollack & Pollack 2014). Therefore, we have tried to test Kotter's change leadership theory in one of the Sudanese universities with a major purpose of evaluating the contribution of this theory to enhance the importance and understanding of change leadership practices at the University context. Hence, the focus of this study was on three phases of change leadership by Kotter (1996); creating the climate for change; engaging and enabling the whole organization; and implementing and sustaining change.

The change leadership practices in the University of Khartoum were the major research question set for the empirical explanation. To this end, the result showed that the change leadership was practiced in the University of Khartoum with its different dimensions. This result can be explained by the fact that the University of Khartoum has developed a clear vision for

what is going to be achieved by deferent colleges, departments and work unit. Also, the University creates strategic alignment among all elements of the university and encourages the group to work together as a team.

The result of the study indicated that the University of Khartoum had created a climate for practicing change leadership according to the Kotter change leadership principles. This can be explained by the fact that the University of Khartoum made it clear up front to those in each college, department why the change is necessary. Also, the university supports collaboration between staff members to achieve change goals. So, it is very important for university leaders to involve staff members and enable the entire institution in the change process.

The study revealed that the University of Khartoum had engaged and enabled the whole organization in the change process according to the Kotter change leadership principles. In this respect, the university needs to communicate the change prior to implementation. This result can be explained by the fact that unclear communication may influence the form of positive or negative response to changes in the organization. We can say establishing a clear communication system in the university between staff members is important for successful changes and lead to avoid many troubles as well.

The study found that the University of Khartoum has implemented and sustained change dimension according to the Kotter change leadership principles. It obvious that the University of Khartoum implements action plans, and empowers staff to implement the change. However, University of Khartoum needs to provide resources required to support the change implementation. We believe that the successful implementation of change in organizations requires a wide range of facilities and leadership behaviors. Some of the behaviors involve political and administrative aspects, and others involve motivating, supporting, and guiding people.

Based on the findings of the study, the university leaders should make a strong case for the necessity of the change prior to implementation. The resistance to change is a common phenomenon for individuals in any organization. So, leaders need to convince the followers with the necessity of change. University leaders should identify supporters of the change prior to implementation. It should also communicate the change prior to implementation; leaders must find ways to communicate the information “broadly and dramatically” in the organization to keep the employees up to date. Besides, university leaders need to provide resources required to support the change implementation. It needs support and assistance to sustain their enthusiasm and optimism as the inevitable difficulties and setbacks occur.

Overall, the vision, strategies and objectives of the University of Khartoum should involve the importance of change. Also, engage staff members in the decision making process in all levels of the university, and inspire them to work as one unit to develop the University. It is important to recognize staff members who contribute to the success of the change implementation. In addition, extra efforts should be made to maintain change leadership culture in the University of Khartoum.

5. Limitations and future studies

The main limitation of this study is that the data were gathered in the University of Khartoum only. So, the findings are specific to a particular case, a specific location and the period; therefore, when the research was conducted in one institution, thus the findings of the study cannot be generalized. The findings of the study may not apply to other institutions. But, it can be used to compare with the results of other Sudanese higher education institutions, in other locations and at some other time.

This study examined change leadership practices; hence, future researchers can study challenges of change leadership practices to provide broader perspective for effective change leadership practices in higher education setting.

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