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The leaders' role in leading and managing organisational change in higher education institutions

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ABSTRACT

The survival of an organisation does not only depend on continuous change to encounter the rapid shifting in marketplace and organisational alliances, but also to adjust their operational process. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the leader in the process of leading and managing organisational change, with some parts focused on higher education institutions. This study utilized research literature review to support author's notions and arguments. The research result found that the critical function of higher education institutions has been changed to a more pragmatic role, universities have changed their previous role not only to serve society, but also more focus on supporting the economy and promoting the quality of life of its citizens. The main role of the higher institution leader in this situation is as mediator between policy and practice. In conclusion, organisational change is an inevitable process in contemporary organisations, including higher education institutions. The key findings suggest that the leaders should create and share vision, develop a strong partnership from those who can contribute to change, improve competence, and reinforce new structure and culture which appropriate to the new environment, by encouraging motivation, communication, participation, empowerment and commitment.



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Introduction

In serving the needs of external and internal stakeholders, every organisation needs to constantly renewing and re-evaluate their organisation direction, structure, and capabilities. The survival of an organisation does not only depend on continuous change to encounter the rapid shifting in marketplace and organisational alliances, but also to adjust their operational process. However, the changes in operational routine are difficult to be implemented due to resistance and even refusal of the people in the organisation. Therefore, organisational leaders should endeavour to align their organisations with these changes in order to ensure the stability of their organisations and at the same time to promote change as the basic for future's environment.

Leaders play an important and central role in civilisation the changes in organisations. The competent leaders are needed to perceive and address the sensitive issues of organisational changes in appropriate way to their people in the organisations. They have to become a role model of the changing and have responsibilities

to manage their people to understand the reasons, purposes, and the way, and also to react positively upon the changes. When the changes are well managed, the people will engage and participate to reach the organisation's objectives (Malhotra, 2013).

Likewise, the higher education institutions are also facing the highly dynamic changes. Today, higher education institutions are required to be more pragmatic and produce outputs that can support the economy and intensify the life quality standard of the society. As a mediator of policy and practice, leaders in higher education institutions have responsibilities for preparing all requirements for academic work and ensuring that their institution can perform as a public institution and an academic organisation. Accordingly, this study is conducted to examine the role of the leader in the process of leading and managing organisational change, particularly focused on higher education institutions.

Method

This research is a type of literature study. Literature study is a set of activities to collect literature review, read and record, and analyse the research materials (Zed, 2014). This study used secondary data through literature review from academic articles and journals, books, and other relevant and valid printed and online publications. A theoretical framework of this study is started from discussion about organisation and organisational change, then followed by review of organisational change and some concepts used to deal with organisational change. Subsequently, the role of the leader in leading and managing change in their organisations is discussed in the next paragraph. Finally, the conclusions and suggestions are drawn in the last section.

Results and Discussions

Organisation and Organisational Change

Organisation is a social entity that is managed and coordinated consciously to achieve an objective or set of objectives. This working definition implies that an organisation consists of people or groups of people who interact in directed channels, involve in decision making in such hierarchic patterns, and has a boundary that can change over time which differentiates members and non-members. In order to adapt to constant changes in the environment, regulation and technology, organisations are commonly need to change their structures and practices, even their basic principles and vision (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006).

According to Hanson (2003), organisational change can be defined as the process of shifting or changing organisational behaviour, structures, procedures or output which can take place as a conscious and deliberate change (planned change), as results from natural circumstances and random occurrences (spontaneous change), or as a collective of small and large-scale planned and evolutionary change. Spencer and Pruss (1993) argue that organisational change is essential for the long-term growth and survival of an organisation. They give several reasons of why organisational change is essential: (1) organisations face the growing awareness of the concept of stakeholders which reflects a recognition that organisations are responsible not only to their shareholders and management, but also to the wider communities and customers, and they have to aware about changes in needs, wants and desires of these stakeholders, (2) organisations face pressure for the changes as a result of attitudes towards environment, (3) organisations must change in order to adapt with new regulations or legislative changes and new technology as well as the changes in their employee's education level and expectations, (4) privatisation policies have forced many organisations to restructure their philosophies and conduct their operations as businesses.

Accordingly, Isabella (1992) declares that organisational changes can be induced by "trigger events" such as merger or acquisition, organisation relocation, new top management, major reorganisation or restructuring, downsizing or retrenchment, unanticipated crises and new strategic initiatives. Organisational change historically has been noted since the 1700s when the Industrial Revolution changed agriculturally based society into mass production-based society as a result of a series of innovations and inventions. The aim of organisations at that time was to increase their production. After World War II, the orientation of organisations shifted towards efficient and effective production processes with the application of bureaucratic structures. More intensive competition in the following period and changes in people's demands have altered the focus of organisations from manufacturing to service. The emphasis has moved towards adding value to goods (Senior, 2002).

Organisational change has also been noted in higher education institutions, primarily over the last four decades. Bridges (2000) portrays that some of the dramatic changes that have been taking place in higher

education in the last decades have been disrupting the traditional identities of place, time and of scholarly and student communities. According to Gibbons (1998), although higher education institutions, particularly universities, have been recognized as the most stable and change resistant social institutions during the past 500 years, in the last decades, a new paradigm of the function of higher education in society has gradually emerged. The critical function of higher education institutions has been changed to a more pragmatic role. In terms of the provision of qualified manpower and the production of knowledge, universities have changed their previous role not only to serve society, but also more focus on supporting the economy and promoting the quality of life of its citizens. For this reason, they have to develop different kinds of alliances with the surrounding society, primarily in order to maximize the intellectual resources that they do not own completely.

The role of the leader in the process of leading and managing organisational change

One of the major issues in regard to organisational change, including in higher education institutions, relates to the role of who leads them (Senior, 2002). In the same way, Stewart and Kringas (2003) in their report on research conducted in six Australian federal agencies between 1996 and 2000 clarify that the leader's role is very important in driving change and that if the leader has good support at senior levels and knows which levers to pull, significant change in performance can result.

Organisational change occasionally happened involuntarily or can be introduced as a way in which the organisation can function more effectively by utilising new technologies and resources. Moran and Brightman (2001) proclaim that there are several common characteristics of leaders who most successfully help people and organisations to manage change, these are: (1) The leaders consider change in terms of results for the organisation as a whole as well as the effect on the individual. (2) Encourage a condition where people are able to share the change. (3) Become the role model for the organisation; leading the change effort with every word and action. (4) Display a constant dedication to making change a reality. They focus on results and always analyse the failures they face. (5) Interact with individuals and groups in the organisation to explain the change.

Accordingly, Botham (2007) states that good leaders are drive changes and ensure that all processes and interactions within organisations are aligned and there is a strong involvement of all stakeholders in their organisation. They motivate, inspire, challenge and always try to encourage the best performance from people who work with them. Based on results of studies on leadership in managing organisational change, Botham (2007) provides the following characteristics of good leaders: (1) Outcome focused: they think about clear and sustainable results, not only focus on good processes. (2) Empower people: they act as a good supervisor, encourage people to achieve better results by understanding and effectively managing individual strengths and weaknesses. (3) Set standards: they encourage processes to be conducted at high standards in order to gain best achievement. They will not tolerate second best achievement. (4) Have small egos: they place the organisation as the first priority, not for individual interest. The leaders should focus on the long-term objectives for the good of the organisation rather than short-term results for the good of their personal image. (5) Courageous: many time they have to take non-popular decisions, but they do it bravely as long as they are sure that it is for the improvement of the organisation.

Furthermore, Botham (2007) explains that in the last decade, many organisations have forgotten that their organisation will not achieve good progress in the near future without good leadership. These organisations have focused only on new processes, better monitoring, improved planning and new systems. In fact, it is leadership that makes the difference. Good leaders are people with vision, focus, and ideas that can be found at every level of an organisation. On the other hand, changes are often resisted and there are people within organisation that appear to prefer status quo. Isabella (1992) argues that since many changes in organisations do not occur totally by surprise, there are always rumours, suspicions or scattered information. The key that needed in order to develop positive respond to change, according to Spencer and Pruss (1993), is information about what organisation trying to do and its impacts for organisation as a whole. Thus, the most important role of the leader in managing organisational change is to raise employee participation in the change process and to maintain that all stakeholders are keep informed. As Bovey and Hede (2001) claim that leading an organisation through change involves efforts to promote participation of people who must first change themselves for organisational change to succeed.

In accordance with statements above, Isabella (1992) asserts that there are four phases of organisational change: pre-event, confirmation of the event, occurrence of the event, and as time passes. Due to people have different ideas in understanding change and these ideas occur at different phase of organisational change, the leaders need to have abilities in taking proper actions to approach each phase, which are: (1) Pre-event: be aggressive in terms of hearing and addressing rumours; provide information, even if speculative or incomplete; anticipate rumours and be ready with replies; provide puzzle box picture. (2) Confirmation of the event:

manage the announcement of the change; provide analogies; use positive past history or reframe negative history; introduce people to the new environment. (3) Occurrence of the event: orchestrate the transition carefully with ceremony; communicate the vision and possible result of organisational change; turn ordinary actions into symbolic communications; make changes from the beginning; specify new works rules and procedures clearly, concisely, and rationally. (4) As time passes: create events to evaluate the change; communicate in very concrete terms what the event has meant overall; admit failures and state new strategies to turn those around.

In regards to organisational change within higher education, Askling and Henkel (2000) indicate that there is an increase in the role of the institution in the process of translating the political intentions of the government into academic processes and outcomes. As a consequence, the main role of the higher institution leader in this situation is as mediator between policy and practice. They have responsibilities for preparing all requirements for academic work and ensuring that their institution is able to perform as a public institution and an academic organisation. Additionally, Reponen (1999) confirms that in the beginning the success of a higher education is highly dependent on people but now has changed in a way different to previous times. Excellent research and teaching are vital but they must also be marketed and disseminated, to do so higher institutions must apply business concepts, which is new in the academic world. Similar abilities are required of staff member which parallel to those in the business world with the addition of research abilities.

Conclusions

In conclusion, organisational change is an inevitable process in contemporary organisations, including higher education institutions. This process is driven by several internal and external factors resulting in changes in almost every aspect of leadership and management of organisations. In order to manage change effectively the leaders have to motivate the changes and establish commitment. Furthermore, the leaders should create and share vision, develop a strong partnership from those who can contribute to change, improve competence and reinforce new structure and culture which appropriate to the new environment, by encouraging motivation, communication, participation, empowerment and commitment. In higher education institutions, the leader should be able to implement business leadership and management models so as to ensure that their institutions meet the stakeholder's demands as an academic organisation and a public institution.

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