

The Application of Kotter's Model of Change in the Higher Education: A Case Study in Vietnam Private Universities



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ABSTRACT: With the changing demands of higher quality teaching profession, especially the increasing trend of studying at private universities, many fail to produce desired effects, even when guided by organizational change models. Educational specialists, educators, academics, school administrators, and even scientists have all contributed to the development of change management as a significant concept. The purpose of this study is to apply Kotter's 8-step model of change to educational administration of private universities in Ho Chi Minh City. Change efforts focus on enhancing faculty capacity to support diverse student success. The change process is planned using Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model and is therefore a regulated, linear, sequential change process. The initial steps were reviewed, and the strategies considered workable. This approach enhances faculty acquisition and project success. Characterization of each step provides insight into ways to apply Kotter's model of change in higher education settings.

KEYWORDS: Change Management, Educational Administration, Kotter's Change Model, Private University, Viet Nam

1. INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education are faced with a plethora of factors that require institutions to rethink as demographic changes, financial pressures, technological advancements and now a pandemic, all are catalysts for academic cultural change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In which universities and schools must always participate in the process of change to be successful with their students considering society's ever-changing needs (Speck, 1999). The first objective of universities is to provide proper education to youth to prepare them for the work market. Their next objective is to use research to generate new knowledge. A third objective is more contemporary goal compels universities to connect with societal demands and link their activities to their socioeconomic setting. Organizations are being urged to move away from an 'economistic' management strategy and toward a more 'humanistic' one (Melé, 2013). Similarly, colleges are encouraged to not only professionally qualified human capital, but also to cultivate students' moral and humanistic evaluative skills (Spitzeck, 2011), and to equip them to be change agents who care for others and society's well-being (Morris, 2011).

In 1986, Vietnam started the economic renovation, which is often referred to as economic reform. The country's remarkable economic growth rates during the late 1980s have been attributed to the economic reform, which replaced a centrally planned economy with a regulated market economy (WB, 2012). Many significant developments have occurred in national education reforms since the early 1990s. In addition, the country is confronted with both obstacles and opportunities. In terms of problems, according to Mac Cargo (2003), reforms have resulted in a significant growth in the number of students, the number and types of educational institutions, and the number and varieties of courses of study at all levels of education. However, he says, the national education system appears to be deteriorating in quality. When asked about opportunities in higher education by Viet Nam News on May 31, 2006, Deputy Minister of Vietnamese Education and Training Banh Tien Long stated that the overall goal of tertiary reform in the next 15 years (the country's global integration plan for education from 2006 to 2020) would be to achieve fundamental changes in the quality and scope of the system so that it could respond to socio-economic development and the pendulum of globalization. Similarly, Hung (2007) identifies five concerns, including the comparability of quality and standards, higher education's multinationalization, brain drains, intellectual property issues, and preserving a university as a learning organization. In terms of the leadership roles in the transformation of Vietnamese higher education, Hung (2007) contends that Vietnamese universities must undergo a radical change to increase the quality and efficacy of education in order to fulfill the diverse demands for human resources.

However, the decentralization must be affected in a step-by-step manner. The university needs a planned sequential path: The management of change needs to be considered and upgraded in the whole process of change. In this article, the author has deeply explored the factors affecting university governance, thereby based on Kotter's Model of Change (1996), building, and

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establishing an appropriate model for the governance of Private Universities in Vietnam in general and Ho Chi Minh City in particular.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Change Management Models

Kotter lays forth an eight-step process for directing change, with leadership at the center. The three titles for these processes are "generating-consolidating-anchoring." Kotter's model resembles Lewin's (1947) "unfreezing-changing-refreezing" paradigm in this regard.

Step 1—Create a sense of urgency

The first stage of the transformation process emphasizes a growing sense of urgency and the need for collaboration. It's difficult to persuade important personnel to join in a change process when the urgency is low, and without incentive, the endeavor will fail. This first phase, according to Kotter, is critical since getting an organizational change program off the ground necessitates the aggressive participation of many employees, and he claims that 50% of the organizations he studied failed in the first stage (1995, 60).

Effective leadership is critical at this point in terms of instilling a feeling of urgency. In most circumstances, pushing individuals out of their "comfort zones" is difficult in a company with too many managers but not enough leaders. Because change necessitates the creation of a new system, leadership is always required. It takes around 80% leadership and 20% management to bring about change (Kotter 1998, 33). According to Kelman, the important task of leaders is to "create a sense of urgency—a recognition that the organization's prosperity and perhaps survival are on the line" (2005, 41).

Step 2 – Building the guiding team

While change in business practices is commonly referred to as organizational change, according to Kee and Newcomer, change is not truly organizational until it is preceded by individual and then team transformation. Major renewal projects, according to Kotter, often begin with just one or two people, and in the event of successful transformation attempts, the leadership coalition gets even larger. Organizations are less hierarchical but more complex in today's world, and leaders need internal and external stakeholder support (workers, partners, investors, and regulators) for a variety of activities (Kotter 1998).

According to Kotter, a good change management steering coalition should be built on three important values: high levels of trust, a common goal, and the correct mix of people. The steering coalition should allude to a position of power in the board, indicating that there are enough essential actors and front-line managers. In addition, the board should have sufficient competence in terms of multiple points of view, discipline, and work experience, credibility that the crew has a solid reputation so that employees can trust them, and leadership that the change agent has sufficient proven leadership qualities (Kotter 1996, 52-57). Efforts that lack a strong enough steering coalition may appear to be making success for a time, but the opposition eventually rallies and puts a stop to the transformation (Kotter 1995, 63).

Step 3 – Creating a vision

A vision is a picture of the future with some explicit or implicit commentary on why people should seek to achieve that future. It refers to a picture of the future with some explicit or implicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future. Vision also encourages people to behave in the right direction and aids change managers in coordinating the activities of many participants (Kotter 1995, 63). Kee and Newcomer explore the role of the leader in transformation, noting that effective leadership necessitates a vision-oriented rather than goal-oriented approach (2008, 55).

According to Kotter, without a clear vision, transformation efforts can quickly disintegrate, and incompatible projects can drive the company in the wrong direction or to nowhere. Furthermore, because a clear vision necessitates a clear grasp of plans and laws, excessive regulation has a negative impact on vision (1995, 63). Effective vision is both focused and flexible enough to drive decision-making while also accommodating human initiative and changing circumstances (Kotter 1998, 30). Changes in vision, clarity, operational mindset, and relevance, according to Cole, Harris, and Bernerth, can increase and facilitate employee understanding of the transition experience (2006, 354).

Step 4 – Communicating the vision

Employees will not make compromises, even if they are dissatisfied with the status quo, unless they believe that beneficial change is possible (Kotter 1995, 63). Furthermore, vision's true power is unleashed only when most people share a similar understanding of its aims and directions. Failures in vision communication are frequently attributed to lower-level employees' inability to communicate vision, as well as a general human tendency to resist change and, as a result, resistance to accepting change information (Kotter 1996, 85-86).

Executives that are more effective in their transformation initiatives use all available communication channels to convey the vision (Kotter 1995, 64). Intensive communication is required for change attempts, but true communication is achieved through actions. It is more powerful than messages and words (Richardson and Denton 1996, 207; Kotter 1995, 64).

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Step 5 – Empowering the action and removing obstacles

The generating phase ends after the fifth step, and the consolidation phase begins. Completing steps one through four of the transformation processes effectively already empowers people significantly. The goal of step five is to mobilize many individuals to act by removing as many impediments to the change vision's execution as feasible (Kotter 1996, 102).

Empowering employees literally implies providing them the power to do what needs to be done during the transition process. Empowering employees also includes giving them the knowledge, skills, opportunity, autonomy, self-confidence, and resources they need to manage and be accountable for change (Gill 2003, 308). (a) Information and personnel systems, (b) a lack of needed skills, (c) managers discourage employees from acting, and (d) formal structures make it harder for employees to act, according to Kotter. Change managers should align structures that obstruct action, train employees to provide them with the necessary skills and attitudes for the project, connect information and people systems to the vision, and challenge supervisors who undercut the change effort to eliminate such barriers.

Step 6 – Generate short-term wins

Since real transformation takes a considerable amount of time, short term goals and wins are useful in keeping the momentum. Without short term wins, there is a risk for people to give up, or become a change resistant (Kotter 1995, 65). The short-term wins should be related to change effort, unambiguous, and visible. Targeting short-term wins increases the pressure on employees and their commitment to the change effort (Kotter 1996, 121).

Step 7 – Build on wins

While short-term victories are vital for maintaining a sense of urgency, declaring triumph too soon would be disastrous. Furthermore, changes take time to transform an organization's culture, and declaring triumph too soon will aid irrational and political resistance in overturning the fragile new shape (Kotter 1995, 66). Another part of resistance to change, according to Laframboise, Nelson, and Schmaltz, is controlling people's feelings. Accepting change, especially when it concerns their work environment, can be tough for many individuals. Employee resistance can stymie change efforts, especially when it comes to projects that aim to change the way people work (2003, 306). Increasing credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that do not fit the vision; hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision; and giving the process a boost with new projects, themes, and change agents are just a few of the actions Kotter suggests to consolidate improvements (1998, 32).

Step 8 – Embed changes into culture

Employees' common ideals and behavioral conventions are referred to as culture. It's not easy to integrate fresh approaches into established cultures. The common idea is that for a change initiative to succeed, it must first change the company culture. Change, on the other hand, occurs last, not first (Kotter 1996, 148-152). It may be difficult to anchor new techniques in cultures that are more status quo focused (Kee and Newcomer 2008, 69). When a new style of conducting business becomes the norm and permeates into the organization's bloodstream, the shift becomes a culture. Two key factors in institutionalizing change in corporate culture, according to Kotter, are a conscious effort to demonstrate the importance of new approaches, behaviors, and attitudes that helped improve performance, and the establishment of a promotion system that moves people to the next generation of top management who truly personify the new approach (Kotter 1995, 67).

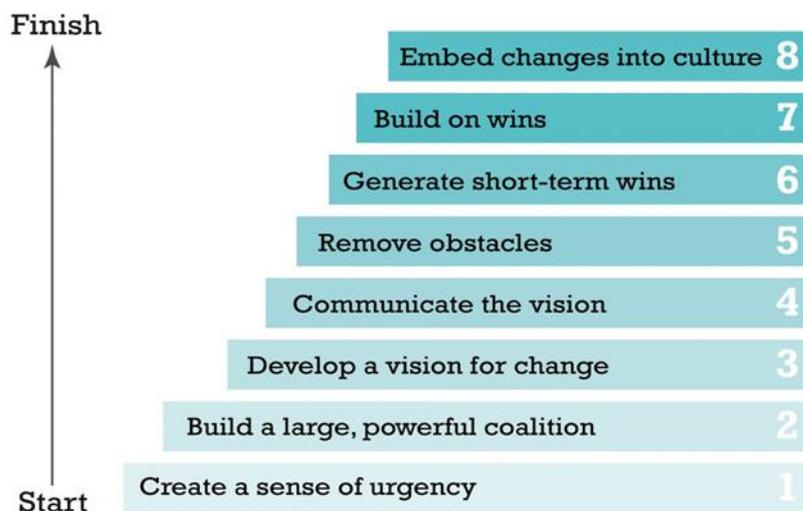


Figure 1. Kotter's 8 step model of change

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2.2. Change Management Models in higher education institutions

In an approach known as managerialism, European universities are adopting strategies from the corporate sector to manage change, but institutions have not entirely adapted (Dunning, 2019). In 2018, the European University Association brought together executives from various universities to acquire a better understanding of the problems that face daily operations and strategies, with the goal of bridging the gap between strategy and execution. Pinheiro et al. (2019) identified signs of change in academic leadership as it transitioned from rotating systems involving peer election to a more managerial logic involving top-down order-giving, performance measurement, and appointed managers, resulting in the formation of a new academic profession.

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Kotter's change model has been successfully utilized to lead or account for change in higher education settings, but it is more commonly associated with administrative and technological changes. Wentworth, Behson, and Kelley (2018), for example, described how Kotter's change model was used to replace a teacher assessment system. They credited their success to following Kotter's processes, but they also highlighted how these procedures applied to higher education. To fit within the shared governance paradigm and secure faculty buy-in, they underlined the need of including people elected by the faculty on the leading team. They helped faculty realize how the new system may assist tenure and promotion processes by giving more valuable and timely feedback, among other things, when they communicated the goal to them. They also made a point of being open and honest about how and why they adopted a particular system. Similarly, a dental school used Kotter's change model to overhaul their method to measuring student and program clinical results in response to statewide changes in dentistry education (Guzmán et al. 2011). Their success was dependent on matching incentive systems, such as awarding continuing education credits to interested academics and rolling out the new system in tiny pilots to gain faculty trust.

The Kotter change model was utilized to change faculty participation in a business school's accrediting efforts (Calegari, Sibley, and Turner, 2015). While their efforts were successful, they felt Kotter's change model did not provide enough guidance on how to get faculty buy-in. They emphasized the significance of transparency and communication, as did Wentworth, Behson, and Kelley (2018). They also discovered that after a short-term triumph, teachers needed to be re-engaged. Similarly, an examination of a top-down initiative to combine instructional technology and library services discovered that when faculty believed such victories were fabricated, it hampered their development (Sidorko 2008).

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was centered on a single case study location, Ho Chi Minh City's Private Universities. This study used a mixed-method approach that included both qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires and interviews were used to acquire historical secondary data from universities. The major variables identified in the conceptual framework of the change management model were used to construct a series of questions. To support case analysis, data was gathered from a second group of interviews with university management (deans/department heads), faculties, personnel, and students. The descriptive analysis is the statistical method utilized.

The following is an interview guide for change management tactics. The study's specific goal, as previously stated, was to uncover the drivers of change in the engagement and outreach paradigm in higher education.

Change Management Strategies include

- Active participation
- Persuasive communication
- Diffusion of learning
- Human resource management practices
- Formalization activities
- Rites and ceremonies: Symbolic public practices

Data Analysis

Data analysis was challenging due to the extensive corpus of secondary data that was available. We did a scrupulous data collection process, and then triangulated the comments of the interviewees with the secondary data we had access to. We proofread all transcriptions, and then moved all data units to MS Excel to code them and identify patterns.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will be presenting the findings of management challenges of change at the Private Universities in Ho Chi Minh city. The discussion will be based on the theoretical model of change, especially based on the change model of John Kotter's Eight Phase Model (1996).

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4.1. Number of Respondents

The findings of this study were collected from 30 questionnaires along with interviewing with the respondents that included 40% deans, 15% department heads, 20% faculty and staff and 25% students (Fig 2)

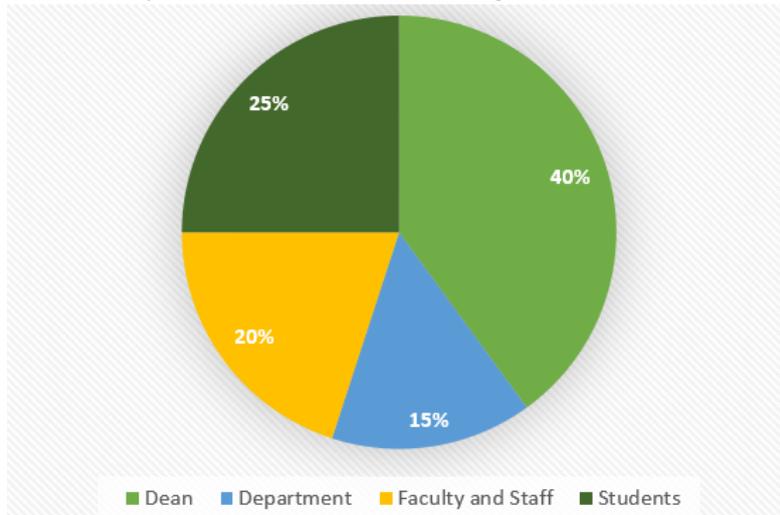


Figure 2. Number of qualitative surveys

4.2. Create a Sense of Urgency to the Need for Change

According to the figure 3 the results of study showed that 40% of the respondents presented sometime for the creating a sense of urgency to the need for change. There are 30% argued that rarely to create a sense of urgency for university change and 15% said mostly.

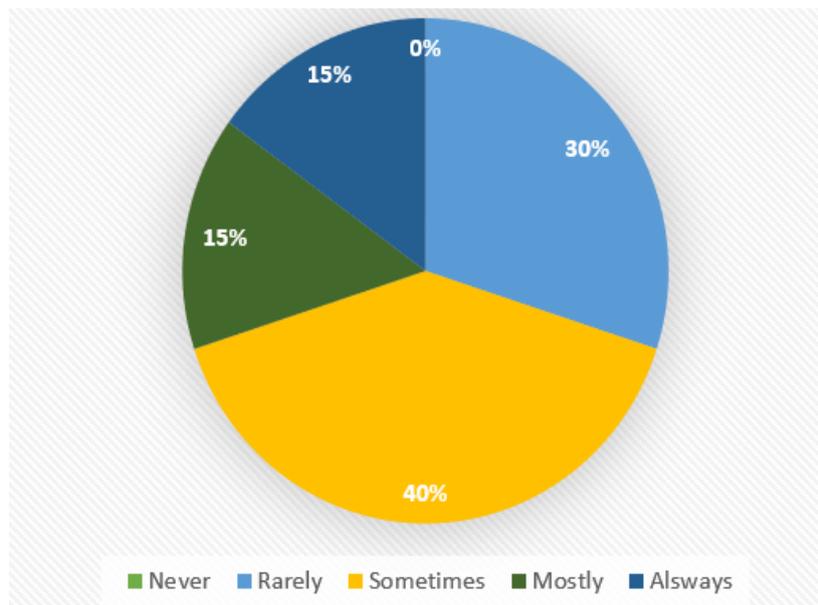


Figure 3. Create a sense of urgency to the need for change

4.3. Provide Evidence to Persuade the Need for Change

Based on the interview, there are 40% of the respondents argued that it is rarely in providing evidence to persuade the need for change of Private Universities, they said that sometime the change initiated from the top management without clear evidence to support the need for change. Renovations of buildings, conference rooms, libraries, and the campus atmosphere, for example, were addressed, as well as other issues such as bathrooms, cleaning, rubbish collection, classroom facilities, and Internet capacity, all of which demonstrated the need for change. There are 10% of respondents provided that the Private University has never provided clear evidence to the need of change and 40% of the respondents believed that there are sometimes.

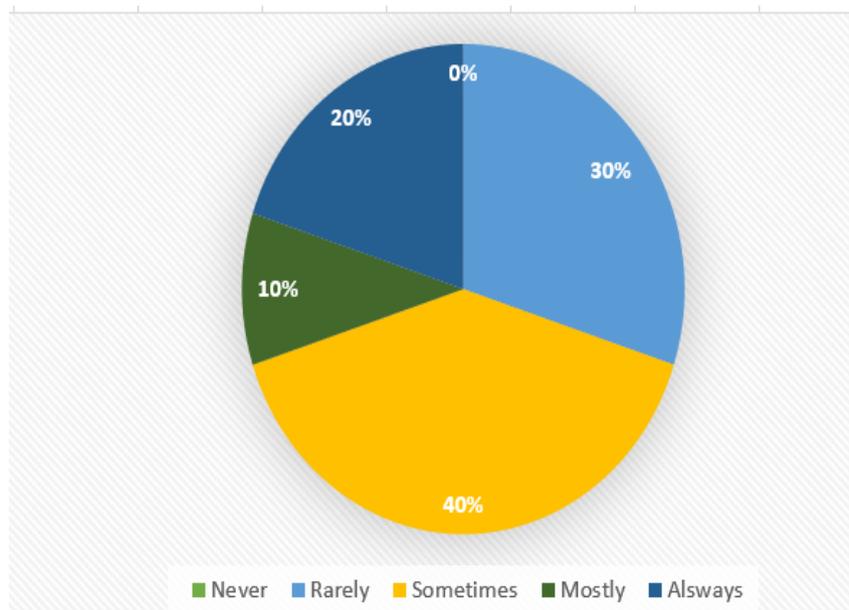


Figure 4. Provide evidence to persuade the need for change

4.4. Creating a Clear Vision for Change

Figure 5 indicated that there are 45% of the respondents argued that they are not clear about the vision of the university for change. They critiqued the lack of opportunity for discussion in the vision of change. They claim that upper management creates the vision statement without involvement or consultation, making it too broad to achieve. They stated that it is critical for the change vision to build faculty and staff commitment, as they will only support change implementation if they understand what we are going to accomplish and how we are going to achieve it. However, 30% argued that it was sometime the vision has been explained and did not clear. At least 15% of the respondents believed that the vision for change has been created clearly and only 15% of respondents provided never.

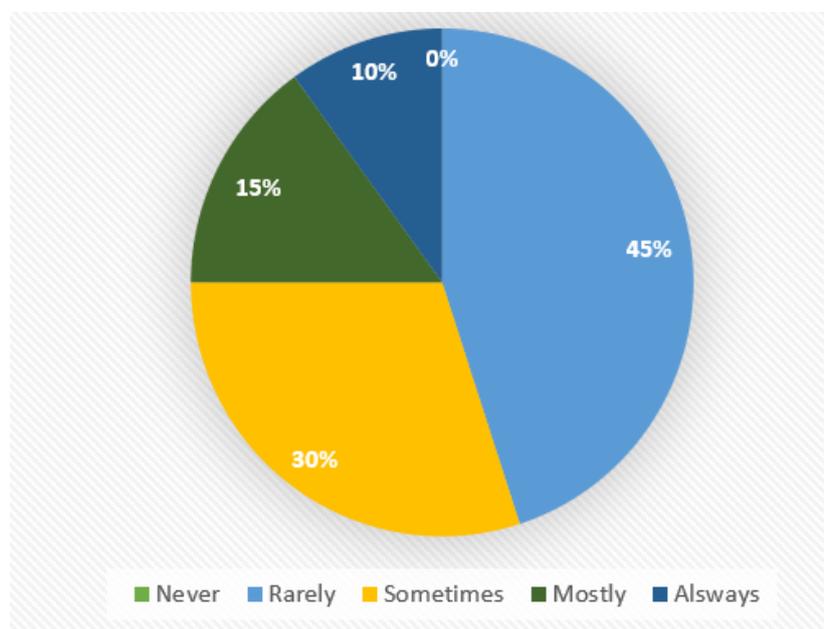


Figure 5. Create a clear vision for change

4.5. Develop Effective Strategies to Deliver the Vision of Change

Figure 6 showed that 48% of the respondents said that there is rarely to the development of effective strategic actions to deliver the vision of change. Most of the respondents said that there was not clear on the action plans for delivering the vision of change, they said the university should have workshop and training for at least three to four times to make understanding of how to implement the strategies and this is the way to offer opportunity for faculty and staff to develop commitment of change. There are 20% of the respondents provided sometimes and 19% presented mostly

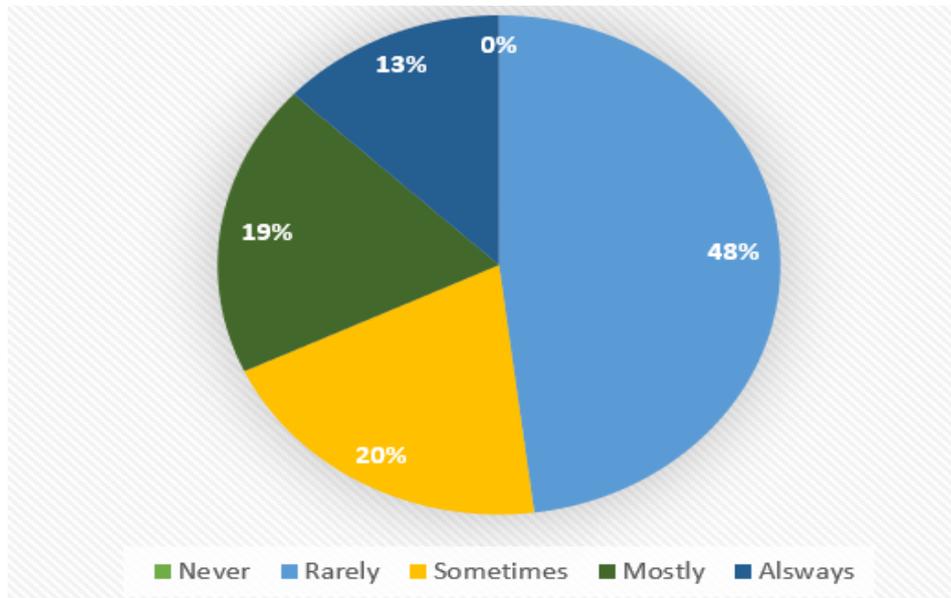


Figure 6. Develop effective strategies to deliver the vision of change

4.6. Clear Roles and Structure to Deliver the Change Vision

There are 40% of the respondents indicated sometimes to encourage people taking account to deliver the change vision. They said that their lack of positive motivation, sometime, they work hard but it seems to be not recognized by the management. There are 35% of the respondents argued rarely of encourage people to take in account for delivering the change vision, 19% said never and only 6% showed that mostly.

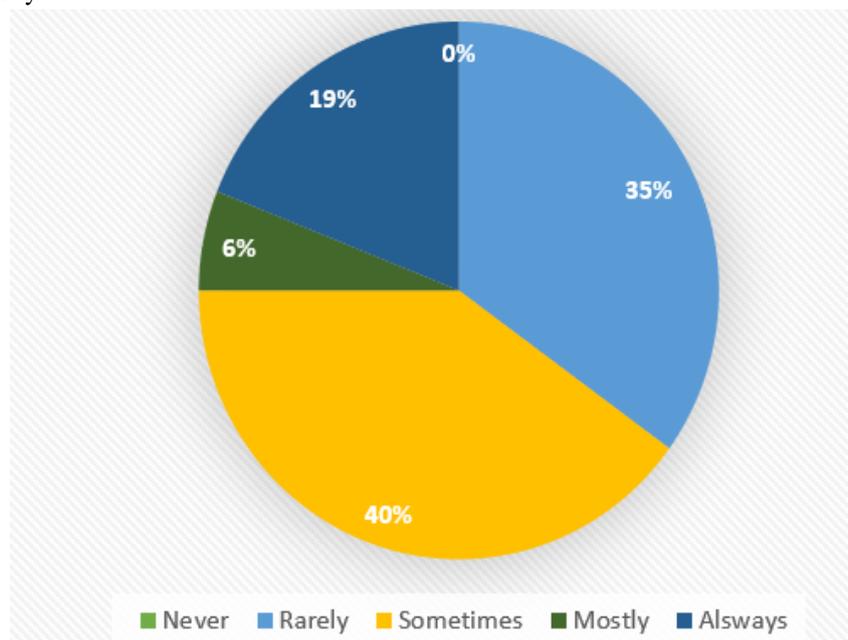


Figure 7. Encourage people take actions to deliver the change vision

4.7. Attitude towards the University Changes

The question on how your attitude toward the change of the Private Universities, in figure 8 showed that 52% of respondents hesitated to show positive or negative attitudes, they pointed that on neutral, means that they think there are not positive or negative. There are 23% of the respondents, however, showed that their attitudes are negative and only 16% was positive. At least 3% of the respondents are very pessimistic on the attitudes toward the change of the University, they feel that the change did not gain more benefits to them and affected to their relatives.

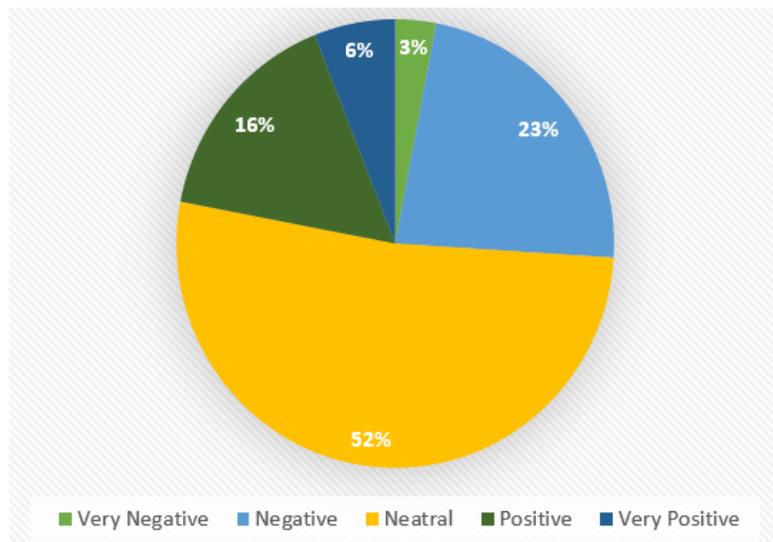


Figure 8. Attitude towards university change

4.8. Satisfaction after Change

Figure 9 indicated that 53% of the respondents are neutral on the satisfaction of work after change. According to the interview most of them feel that their working places are small, facilities and technology are not sophisticated enough, there are no personal room for dean and faculty to work or consult with students, not enough stationary for work operations, no petty cash for solving routine work problem, no staff support for each faculty, etc. There are 19% of the respondents, however, satisfied with workplace after change, they feel proud with the new environment of campus and 23% of the respondents are not satisfied with the change.

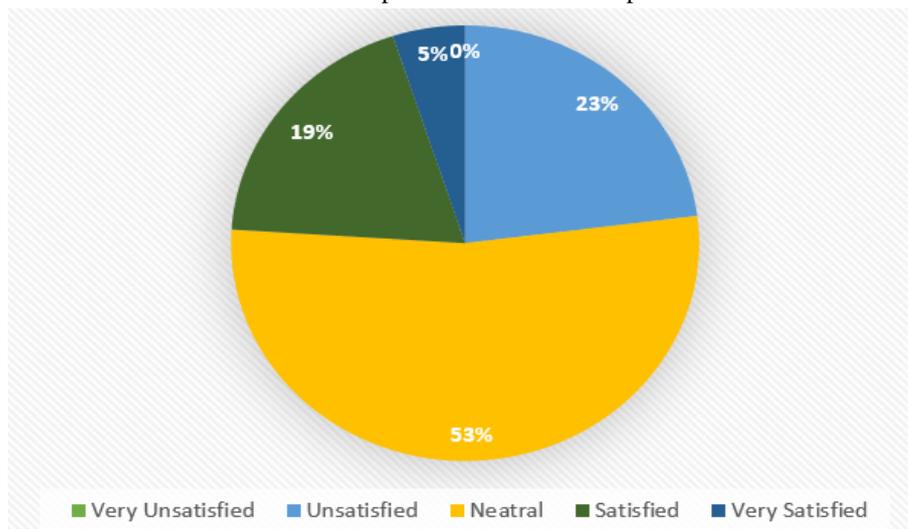


Figure 9. Satisfy with work after change

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of interviews were used to construct ideas, validity, and reliability, as well as examine the influence of factors on change management in a university setting. It reveals that the majority of interviewees are enthusiastic about change management and the application of a new paradigm to private universities. Vietnam need a new model for establishing change management processes in private universities in Ho Chi Minh City in order to fulfill its educational role in the Vietnamese and regional learning environments. As well as promoting integration into the global educational environment in Ho Chi Minh City. Meanwhile, any educational institution in a country can undoubtedly choose the most appropriate model to adopt, administer, and build a change management process for the country's educational goals.

With Kotter's eight step change model apply in Private University has many benefits right along with its few deficiencies in implementation. The model is not related to the complexity theory, but this linear model provides a more predictable and manageable change process. The steps are mostly clear, understandable, and give guidance for the process. The focus is on the acceptance and preparedness for the change, which makes it an easier transition. Change in higher education is hard, or at least it can be. It is common to believe that it is nearly impossible for leaders to effectively implement significant change that is incongruent

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with the institution's organizational culture because of the decentralized organizational structure, shared governance, and several other factors that make higher education a unique place to live and work.. This study provides evidence to the contrary.

The Private Universities has many change experiences from period to period and more people satisfied with the university after changes. The change of Private University was responding to the change in environment such as national and regional competitions, government policy, market demands, etc. The Universities, however, achieved its mission by serving the nation by providing several thousands of capable and socially responsible managers and entrepreneurs for Viet Nam society.

Limitation & Future research

The limitations of the study suggest two things:

- Firstly, the study focuses on the management of change of the private universities of a city, the final research papers can develop the research scale.
- Secondly, the analysis method of this study will use only qualitative analysis, so that some variables use perceptual measures will lead to limitation of making conclusion and recommendation. The authors recommend complementing the present findings through a quantitative study spanning a larger panel of participants and allowing a yearly follow-up starting from the date of their first experience in volunteering to gain a better understanding of the evolution of their mindset along with their practical experience.

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