The Impact of Resistance to Change among Lecturers in Private University

Mahiswaran Selvanathan[1,*], Mahadevan Supramaniam[2], Yew Ter Shern[2], Subaashnii Suppramaniam[3], Ahmad Muzammir Muhammad[3]

[1]National Higher Education Research Institute (IPPTN), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia
[2]SEGi University, Malaysia
[3]Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU), Malaysia

Abstract Resistance to change is important for the current working environment because universities are faced with constant amounts of changes in the environment, which would force the lecturers in the university to change as well. Therefore, the resistance to change needs to be focused on improving the lecturers' well-being in order to boost the productivity and performance in the workplace. This research focuses on the impact of resistance to change among lecturers in SEGi University. A total of 114 respondents consist of different levels from the lower management, middle management to senior management involved in this study conveniently. Findings revealed that an individual's resistance to change was determined by communication and normative commitment factor. This research would further discuss each of the factors and examine how the factors could impact the resistance to change among lecturers. This study has identified few predictors towards the resistance to change among lecturers in university context.

Keywords Resistance to Change, SEGi University, Lecturer

1. Introduction

Change defined as the alteration, modification, variation or transformation of the individual, self and the environment surrounding the person (Sharabi and Harpaz, 2013). Change comes in many forms, as there is always a need for the human being to bring improvement to benefit and add value to their lives and for future generations. It is important for a university to change and adapt to the current situation to maintain a competitive advantage in the industry compared with other university (Kuula, Putkiranta and Toivanen, 2014) and in order to achieve that, change is needed. Organizational policies are the guidelines the university has for the lecturers to follow in order for the university to achieve their goals and vision. Having said that, the university frequently established their goals and vision based on their shareholders expectation which is always demanding an improvement for the benefits of both parties (Vogel and Rowold, 2014). Therefore, the university would always change their policies in order to meet their demands. In connection with that, the lecturers in the university would have to follow the new organizational policies that is evolving at a fast pace in this age of globalization. This idea would cause the lecturers to always face changes in the university. Even the most successful university encounters the need to change. The capability of a university to change as soon as possible according to the environment will determine whether the university would be able to sustain in their competitive industry or not.

Change could mean that the individual in the university is not doing things the way they are used to. This would cause the university to face some resistance to change from the lecturers working inside the university (Langstrand and Elg, 2012). The problem will arise when there is a process of implementing change. In general, people refuse to change due to status quo, lack of communication within the lecturers in the university, lack of commitment of lecturers and the fear of taking risk. Those barriers themselves could affect any university that wants to implement anything which would change the way the university functions.

Although it is without a doubt that a university could not escape the need to change in today's competitive environment, the failures or low rate of implementing change in an university leaves an university with a heavy task to continue with its drive to achieve their goals and vision. According to an article by Towers Watson in Forbes, it is discovered that only 25% of change management initiatives are successful in the end. For

example, the Change and Communication Survey which was administered in 2013 involving 276 large and medium-sized organizations located in North America, Europe and Asia stated that the employers observed that 55% of change management efforts met the original goals, with only 25% of that change were sustainable in the long term. Besides that, 87% of the organizations had trained their managers to facilitate change but only 22% of the organization stated that the training was actually a success. Furthermore, the percentage of managers who understands the changes drops as it goes down the hierarchy with 68% of top management said that they understand the change, 53% of middle managers get the change and 40% of first line managers get the change (Lipman, 2016).

This research is important to identify the factors that cause the resistance to change among lecturers. It will help the university to identify the main factors and try to address it so that they can implement change effectively in the shortest period of time. This would allow the university to progress according to the time and gain the competitive advantage in the industry. The faster the lecturer in the university is able to adapt to the change, the more effective and efficient they are able to perform according to the demand of the current market. Furthermore, it is able to plan for future development of the university as they are way ahead of their competitors. The university is able to come up with better ideas for customers in order for them to capture them from the competitors. As long as the factors have been identified, the university could provide change management training to those who are highly resistant to change when they are identified. By a more targeted way of solving the problem, this would save cost by only providing the lecturers who are resistant to change the required training.

2. Literature Review

Organizational change is defined as the observed alteration in the organizational entity in deviations of its shape, value or situation in a certain period (Val and Fuentes, 2003). According to Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald, and Nguyen-Quang (2015), organizational change will cause an individual to experience a process that is divided into four stages known as initial denial, resistance, gradual exploration and finally, commitment. These are the stages that the lecturer needs to go through when the university that they are working with would want to implement change. Referring to the research by Jaramillo, Mulki, Onyemah and Pesquera (2012), the resistance to change is associated as a significant element in the failure of an organization to implement a change initiative. In connection with that theory, it is stated that no wonder that many change initiative would take longer than expected and most of them failed caused by not having enough planning and implementation added on with

lecturers who do not want to change. Furthermore, Pieterse, Caniëls, and Homan (2012) stated that change is a process that is stimulated by strategic considerations and the requirement for a more effective way of doing things in an organization. Change in an organization is important to ensure that the organization is keeping up with the innovation in their respective industry as it progresses with the advancement of time.

'Perceived change in status refers to the belief in the current situation being the most suitable in the ways things are getting done which suits the lecturers style of working in that organization (Vakola, 2014). According to Guerrero, Sylvestre, and Muresanu (2013), it also means that the lecturer would find reasons to withhold what they are currently doing in the organization. Rivas, Taylor, Abbott, Clarke, Griffiths, Roberts, and Stone (2012) supported the claim by stating that by having this perception, the lecturer perceives that the current working environment that they are working in is the best and comfortable for them to carry out their day-to-day duties. Therefore, lecturers would prefer to stay in their comfort zone instead of changing to an environment that they would need to adapt again, which does not guarantee that it would be better than the previous one.

Change communication is an important practice for an organization to carry out in order to give a positive feeling for the lecturer when going through the change process (Hedman and Valo, 2015). Relating to a study by Zamparini and Lurati (2012), the smoothness and ease of the change process depend on the level of professionalism in communicating the change process. The need for change depends on how the university communicates with its lecturers, which would later on affect their perception on how they view the implementation of change by the university. Veil and Husted (2012) stated that if the communication is carried out well and the lecturers understands why the university is implementing change, then there would be little till less resistance to change from the lecturers. However, if the change communication were not carried out effectively, then the opposite would happen.

Organizational commitment is a well-researched variable in the field of organizational studies. Plimmer and Blumenfeld (2012) stated that there are many terms which are linked to this form of commitment such as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. In this study, we will focus more on normative commitment. Normative commitment refers to a type of commitment that is based on an individual's feeling of obligation to remain working for the organization because it is viewed as the right thing to do and as a moral norm. One of the common examples of the feeling of obligation is that when a university supports the lecturers' educational efforts before entering the university or when a lecturer is working in that university. Zayas-Ortiz, Rosario, Marquez, and Gruñeiro (2015) encourages that the organization seeks individuals that are capable and have

the potential that the organization requires in order for them to move forward and grow in their respective industries.

Othman, Hashim and Wahid (2012) refer to change readiness as a particular behaviour of a lecturer to be prepared for the oncoming change in their environment to the university when it comes. It results from the thinking and judgment that lecturer has on the change process. Therefore, in reference to Rusly, Corner and Sun (2012), lecturers could only be ready for that change if they have the feeling that the change is needed. According to a research conducted by Vakola (2014), the readiness to change would also refer to the lecturer to be able to keep up with or handle the change. This depends on the lecturer having proper set of skills and capabilities to carry out tasks and events that are related to the efforts in implementing that change. Haffar, Al-Karaghouli, and Ghoneim (2014) states that lecturers' confidence in the new way of doing things also plays an important role in ensuring that the lecturer is able to keep up with the change. Some lecturers who are not confident enough would feel that the change efforts would be a waste of time thus resisting the change. These types of lecturers do not have the readiness to change. Therefore, Kuntz and Gomes (2012) suggested that the organization needs to ensure that the lecturers are being briefed on the overall need for the change in order for them to understand more regarding the change process and to get them to be ready before it is implemented.

3. Research Methodology

120 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in this study. Out of 120 questionnaires only 114 were usable. The targeted population of this research was those lecturers in SEGi University. The respondents consist of lecturers from the different faculties. Thus, the targeted respondents are from different levels of the organization in order to generate accurate and larger information regarding resistance to change.

4. Research Findings

The total number of respondents is 120 people, including 51 males (44.7%) and 63 females (55.3%). From the total, 32 respondents (28.1%) are single, 82 respondents (71.9%) are married. In term of age group, there are 1 respondent (0.9%) is in the age range of 18-24 years old, 44 respondents (38.6%) are in the range of 25-34 years old, 50 respondents (43.9%) are in the range of 35-44 years old, 18 respondents (15.8%) are in the range of 45-55 years old, and 1 respondent (0.9%) is above 55 years old. Besides, the survey on education level shows 87 respondents (76.3%) have completed Bachelor degree, 24 respondents (21.1%) have completed Master's Degree, and

3 respondents (2.6%) have PhD qualifications. Also, there are 114 respondents (100%) who are employed for wages. Referring to the income level, 6 respondents (5.3%) earn income in the range of RM2,501-RM4,000, 17 respondents (14.9%) earn income in the range of RM4,001- RM5,500, 28 respondents (24.6%) earning RM 5,501- RM 7,000 monthly and 63 respondents (55.3%) earn income in the range above RM7,000

In closer inspection in exploring the relationship among the variables, resistance to change shows a very low correlation with perceived change in status. However, resistance to change reveals low correlation with perception change communication (r=0.378), normative commitment (r=0.304), and change readiness (r=0.312). Based on the results of this research, there was no significant relationship between perceived change in status and resistance to change in this study. This is in contrast to the result of this research where there were previous researches that show that there is a positive relationship between perceived change in status and resistance to change among lecturers in SEGi University. According to the Guerrero, Sylvestre and Muresanu (2013), there is a direct relationship between perceived change in status and resistance to change. The research that had been conducted by Lee, Park and Kim (2014) had also concluded that perceived change in status is one of the factors that are affecting resistance to change. Another research by Koskinen (2015) had also found a relationship between perceived change in status and resistance to Change.

Secondly, this study found that there was a positive relationship between perception on change communication and resistance to change had been accepted. This result is similar to the research by Hedman and Valo (2015) that had supported the positive relationship between perception on change communication and resistance to change. Referring to the research conducted by Zamparini and Lurati (2012), the research outcome had also stated the positive relationship that exists between perceptions on change communication and resistance to change. In addition, Dade and Hassenzahl (2013) had concluded that perception on change communication would affect resistance to change.

The results of this research showed the positive relationship between normative commitment and resistance to change to be accepted. This result is similar to the result of previous researchers that had shown a direct relationship between normative commitment and resistance to change. According to Plimmer and Blumenfeld (2012), normative commitment had been identified as one of the factors that affect resistance to change. Furthermore, Visagie and Steyn (2011) had also stated that normative commitment could affect resistance to change. Moreover, Yam and Chan (2015) had concluded in their research that normative commitment has a direct relationship with resistance to change.

The last pair of relationship is between change readiness

and resistance to change. Study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between change readiness and resistance to change is rejected. The results re-affirmed the previous studies (Othman, Hashim and Wahid, 2012; Rusly, Corner and Sun, 2012; Vakola, 2014) that had found that there is a positive relationship between change readiness and resistance to change.

Meanwhile, Multiple Regression Analysis indicates that 21.6% of the total variance in the dependent variable (resistance to change) is explained by the total independent variables. The F statistic for the overall goodness of fit of model is 7.516, which is significant at α =0.01. After excluding the non-significant variables, the final regression model produced by enter method for resistance to change is: Resistance to Change (Y) = 1.583 + change communication (0.238) + normative commitment (0.236). The arrangement of strengths among the independent variables (perception on change communication, normative commitment, change readiness and perceive change in status) that contributes to the dependent variable (resistance to change) are normative commitment (B=.246), and perception on change communication (B=.246).

5. Conclusions

This research had focused on the factors that impact the resistance to change among lecturers in Malaysia. There are a few factors that had been identified to impact the resistance to change such as perceived change in status, perception on change communication, normative commitment and change readiness. The factors that had been selected are to be argued to have a positive relationship with resistance to change. The implications of the study are to be discussed as follows.

This research regarding the impact of resistance to change among lecturers could help the lecturers to be aware of their own attitudes that cause them to resist change. This awareness by the lecturers would assist them to be prepared when there is a sudden need for change in the workplace or the environment due to the ever-changing environment. Furthermore, the lecturers would also be able to identify those that are around them that have high tendency to resist change which would make it hard for the university to implement certain policies or change according to the environment. Based on this identification, the individual is able to place effort to change their colleagues inside the company to ensure that the resistance to change would be diminished. This research would also benefit the company in many particular areas where one of them is to be able to determine the main factors that cause the resistance to change among lecturer. Therefore, this research could be able to help the company to put effort to ensure that those factors that cause resistance to change to be addressed. Since the company is able to address the issues that are related to the resistance to change, the company would be able to solve it and change swiftly according to the demand of the environment and industry. The time and efficiency that the company could be able to save at the same time would allow the university to gain the competitive advantage over its competitors in the same education industry. The lecturers that had been identified to have high tendency to resist change could also be selected and be specifically provided with training to ensure that not all lecturers are involved which would allow the company to save the cost.

REFERENCES

[1] Abrell-vogel, C & Rowold, J. (2014). "Leaders' commitment to change and their effectiveness in change – a multilevel investigation". *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 27(6), 900-921.

[2] Appelbaum, S., Degbe, M., MacDonald, O., & Nguyen-Quang, T. (2015). Organizational outcomes of leadership style and resistance to change (Part Two). *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 47(3), 135-144. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ict-07-2013-0045

[3] Dade, A. & Hassenzahl, D. (2013). Communicating sustainability. *Int J of Sus In Higher Ed*, 14(3), 254-263. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ijshe-08-2011-0053

[4] Guerrero, S., Sylvestre, J., & Muresanu, D. (2013). Pro-diversity practices and perceived insider status. *Cross Cultural Management*, 20(1), 5-19.

[5] Haffar, M., Al-Karaghouli, W., & Ghoneim, A. (2014). An empirical investigation of the influence of organizational culture on individual readiness for change in Syrian manufacturing organizations. *Journal of Org change Mgmt*, 27(1), 5-22.

[6] Hedman, E. & Valo, M. (2015). Communication challenges facing management teams. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 36(8), 1012-1024

[7] Jaramillo, F., Mulki, J., Onyemah, V., & Rivera, M. (2012). Salesperson resistance to change: an empirical investigation of antecedents and outcomes. *Int J of Bank Marketing*, 30(7), 548-566.

[8] Koskinen, K. (2015). Identity change in organizations: a philosophical exposition. *Int J of Org Analysis*, 23(4), 621-636.

[9] Kuula, M, Putkiranta, A & Toivanen, J. (2014). "Effect of change – a longitudinal study into the changing manufacturing structures". Benchmarking: *An International Journal*, 21(3), 329-343.

[10] Langstrand, J & Elg, M. (2012). "Non-human resistance in changes towards lean". *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(6), 853 - 866.

[11] Lee, J., K. Park, N., & Kim, H. (2014). The effect of change in organizational identity on knowledge creation by mobile R&D workers in M&As. *Journal of Org Change Mgmt*, 27(1), 41-58.

[12] Othman, N., Hashim, N., & Wahid, H. (2012). Readiness towards entrepreneurship education. *Education and Training*, 54(8/9), 697-708.

[13] Pieterse, J & Caniels, M. (2012). "Professional discourses and resistance to change". *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(6), 798-818.

[14] Plimmer, G. & Blumenfeld, S. (2012). Trade union delegate leadership and membership commitment: a cross-sectional analysis. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 33(8), 750-762.

[15] Rusly, F., Corner, J., & Sun, P. (2012). Positioning change readiness in knowledge management research. *J Of Knowledge Management*, 16(2), 329-355.

[16] Sharabi, M & Harpaz, I. (2013). Changes of work values in changing economy: International Journal of Social Economics. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 40(8), 692-706.

[17] Vakola, M. (2014). What's in there for me? Individual readiness to change and the perceived impact of organizational change. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 35(3), 195-209.

[18] Val, M & Fuentes, C. (2003). "Resistance to change: a literature review and empirical study". Management Decision, 41(2), 148-155.

[19] Veil, S. & Husted, R. (2012). *Best practices as an assessment for crisis communication*. JCOM, 16(2), 131-145.

[20] Visagie, C. & Steyn, C. (2011). Organizational commitment and responses to planned organizational change: An exploratory study. Southern African Business Review, 15(3).

[21] Yam, R. & Chan, C. (2015). Knowledge sharing, commitment and opportunism in new product development. *Int Journal of Operation and Production Management*, 35(7), 1056-1074.

[22] Zamparini, A. & Lurati, F. (2012). Communicated identities of regional cluster firms. Corporate Communications: *An International Journal*, 17(4), 498-513.