

# Using Kotter's theory to lead change at University of Khartoum: A qualitative study

Saifaldin Idris Onia

*Department of Foundations of Education & Educational Administration, Faculty of Education,  
University of Khartoum, Sudan  
E-mail: saifonia89@gmail.com*

## Abstract

Changes in Universities need to be prepared, enforced, and sustained to turn the universities into institutions that can function effectively and efficiently. Kotter's change model is one of the most widely recognised models for leading change, and yet there are few case studies have been used this model in the academic literature. Therefore, this study aimed to test Kotter's change model at University of Khartoum. To do so, a qualitative research design was followed. To collect data a semi-structured interview was used with 11 leaders in the University of Khartoum. The thematic analysis has shown that create an environment for change depends on create urgency, and develop a vision for change that convinces staff members to participate in the change process. It is evident that the University of Khartoum has engaged and enabled the staff members in each college and work unit to embrace the change. Besides, the analysis indicated that for the change to be implemented and sustained it needs to removing obstacles and making it the university culture. The paper recommended that the importance of change must be embedded in the vision of the University of Khartoum to create a strong climate for change in the University environment.

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Leading change, Kotter's change model, Thematic analysis, University of Khartoum.*

## Introduction

Change is an inherent phenomenon of human nature, mainly because we live in an age of many challenges and changes in all areas of life: educational, cultural, political, social, economic, etc. Change defines organizations' conversion about certain things from their current situations into other situations (Gilia, 2016). Change is a process through specific stages as in the management process, which always starts from planning, implementation, and ends with an evaluation (Rozikin, Muslim, & Pratama, 2021). Change presents policies and practices that deal with dynamic cultural factors (AACRAO, 2020). Therefore, organizations need to change processes to be nimble, innovating and introducing more sustainable methods and procedures (Redding, 2012; Helvacı, & Kiliçoğlu, 2018). Similarly, higher education institutions (HEIs) are not immune to these changes as they work in an ever-changing environment: information, technological, administrative, etc. Cardona, Pardo, and Coscollar (2020) mentioned that HEIs have gone beyond traditional missionary axes such as training, the creation of knowledge and social projection. Hence, there are a number of factors contributing to the occurrence of change such as globalization, liberalization and information technology (Mukhtar, & Fook, 2020). Temple (2011) stated that universities are also under a series of changes to guarantee their contribution and societal relevance like other organizations. Ramaley (2014) confirmed that Universities are changing in today's world because the world itself is changing, and complex problems confront us daily.

Universities now find themselves in a new era, and the environment in which they operate is confronted with many arrays of challenges and forces for change (Zhu & Kurtay, 2018). In this respect, the pressure for change on universities can come from both within and outside, social and demographic developments, new patterns of employment, developments in technology, and globalization (Beycioglu, & Kondakci, 2021; Atasoy, 2020). Internal factors include the need to improve the quality of student learning, staff development, and

improved learning experience; whereas, the pressure from the outside involves improving access, competition, and increased students' expectations, as well as contributions to the economic and social development (Fullan, 2007). Kondakci and Kurtay (2019) discussed many of the pressures for a change facing HEIs. They stress the need for effective leadership to respond effectively to the change (Lamidi & Williams, 2014). They also show that significant changes in Universities need to be prepared, enforced, and sustained to turn the universities into institutions that can function effectively and efficiently in the tumultuous climate (Ghasemy & Hussin, 2014).

In Sudan, the higher education (HE) movement has witnessed significant change and development. As universities have an important place among the national institutions working for building human beings, they also contribute to the growth and development of society through their intellectual and scientific influence (Abdalla, 2016). Sporn (2001) asserts that the changing role of the state, restructuring of national economies, shifts in demography, new technologies, increased globalization, and other factors may be causes of environmental dynamism and changes in HE. As a result, policymakers in the HE sector increasingly recognize the need to adopt change in the educational processes. Change that can be implemented by all Sudanese universities to significantly improve the quality of education and stay healthy in the education sector, particularly after the significant increase in demand for university education. In this regard, Hooper and Potter (2000) defined change leadership as creating a vision for the university, making strategies that enable that vision to become a reality, and ensuring that the people in the university are driving towards the same goals.

The importance of leading change in universities has been the topic of many scholars such as; Al-Asbahi (2007) proposed a model for leading change in Yemeni public universities in light of contemporary reality and trends. Saqqa (2011) identified the skills required by academic leaders to lead change and the degree of their practice of those skills at Umm Al-Qura University. Al-Lihyani (2011) found that heads of departments in the Faculties of Education practice change to a high degree. Equally, Abu Samra (2014) reached to the degree of practicing change leadership to the heads of academic departments in the Palestinian universities was a high degree. Al-Hubob (2012) recommended activating the university's role in spreading the culture of change.

Furthermore, Al-Qarni (2016) revealed that the reality of the heads of academic departments at Tabuk University for the change leadership from the viewpoint of faculty members was high. Another study conducted by Al-Kurdi (2017) proposed strategy for the development of change leadership in the HEIs in Gaza governorates in the light of the principles of sustainable development. In addition, Al-Thubaiti (2017) aimed to determine the degree of change leadership in educational administration departments in Saudi universities in light of the Kotter model of change. The Kotter model of change in its eight steps was used with a descriptive survey approach. The study results indicated that the degree of change leadership in educational administration departments in Saudi universities was moderate. The results showed that the first step of the Kotter model for change, "create a sense for an urgent change", came with a high degree, while the degree of the other seven steps of the Kotter model of change came in a medium degree.

Kotter (1996), in his theory, discussed the practices of leading change in terms of creating the climate for change by creating a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, developing and communicating a vision, engaging and enabling the whole organization by removing obstacles, and implementing and sustaining change by building on change. Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, and Liu (2008) proved that most of the change leadership behaviors are communicating the plan for the change, building a guiding coalition, developing a sense of urgency or a compelling rationale for the change. Robbins (2001) (as cited in Genie, 2019) stated that building and communicating a shared vision, creating a 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.

Based on Kotter's leading change theory, this study has sought to test Kotter's three dimensions of leading change at University of Khartoum. With this purpose, the following basic questions were developed to guide the study; first: how can created a climate to lead change at University of Khartoum? Second: how can engage and enable the whole organization in the change at University of Khartoum? Third: to what the extent change can be implemented and sustained at University of Khartoum?

## Literature Review

This study uses as its theoretical framework John Kotter's Leading change theory. This model can be classified into three phases: create a climate for change, engage and enable the whole organization, and implementing and sustaining change (Kang'ethe, 2014). Likewise, the model is divided into three phases to help leaders deal with the challenges inherent in any initiative for Change (Campbell, 2008). Kotter pointed out that before progressing to the next stage, each step needs to be completed fully. Skipping measures create the illusion of pace and never yield a satisfactory result. He also noted that the eight steps could be classified into three phases: Steps 1 to three (create a sense of urgency, making the directional team, developing a change vision) aimed to create a climate for change. Steps 4 to six (communicating an idea, removing obstacles, induce short-term wins) are aimed to engage and enable the whole organization, while Steps 7 & 8 (building on change, make it stick) for implementing and sustaining Change (Kang'ethe, 2014).

The literature is full of glowing reviews of Kotter's work, and it is cited frequently as a leading change model (Farkas, 2013). Kotter's (1996) model is effective in leading change in academic organizations. It provides a template that leaders can understand and consistently implement such that the success of the planned change is achieved (Kisunzu, 2011). Haskins (2009) further tested the effectiveness of Kotter's (1996) model for leading change through the analysis of its sequences as a necessary progression for implementing the desired initiative. Similarly, Taylor (2010) joins other researchers who have tested this model for its effectiveness. Progression through its steps effectively provided the template for leaders to use as they implemented the planned change to seek accreditation. Additionally, Hurd (2007) found Kotter's (1996) model for leading change was effective when applied to a university's initiative toward internationalization. More recently, Baird (2018) examined the effects of John Kotter's for Successful Change framework and strategies in systems implementation in the education environment. The efficacy of Kotter's tactics used by their administrative team to promote social change was investigated in this study.

In higher education (HE), Kotter's model has been used as a framework for analyzing already existing case studies focused on change (Farkas, 2013). It has been used as a valuable framework within the university to identify faculty developers as facilitators of change (Diamond, 2005; Dawson, Mighty & Britnell, 2010). Dwyer (2005) described how Kotter's model fits well with the process that was used at her college to overcome obstacles to changing the culture of assessment. Also, for supporting students' transition from university to career (Heathcote & Taylor, 2007). Uys (2010) used Kotter's framework to incorporate Charles Sturt University's open-source learning management system. Increasingly, Carneiro (2010) used it to analyze the effectiveness of strategic change and innovation on staff in HE in general. Further, to change the medical evaluation system of the University Of Puerto Rico School Of Dental Medicine (Guzmán et al., 2011). All of these case studies highlight the value of Kotter's change theory in different HE fields to direct improvement practices.

Therefore, this study is based on three dimensions of leading change by Kotter (1996); creating the climate for change; engaging and enabling the whole organization; and implementing and sustaining change. Hence, the three basic dimensions of Kotter's change theory, whereby this study is mainly focused on, are discussed below.

### **Creating a climate for the 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). Also, converting the importance of acting immediately by showing potential threats and scenarios showing what would happen in the future if the changes would not happen (Kotter, 2007).

### **Engaging and enabling the organization**

Kotter 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). According to Kotter, 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 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). According to Kotter, an organization needs to abolish all obstacles that would interfere with the change (Kotter, 2012), is everything in line with the vision? the organizational structure, job descriptions, compensation systems, and performance (Kotter, 2007). Scott and Asavisanu (2021) proved that change empowers individual and groups to scrutinize internal and external conditions, interpret threats and evaluate alternatives. It is also stated that making radical changes on organization's own strategy and structure is important for evading the threats from surroundings (Coban, Ozdemir, & Pisapia, 2019).

### **Implementing and sustaining the change**

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 that 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). 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). The organization has to identify the people who are resisting the change and get them the needed tools, methods or support that would make it easier for them to change, and solving the problems that are caused by the resistance (Kotter, 2007). Thus, key agents should stay on board, new employees should be trained in new processes and attitudes, and awareness of the change's importance should be maintained among all employees (Vlachopoulos, 2021).

### **Methods**

This study was designed as a qualitative research which is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., nonnumerical) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Gay et al., 2012). Through a qualitative method, the data will be collected through direct participation, and an in-depth interview (Bishaw & Getahun, 2014). It provides an opportunity for the researcher to involve the respondents in projective techniques. Therefore, this method was used in this study through interviews with the high administration at the University of Khartoum to gather descriptive information about their attitudes, opinions, and ideas concerning the variable under study.

The participants for in-depth interviews were selected purposely in a qualitative method that helped a researcher pick units from a population they are interested in studying, based on the researcher's subjective judgment. The purposive sampling was used with the 11 participants, including college deans, deputy deans, department heads in the University of Khartoum. The participants were anonymized by using codes instead of their real names.

Consequently, to ask additional probe questions to analyze the issue in-depth and understand the reasons behind participants' answers, a semi-structured interview is used in this study. This type of interview was appropriate for research questions because it gave the participants considerable liberty in expressing their definition of the presented situation on their terms. Also, it allowed the researcher to prepare questions ahead of time according to an interviewee's answers. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to analyze the data thematically.

The content validity, which referred to the appropriateness of the content of instruments, was used. According to Peter (1981) and McGarland & Kimberly (2005), a measurement instrument is valid when

measuring what it is supposed to measure. To check the validity of the interview of this study, the researcher gave it to some experts in the field of educational leadership and educational research methodology to examine the items and identify the specific items that instrument are supposed to measure and check the clarity of language that has been used.

The researcher conducted interviews with the participants from the leaders in the University of Khartoum, in their places, and in their free time to cover all the desired questions and get more information. The meeting was organized with the participants to obtain consent from them to participate in the interview session, after explaining the research objectives and clarifying their information for the study only. In addition, the researcher engaged in securing data by writing what the interviewees responded to the interview guide questions. The researcher organized the participants' perceptions and prepared them for the analysis.

To analyse the answers of the semi-structured interview, the researcher used the thematic analysis method. The reason for using thematic analysis it led a researcher to define, organizing, and providing insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set; therefore, classify those critical for the answer to a specific research question. The six steps that researcher followed in thematic analysis method were: first, the researcher familiarized himself with the data that collected from participants; to understand the participants' real social experience involves qualitative data analytical approaches that decide upon the themes, under which the data will be labelled, sorted, compared, and synthesized (Jane Ritchie & Jane Lewis, 2003). Second, initial codes were generated from data; each participant's answers were separated into meaningful categories, named, and coded as P1, P2, P3, to P11 where "P" refers to the participant. Third, the researcher searched for themes. Four, the potential themes were reviewed. Five, themes were defined and named; without thematic categories, the researcher has nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Six, producing the report (the findings); when introducing results, the researcher used different ways to keep participants' anonymity and privacy, using general terms like one dean, deputy dean, one department head, one professor, etc.

## Results and Discussion

Using the qualitative data collection procedures described in the method of the study, qualitative data were collected from prospective leaders through a semi-structured interview at the University of Khartoum. The data analysis was made to produce a more complete picture of using Kotter's theory to lead change at University of Khartoum. This part of the study presents step by step the findings of the qualitative data analysis made on data gathered on leading change at University of Khartoum.

The analysis of data revealed that most of the participants agreed that the University of Khartoum practiced leading change by Kotter's theory in one way or another. Among the interviewees, one department head (*P11*) starts his response explaining that the leading change process in the University of Khartoum seem reasonable in the vertical level for the top of the management and the leadership and horizontal where staff members in each work unit are involving in the change process. He said:

As a result of leading change process on both the vertical and horizontal levels, the University of Khartoum made its decisions by empowering employees in the university, and encourages them to feel delegated and make essential decisions in their everyday jobs.

The above quote informed that there is some degree of autonomy to formulating decisions that contribute to the change process. Moreover, one participant who was a deputy-dean (*P4*) stated that the University of Khartoum represents in its different colleges and work units gives staff members opportunity to express their opinions and ideas in making decisions. He mentioned:

At the University of Khartoum, change leadership is being practiced in a medium-sized community. I partially agree that there is a need to create a climate for change and implement and sustain change. I firmly believe that staff members should be involved in decision making, change management, and the development of the University.

From the above participant remark, the Kotter's leading change dimensions are reflected which are create a climate for change in the university, involving staff members in the change process, and implementing and sustaining change. These dimensions are presented below.

### *Create a climate for change*

The first most important theme that emerged from the interview was creating a climate change. Setting the stage for change is the first step in creating an environment conducive to change. In this regard, one professor (P1) reflects that create an environment for change depends on create urgency, and create a vision for change that gives the university a picture of what the future will look like after the transition is made. He stated that:

The scientific side of leading change at the University of Khartoum is needed by selecting appropriate leaders to lead change based on specific criteria. All staff members participate in the development process. He explained that establishing an environment for change requires following scientific steps of change to convince staff members to participate; otherwise, they will resist it and withdraw their support for specific plans or ideas.

Related to create a climate for change, leaders need to spread the culture of change, so it necessary to develop values and establish new norms and rituals that constitute the culture that shapes and encourages staff behaviour. It sets the tone for how we work and how we relate to others in the university. Likewise, leaders need to form a powerful guiding coalition; they need a shared goal to make the needed change happen. To this end, one professor (P2) detailed that:

*At the University of Khartoum, there is some leadership transition. Leading change process must disseminate a changing culture among employees by making the new state more secure than the old make. He added culture is very important to know each other and share values and norms between the staff. In addition, in part of disseminating culture, the university needs to organize training courses for the leaders and staff members to lead change.*

It is clear from interviewees' reflections that create an environment for change depends on create urgency, and develop a vision for change that convinces staff members to participate in the change process.

### *Engage staff members in change*

To change to be successful, communicating the change to all staff members is very important and the communications about the urgent need for change must be honest. The interviewees mentioned that leaders must be self-aware and consider their own and their followers' emotions. They must comprehend what motivates their behaviour and why certain factors are essential. They stated that they would be unable to adequately convey the vision to all staff members without this understanding. They added leaders should be the first to establish bridges between the university staff members through careful and effective communication. To show how communication works, one dean (P3) said:

*I have appointed as a dean this year, so I came with a plan for change and development in my faculty. So, the first thing; I started the communication with all staff members to solve their problems and keep them up to date. When I did that I found collaboration to work in different constitutions of the faculty. Therefore, I can say there is planning for practicing change and involvement of staff members in the decision making and leading change process.*

As put in the above quote, the researcher could understand that change needs to be planned first and communicated to different parts of the university. Besides, the collaboration between all staff members in the university and each college and work unit.

Furthermore, for staff members to be engaged in the change process; most participants agreed that staff members need to be given some degree of autonomy and responsibility for decision-making in their daily work. They mentioned that staff members at the University of Khartoum work hard to fulfil the university's vision. That is delegating authority and decision-making, sharing information can empower staff to work toward their goals. One department head (P8) stated that:

The University of Khartoum represents in its staff members work hard in the change process and development of the university. The University seeks earnestly to increase its innovative and productive abilities to fulfil the needs of society and requirements of the change and development. Leaders need to empower staff and give them a sort of autonomy in their daily activities.

Moreover, to eliminate staff discouragement in the change process, it is necessary to prevent the loss of momentum and keep everyone informed and engaged. Related to this, one interviewee (P10) detailed

“leading change is a strategy for achieving objectives. To accomplish this, I collaborate closely with my staff and keep them updated on university decisions. As a result, staff members are involved in all constitutions and the change process”.

It is evident that the University of Khartoum has engaged and enabled the staff members and the whole organization in each college and work unit to embrace the change and communicates the change before implementation.

### *Implementing the change*

Implementing and sustaining change is the third dimension of leading change by Kotter's theory. Most interviewees agreed that at the University of Khartoum there is a slow pace of implement significant changes. One interviewee (P6) reflected that there is practicing change at the University of Khartoum, but more minor than required because is slowly. Also, most participants agreed that minor changes in the university are often the result of a decision-making process. In this respect, one deputy-dean (P5) reflected that:

It appears that the process of leading change at the University of Khartoum is progressing well, but at a slow and medium pace in terms of implementing change decisions. Because you see in the University of Khartoum some staffs do not accept new ideas; they claim that they want to maintain the historic situation of the university as it is. However, I believe implementing change in the university needs time.

More similar to the above description, the other interviewee detailed that removing obstacles can empower the staff members to execute the vision and help the change move forward. One department head (P7) mentioned:

Leading change at the University of Khartoum is going on slow steps, despite engaging staff members in the change process and enabling them to make and change to the better. It requires exerting great efforts and removing obstacles to sustain the concept of change leadership and make it prevalent culture among staff members in all faculties of the University.

The above quotes are likely to indicate that for the change to be implemented and sustained it needs to removing obstacles and making it the university culture.

Thus, depending upon the data gained from the interview concerning leading change at the University of Khartoum, it could be possible to conclude that, it seems that the process of leading change at the University of Khartoum going well, but slowly, despite engaging staff members in the change process and enabling them in the decision making and change to the better. It requires exerting great efforts and removes obstacles to sustain the leading change and make it a prevalent culture among staff members in all faculties of the University.

## **Discussion**

Kotter (1996) in his theory discussed the leading change process in terms of creating the climate for change by creating a sense of urgency, forming a 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. With these dimensions of leading change process, this study intended to investigate the use of Kotter's theory to lead change at the University of Khartoum. Mainly, the investigation was done focusing on dimensions supposed to indicate the status of the leading change process. These dimensions include creating a climate for change, engage and enable the whole organization, and implementing and sustaining change. In this section, the findings of the study are discussed below.

According to the findings of the present study, most of the participants agreed that the University of Khartoum practiced leading change in one way or another. They agree that there is a need to create a climate for change and implement and sustain change. They believe that staff members should be involved in decision making, change management, and the development of the University of Khartoum. Therefore, there is some degree of autonomy for staff members to express their views and to take part in formulating decisions that contribute to the leading change process.

Supporting the result of current study, Saqqa (2011) aimed to identify the skills required by academic leaders to lead change and the degree of their practice of those skills at Umm Al-Qura University. The study reached to the high degree of leading change process of the educational leaders from the faculty members' point of view. Similarly, Al-Lihyani (2011) aimed to identify the degree of department heads' practice of change leadership from the point of view of deans, department heads, and faculty members. The most important results the heads of departments in the Faculties of Education practice leading change to a high degree. The empirical study of Abu Samra (2014) also aimed to identify the degree of practicing change leadership to the heads of academic departments in the Palestinian universities. The findings included the degree of practicing change leadership to the heads of academic departments in Palestinian universities from their perspective was a high degree of approval. Another study by Al-Qarni (2016) aimed to recognize the reality of the heads of academic departments at Tabuk University to leading change from the viewpoint of faculty members. The study revealed that the existence of the practice of the leaders of academic departments at Tabuk University for the leading change from the perspective of faculty members was high.

Contrary to the result of the study, Al-Thubaiti (2017) aimed to determine the degree of leading change in educational administration departments in Saudi universities in light of the Kotter model of change. The Kotter model of change in its eight dimensions was used, with a descriptive survey approach. The study results indicated that the degree of leading change in educational administration departments in Saudi universities was moderate.

Hereunder, the results of dimensions of leading change process, which include creating a climate for change; engage and enable the whole organization, and implementing and sustaining change are discussed in detail.

As indicated in the findings of the study, create an environment for change depends on create urgency, and develop a vision for change that convinces staff members to participate in the change process. The result of this study agreed with Al-Thubaiti (2017) outcome in that the first dimension of the Kotter model for change, "create a sense for an urgent change," came from Saudi universities with a high degree. This can be explained by the fact that the University of Khartoum seeks to make it clear to those in each college, department why the change is necessary. The interview results also indicated that establishing an environment for change needs to follow scientific steps of change to convince staff members to participate in it; otherwise they will resist it and withdraw their support for specific plans or ideas. Therefore, create an environment for change depends on create urgency, and create a vision for change that gives the university a picture of what the future looks like after the change is implemented.

In the same way, Burke (2010) stated that scanning the environment and gathering information, recognizing the need for change, providing clarity of vision and direction, communicating the need for change, attracting employees' attention, and overcoming resistance are fundamentals of change leadership behaviours. Gill (2002) identifies change leadership behaviours such as providing a vision, role modelling, promoting shared values, developing an implementation strategy, and empowering, motivating, and inspiring employees. 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 example is vital for a permanent change (Kotter, 2012). Accordingly, develop a clear vision lead to establishing a strong environment for change. Therefore, change leadership is practiced by building a broad coalition upfront to support the change. Supporting this idea, Sidorko (2008) showed the need to create numerous leadership coalitions on multiple occasions to tackle various aspects of the change process.



Consequently, the University of Khartoum has created a climate for change by making it clear to those in the unit why the change is necessary. This can be explained by the fact that resistance to change is a common phenomenon for individuals in any organization. Therefore, leaders need to convince the followers of 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 toward their main goals (Kotter, 2007). In this respect, interview results indicated that leading change process need to disseminate the culture of change between staff members by making the new state more comfortable than the old one. So, developing values and establishing new norms and rituals that constitute the culture that shapes and encourages staff behaviour. Besides, leaders need to form a powerful guiding coalition; they need a shared goal to make the needed change happen. Magnúsdóttir (2018) revealed that change would not occur if only a few people are on board with the idea.

Based on the findings obtained in the current study, the University of Khartoum has engaged and enabled the staff members and the whole organization in each college and work unit to embrace the change. Supporting this, Penrod and Harbor (1998) stated that the change would not come unless the frontline staff engages in adaptive behavior of change. Zec and Shurrab (2013) said that enlists others it may clear that it takes a long time to achieve significant and severe transformations. However, it is quite possible to avoid employee resistance over a long period required to complete such a long transition successfully.

The results also indicated that for staff members to be engaged in the change process; most participants agreed that staff members must be given autonomy and decision-making authority in their daily work. They mentioned that staff members at the University of Khartoum work hard to fulfill the university's vision. That is delegating management and decision-making, sharing information can empower staff to work toward their goals. They pointed that without collaboration, they will not communicate the vision effectively to all staff members. This indicates that there is communication and cooperation among all staff members in the university and each college and work unit.

In line with what was stated above, Bordia et al. (2004) said 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 positive or negative responses to changes in the organization (Nelissen & Van, 2008). Kotter (2012) confirmed that leaders are also critical in helping workers resolve their challenges during implementation. Kotter (1995) further states that leaders must find ways to communicate the information "broadly and dramatically" to keep the employees up to date. Therefore, establishing a transparent communication system in the university between staff members is vital for successful changes and leads to avoiding many troubles. Accordingly, engaging and enabling the organization to lead change was practiced in the University of Khartoum by inspiring staff in the work unit to embrace the change and communicates the change before implementation.

Furthermore, most interviewees agreed that in the University of Khartoum there is a slow pace of implement significant changes. They stated that it appears that the process of leading change at the University of Khartoum is progressing well, but at a slow and medium pace in terms of implementing change decisions. So, they believe implementing change in the university needs time. Similarly, one participant mentioned that change leadership at the University of Khartoum going on slow steps, despite engaging staff members in the change process and enabling them in the decision making and change to the better. It requires exerting great efforts and removing obstacles to sustain the concept of change leadership and make it prevalent culture among staff members in all faculties of the University. It is likely to indicate that removing obstacles can empower the staff members in the change process.

Supporting the above opinion, Kumar and Kumar (2017) stated that empowerment seems to be a powerful management tool used to exchange the shared vision that the organization expects to materialize into common goals. The truth is that empowerment can be used as an expression to describe various plans concisely, implying that empowerment is a fine object that creates a win-win situation for both employees and leaders. Ozaralli (2003) mentioned that where there is a commitment to change, employee empowerment becomes a function of transformational leadership. Therefore, it is possible to reflect that empower the staff members can assist to execute the change vision, and it can help the change move forward.

However, the University of Khartoum needs to provide the resources required to support the change implementation. Besides, keep everyone informed during the change implementation. This result can be explained by the fact that organizations' successful implementation of change requires a wide range of facilities and leadership behaviors. Some of the behaviors have to do with politics and administration, while others have to do with inspiring, helping, and directing people. Yukl (2010) elaborated that, those who initially embrace change would need support and assistance to maintain their excitement and confidence as challenges and setbacks inevitably arise.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to shed light on use of Kotter's theory to lead change in the University of Khartoum in terms of three dimensions: create a climate for change, engage and enable the whole organization, and implementing and sustaining change. Based on the study's findings, the University of Khartoum has used Kotter's theory to lead change. That is mean; the University of Khartoum has developed a clear vision for what will be achieved by different colleges, departments, and work units. In addition, the University creates strategic alignment among all elements of the university and encourages the group to work together as a team. Besides, recognizing staff members who contribute to the success of the change implementation. Hence, the implications of these findings might be adding to the understanding of how administrators and leaders perceive their readiness and ability to lead change initiatives, specifically for leadership within faculties' deans and the departments. The most important is the University of Khartoum ready and can receive and implement changes.

Based on the study's findings, the study recommended it necessary to formulate a clear change vision because vision is crucial for the change initiatives success. University leaders or college officials should repeat the change vision in discussions with staff members on all levels, and leading by example is essential for a permanent change. To get staff members involved in the change vision, the university or college officials should frequently communicate and implement the change vision into the day-to-day work. Accordingly, the importance of change must be embedded in the vision, strategies, and objectives of the University of Khartoum to create a strong climate for change in the University environment.

Furthermore, the study recommended empowering staff members in the change process; empowering staff is very important in moving forward. Hence, university leaders or college officials should delegate authority and decision-making, sharing information that can empower staff members to change goals. The university leaders should also inspire staff members to work as one unit to develop the university; support collaboration between staff members to achieve goals for progress, as well as removing challenges and solving problems which can be resulted in helping staff members fulfill the vision and move change forward. Besides, staff members need to be given some degree of autonomy and responsibility for decision-making in their daily work.

In addition to sustaining change culture; because culture has a vital role in the performance of any organization. So, maintain a changing culture in the university sets the tone for how we work and how we relate to others in the university. Therefore, leaders need to spread the changing culture, so it is necessary to develop values and establish new norms and rituals that constitute the culture that shapes and encourages staff behavior. The university leaders and college officials should play a role model in embedding the change in their behaviors. Likewise, leaders should continue to reinforce the right behaviors that motivate and inspire the staff members to accomplish the change strategy.

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