CHANGE MANAGEMENT AT CAMBODIAN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: APPRAISING CHANGE ACCEPTANCE FROM CULTURE, TRUST, PROCESS AND ELEMENTS

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Abstract: This study aims to appraise teaching staff's acceptance with organizational trust, culture, process and elements, followed by an attempt to construct a model to predict change acceptance. This study employed online survey questionnaires for data collection. Participants in this research are teaching staff experiencing the adoption of new technology change, Blended Learning, at two public higher education institutions in Cambodia. The study found that majority of teaching staff expressed their support towards the change program, yet not all of them had adopted such changes in their work. The analyses of these six-paired variables-change acceptance, trust, task and relationship cultures, change process, strategy and technology-confirm positive correlations. There is also sufficient evidence proving that change acceptance can be predicted from these early dimensions, and relationship culture is found to be a significant predictor.

Keywords: change acceptance; change management; organizational culture, higher education institution

1   INTRODUCTION

The proposition of change management has been a lively debate within private sector due to competitive and globalized environment. In such a context, those who cannot embrace the change would be left behind and obsolete. Later, the term also appears in public sector, particularly in public higher education institutions (HEIs) (Smuts, Lalitha & Khan, 2017; Stoltenkamp & Kasuto, 2011). Many HIEs have embraced the transformation in many senses to adhere to the current development and needs of the market. For instance, the adoption of technology change in academic program is trendy for education institutions, and this shift is even more ideal as the world is encountering Covid-19 pandemic.

Among biggest challenges facing change adoption in HEIs and at other sectors alike is the underestimation of change and getting people on board (Kotter, 1996; Stoltenkamp & Kasuto, 2011). With numerous studies looking at this

issue from a cognitive and demographic dimension concerning age, tenure and education (Di Fabio & Gori, 2016; Iverson, 1996; Kunze, Boehm & Bruch, 2013), few of them touched on underrated variables such as culture and trust. It is acknowledged that different institutions embrace different culture and practice. People mindset and behaviour are heavily influenced by working culture and their relationship with manager (Alas & Vadi, 2006; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Rashid & Rahman, 2004; Shoba & Prabu, 2016).

In addition, discussion on technology change would not be completed without the consideration of process, human, strategy and technology (Andersen, 2018; Orlikowski & Yates, 2006; Som, Chan & Dumitraşcu, 2020). As previous papers argue, [the researchers] emphasize the relationship between change and its process, effective strategy, and availability of technology. This paper is a subsequence study of the researchers to test the variables quantitatively. The main objectives of this paper are therefore to assess teaching staff's perception on the acceptance of change program, working cultures, trust, change process, strategy and technology support at their institutions. This paper also aims to investigate the relationship among these variables, together with an attempt to construct regression model to predict change acceptance of teaching staff.

The following parts begin with the literature review on the relevant theories and variables, and the presentation of scale construction for measurement. It proceeds further with the methodology part, and research finding. Before last is the discussion of the findings against the existing literature. As other papers do, this paper ends with a conclusion.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Acceptance of change has been viewed differently. Iverson (1996), for example, revealed that the acceptance of change is determined by the organizational commitment, harmonious climate in the industry, level of education, job motivation, satisfaction, and job security. The author however confirmed that the same dependent variable is negatively affected by union membership, role of conflict, tenure and opportunities. Beyond this, Fabio and Gori (2016) have constructed Acceptance Change Scale (ACS) through psychometric approach to measure acceptance level, consisting of five dimensions, including predisposition to change, support for change, change seeking, positive reaction to change and cognitive flexibility.

Earlier than the above was the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Though having been adapted and developed many times (Szajna, 1996), this theory has long been a dominant theory, explaining the acceptance of technology use or change. According to TAM, the attitude towards adopting such changes is determined by the perceive ease of use and perceive usefulness, with the latter influences the attitude towards using technology as twice as the earlier (Davis, 1989).

Aside from the earlier, Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory coined by Rogers (1962) also took the stage. To explain the phenomenon of technology adoption, DOI suggests other five factors, consisting of "(1) relative advantage –the degree to which an innovation is seen as better than the idea, program, or product it replaces; (2) compatibility –how consistent the innovation is with the values, experiences, and needs of the potential adopters; (3) complexity –how difficult the innovation is to understand and/or use; (4) triability –the extent to which the innovation can be tested or experimented with before a commitment to adopt is made and (5) observability –the extent to which the innovation provides tangible results" (cited in LaMorte, 2019, p.1)

While earlier takes have largely been influenced by cognitive and technological aspects, "change acceptance" in this study is operationalized as "the support from teaching staff for change, and the adoption of new

technology as change". Informed by literature and field work at two public Cambodian HEIs, this study investigates change acceptance from a different hypothesis, claiming the acceptance of change is influenced by predominant culture, trust towards middle managers, the clear process of change and strategy implemented by the management team, and technology support.

2.1   Organizational culture

The relationship between organizational culture and change is inseparable as manifested in various studies (Tierney, 1988; Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Fralinger and Olson, 2007). Study conducted by Kezar and Eckel (2002) reveals the relationship between both variables, proving also that institutional culture could determine change strategy or the process that things worked. According to the authors, culture existing in each and every institution varies due to its natures and types as defined distinctly by various scholars. While corporate firms conform to one own culture (which is profit-oriented), HEIs too are also seen to be conforming to their own unique culture given their societal and educational mission (Gaus, Tang & Akil, 2019). Commons to this Bergquist's archetype of culture are collegial, managerial, developmental and negotiating culture, found mostly in academic organization (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Collegial culture works well when applies a sort of centralized process and strategy, and most of the planning is made from department or higher level. Davies et al. (2007) found that HEI embedded with collegial culture tends to be successful when change program is introduced. This is because all decisions related to academic matters are made by a collegial group.

To understand the relationship, Alas and Vadi (2006) also conducted an empirical study among forty-four Estonian organizations. Finding reveals congruency with early takes, confirming the relationship between organizational change and employees' behaviour toward change. In the study, Alas and Vadi (2006)

categorized culture into two types—task-orientation and relationship-orientation, both of which respectively reflect mercenary and network culture proposed by Rashid et al. (2004). The relationship-orientation working culture and staff attitude to change is found to have a relationship, particularly within the old group of workers who were formerly living under Soviet Union. The relationship among old workers in the organization more or less has influenced on the attitude to change, as these people would trust the information that they get from people they are close to. Different from the old employees, young generation of Estonian born during the turbulence period and who worked during 90s is found to be influenced by task-orientation culture, a practice that prioritizes the results than relationship.

2.2   Trust

Building trust with subordinators is not only a task that managers should do, but is also a main mechanism to control and direct the prior group (Long, 2018). The Estonia case again explains the construct of trust which is rooted deeply in many cultures, not just that in the former Soviet Union (Alas & Vadi, 2006). To begin change by way of conveying the so-called change message may not be effective enough in these societies if trust between managers and the followers is not strong. This closeness helps to ensure that subordinators buy in the change efforts, even without question. While this case is applicable to the elderly Estonians who have gone through the socialist period, the authors noted, it seems not so true for the younger generation. Rather, this later group enthusiast more about learning new things through change.

A myriad of studies has viewed organizational trust with resistance to change. Saruhan (2013) conducts a study investigating that relationship and found that these variables are negative corelated. The finding is also supported by Shoba and Prabu's (2016) work. Within the dimension of trust, Saruhan (2013)

simplify it as the connection between employees and organization, employees and supervisor, and employees and employees. The author also found that the variable of organizational trust also has significant contribution to the prediction of resistance to change.

In this study, the instrument (measuring trust between ground staff and middle manager) is adopted from the scale developed by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) and was originally constructed by Gabarro and Athos (1976). This instrument was applied and tested in many relevant studies which showed reliable results (Cheung, Wong and Yuan, 2017; Ababneh, 2020).

2.3   Change model/process

Many theorists have proposed change model as process for implementation. The earliest and common one is the planned change. This was proposed by Lewin's (1951) who argues that change involves a three-stage process including unfreezing current behaviour, moving to the new behaviour, and refreezing the new behaviour. Developed from this, Judson (1991) model to change contains merely five steps which include (1) analysing change priorities (2) communicating the change (3) gaining acceptance of new behaviour (4) changing from a status quo to a desired state and (5) consolidating and institutionalizing the new state.

A year later, Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992) coined ten commandments on how to plan a change process, which include (1) analyse the need for change, (2) create a shared vision, (3) separate from past, (4) create a sense of urgency, (5) support a strong leadership role, (6) line up political sponsorship, (7) craft an implementation plan, (8) develop enabling structures, (9) communicate and involve people, (10) reinforce and institutionalize change. Seeing Kanter's ten commandment too rigid and complex, Kotter (1996) adopted another model covering only eight steps, including (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) creating a

guiding coalition, (3) developing a vision and strategy, (4) communicating the change vision, (5) empowering employees for broad-based action, (6) generating short-term wins, (7) consolidating gains and producing more change, (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture.

Despite having different process of completing change, all the models fall into common significant process, covering planning, communicating, implementing and institutionalizing the change. Having considered these, researcher has synthesized such processes for questionnaires construction.

2.4   Technology

Once the variables "technology" is discussed, many underlying attributes can be determined. By this, researcher has operationalized the term as "tools, skills and system". This definition reflects the work of Orlikowski and Yates (2006) who mentioned the three elements as "dealing with materiality, focusing on practice and making things workable". Technology as tools or materials simply implies that institution must ensure sufficiency of devices or technology equipment to make it inclusive and useable for all. Skills to operate the new tools are compulsory due to the fact that failures of change programs were mostly recorded to have been caused by inadequate support and training which finally lead to resistance and other challenges (Khan et al., 2012). Furthermore, technology as a change agent should not be viewed as a tool per se, but as also the system. This simply means that once change is proposed, the change needs some other supporting artefacts as a system. The move to integrate technology in education, for example, inevitably requires the improvement of the existing ICT infrastructure such as internet bandwidth, speed, connectivity, technological support and maintenance, without which success is not realizable.

2.5 Strategy

Regardless of trivial many, two main components for strategizing the change would be "Open Participatory Approach-OPA" and "Claiming Short-term Win". Early findings indicate that managers have not open enough for functional staff to involve in planning the change, which finally resulted in change resistance (Alas and Sharifi, 2002; Marchesoni, Axelsson, Fältholm & Lindberg, 2016). Being open to ground staff is very necessary as this would help the manager to assimilate and gather the right people on board (Stoltenkamp and Kasuto, 2011). The bigger the space is, the more likely that change is successful. Alas and Sharifi (2002) report that managers in Estonia, to deal with resistance, have allowed employees to involve in every level of the organization. On top of OPA, claiming success at some points can also ensure momentum for change (Kotter, 1996). Ideally, eating an elephant requires cutting it into small pieces, and this also holds true for claiming short-term success in continuous change. Waiting for too long for a big achievement to happen would be implausible. However, Kotter (1996) warns also that claiming success too early would kill momentum for change. This therefore requires managers to properly calculate both costs and benefits before change update is sent through to stakeholders.
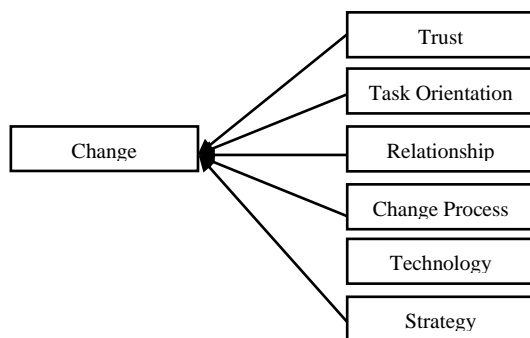

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Research questions

➢ What are the levels of change acceptance, task and relationship cultures, trust, change process, strategy and technology availability at two public HEIs in Cambodia?
➢ What are the association among the seven variables: change acceptance, trust, task culture, relationship culture, change process, change technology and change strategy?
➢ How well can we predict change acceptance from a combination of six variables: trust, task culture, relationship culture, change process, change technology and change strategy?

3   METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative approach by employing survey questionnaire for data collection. Participants in this study are teaching staff experiencing the adoption of new technology change (Blended Learning) at two public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia. The selected institutions are the pioneer HEIs in Cambodia and have introduced technology-driven change into their learning program for a few years. The survey was conducted online due to school closures caused by the world pandemic. With good coordination from the management teams of both institutions, the surveys were successfully sent to (all) 350 teaching staff who were carefully identified by the researchers. A total of 217 responses (accounting to 62%) were received. Researchers proceeded the study by coding the responses into a statistical software SPSS-version 26. The data was cleaned, coded, and recoded according to the nature of each item, for final analyses.

3.1 Instrument validity

In this questionnaire, teaching staff's change acceptance, trust towards the department management team, their working cultures, change process and elements (technology and strategy) were investigated by using 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree). The instrument measuring these constructs was informed by prior research (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994; Vadi, Allik and Realo, 2002). Cronbach's alpha for change acceptance, trust, task-orientation culture, relationship-orientation culture, change process, technology and strategy were 0.53, 0.75, 0.66, 0.81, 0.66, 0.86, and 0.84, respectively (Table 1). It is important to note that one item from the construct of change element-strategy (item 49) was excluded from correlation and regression testing because its early analysis showed inconsistency of the instrument, with negative Cronbach's alpha. Overall, the results indicate reliability of the instruments as the alpha is between 0.70-0.90 according to Tavakol and Dennick (2011). However, the lower alpha is common for constructs that consist very few items as suggested by these authors.

Table 1. List of measurement instruments
(4-point Likert Scale)

Variables	Number of items	Source	Cronbach's alpha
Change acceptance	2	Self-constructed	0.53
Trust	7	Gabarro and Athos (1976) cited in Robinson and Reasseau (1994)	0.75
Task-orientation culture	8	Vadi et al. (2002)	0.66
Relationship-orientation culture	8	Vadi et al. (2002)	0.81
Change process	2	Self-constructed	0.66
Change element: Technology	3	Self-constructed	0.86
Change element: Strategy	2	Self-constructed	0.84

4 FINDINGS

> What are the levels of change acceptance, task and relationship cultures, trust, change process, strategy and technology availability at two public HEIs in Cambodia?

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of change acceptance, trust and culture dimensions

	N	M	SD
Change Acceptance			
19. I support the change initiative (adopting Blended Learning).	208	3.37	0.70
20. I have been trained and have adopted Blended Learning.	207	2.81	0.97
Human: Trust			
21. I am not sure if I fully trust my management team (department). *	205	2.92	0.95
22. Management team (department) is open and upfront with me.	208	3.36	0.79
23. I believe the management team (department) has high integrity.	208	3.40	0.74
24. In general, I believe the management team's (department) motives and intentions are good.	206	3.54	0.66

25. Management team (department) is not always honest and truthful. *	206	3.03	0.92
26. I don't think the management team (department) treats me fairly. *	206	2.94	0.98
27. I can expect the management team (department) to treat me in a consistent and predictable fashion.	203	2.75	0.80
Human: Culture (Task Orientation)			
28.I am proud of my organization.	207	3.43	0.69
29.I am rewarded for my good work.	205	2.58	0.91
30.I have a big freedom of activity.	207	3.34	0.68
31.I am not afraid of making mistakes.	207	2.47	0.95
32.Positive changes constantly take place.	207	3.20	0.69
33.Differences between subordinates and superiors are not accentuated.	207	2.70	0.85
34.My co-workers and I concentrate more on our own needs than on the goals of the organization*	206	3.06	0.85
35.People's well-being is important.	206	2.81	0.79
Human: Culture (Relationship Orientation)			
36.My co-workers and I know one another.	207	3.18	0.72
37.Accepted communication standards exist.	207	3.15	0.63
38.I know about my co-workers' personal lives and vice versa.	207	2.41	0.84
39.In case of mistake, I feel embarrassed to other members of the organization.	206	2.64	0.88
40.In tough situations there is a strong feeling of togetherness.	207	3.12	0.72
41.My co-workers and I know about each other's hobbies and out-of-work activities.	205	2.52	0.76
42.My co-workers and I help each other in job-related problems.	206	3.05	0.67
43.All important matters are discussed with each other.	207	3.18	0.66
*Reverse coding			

Table 2 illustrates the mean score of teaching staff's responses on three dimensions, including change acceptance, trust and two types of culture. The two attributes under change acceptance received high mean scores, indicating the agreement of participants on the statements; item 19-I support change initiation (M=3.37) and item20-I have been trained and have adopted BL (M=2.91). Each attribute of trust dimension is quite high, ranging from "fully trust management team of the department" (M=2.92) to 'trust on good motive and intention of the management team of the department" (M=3.54). This can be concluded that participants agree with all the above statements, showing high level of trust toward the management team, particularly the head of the department (middle manager). Within the task-orientation culture dimension, the finding indicates similar trend of participants' agreement on all attributes; yet there is one statement receiving the lowest mean score "not afraid of making mistake" (M=2.47) which falls to "disagree" category, according to scale measurement of Pimentel (2019). The same is true for relationship-orientation culture dimension. Table 2 shows that the means score of almost all attributes are above 2.51, falling to "agree" category of the 4-point Likert scale. Only one statement "I know about my co-workers' personal lives and vice versa" was disagreed by participants with the mean score (M=2.41).

In another section of questionnaires, all staff were asked to complete the information regarding the practice of change at their university covering process, strategy and technology change dimensions in 4-point Likert scale; 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree and 4 strongly agree.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the practice of change process and elements

	n	M	SD
Change process			
44.Top management team have analysed and planned the change program.	204	3.01	0.81
45.Management team of the department or centre has explained and communicated clearly about the change program.	204	3.39	0.81
Change elements: Technology			
46.There are enough ICT tools and infrastructure for the change project.	204	3.00	0.97
47.There are enough trainings on technology use for blended learning adoption.	201	2.7	0.83
48.An array of technology supports (ecosystem) is available for the adoption of blended learning.	203	2.86	0.81
Change elements: Strategy			
49.Top management have sought for external supports to the change program.	201	2.09	0.80
50.Management team of the department or centre allows staff to participate and contribute their ideas to the change program.	204	3.14	0.77
51.Short-term success of the change has been claimed by the management team of the department or centre.	203	3.04	0.72

Among these statements as shown in Table 3, except item 49, participants are found to agree with these statements in which the mean score fall between 2.7 and 3.39, considered as "agree and strongly agree" according to Pimentel (2019). Participants strongly agree that the management team at the department has communicated the change idea well (M=3.39), and they also agree that management team has allowed staff to express ideas in the change program (M=3.14), claimed short-term win (M=3.04), analysed and planned for the change (M=3.01), and has provided enough ICT infrastructure (M=3.00). Technology support has been created as an ecosystem (M=2.86), and there are enough technology trainings for the change (M=2.7). Participants however disagreed that management team members of the department have tried their best to seek for external support yet (M=2.09).

> ➢ What are the association among the seven variables: change acceptance, trust, task culture, relationship culture, change process, change technology and change strategy?

Because the variables of change acceptance, trust, task-orientation culture, relationship-orientation culture, change process, technology and strategy were normally distributed and the assumption of linearity was not markedly violated, Pearson correlations were computed to examine the intercorrelations of the variables. Table 4 shows that all pairs of variables were significantly correlated. Yet it is worth presenting the correlation between dependent variable, change acceptance, and the other six independent variables only. The positive

Table 4. Intercorrelations, mean and standard deviations for dependent and independent variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	*M*	*SD*
1. Change Acceptance	--	.177*	.243**	.330**	.303**	.276**	.302**	3.09	0.70
2. Trust	--	--	.348**	.221**	.309**	.274**	.421**	3.14	0.53
3. Task Culture	--	--	--	.411**	.512**	.471**	.549**	2.95	0.44
4. Relation Culture	--	--	--	--	.433**	.408**	.484**	2.89	0.48
5. Process	--	--	--	--	--	.667**	.693**	3.20	0.70
6. Technology (Element)	--	--	--	--	--	--	.588**	2.85	0.77
7. Strategy (Element)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.09	0.69

*p < .05; **p<.01

correlation, which would be considered a medium or typical effect size according to Cohen (1988), was between change acceptance and relationship-orientation culture, $r(200)= .33$, $p<,001$; change acceptance and change process, $r(198)= .30$, $p<.001$; and change acceptance and change strategy, $r(197)= .30$, $p<.001$. These mean that one is likely to accept the change when good relation among staff is practiced; the same also applies when there are clear change processes identified by the middle manager; when the middle manager has applied open participative and claiming short-term win strategies. Change acceptance was also positively correlated with trust toward middle manager ($r=.18$), task-orientation culture ($r=.24$), availability of the technology ($r=.28$). These indicate small size effects or correlations according to Cohen (1988).

➢ How well can we predict change acceptance from a combination of six variables: trust, task culture, relationship culture, change process, change technology and change strategy?

The early section revealed the correlation between the acceptance of change with trust, task culture, relationship culture, change

process, change technology and change strategy. This finding intrigued the researchers to explore further to understand whether these six variables can function as a model to predict change acceptance of the teaching staff.

Table 5. Simultaneous multiple regressions analysis summary for trust, culture, change process and change elements (N=188)

Variables	B	SE B	β	*t*	*p*
Trust	0.05	0.10	0.05	0.48	0.246
Task Culture	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.91	0.906
Relationship Culture	0.07	0.10	0.07	0.63	0.003
Process	0.11	0.10	0.09	1.17	0.632
Technology (Element)	0.02	0.13	0.01	0.12	0.364
Strategy (Element)	0.35	0.11	0.24	3.02	0.532

Note: R^2 =.166;
$F_{(6,181)}$=6.02; $p<0.001$.

Simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to investigate the best predictors of change acceptance result. The means, standard deviations and intercorrelations can be found in Table 5. The combination of variables to predict

change acceptance from trust, task orientation culture, relationship orientation culture, change process, change element-technology and change element-strategy was statistically significant, $F(6,181) = 6.02$, $p<0.001$. The beta coefficients are presented in Table 5. Note that higher score of relationship orientation culture significantly predicted change acceptance when all six variables are included. The adjusted R^2 values was 0.166. This indicates that 17% of the variance in change acceptance was explained by the model. According to Cohen (1988), this is a small effect.

5   DISCUSSIONS

Within the dimension of change acceptance, we can see that majority of staff have expressed their support towards the change program (adopting BL), yet not all them have adopted the change. This might have caused by many underlying problems. Literatures explain these causes to be emanated from one's personal background, cognitive perception, and commitment towards change (Davis, 1989; Iverson, 1996; Di Fabio and Gori, 2016), which are partly true. Stoltenkamp and Kasuto (2011) present the same case of technology-driven change at one HEI where little buy-in was recorded at the initial stage of change project. The finding is well in congruent with Diffusion of Innovation theory which acknowledges this participation pattern to be normal, considering the differences of the five groups of adopters, namely the innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards (Rogers, 1962). Regardless of efforts that managers have taken into account, not all participants are likely to embrace the innovation change, particularly at the early stage.

Stoltenkamp and Kasuto (2011) noted however that the landscape of change participation at the said institution has changed remarkably when cultural factor was stressed on, and non-coercive approach were adopted. The

finding has reminded change managers not to underestimate the dominant factors of culture and trust in change acceptance. As shown in Table 2, the level of trust from teaching staff towards middle managers or departmental level is quite high, showing a strong momentum for making change. Although some of them are enculturated by task-oriented culture, they still value their good relationship among co-workers, albeit they are still reluctant in making mistakes, and approaching their peers' personal life (Alas and Vadi, 2006).

The implementation of change program at both HEIs is observed to be following clear planning and communicating processes—the two main steps in many change models (Judson, 1991; Kanter et al., 1992; Kotter, 1996). On the side of planning, they readied up technology, including tools, skills and system as argued by Orlikowski and Yates (2006) before change took step. On top, management teams at the two HEIs are well-strategized (as indicated in survey findings) and do follow the open participation and claiming short-term win suggested by Kotter (1996); nevertheless, the managers are found to underestimate the opportunity to seek for external support to finance the change.

In addition, the analyses of these six-paired variables (change acceptance, trust, task and relationship cultures, change process, strategy and technology) confirm positive correlations (Table 4). This finding provides general support that the high level of acceptance of teaching staff in the change program do positively align with the high level of trust, task and relationship-orientation culture, a well-defined process, effective strategy and sufficient technology supports. The finding is even proved further by the regression model predicting change acceptance from trust, culture, process, strategy and technology dimensions. With this, several questions need to be asked once managers would like to discuss change with ground staff. These include whether or not they have built a good trust with subordinators, what the culture

is at their institutions (Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Rashid and Rahman, 2004; Alas and Vadi, 2006), whether a clear process for change identified, and space for ground staff to participate and express their ideas on change is big enough, and even if success is well-claimed when a small task is achieved. To the very basic of all, question on technology infrastructure, training and supports (Orlikowski and Yates, 2006) shall be strictly attended to.

The significant value of relationship-orientation culture in predicting change should also draw managers' attention to the environment where institutions operate. Extended on the existing findings claiming the intertwin between collegial culture and change (Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Rashid and Rahman, 2004; Davies, Douglas and Douglas, 2007), this study suggests that collaborative work and close relationship culture (networked) among ground staff play a significant role in making change possible. It is even more prudent than a good leadership and other aspects. Once majority of staff is well-bonded, the change in one group would escalate to the others. A working staff is likely to accept the change when his/her peers or close co-workers accept the change. Hence, there is no doubt that many workplaces have implemented teamwork and bonding activities to maximize institution's performance and reduce the possibility of resistance (Alas and Sharifi, 2002).

It is important to note that this study inevitably consists of a few limitations. The instrument used in this study is newly constructed, and hence subject to questions on reliability. The authors admit the limitation of the items representing in each dimension; hence, following researcher may take this opportunity to develop them further and test in different contexts.

6   CONCLUSIONS

Different from previous studies which view change acceptance from age, tenure and education, this study draws a new outlook to change acceptance from the variables of trust, cultures, process, strategy and technology. The assessment on change acceptance at two public HEIs in Cambodia confirms that although majority of staff at the said institutions support the change initiative, not all of them chose to involve. This reflects the needs for management team to gather more people on board.

The constructions of correlations and regression model among change acceptance and trust, task culture, relationship culture, change process, change technology and change strategy, have necessitated the needs for managers to examine working culture within institution and the level of trust among the stakeholders (from ground staff to department level). To simply put, if subordinators are close with one another and task-oriented, they will be committed to change. On the contrary, if trust among them is little, change acceptance is subject to question (Saruhan, 2013). Together with this, others aspects including clear process, effective change strategies and sufficient technology tools and supports do play a role in getting more people on board. If managers fail to fulfil the criteria, they may risk the total change effort.

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