

21st Critical Management Skills to Counterfeit Resistance to Change: Springboard to Organizational Modification

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Abstract

This study examined the adoption of 21st critical management skills among school administrators in overcoming resistance to change as a foundation for organizational modification at Zamboanga del Sur National High School. Anchored on the relationship between management skills, resistance to change, and organizational modification, the study focused on four dimensions: overcoming opposition, effectively engaging employees, implementing change in several stages, and communicating change effectively. The study employed a descriptive survey research design involving school administrators and teachers who were purposively selected as respondents. Data were gathered using a questionnaire-checklist and analyzed through weighted mean, ranking, and t-test. The findings revealed that school administrators consistently adopted the four identified management skills in addressing resistance to change. Among the practices, overcoming opposition obtained the highest adoption level, followed by effectively engaging employees, implementing change in several stages, and communicating change effectively. The results further showed a significant difference between the responses of school administrators and teachers regarding the adoption of 21st critical management skills in managing resistance to change. The study concluded that effective application of critical management skills is necessary to encourage cooperation, minimize resistance, and support organizational success. It recommended strengthening these skills through seminar-workshops and team-building activities for school administrators. The study contributes to SDG 4 – Quality Education by supporting effective educational leadership and institutional improvement, and to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by promoting participatory, transparent, and responsive organizational practices. The sustainability impact of the study lies in strengthening institutional sustainability through improved change management, collaboration, and governance practices within educational organizations.

Keywords: Change Management, Organizational Modification, Resistance to Change, School Administrators, 21st Critical Management Skills, Teachers

1. Introduction

Management is a continuous journey shaped by existing strategies, beliefs, traditions, cultures, and organizational practices. Change serves as a constant reality that affects both personal and professional environments. Within organizations, implementing change requires commitment, patience, perseverance, and effective management approaches because many institutions struggle to introduce modifications necessary for survival and success. Although change creates opportunities for improvement and growth, individuals often resist because it challenges established routines and creates uncertainty. Resistance to change is considered a natural human response, as individuals tend to protect familiar conditions and maintain the status quo. Aquino (2000) emphasized that among the five M's of management—man, money, machine, materials, and methods—man is the most challenging element to manage because human beings possess the ability to think, reason, and influence organizational processes. Resistance may occur openly through rejection and protest or indirectly through hesitation and lack of cooperation. Employees may experience insecurity, prefer existing practices, or struggle to move beyond their comfort zones. As a result, successful organizational transformation requires administrators to develop strategies that encourage participation, communication, and acceptance of change. In educational institutions, school administrators play a critical role in managing organizational transformation. Their leadership skills influence how teachers perceive, accept, and participate in change initiatives. The adoption of effective management practices can minimize resistance and contribute to organizational modification that benefits teachers, learners, and stakeholders.

Organizational change is influenced by both internal and external forces that affect how institutions respond and adapt to evolving conditions. Senge (1990) emphasized that individuals often resist not the change itself but the experience of being forced to change. Educational organizations, like other institutions, experience technological, structural, social, and financial changes that require adaptability (Levin, 1993). Leavitt (1964) identified technology, primary tasks, people, and administrative structures as major internal forces influencing organizational change. These factors demonstrate that successful transformation depends on the alignment of organizational systems, processes, and human behavior. These factors demonstrate that transformation depends not only on systems and processes but also on human resources and

managerial decisions (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). Furthermore, external and internal forces influence the direction, speed, and outcomes of organizational change (Dawson, 2003). In schools, change is driven by government policies, societal expectations, technological advancements, administrative processes, and the evolving needs of school members. Improved technology, facilities, and equipment can enhance productivity and competitiveness in educational institutions (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). Therefore, schools must develop readiness and adaptability to respond to environmental demands and ensure institutional sustainability (Yilmaz & Kilicoglu, 2013).

Literature on overcoming resistance identifies several strategies for effective change management. These include engaging employees, communicating clearly, implementing change gradually, and addressing employee concerns. Effective communication allows employees to understand the purpose and benefits of change, while participation encourages ownership and commitment. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979, p. 29) identified education and effective communication, participation and involvement, and support and facilitation as essential techniques for minimizing resistance. Two-way communication enables organizations to address concerns, build trust, and develop commitment among employees. Resistance to change may result from several factors, including fear of job loss, poor communication, lack of trust, uncertainty, poor timing, organizational politics, peer pressure, and fear of failure. These factors demonstrate that successful change management requires both structural strategies and consideration of human behavior.

Educational organizations operate within environments characterized by continuous social, technological, and institutional changes. Globally, schools face increasing demands to improve quality, adopt innovations, and respond to changing educational expectations. These pressures require administrators to develop leadership competencies that support organizational adaptability. Within the Philippine educational context, schools continuously experience reforms, technological integration, and administrative adjustments that require cooperation among administrators, teachers, and stakeholders. Effective management of change is necessary to maintain productivity, improve organizational performance, and ensure that institutional modifications contribute to better educational outcomes. The study was conducted at Zamboanga del Sur National High School, where school administrators and teachers experience organizational changes requiring effective leadership strategies. Understanding how administrators apply critical management skills provides insights into reducing resistance and strengthening organizational development.

This study is anchored on organizational change and change management perspectives emphasizing the relationship between leadership practices and employee responses to transformation. Organizational modification depends on administrators' ability to recognize resistance, communicate effectively, involve employees, and provide appropriate support during transitions. The conceptual basis of the study highlights the relationship between 21st critical management skills and resistance to change. The management skills examined include overcoming opposition, effectively engaging employees, implementing change in several stages, and communicating change effectively. These competencies are considered mechanisms that help administrators address resistance and facilitate organizational improvement. The framework recognizes that successful change is not achieved solely through administrative decisions but through collaboration between leaders and organizational members. Human factors, communication processes, and participation influence how effectively institutions adapt to change.

Although organizational change has been widely studied, resistance among employees remains a continuing challenge, particularly in educational institutions where reforms directly affect teachers' practices and responsibilities. Existing literature discusses general strategies for managing change; however, further understanding is needed regarding how specific management skills are applied by school administrators to overcome resistance. The study addresses this gap by examining the extent to which 21st critical management skills are adopted by school administrators and how these practices influence responses toward organizational modification. It also examines differences between administrators' and teachers' perceptions regarding change management practices. By exploring these relationships, the study provides evidence that may assist educational leaders in developing approaches that encourage cooperation, improve productivity, and strengthen organizational readiness for future changes.

This study aligns primarily with SDG 4 – Quality Education because effective educational leadership and organizational improvement contribute to creating institutions capable of responding to evolving educational needs. Strengthening school management practices supports sustainable educational systems by promoting environments where teachers and learners can benefit from continuous improvement. The study also relates to SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth through its focus on improving workplace management, employee engagement, and organizational productivity. Developing supportive change management practices contributes to healthier professional environments where employees can participate effectively in institutional development. Furthermore, the study supports SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by emphasizing transparent communication, participation, trust-building, and inclusive decision-making within educational organizations.

The study contributes to multidisciplinary sustainability by addressing institutional, educational, and socio-organizational dimensions of sustainable development. From an educational sustainability perspective, effective change management enables schools to remain adaptive and resilient amid evolving demands. From an institutional sustainability perspective, strengthening leadership competencies supports continuous organizational improvement and more effective implementation of reforms. From a socio-economic sustainability perspective, improving employee engagement and productivity contributes to a more collaborative and stable workplace environment. The findings may benefit school administrators, teachers, policymakers, stakeholders, and future researchers by providing insights into strategies that reduce resistance, encourage participation, and promote sustainable organizational transformation.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design to determine the current practices related to overcoming resistance to change among school administrators. This design was considered appropriate because it aimed to describe existing conditions, identify patterns, and examine perceptions regarding organizational change practices. According to Padua and de Guzman-Santos (1998:28), descriptive survey research involves comparison and contrast in carefully planned descriptive investigations, with the purpose of describing the status of events or subjects as they exist. Descriptive research also serves as a fact-finding approach supported by appropriate interpretation.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Zamboanga del Sur National High School during the school year 2019–2020. The research focused on the school environment where administrators and teachers encounter organizational changes requiring effective management strategies. The locale was selected to examine how school administrators apply critical management skills in managing resistance and supporting organizational modification.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of school administrators and teachers of Zamboanga del Sur National High School. The participants included nine (9) school administrators and 110 teachers who were selected to provide their perceptions regarding the adoption of 21st critical management skills in managing resistance to change.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling, specifically judgment sampling, in selecting the respondents. The sampling process was conducted to ensure that participants possessed relevant experiences related to organizational change within the school setting. The researcher carefully established the sampling frame to obtain accurate information from the selected school administrators and teachers.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized a questionnaire-checklist developed to measure the adoption of 21st critical management skills in overcoming resistance to change. The instrument consisted of indicators related to overcoming opposition, effectively engaging employees, implementing change in several stages, and communicating change effectively. The questionnaire used a four-point continuum to categorize responses according to the extent of adoption. The responses were interpreted as Always Adopted (AA), Often Adopted (OA), Sometimes Adopted (SA), and Never Adopted (NA), based on the numerical scale provided in the instrument.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, appropriate protocols were followed, including securing permission prior to the distribution of the questionnaire-checklist. After approval was obtained, the researcher personally administered the instrument to the respondents. For teacher respondents, the questionnaire was distributed after their faculty meeting. Participants were provided sufficient time to complete the instrument and were instructed to answer honestly without leaving any items unanswered. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, provided directions for answering the questionnaire, and assured respondents that their perceptions would remain confidential.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were organized, classified, and subjected to statistical analysis for interpretation of results. Weighted mean was used to determine the overall responses of participants by obtaining the sum of the products of frequency and assigned weight divided by the total number of respondents. Ranking was applied to identify the relative standing of statements under each variable. A four-point continuum was used to interpret the extent of adoption of management practices. The t-test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed between the responses of school administrators and teachers regarding the four variables of 21st critical management skills. The level of significance was set at five percent, with the decision rule based on the comparison between the computed t-value and the table value.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission was secured before data collection, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research. Participants were given appropriate instructions and were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. The researcher emphasized honest participation and ensured that respondents understood the significance of providing accurate information.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Main Findings on the Adoption of 21st Critical Management Skills in Managing Change

3.1.1 Adoption of Strategies for Overcoming Opposition

The findings revealed that overcoming opposition was always adopted by school administrators, obtaining an average mean of 3.39. The results showed that allowing teachers to provide input received the highest weighted mean of 3.51, followed by explaining why change is needed with a weighted mean of 3.42 and alleviating problems in a timely manner with a weighted mean of 3.37. These results indicate that school administrators consistently applied strategies that involved teachers in the change process and addressed concerns related to organizational modifications. The result suggests that involving employees in decision-making processes can help reduce resistance because individuals are more likely to support changes when they understand their purpose and feel included. Resistance to change is often influenced by uncertainty, fear, and the desire to maintain familiar practices. Effective involvement and communication allow organizations to address concerns and encourage cooperation among members. This supports the idea that educational organizations must consider both human resources and managerial behavior when implementing change (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

3.1.2 Adoption of Employee Engagement Practices

The findings showed that effectively engaging employees was always adopted by school administrators, with an average mean of 3.31. Among the indicators, tailoring ways to work on problems creatively obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.51, followed by learning to listen with a weighted mean of 3.31 and receiving feedback positively with a weighted mean of 3.28. These results demonstrate that administrators applied approaches that recognized individual differences and encouraged employee participation during periods of change. The findings emphasize the importance of employee involvement in successful organizational transformation. Since employees may respond differently to change, administrators need to understand individual concerns and provide appropriate support. Participation and involvement are essential strategies in reducing resistance because they create collaboration between leaders and organizational members. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979, p. 29) emphasized that education, communication, participation, and support are important techniques for minimizing resistance to change.

3.1.3 Implementation of Change Through Several Stages

The results indicated that implementing change in several stages was always adopted by school administrators, with an average mean of 3.35. The findings showed that taking action on change obtained a weighted mean of 3.46, preparing a plan for managing change obtained 3.42, and supporting changes obtained 3.31. These results indicate that administrators followed a gradual approach in introducing and managing organizational modifications. The result highlights that change implementation requires systematic planning rather than immediate transformation. A staged approach allows employees to adjust, understand expectations, and develop confidence in new practices. Proper preparation and continuous support are necessary because resistance may increase when individuals feel overwhelmed or uncertain about changes. Effective management of internal and external factors influences the direction, speed, and outcomes of organizational change (Dawson, 2003).

3.1.4 Effectiveness of Communication During Organizational Change

The findings showed that communicating change effectively was always adopted by school administrators, with an average mean of 3.41. Sending emails or memoranda to inform employees obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.50, followed by informing employees about ongoing changes with a weighted mean of 3.42 and ensuring that employees received change-related information with a weighted mean of 3.39. These results indicate that administrators utilized communication strategies to keep employees informed throughout the change process. The findings demonstrate that communication is a critical factor in reducing uncertainty and resistance. Clear and timely communication helps employees understand the reasons, objectives, and expected outcomes of organizational changes. Two-way communication is particularly important because it allows employees to express concerns and participate in the change process. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979, p. 29) emphasized that effective communication and employee participation facilitate smoother implementation of planned changes.

3.2 Comparative Findings on the Four Change Management Practices

The results showed that among the four variables related to overcoming resistance to change, overcoming opposition obtained the highest overall mean of 3.50. This was followed by effectively engaging employees with an average mean of 3.42, implementing change in several stages with an average mean of 3.40, and communicating change effectively with an average mean of 3.37. All four practices were identified as consistently adopted by school administrators. The findings indicate that addressing employee concerns and encouraging participation are essential components of successful change management. Resistance is influenced by factors such as fear of uncertainty, lack of trust, poor communication, and concerns regarding organizational roles. Addressing these issues through participation, support, and transparent communication can strengthen employee acceptance of change. These findings are consistent with the view that resistance is a normal response that requires careful management rather than simple elimination. Gattiker (1990, as cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008) identified factors such as fear of the unknown, threats to power or influence, organizational structure, and limited resources as reasons behind resistance to change.

3.3 Difference Between School Administrators' and Teachers' Responses

The findings revealed a significant difference between the responses of school administrators and teachers regarding the four variables of 21st critical management skills in overcoming resistance to change. The t-test result produced a computed value of 6.59, which exceeded the table value of 2.447 at the 5 percent level of significance with 6 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the perceptions of school administrators and teachers were not similar. The difference in perceptions suggests that administrators and teachers may experience organizational change differently based on their roles and responsibilities. While administrators may view change initiatives from a leadership perspective, teachers may evaluate them based on their direct experiences and implementation challenges. This supports the importance of continuous communication, consultation, and collaboration between administrators and teachers to ensure that organizational changes are understood and effectively implemented. Educational organizations must remain responsive to changing conditions and demands to achieve institutional improvement (Yilmaz& Kilicoglu, 2013).

3.4 Implications of the Findings for Organizational Modification

The findings imply that school administrators should continuously strengthen their application of 21st critical management skills to reduce resistance and promote organizational improvement. Administrators should encourage teacher participation, recognize individual differences among employees, provide support throughout change implementation, and ensure that all members receive timely information regarding organizational changes. These implications highlight the need for sustained leadership development activities that enhance administrators' ability to manage organizational transformation. Strengthening change management practices can support cooperation among teachers, improve productivity, and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that there is a significant difference between the responses of school administrators and teachers regarding the four aspects of 21st critical management skills in overcoming resistance to change. The findings revealed that school administrators consistently adopted strategies such as overcoming opposition, effectively engaging employees, implementing change in several stages, and communicating change effectively. These management practices are essential in reducing resistance to change, encouraging teacher cooperation, and achieving organizational success at Zamboanga del Sur National High School.

It is recommended that school administrators continuously strengthen and apply the identified 21st critical management skills to minimize resistance to change and support organizational improvement. In particular, administrators should consistently allow teachers to provide input, recognize the uniqueness of each employee, support change implementation processes, and ensure that all employees receive appropriate information regarding changes. Furthermore, seminar-workshops and team-building activities should be conducted to intensify the 21st management skills of school administrators in managing resistance to change.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study complied with recognized ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality through anonymous, secure, and aggregated data handling. Given the focus on psychological well-being, procedures were non-invasive, and safeguards were observed to minimize discomfort, with guidance to appropriate support services when needed, and required institutional permissions were secured for instrument use and access to academic records.

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