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Leadership transformation in academic organisation: A case study

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Abstract

The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is seeking to revolutionise its academic operations. HCT has 17 campuses across the UAE, creating both opportunities and challenges for management. The organisation needs to identify and implement an effective and efficient management structure and process to realise its new vision, HCT 2.0. HCT has developed a strategic plan 2017–2022, where it is implementing the corporate approach in an academic institution. This approach imposes 320 key performance indicators and 23 strategic initiatives to achieve the HCT 2.0 vision and mission. The key target of HCT 2.0 is to achieve 100% employment for its graduates by 2022. The management has solicited all stakeholders' input in the transformation processes, to ensure alignment of its operations with the new paradigm. This paper demonstrates the transformation process and its impact at the leadership level.

Keywords: Leadership, organisational transformation, HCT 2.0, change management.

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1. Introduction

The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) occupies a unique and critical position in the education sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The institution has been actively involved in preparing young people in UAE to meet the professional demands of modern economy. The organisation has grown from its humble beginnings in 1988, to become the largest provider of higher education in UAE (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). However, the changing business landscape requires radical transformation as it seeks to optimise its business operations and the ability to make a difference in the UAE.

HCT has adopted a strategic plan for the years 2017–2022 to enhance the value available to both male and female students in the UAE while protecting its 43% market share (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). In particular, it is keen on creating industry-relevant courses that ensure graduates are prepared to add value to their employees. The organisation has issued 69,641 qualifications while creating a large alumni network that can create an enabling learning environment for students across the UAE (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016).

The leaders in HC T can use key performance indicators to measure the progress of the institution in creating a positive learning environment. The first key performance indicator is the achievement of 100% graduate employment rates (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). Presently, the institution has employment rates of 71%, a modest outcome that underscores the quality of its learning programmes (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The leaders can collaborate with members of the faculty and experts to develop accredited programmes that enhance the professional qualifications of its students. The leaders can also engage with regulators to develop flexible industry-relevant academic programmes. The management will be integral in ensuring that all of its programmes are aligned with NQF and industry standards.

The commitment of the organisation will be instrumental in ensuring the organisation can achieve 85% satisfaction rates among its graduates. Presently, the organisation has a 74% satisfaction rate (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The organisation hopes to achieve 50% employee sponsorships. Presently, it is only receiving 15% financial support from the institutions (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The management has a responsibility to create relevant relationships with industry stakeholders. In addition, the management is responsible for creating an enabling environment for industry leaders to collaborate with their academic staff to address industry needs. Effective leadership will be instrumental in gaining the confidence of industry.

The leadership of the learning institution must be actively involved in creating strong partnerships with the UAE government and accrediting regulators across the world. The partnerships will be instrumental in ensuring the organisation is accredited and that 100% of all its programmes are accredited (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). Presently, only 4% of its programmes have received accreditation (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The engagement of leaders of the organisation with the international community will be integral in ensuring the organisation has 60% international programme accreditation. Presently, the organisation only boasts of 32% international programme accreditation (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The achievement of the key performance indicators requires the allocation of sufficient resources by the organisation, the commitment of its managers and the goodwill of all its stakeholders.

The transformation of HCT creates an opportunity to evaluate the processes of delivering high-quality education to students in different parts of the country. The institution has been forced to change its operations in an effort to respond to the evolving business landscape. Advances in information technology, changes in the education sector and increased competition create a new business landscape. Consequently, the organisation has a responsibility to transform its business processes to optimise its operations and enhance efficiency.

HCT has to embrace modern management practices to deliver high-quality education. It is important for the organisation to create a lean system that optimises resource utilisation. Besides, the system should enable it to focus on its core business of delivering high-quality education to students in the UAE.

2. Aim of Study

HCT faces a rapidly evolving business environment as the UAE seeks to align its economy with the international community. In response to a changing business environment, the organisation has embraced the strategic plan of 2012–2017 to create HCT 2.0. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the institution's leadership in facilitating the success of the transformation process.

3. Research Questions

a. What is the role of the management in initiating change efforts?
b. What are the key performance indicators that measure the success of a change effort?
c. What are the challenges in initiating change within HCT?
d. What is the current nature of HCT?
e. What is the level of preparedness for the transformation?

4. Literature Review

Leaders play an integral role in managing educational institutions. Many stakeholders recognise that leadership is instrumental in creating the organisational culture and environment to realise the desired outcomes. Transformational leadership ensures that the management's performance is not only based on the achievement of strategic goals but also the impact on followers (Okinyi, Kwaba & Nyabut, 2015). In particular, it is instrumental in a change process because it ensures that followers are involved in each step of the process. Stakeholder involvement ensures that change effort creates a sustainable organisational culture (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). Transformational leadership relies on the synergy between leaders and followers to create an organisational framework that can achieve positive outcomes. Leaders ensure that enthusiasm, energy and passion emanate from purposeful interactions (Fullan, 2008). Leaders have a responsibility to use both their roles and personality to inspire their followers to work towards the achievement of common goals (Hayes, 2014).

Leaders create intellectual stimulation in an organisation, creating an opportunity for all stakeholders to explore new approaches of doing things. They also ensure that the interests and needs of stakeholders are considered in the decision-making process. Leaders also contribute towards the change process by providing a vision that is shared by stakeholders in the change effort (Hussain et al., 2016). In addition, leaders provide an enabling environment for individuals to trust in the transformational process (Inkinci, 2013). The long-term success of the change effort requires commitment and stakeholder ownership (Straw, 2013).

Leaders play an instrumental role in aligning the organisational culture with the change effort in their institutions. They ensure institutional memory is preserved during the process. In addition, they also identify the roles of different stakeholders in the process (Inkinci, 2013). Effective leadership ensures that the change effort recognises the dignity of the stakeholders and improves their welfare.

4.1. Theoretical underpinnings

The transformation leadership theory postulates that a leader has the responsibility to engage with other stakeholders to create effective change in their communities. The interactions between a leader and their followers create an opportunity for extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Okinyi et al., 2015). Leaders can facilitate effective change in their organisations through their inspirational nature and

charisma. In the change process, stakeholders look at leadership that eases their anxiety and provides reassurance. Transformational leadership is critical to ensuring that an organisation's rules and regulations evolve to accommodate the new paradigm. They also ensure that the organisational culture is protected in the process by demonstrating continued adherence to group norms (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). The approach ensures that followers can embrace the purpose of the change effort and their leadership (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

The change effort requires the adoption of new paradigms and processes in an organisation (Mcfarland & Goldsworthy, 2014). The new structure presents challenges to employees who have to adjust to the new organisational environment (Hussain et al., 2016). In addition, it may result in the erosion of some roles and the creation of new ones (Wallin, 2010).

Organizational change process showing different stages
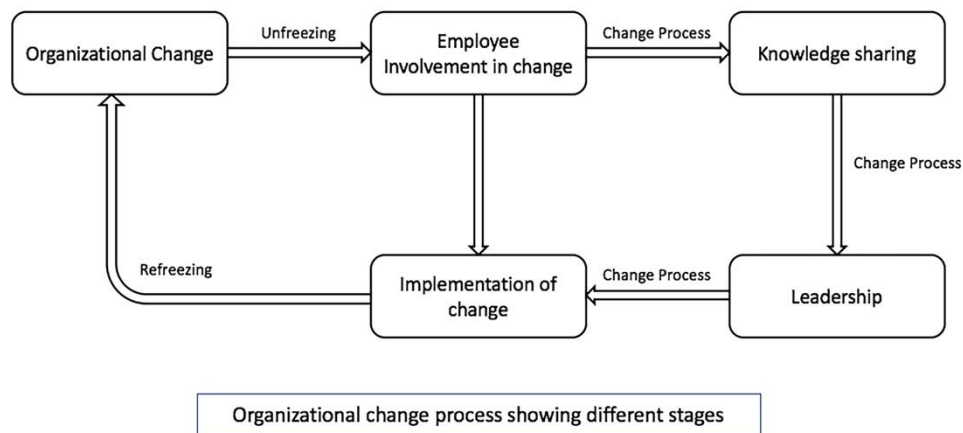
Figure 1. Theoretical construction of the role of leadership in change processes (Hussain et al., 2016)

Stakeholders require transformational leaders to address their concerns and ease any anxiety that may be associated with the change process (Fullan, 2011). The quality of leadership during the conceptualisation, planning, implementation, evaluation and consolidation of the change effort will be a critical determiner of the success of the change effort (Biech, 2007).

4.2. Approach/methodology

Qualitative research provided an opportunity to align the existing literature on the role of leaders in a transformation process with the insights of stakeholders in the industry. The interviews were integral in capturing the views, experiences and beliefs of the respondents (Jamshed, 2014). In addition, the qualitative research process revealed the motivations of different stakeholders and their confidence in the leadership teams. The research process created opportunities to understand the role of leadership in the transformation. In particular, the interviews highlighted the belief systems and values of stakeholders that influenced their response to the transformation process. The interviews involved two participants who were drawn from the HCT Community. The sampling technique that was adopted in this study was the snowballing approach, because it was relatively easy. The approach provided an opportunity for identified participants to provide a generalised view. In addition, it ensured that only individuals with relevant experiences and knowledge participated in the decision-making process. In addition, it provided a mechanism for selecting the most important resources in the community and the people suited to contribute towards the change effort in the organisation.

4.3. Ethical consideration

The involvement of human participants in this study presents critical ethical considerations that the researcher needs to address. The research design will have the approval of the ethics committee in a bid to certify that the entire processes have fulfilled all the relevant ethical obligations. The participants must understand their right to opt out of the study at any stage. The focus of the study on HCT presents unique challenges for the participants who work within their organisation. Consequently, they will be assured of confidentiality to give them the space to provide honest feedback. Besides, it is necessary to seek informed consent will from the participants. All the participants will have attained the legal age for majority consent, enabling them to sign agreement forms indicating their voluntary willingness to be involved in the research. The analysis of the research findings will be an accurate reflection of the data. Deliberate efforts will be made to utilise valid instruments and demonstrate how the study was conducted to allow other researchers to replicate the process. In addition, the researcher intends to provide a disclaimer underscoring their independence from the HCT institution or other interested parties.

5. Findings from Interviews

Both the interviewees indicated that the leadership of HCT would enable the organisation to succeed in its strategic transformation as it seeks to optimise its business processes and prepares students with the requisite competence to shape the evolution of the UAE. The first interviewee indicated that the operational structures in the organisation were inefficient due to the duplication of roles. Similarly, the second interviewee indicated that the organisation was reliant on an overly traditional business processes. In particular, the interviewees indicated that the management should ensure that all the resources required for this change effort are available. Both the interviewees were willing to support the transformation agenda and believed that leaders in the organisation were responsible for the success of the process.

Creating an enabling learning environment that optimises the delivery of knowledge and skills acquisition requires the commitment of the management. The first interviewee indicated that the management should be embedded in the operational team. In addition, the second interviewee responded that managers should monitor the activities of their subordinates and guide them towards achieving the desired outcomes. The managers must be committed to inviting all the stakeholders to be involved in each stage of the transformation process. The first interviewee indicated the importance of cultivating team spirit and engaging all the employees during the transformation process. Similarly, the second interviewee believed that the management should ensure that their teams are aligned with key objectives of the transformation process. Ensuring that stakeholders are involved in the transformation process will empower them to make the necessary sacrifices to contribute towards positive outcomes.

The present organisational environment is inefficient because of duplicate roles. The operational structure of the organisation relies on legacy systems and fails to consider the evolving demands of the organisation. In spite of the modernisation of the education sector in the UAE, the operational structure at the HCT has remained very traditional as evident in the responses by the second interviewee. In spite of the excellence of the institution in the provision of technology education, it has failed to digitise vast parts of its operations. For instance, the institution has failed to embrace enterprise (ERP) systems that would streamline operations in the organisation. The first interviewee indicated that they would like the organisation to shift towards the adoption of ERP systems. The information is consistent with the views of the second interviewee that the organisation should become more creative and innovative in its operations. The feedback by both the interviewees demonstrates that stakeholders in the organisation recognise the importance of transforming business processes. The leadership ensures that the organisation embraces innovation and creativity in the

pursuit of its mission to produce competent graduates with the requisite skills to thrive in the global marketplace.

6. Discussion

6.1. Setting the transformation agenda

Leaders will play a critical role in creating a sustaining tone for change during the transformation process. In the UAE, organisations have embraced traditional values and paradigms that inform their business processes. The reliance on traditional systems and values in the HCT highlights the impact of the national culture on the organisation. However, the first interviewee indicated that the presence of traditional systems highlights the need for the organisation to modernise its business operations. Consequently, the management must demonstrate leadership in facilitating organisational change in the organisation. The leadership is actively looking to engage all employees in this change process, as highlighted by the communication of the vice chancellor in a memo dated 30 November 2015, in which he says, 'The dynamics of this project will involve several engaging activities – interviews, workshops, focus groups, surveys – soliciting your input and shaping our strategic goals and initiatives together'. Besides, it is important to create an enabling environment to realise positive outcomes within the organisation. The leaders must change the organisational culture by presenting a new meaning in employees' perception of their role in the pursuit of shared outcomes (Singh & Bhandarker, 1990). It is evident that the management must demonstrate that it is committed to supporting the change effort. The response of managers to this transformation agenda will send crucial signals to their subordinates that will inform their attitudes towards the process. Each leader in the organisation should understand their role in the transformation process (Ayars, 2009). In instances where the transformation agenda requires significant sacrifices by the organisation or some employees, effective leadership will be instrumental in addressing the anxieties that may undermine the effort. The leaders must demonstrate and appreciate the challenges facing the organisation and the unique contribution of key individuals in facilitating change in the organisation.

Transformational leadership will be critical in determining the success of the change effort. The quality of leadership is instrumental in cultivating acceptance among the people. The leaders can set the agenda and manage the attention of stakeholders within the organisation (Andrews, Mcconnell & Wescott, 2010). The chancellor and the vice chancellor must frame the transformation agenda in a manner that is consistent with the aspirations of the organisation. Consequently, both the interviewees expressed a desire to see top managers provide leadership during the transformation process. They can coach their followers to be active participants in the transformation process (Andrews et al., 2010). They can also provide sufficient resources, tools and information to implement their transformation agenda.

6.2. Stakeholder engagement

The leaders in HCT should allow their followers to thrive during this transformation process. They can create strong relationships with key stakeholders in the organisational environment (Andrews et al., 2010). In addition, it is important to provide adequate finances that will support the implementation of the transformation process (Andrews et al., 2010). In particular, the chancellor and the vice chancellor must ensure that their officers are trained on the new digital learning platforms.

HCT has succeeded in creating a community that appreciates the contribution of each stakeholder in the change effort. Consequently, it is imperative for stakeholders within the organisation to be involved in the transformation processes. The chancellor should create an organisational culture that protects the interests of all stakeholders as they collaborate towards the realisation of shared outcomes. Transformational change is concerned with creating a radical shift from the existing organisational environment to desired states (Gilley, 2005). The chancellor, Mohammed Omran Al

Shamsi, communicated the importance of this transformational process in ensuring that the institution enhances its competitive advantage in the training of talent in the UAE. In his message, he demonstrated an understanding of the ecosystem within which the organisation is operating. It is important for the institution to align its strategic growth with the evolving demands of the global workplace and the aspirations of the UAE. This vision is clear from the words of the Chancellor, communicated as a memo, on 30 November 2016 to all the staff of HCT. In the memo, the Chancellor says, 'Institutional change is often demanding and arduous, but it is also a crucial step to meet the demands of a changing world. Significantly, education is at the heart of the global economy, and that is why organisations such as HCT have to reinvent themselves to meet new challenges'. Transformational leadership must communicate a clear and consistent vision to earn the support of stakeholders (Jung & Lee, 2010). The chancellor set the right tone in asking each member of the institution to be actively involved in creating an organisation that is not only efficient but committed to realising its core mission of producing talented and competent graduates with the skills to make a difference in the global economy. The message demonstrated that the Chancellor recognised the importance of people in facilitating the success of the transformational initiative.

The leaders must ensure that all stakeholders focus on the core mission of the organisation. Leaders should ensure that their followers are active partners in pursuing a clearly defined vision (Hussain et al., 2016). The anxiety caused by change efforts and competing interests may distract stakeholders from the main objective of the organisation. Consequently, it is important to ensure that everyone within the organisation recognises their responsibility in creating a learning environment that equips students with the relevant skills to thrive in both existing and emerging roles in the workplace. The chancellor and his management team should ensure that the learning process is not undermined because of the transformation process. The first interviewee appreciated this concept by indicating that the management should ensure that the transformation process positively influences the student's learning experience. The contribution of stakeholders in the research process will be instrumental in ensuring they have a stake in the outcome of the change effort.

The leadership must also create opportunities for all stakeholders to be involved in the transformational process. The contribution of employees in creating transformative change ensures that the people recognise the value they can make in their communities. Stakeholder engagement, effective governance and strong leadership are instrumental in creating sustainable change in an organisation (Nieuwenhuizen, Rossouw & Badenhorst, 2008). Every employee and stakeholder should be an active participant in creating change within the organisation, and this is reiterated by the words of the Chancellor as highlighted in the memo dated 30 November 2016, 'I commend all of the faculty and staff for your contributions in making HCT better. I ask you to prepare yourselves for next year, so that we may continue our journey of achievement, and look to a future of boundless possibilities'. The implementation of the transformational strategy should be an essential part of an individual's role.

6.3. Holding followers accountable

Leadership will be instrumental in holding all members of the organisation accountable during the transformation process (Andrews et al., 2010). The leaders will ensure that middle managers are responsible for the realisation of key performance indicators. They can also empower middle managers to make effective operational decisions that allow the organisation to achieve positive outcomes. The second interviewee indicated that the role of middle managers would be critical achieving key outcomes. The observation is consistent with the thoughts of the first interviewee that middle managers would be at the frontline of the transformation process. They should delegate responsibilities to middle managers in order to create effective change agents across the organisation. Effective leadership will be critical in creating an enabling environment for followers to embrace the change effort (Andrews et al., 2010). In particular, the chancellor and the vice chancellor will champion the transformation agenda and protect their followers from external influence.

6.4. Identifying and empowering change agents

Leaders play a crucial role in identifying and empowering change agents within the organisation. Transformational leaders should provide opportunities for their followers to be actively involved in the process (Okinyi et al., 2015). HCT has operations in different parts in the UAE. Consequently, it is important to empower managers who will lead the transformation agenda across all its branches. The engagement of leaders in the change effort will be instrumental in creating a sense of shared responsibility for creating transformative change in the organisation. The leaders must engage all the stakeholders to underscore the importance of transformation. Stakeholder engagement is critical to creating sustainable change in an organisation (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). They must demonstrate how each role is linked to key strategic outcomes. Besides, it is important to create an enabling environment for all employees to be actively involved in the change process.

6.5. Facilitating collaboration with key partners

The leaders must advocate for increased partnerships between the government, the private sector and the institution. In the increasingly complex modern business environment, change requires the participation of multiple stakeholders (Stringer, 2013). They also have to demonstrate good governance practices that will attract increased private sector partnerships. Securing private and public sector partnerships require the creation of an efficient and credible learning environment. The chancellor and vice chancellor will be instrumental in advocating for increased collaboration between key stakeholders in the learning environment.

The managers must be actively involved in creating quality performance standards that push stakeholders towards creating an enabling learning environment. Consequently, it is important for the managers to demonstrate a commitment to pushing their staff towards reaching defined milestones. Both the interviewees understood the importance of key performance indicators in performance appraisals as managers seek to align employee tasks with the strategic plan. For instance, the strategic plan envisions the realisation of 90% on-time graduations (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). Presently, the institution is only experiencing 61% on-time graduation rates (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). In addition, the focus of the management will determine the areas that receive priority within their institutions. Innovative managers will enable the organisation to create 34 innovation centres as envisioned in its strategic plan (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). At present, HCT only has one innovation centre. In addition, they will be integral in ensuring that 100% of the academic programmes offered by the institution are available on smart learning platforms (Higher Colleges of Technology, 2016). The strategic aspirations of the organisation demonstrate a focus on the digitisation of the learning environment. Consequently, the leaders should appreciate the power of technology in supporting the institution to achieve its vision and mission. In addition, they must be willing to spend on information technology in order to create an enabling learning environment. The shift towards the digitisation of the learning process will require a transformation of business processes and key roles within the organisation. As a result, the leaders must be willing to invest in the training of employees within the institution. They should also be willing to give resources and tools that will enable them to thrive in a digital-first organisational environment. Leaders have a responsibility for creating an enabling environment for their followers to trust the transformation process (Inkinci, 2013). The success of the transformation agenda relies on the ability of the organisation to create a learning environment where all the stakeholders are comfortable with the increased reliance on information technology tools.

6.6. Effective leadership and governance

The management of the organisation must provide a clear vision that the staff can buy in order to create synergy within the organisation. Communicating their vision will ensure that the people are completely engaged in the pursuit of desirable outcomes. Leaders are responsible for motivating

followers to pursue shared objectives (Fullan, 2008). The management will be instrumental in ensuring that employee performance appraisals capture the progress of the institution towards the achievement of its objectives.

The leaders in the institution have a responsibility to ensure the transformation process in the organisation aligns with the national goals of the UAE. Stakeholders within the organisation are predisposed to focus on their individual interests and the impact of the transformation agenda on their departments. The change process should be characterised by a cross-sectional transformation among all the critical entities in an organisation (Keller & Price, 2011). Consequently, it is imperative for the leadership to ensure that members of the organisation recognise their responsibility to make a difference in the community. The leaders will ensure that the government, regulators, political leadership in the communities where it operates and parents support the transformation process.

6.7. Responsibility for the outcome of the transformation agenda

The management should ensure that good employees are motivated to stay during the transformation process and lead the process. Change practices may undermine the commitment of good employees in an organisation if they lose faith in the ability of the organisation to support their aspirations. The management must be committed to changing the mindset of employees within the organisation. Leaders must create an organisational culture that supports the transformation agenda (Kolorouti, 2004). In particular, they must recognise the challenges facing the organisation and the importance of commitment among all stakeholders towards creating positive change in the community. They must facilitate the development of a new organisational culture where the people are fully committed to creating a learning environment that can compete with the most credible institutions around the world.

The management should ensure that each college has an operational strategy that moves the institution closer to its goals. It is important for the organisation to create an enabling environment for all constituent branches to create positive change. The leaders must ensure that all colleges are actively involved in the transformation process. This is highlighted by expanding the role of programme specific Executive Deans to involve in campus operations as per the memo of the vice chancellor sent on 16 September 2015, in which he communicates, 'Executive Deans are now expected not only to lead the development of their academic division, but also to collaborate effectively with both Campus Directors and Heads of Academic Operations'. The leaders can create a platform for effective communication and coordination among the people. In addition, the organisation should create an enabling environment for the people to change their immediate environment. Stakeholder participation is critical to achieving sustainable change in an organisation (Straw, 2013). The participation of all colleges in the change effort will create opportunities for the institution to achieve uniformity in the achievement of positive outcomes.

6.8. Effective communication during the transformation process

The leaders must communicate the importance of the strategic transformation and its relationship with its mission and vision. The strategic transformation is a response to actual changes in the education sector and the demands of the society. For the organisation to remain profitable, it is imperative to align its operations with the evolving business environment. Consequently, the strategic transformation is critical in creating an institution that is not only profitable, but that is actively involved in shaping the future of the UAE. Transformational leaders must inspire their followers by communicating a clear vision and demonstrating how it will serve their self-interest (Qutob, 2013). For instance, creating an innovative learning environment will enable HCT to attract a large student population and enhance the ability of its staff to make a positive contribution to the education sector. The leaders can demonstrate how the transformation will be essential in enabling the UAE to have a competent and skilled workforce that enhances its competitiveness in the global economy. The

leaders must be prepared to make the necessary difficult decisions that must be made during the transformation process. For instance, they should be prepared to fire the employees who are unwilling to adjust to the new work environment. Organisational change may cause changes in the erosion of some roles and the emergence of new ones (Wallin, 2010).

The leadership in the organisation should understand the challenges facing the people and their commitment to the values of the organisation. The engagement of the people will be instrumental in creating opportunities to produce positive outcomes. It is important to ensure that the people have a strong appreciation of the essential nature of this strategic transformation. Transformational leaders have a responsibility to coach their employees to be actively involved in the pursuit of shared goals by transcending their narrow self-interests (Harris, Roussel & Thomas, 2017). Although the achievement of key objectives in this process requires many sacrifices, it is critical for the leaders to demonstrate its necessity. The leadership function at each stage of the transformation process will be a key determiner of the ability of the organisation to achieve its goals (Biech, 2007). If HCT fails to transform its business processes, it not only risks losing its market share, but it would be exposing itself to failure as the demands of the UAE economy evolves.

The management also has a responsibility to raise awareness about the change effort and the impact it can have on the society. Leaders must ensure that the strategic transformation process is goal-oriented. The management must address and manage any resistance from stakeholders. Leaders must identify the most effective change agents in their organisation environment and provide resources to facilitate the transformation agenda (Cummings & Worley, 2015). The leaders must understand the needs of their organisation and the impact of the transformation agenda on the objectives.

The leadership in an organisation should create an enabling environment to implement change. The strategic transformation process in HCT is poised to be a success, because the process is based on elaborate plans that were designed to change organisational operations. The first interviewee indicated that many members of staff are prepared for the change effort because they recognise the importance of creating an ERP that can compete in the modern economy. In addition, the leaders demonstrated their commitment towards leading the change effort. Indeed, transformational leadership requires willingness among the leaders to embrace change (Wanna, Vincent & Podger, 2012). The chancellor and vice chancellor were committed to leading the way in the adoption of a new paradigm. They are keen on providing a good example for stakeholders to be actively committed to the transformation agenda.

Leaders have a responsibility to communicate the vision of this strategic transformation and the ability of the institution to achieve its mission and vision. The first interviewee indicated that leaders should hold town halls with members of staff and their students to communicate the importance of the change. The town halls will also provide an opportunity for the leaders to address the anxieties of the people and create opportunities for all stakeholders to share ideas. In addition, the second interviewee stated that the management should secure the employment contracts of their staff to ensure their concerns over job security are addressed. Commitment to group norms will be instrumental in gaining the commitment of followers to a transformational agenda (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

6.9. Measuring outcomes

The success of the transformative agenda will be measured after analysis of the performance indicators. The leaders must demonstrate accountability and transparency in the transformative process. They should be willing to take responsibility for the outcome of the change process. In addition, the management must create an enabling environment for individual employees to be actively involved in each step of the transformation process. They should also invest in the implementation of new business processes and paradigms to support the change effort. In this effect,

the vice chancellor has revised the directorate of the deputy vice chancellor for Academic Affairs. This restructuring, as illustrated in a memo from the vice chancellor sent on 17 August 2015, will help in 'Better alignment with HCT mission with clear accountability for advancing both the interests and the productivity of faculty members and the role of applied research in HCT activities and processes'. The adoption of new paradigms and processes are integral in supporting the implementation of change in an organisation (Mcfarland & Goldsworthy, 2014). In addition, they should ensure that all the stakeholders are motivated to contribute in all the stages of the transformation process. They have a responsibility to earn and maintain employee commitment throughout the entire process. Followers are influenced by the actions, words and commitment of their leaders (Shelton, 2012). Consequently, the chancellor and vice chancellor must demonstrate their commitment towards the strategic plan 2012–2017.

The leadership must ensure that the transformation process aligns with the unique needs of this organisation. Although they should borrow the best practices from other educational institutions, it is important for the organisation to adopt an operating system that serves its unique needs. The new approach must align with government regulations and the standards set by the international community. In addition, the leaders must ensure that the new business model reflects a commitment to the national and cultural values of the UAE. The top leadership must ensure that all stakeholders recognise the need to centre the new learning environment on the delivery of individual-focused education that focuses on the unique needs of students. Stakeholder engagement is instrumental in ensuring they own the transformation process (Cawsey, Deszca, Ingols & Cawsey, 2012). HCT is keen on creating strong partnerships with its students and providing them with an opportunity to make a difference in their communities.

The success of this transformative change is dependent on the impact on the society and its ability to introduce innovative changes that enhance the ability of HCT to achieve its vision and mission. The organisation requires increased commitment by the stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes in its engagement with each other. Both the interviewees appreciated the role of key performance indicators in evaluating the outcome of the transformation process. In particular, it is imperative for the organisation to appreciate the challenges faced and the need to embrace sustainable solutions. It is important to equip stakeholders with the skills and resources they require to thrive in the new organisational environment. The new structure presents unique challenges to the employees (Hussain et al., 2016). Consequently, it is important for HCT to organise training workshops to equip the employees to achieve positive outcomes in the change process.

6.10. Role of middle management

The middle management will play a critical role in facilitating the quest to achieve the desired outcomes during this transformation process. Indeed, the middle management is the face of the transformation process. They will be at the frontline of the implementation of the change effort. Consequently, they must be empowered to lead the change effort in their departments. It is imperative to identify leaders across the organisational environment who can lead the change effort (Yearout, Miles & Koonce, 2001). They should have all the information they need to respond to emerging issues. They provide a means for the top management to reach all the employees in the institution. The middle management will be critical in enlisting the involvement of all professionals in the transformation process. The engagement of technical, managerial and non-technical staff will be essential in the transformation process (Sharma, 2007). The success of the transformation agenda is dependent on the ability of the people to create a positive transformative agenda.

The leadership should ensure that all the stakeholders in the organisation have the resources and tools they need to influence their organisations. Effective leaders take personal responsibility for the outcomes of their followers (Hayes, 2014). It is important to ensure that they can provide leadership during periods of difficulty in the transformation process. Implementing change within an organisation may cause profound challenges for stakeholders due to changing roles, the need for new skills and

increased demands to deliver on key performance indicators. The leadership should provide all the requisite resources that will ensure the organisation can achieve the goals of its transformative agenda. Leaders must help other people in their organisations to thrive during the change process (Cran, 2016).

The leaders must cultivate a team spirit and ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the change effort. In the past, HCT has thrived through the involvement of all staff in the planning process. However, the comprehensive nature of the 2017–2022 strategic plans requires the participation of political leaders, students, parents, regulators, industry officials and members of the community. The participation of members of the community will be instrumental in facilitating the achievement of positive outcomes in the creation of a forward-looking learning environment that leverages the opportunities presented by the information technology to realise positive outcomes. The top leadership of the organisation must also ensure that the management is aligned with the objectives of the organisation.

To sum up, HCT has adopted a strategic plan 2017–2022 in an effort to produce competent and skilled graduates who will be actively involved in shaping the future of the UAE. The management of the institution should provide culturally relevant and evidence-driven leadership. It has the responsibility of earning and maintaining the support of all stakeholders. The leaders must also ensure that the transformation agenda translates into the achievement of 100% employment rates for its graduates by 2022.

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