**Stakeholders’ Involvement in the Implementation of Changes in the Provision of Academic Library Services**

**Abstract**

*Changes are inevitable in any organization and they should be carefully planned and implemented for managing changes. Change in an organization is a respectable sign indicating an organization growing. However, if the process of change in an organization cannot be well planned, the implementation may fail due to resistance to change accompanied by a number of factors particularly resistance from stakeholders. While all academic libraries worldwide like other organizations, experiencing change, various challenges delay them to implement changes. These challenges include expansions in information resources and services, as well as keeping up with the current policies and professional development and snubbing stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement in change management is important for the success of any initiative of change as the most likely to be affected by the change. Therefore, it is imperative that, prior to implementing any change the organization needs to understand its stakeholders, how it can best involve them, and how to keep them engaged throughout the entire process. This chapter, therefore, attempts to highlight the significance of involving stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing change in academic libraries to alleviate resistance to change. The chapter further used Kotter’s 8-Step Change Theory to highlight proper ways to be used by academic libraries to implement changes to lighten resistance to change from stakeholders.*

1. **Introduction**

Changes are inevitable in any organization owing to numerous factors. Among others, the main factors which influence organizational changes include performance gaps, something that sounds better, change for the sake of the change, crises, the advent of new technology, and identification of opportunities from internal and external forces. Equally other reasons can also make academic libraries make changes to respond to emerging changes (Aslam, 2021; Grant, 2018). As stated by Aslam (2020), “Changes in academic libraries are the result of globalization and the current requirements for higher education”. Some scholars such as Schulte *et al* (2018) have informed that change in higher education hassle academicians to improve their skills and implement new roles of librarianship as traditional ways of working may no longer be suitable in the modern settings of academic libraries. While many organizational changes transpire from the outside environment, some changes also start within the organization. Academic library changes also originate from the same channels (Barnhill‐Dilling *et al*., 2021).

Planned changes often bring new things to diverse stakeholders who in turn need to be engaged in the organization’s planning phase of implementing changes. Accordingly, academic libraries like other organizations need to have an appropriate approach to engage the key stakeholders in the process of planning and the implementation of changes to avoid resistance. That is, planned change implementation has never been free from resistance, and organizations have to skirmish to overcome that resistance. Potential challenges that academic libraries may encounter during the planning and implementation of changes include expansion of information resources and services, coping with the current and emerging policies, professional developments and resistance from a section of stakeholders (Aslam, 2021; Charney, 2020). Although various challenges can deter the implementation of changes in academic libraries, the foremost challenge is that of overlooking the potential of engaging stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing changes. Stakeholders are thus the key feature for the change implementation prosperity of any organization. In academic libraries, stakeholders also have a role to play in the process of change’ planning together with its associate service delivery.

Library stakeholders embrace library staff who are the service providers, students, instructors and researchers who are the service consumers, university management,and development partners. The present study focused on library staff only to find/uncover their perception of the process of implementing planned changes. This category has been designated since it provides library services related to academic matters to different consumers. Library staff also need to be well informed about new changes the library management is planning to implement. Changes can easily be accomplished by developing the interest and eagerness of individual stakeholders throughout the entire process (Meulemans &Maltin, 2019). As argued by Urcuqui-Bustamante *et al* (2021) that, stakeholders’ engagement in the process of planning and implementing changes has received great attention globally. Thus, academic libraries need to recognize the significance of engaging stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing changes.

The key primary managerial duty for the development of an organization is planning. This is a crucial step that managers at all levels should give great attention to. Specifically, it has been reported by Sanches (2018) that “the majority of organizations are failing to implement changes due to poor strategic planning and overlooking engaging stakeholders in the process of change planning and implementation”. Similarly, Wong (2019) and Harland, Stewart, and Bruce (2019) advocated that “it is imperative for organizations to make appropriate decisions and action plans prior to performing changes”. More clarifications were given out by Coghlan and Rushford (2006) that “if the process of implementing changes in an organization is not well planned, there will be a great chance of resistance from stakeholders. Furthermore, Aslam (2021) and Charney (2020) agree that proper planning enables libraries to employ control over these changes and adjust to the future, particularly when the future appears ambiguous and unpredictable. This chapter divulges how the engagement of stakeholders in academic libraries is central to the process of planning and implementing changes in the provision of academic library services. The chapter further proposes appropriate measures the libraries need to abide within the process of planning and implementing changes.

**2.0. Engaging Stakeholders in the Implementation of Changes**

According to Esson et al. (2012), academic libraries must undergo a crucial shift toward a new emphasis on engaging with patrons to remain relevant. For a service organization like an academic library to innovate successfully, it requires full engagement of staff as service providers during the implementation of changes (Daniel, 2013; Renu, 2015). Stakeholder engagement is a paradigm that aims to bring the relationship between stakeholders and organizations to a more equal level (Luoma-Aho, 2015; Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, and Ilic, 2011). However, engaging stakeholders in change implementation is not a simple task, especially in an information-overload environment, and it can even be likened to a pinball match (Luoma-Aho, 2015). On the other hand, Healey (2021) and Ulewicz (2017) proclaim that since stakeholders are major decision-makers and directly affected by the outcomes of changes, they should be actively engaged in the change implementation plan. Empirical evidence has consistently shown a strong correlation between stakeholders' engagement and organizational outcomes.In conclusion, to ensure success in an ever-changing landscape, academic libraries need to focus on engaging with their patrons and embrace staff involvement in the implementation of innovative changes. Stakeholder engagement is crucial, as it establishes a balanced relationship between stakeholders and organizations, leading to better outcomes. Despite the challenges, actively involving stakeholders in the change process is vital for achieving positive results.

As asserted by Lorne and Dilling (2012), "both private and public organizations that have made stakeholders' engagement a crucial component in change implementation have witnessed great achievements." This statement implies that engaging stakeholders in the change implementation process is indispensable. Academic libraries, like other service providers, face the risk of being affected by imminent resistance to changes from their key stakeholders if not well engaged.Furthermore, Nalick et al. (2016) specified that an intersection exists between stakeholders and a two-way information flow, which encourages stakeholders' acceptability through sustained collaborative relationships. Thus, stakeholders' engagement in change implementation is imperative for the success of any initiative. Employees are the backbone of any organization and are likely to be significantly affected by changes. Therefore, before implementing any changes, it is crucial for an organization to understand its stakeholders and devise effective strategies to engage them throughout the entire implementation process. As noted by Lynda and Bourne (2016), engaging stakeholders in organizational activities can foster commitment and reduce indifference or hostility. This emphasizes that stakeholder engagement is key to the success of any planned changes in an organization (Aslam, 2021; Charney and Hauke, 2020).No matter how well-planned the changes may be, their successful implementation depends on the acceptance and support of stakeholders. Ensuring their active involvement and buy-in can lead to the best operational outcomes for the organization.

According to Buse et al. (2012), stakeholders play a crucial role in policy decisions and organizational changes, which can lead to various benefits. When stakeholders are actively engaged and foster feelings of commitment, trust, and satisfaction with the changes, the benefits are abundant (Kang, 2012).

Engaging stakeholders in the implementation of changes offers several advantages. Firstly, it increases public awareness and acceptance of society's problems. Secondly, it improves decision-making regarding service provision by incorporating relevant stakeholders' viewpoints, information, and interests. Finally, it enhances the legitimacy of the changes (Van Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004).

Stakeholder engagement is not a new concept in the academic library and information science field, as highlighted by Harland et al. (2019). Successful organizational changes are often attributed to the effective management of the human resource system. Understanding people's feelings, behavior, and responses in relation to changes is crucial for managers when implementing changes, as supported by Farley et al. (1998).

Stakeholders are integral to the functioning of academic libraries, including the delivery of services to users. Engaging stakeholders can significantly reduce resistance to changes. Therefore, special attention should be given to both those who will carry out the changes and those who will be directly or indirectly affected by them (Farley et al., 1998)

1. **Implementation Barriers to Planned Changes in Academic Libraries**

Many organizations have found it difficult to implement changes successfully due to challenges facing the implementation process. Asworth *et al* (2020) put it, academic library change implementation has never been free from challenges. Planned changes frequently introduce new concepts and ideas to people; thus, change implementation must be carefully thought out. Academic libraries may find it difficult to implement changes due to a lack of proper planning which fails to designate resources needed for implementing changes, resistance to changes, or being unaware of the changes(Aslam, 2021). Organizations need to identify any problems that may prevent the adoption of changes and analyze potential causes before planned change implementation to alleviate this challenge. Among the challenges that may encumber academic libraries include strategic barriers, structural barriers, human resources barriers, contextual barriers and procedural barriers (Mosadeghrad & Ansarian, 2014). Strategic problems are significant barriers in the process of change implementation and have the most undesirable influence on their achievement. According to Ali *et al* (2014) strategic barriers are generally connected to the top management and leadership of the organization. Inhibitors such as poor management, scarce leadership and shortage of strategic planning are clustered under strategic problem barriers. Staff shortage, employee resistance to changes and inadequate human resource management practices are under human resources barriers. They include challenges that are related to the human factor. Issues such as systems, and resources required for implementing the change program are related to structural obstacles structure, as stated by Aiyebelehin (2012) that, “library like any other system is made up of various interacting sections and the organizational structure helps to define the roles of everybody in the library system” This implies that meager engagement of library staff in the process of change implementation may accelerate to resistance to changes.

**4.0. Resistance to Changes**

Organizations need to undergo changes and adapt to new routines, improve service and extend their portfolio. According to Chen (2017), “Change” is the theme of the 21st century associated with new technology and significantly altered the pattern of economic activity, social communications, and human daily life. It is also known that not all employees react to an announced change with joy since it depends on the way how individual employees perceive the change. Employees tend to resist change if they lack the courage and aptitude to handle change with a need to have adequate knowledge and ability to enable them to overcome change(Aslam, 2021). Once they recognize that they lack the compulsory knowledge they resist change. On the other hand, resistance is a behavioral phenomenon that appears as a rejection of or a negative reaction toward a change or adaptation to new methods (Nakhoda & Tajik, 2017). It is an irrefutable reaction toward significant changes and people naturally attack changes to defend the present situation when they feel that their security and condition are endangered (Folger & Skarlicki, 1999). Understanding the people’s anxiety, the organization needs to conduct training prior to the implementation of change to equip them with the right tools necessary for the facilitation of the change.

Academic libraries need to undergo change to improve the way of delivering services to their users. Employees often resist changes in the workplace for a variety of reasons. While academic libraries are struggling to achieve their main goals of providing quality services in teaching, learning, and research mission, changes in many aspects of the academic library have challenged library professionals to cope with new issues that have risen with the changes. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) proposed four reasons for resistance to change as;- a desire not to lose something of value, a misunderstanding of the change and its implications, a belief that the change does not make sense for the organization, and a low tolerance for change’. Nakhoda, et al., (2017) highlighted various factors, which can influence employees to resist change that is either associated with the organizational environment or the perception of their own job. Nakhoda , al., (2017) established that ambiguity is a major source of resistance to technological change, combined with uncertainty toward institutional change.

When employees are not willing to change, they resist the initiative of change (Zhang *et al*., 2022). A deficiency of consciousness of the need for change can greatly influence resistance to change (Sánchez, Sitú and Murillo, 2022; Nagaraj *et al.*, 2021). Fear of not having the new knowledge or inability to handle changing environments together with a deficiency of skills can be other key factors of resistance (Rao *et al*., 2022). Library professionals may therefore apply several approaches to circumvent and diminish the risk of resistance. They may deal with resistance as a primary action toward reducing the chance of resistance (Aslam, 2021). There are however some eloquent steps that library administrators may take at the early stages of discourse resistance which is proactive resistance management. Such steps are not limited to change and should be well planned, properly organized and measurable and require strong leadership to handle change. Strong and visionary leadership may reduce resistance by motivating employees, sharing ideas, and mentoring them (Gutterman, 2022). A common vision may play a great role during an amendment to prepare librarians for accepting change in difficult times (Aslam, 2020).

Other elucidations according to Aslam (2021) and Clare,(2017) have been developed to overcome resistance to change in the organization and libraries including provide all required information at an early stage; encouraging employee involvement, make an only essential change, building trust, provide counseling and feedback, and open communication and discussion

**5.0.Effective Implementation of Planned Changes**

The most challenging issue for any organization is implementing change (Diane, *et al*., 2018). Academic institutions are rapidly changing around where libraries are facing similar challenges and adapting to change is a demand for growth and improvement. Thus, library administrators need a clear vision, an implementable strategic plan to meet the upcoming challenges, self-confidence, and the ability to work with diversity (Aslam, 2021). While other scholars assert that library professionals need to show flexibility and willingness to develop new skills and adopt new ways of working and dealing with the academic community, other issues that effective change can be accomplished by developing the curiosity and enthusiasm of individual employees (Schulte, 2018). All matters related to technology, material, and human to establish suitable strategies, structures, and alternatives to cope with change need to be addressed. The reason behind academic libraries’ challenges in change implementation is associated with lack a of proper planning and implementation and a lack of poor understanding of the change to stakeholders. Since library staff are the change agents in the library, it is essential for them to be engaged in the entire process of change planning and their implementation. Although academic libraries are undergoing challenges in implementing planned change, they should struggle since change is necessary for their continued viability and growth (Dean *et al*., 2018).

The process of implementing a planned change by engaging stakeholders is the key determinant of success to change. Change models such as Pfeifer, Schmitt, and Voigt (2005), Graetz and Smith (2010), and Haddad and Kotnour (2015) have been proposed and studied over the years. Although there is no agreement on the best approach to effective change implementation, some models are more appropriate for certain organizations than others subject to the way in which management is structured.

**5.1.Kotter’s Eight Models on Change Implementation in Academic Libraries**

Some strategies and models have been developed to engage stakeholders in implementing planned changes in academic libraries. Various models have been used to show effective ways of implementing such changes. The shreds of evidence indicate that multinational companies applied Kotter’s Model in simulation exercises to help managers to adapt changes in the renewable energy sector (Hurn, 2012). It has been specified by Popp (2012) that, Kotter’s Eight Steps Model is essential for effective management to be used by libraries in developing appropriate ways of implementing the planned changes.

The notable consumption of the Koter’s (1996) Eight Model include Pepsi-Cola International which also effectively applied the Kotter Model to build a globally comprehensive organization (TMC n.d.); Honeywell has successfully applied the model to a business process reengineering project (Rodger and Pendharkar, 2001); Ericsson telecommunications applied the model to help employees’ transition from a 3G to a 4G environment Gammel- Gaard (2015) used the model in making changes in Copenhagen’s city logistics recommended the model to implant a culture of assessment in libraries; Carter (2015) indicated that Auburn University Library used Kotter’s Eight-stage Model to guide changes, specifically efforts to integrate information literacy assessment into its library instruction; Nussbaumer and Merkley (2010) concluded that the changes were driven by a new University Librarian embedded in the eight strategies for systemic change; Cox (2015) recommended the use of the model in planning university sustainability programs, while Calegari, *et al* (2015) followed the model to attain accreditation status for their business school; Borrego and Henderson (2014) applied the model to help higher education instructors adapt to change in teaching STEM-related classes; Townsend *et al* (2016) implemented a new fall risk assessment program in the Emergency Department of a New Jersey hospital following the Kotter Model and Guzman *et al*(2011) applied it when revising their dental school’s clinical assessment system. Kotter's Eight-Step Change Paradigm was therefore found to be more appropriate to guide this study.

Kotter’s Eight-step Model was used to plan and implement major organizational change and has been disseminated widely with positive outcomes. Previous studies demonstrated that the Kotter Model can be effective across a wide variety of organizations. Since this study aimed to unveil the potential of involving library staff in implementing planned changes in academic libraries, Kotte’s (1996) Model was more appropriate as is often used to explain the change in organizations, easier to apprehend has transparency, and is more communication-friendly. The model comprises eight steps, namely establishing a sense of communication-friendly by forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision, communicating the vision, empowering others to act on the vision, planning and creating short-term wins, and still producing more change, and ending by institutionalizing new approaches. Various public and private organizations have used Kotter’s Eight-step Model to implement changes successfully. Among the models, Kotter's Eight-step Change Paradigm was found to be more appropriate in this study since the model focuses not only on changes but also addresses the stakeholders who are affected by the changes, as indicated In Figure 1:



**Figure 1**: Adapted and Modified from Kotter’s 8-Step Change Model

**Source: John Kotter’s (1996) Change Model**

The Kotter’s Eight (1996) Stage Model produced a sequential list of steps to enable implementation in change management by focusing on 8-step change management to accommodate evolving business requirements and speed up the transformation process.

**5.2.Creating a Sense of Urgency**

The first step in Kotter’s Model maintains that organization members must be aware of and understand the pressing need for changes is likely to happen. Sharing a sense of urgency of changes is the primary key to planned change implementation success in order to gain the needed cooperation. Since employees often tend to resist changes, establishing a sense of urgency is necessary for clearing employees’ uncertainty concerning their effects. Academic library managers need to communicate the perseverance of the changes to stakeholders so as to know their reactions through a dialog conferring the problems submerged in library services for stakeholders to be familiar with and become part of changes.

**5.3. Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition**

This step is necessary for changes to occur. The intention is to form a team that can support passing the change message to the library staff. The team has to distinguish characteristics and be strong enough with a convincing influence on others during the change implementation process (Appelbaum et al., 2012). This is important since it holds a high value since support is mandatory from other employees to effect the changes to take place implying the necessity for library management to execute the partial gradation level of resistance to changes.

**5.4. Developing a Vision and Strategy**

The library manager must develop a thorough and workable plan for implementing changes that spells out the goals of the changes that will help the library accomplish them, lists the key performance indicators by outlining how success will be measured, what metrics will need to be adjusted, and what will be the starting point, where things are at the moment, and is clear as to who will be responsible for carrying out and supervising the changes. The management of the library creates the leading coalition for a change vision in the form of objectives that the institution seeks to address. According to Hackman (2017), the guiding coalition must develop a plan for carrying out the shared change vision by incorporating all workers at every stage of the procedure.

**5.6. Communicating the vision**

To give employees and other stakeholders enough knowledge to be able to question and comprehend the vision, it is crucial to make sure that organizational members are made aware of the impending changes as quickly and in as much detail as possible.The administration of academic libraries must correctly carry out this stage in order to win over the trust of the staff by using clear, honest language to describe the modifications and their justification.According to Hackman (2017), the head of department at the library can lead discussions and describe the benefits of enacting changes using Kotter's Model.

**5.7. Empowering Others to Act on the Vision**

In order to prevent the failure of a whole change endeavor due to employees' unclear perception of the intended change vision, clear and effective communication is very necessary.To encourage higher acceptability and compliance, it is vital to broaden and distribute duties within the business (Dian et al., 2016). (2018). Therefore, academic library management should create task force members who will act as communicators of the vision by informing library staff of the new changes and responding to inquiries by outlining the changes' importance, how they will be implemented, and potential issues in both realistic and unrealistic domains (Dean et al.2018).

5.8.**Generating Short-Term Wins**

As soon as feasible during the transformation process, employees must experience success in order to motivate them and create momentum for the vision. When the target is smaller, there is very little chance of failure evaluating the results and praising each effort made to reach the long-term goals (Pietersen, 2002). By achieving short-term successes early on in the transformation process, you can create a sense of victory. Set a few more attainable, inexpensive, and less likely to fail short-term goals rather than concentrating on one main long-term aim. It is crucial to acknowledge the efforts made by people who helped achieve the objectives.

**5.9.Consolidating and Building on Gains**

If the people driving the changes become complacent owing to short-term success or become discouraged due to impediments, a change program might quickly fail. Therefore, maintaining the support of top stakeholders, motivating new hires to accept the changes, and recognizing individuals who adopt the changes all assist in promoting the changes. For planned change to be implemented successfully, leaders must develop SMART goals (Kotter, 2012) .In order to keep the continued personnel informed about the change, training sessions should be provided to them until the planned change implementation gets embedded in their habits. This is according to. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model's final step which deals with keeping the new muscles

**6.0. Conclusion**

Although change implementation is not much easy task due to various resistance which emanates from innumerable influences yet academic libraries need to undergo change to improve the way of delivering services to their users. While various factors such as budget pressures, technological factors, and poor implementation of change but the leading factor stem from the employees. Thus it needs to be handled with care. Academic libraries should think strategically about how to ensure that stakeholders are well-made parts of the implantation of change. The academic library should adopt a proper of implementing change to overcome all challenges emanating from stakeholders. Academic libraries are supposed to ensure that all stakeholders who are possibly going to be affected by the change are well-informed about the change before the change is implemented.

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