
Administration of University in a Transitional Era: Integrating Change Management Theories and Social Identity for Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the operational structure and management of a public university in Thailand facing a highly volatile period of educational transformation. The primary objective is to critically analyze the institution's various challenges and weaknesses arising from 21st-century crises and propose actionable strategic adaptation strategies. This is achieved by integrating Kotter's change management framework with social identity theory. Empirical findings reveal that the institution is experiencing a severe "double crisis" characterized by a significant demographic crisis resulting from a continuous decline in student numbers, coupled with profound digital transformation, particularly the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, which is altering the paradigm of knowledge acquisition and redefining the future career landscape. Furthermore, the research identifies significant internal obstacles, including the university's deeply ingrained hierarchical bureaucratic structure and a clear internal division of labor, severely hindering organizational agility and global competitiveness. To mitigate these impacts, the research emphasizes the need for educational administrators to cultivate visionary and forward-thinking leaders capable of building a unified and shared organizational identity rooted in local cultural capital and strategic human resource restructuring. Finally, the research recommends a comprehensive structural reform, shifting from traditional practices to a dynamic lifelong learning ecosystem supported by flexible and competency-based curricula. The successful integration of institutional change management and reinvented social identity will enable public universities to effectively survive this transformation while sustainably maintaining their vital role as the foundation of higher education within local communities.

Keywords: change management, social identity, visionary leadership, lifelong learning.