
ADAPTIVE CAPACITY FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STAFF IN VIEW OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS AT VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper informs on the set of criteria and associated indicators that can be used for establishing an adaptive capacity framework for university management staff in facing the reform towards educational innovation in Vietnam today. The adaptive capacity framework of the management staff shall indicate susceptibility to the change, the ability to understand the positive and negative impacts of changes on such staff themselves and their Universities, and the ability to overcome challenges of change in the most effective way; especially adaptability of a management staff is closely associated to the skills of change management in respective units of such management staff. The framework was tested at the Vietnam National University and the findings are presented in this paper along with recommendations.

Keywords: *Identification, Adaptability, Adaptive Capacity Framework, Criteria*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of intensive integration and social changes in general and educational reform in particular, the management staff of schools in general and at universities in particular should possess adaptability trait to ensure growth. As universities worldwide face the challenges of providing quality education that is relevant in the 21st century, education innovations are seen as an essential factor. This is also a challenge faced by many countries thriving towards greater state of development where education is recognized as a key enabler. In such scenario, the management staff of the universities will have to possess or develop the required adaptive capacity. It is in the interest of every university: traditional universities such as the Vietnam National University (VNU) and the technology driven open and distance learning providers alike to build an adaptive capacity framework for university management staff. Such framework would enable the management staff of universities to move the institution to create education innovations that could ensure a sustainable future in today's competitive world.

It is important to identify the present adaptive capacity of the management staff and to establish the need for seeking necessary solutions or recommendations towards such capacity at universities in Vietnam today. This is the aim of this paper. The specific objectives of this paper are: (i) to determine the criteria and indicators for identifying the adaptive capacity of the university management staff towards creating education innovations in Vietnam; (ii) to identify current level of adaptive capacity among university management

staff at the VNU; and (iii) to propose solutions/recommendations for establishing an adaptive capacity framework for VNU management staff.

The research corresponding research questions are as follows:

- What are the criteria and indicators in adaptive capacity framework for university management staff?
- What is current level of adaptive capacity of VNU's management staff?
- What are the solutions or recommendation that could help them enhance the capacity for adapting to the changes?

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STAFF

According to Smit and Wandel (2006), the concept of adaptation has been used in diverse social science areas including political ecology. Adaptive capacity refers to the ability of a person or an organisation, or society to adapt to the changes in the surrounding environment. Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow (2009) stated that the adaptive capacity of a person can be identified though the person's ability: to assimilate and adapt to any changes; to analyze the impacts of changes on themselves; and to proactively respond to the changes of circumstances as well as to foresee the consequences of actions in creating changes in order to meet the requirements of change in the contexts.

In identifying the adaptive capacity of VNU's management staff (and Vietnam universities management staff in general), Dang, Hung and Hang (2016) and Hoa (2002) stated the adaptability of a management staff depends on the following four criteria:

- (1) Awareness: being aware of the contexts of changes and the policy on "comprehensive and fundamental innovation on Education and Training" that are directly related to the respective unit.
- (2) Identification: being able to identify and analyse the impacts, obstacles and challenges upon implementing the changes at the respective unit.
- (3) Adaptation: being able as to adapt to the changes at the respective unit.
- (4) Skills: having the skills to manage the management staff changes at the respective unit.

METHODOLOGY

The criteria and indicators in adaptive capacity framework for university management staff that were identified by Dang, Hung and Hang (2016) are listed in Table 1. There are 44 indicators that are grouped under the aforementioned four criteria. The levels of adaptability (1, 2 and 3) are identified in the table. The criteria and indicators in Table I is evaluated by referring to a person's ability to perform the indicated task.

- Level 1 (1 point) indicates the lowest level (this indicator does not clearly show in themselves or in their units or just shows 30-40% content of the indicator)
- Level 2 (2 points) indicates average level (this indicator does not clearly show themselves or units they are in charge of management or just shows 60-70% content of the indicator)
- Level 3(3 points) is the maximal mark (this indicator clearly shows in themselves or in their units or shows 90-100% content of the indicator).

The total points refer to the "level of adaptability to change". If the total point is below 65, the management staff is considered to have low adaptability to change. Total points from 66 to

110 indicate that the management staff has an average adaptability to change. Total points above 111 mean that the management staff has a high adaptability to change.

Table 1: Proposed criteria and indicators for the adaptive capacity score

CRITERION 1: Recognizing the impacts of the contents of changes on themselves and their units	1	2	3
Indicators:			
1. Identify their shortcomings and their units in case of changing the contexts;			
2. Understand the changes required for themselves and their units to adapt to the changes of contexts;			
3. Identify the specific contents of the target upon making the changes in their respective units;			
4. Understand the nature, characteristics and scale of the potential changes;			
5. Understand the nature of these aspects of the changes that they plan to proceed with;			
6. Identify the factors directly related to the contents of changes in their unit;			
7. Expect the scientific roadmap to make the changes that they plan to proceed with in their units with a highly reasonable degree;			
CRITERION 2: Identify and analyze the barriers and challenges to make changes in their units.	1	2	3
Indicators:			
1. The degree to understand the origin of the changes of the unit initiated by the upper level			
2. The degree to understand the nature of the change of the members of the organizations when the units implement a certain change			
3. The degree of identifying the difficulties and complexities of making the changes in the involved people when the units make the changes			
4. COMMITMENT extent of the staff in charge of implementing the contents of changes in their unit			
5. The extent of feeling the benefits of the successful implementation in the changes of the staff in charge of implementing the contents of changes in their unit.			
6. The extent to understand the elements of change impacting on the contents of works carried out in the units			
7. The commitment to support of the management staff of departments for their employees upon making the changes			
8. The drastic direction of the unit leaders upon making the changes			
9. The readiness of the participants to make the changes			
10. The extent of confidence in the successful outcome of the changes of the units			
CRITERION 3: Ability to act and skills to adapt to changes as a unit manager.	1	2	3
Indicators:			
1. Take advantage of the support of the relevant parties upon making the changes in their educational institutions			
2. Conduct proper decentralization in the implementation of the contents of the changes in the units			
3. The managers master "Lục tri" (6 knows)			

4. Identify characteristics of themselves and challenges in their existing context			
5. Be able to understand the reactions upon initiating the changes and resolving conflicts upon making the changes			
6. The extent to understand of the culture and values of their units as important factors to be ready to adapt to each change			
7. Analyze situations and handle them upon encountering in the process of making the changes			
8. Analyze the negative responses from the relevant persons for proper resettlement			
9. Listen openly and intently the ideas of the people even in case of disagreeing			
10. Be able to convince subordinates to trust on positive results of the changes			
11. Do well communication on the changes to create a consensus of the relevant persons			
12. Choose the priorities upon making changes according to the roadmap and conditions for implementation			
CRITERION 4: Skills to manage the changes	1	2	3
Indicators:			
1. The management staff encourage others in their units to create new ideas and methods			
2. The management staff regularly share information to get desired results of the changes			
3. The management staff always work to improve the process to achieve the desired results of a change			
4. The management staff makes everyone in their units feel comfortable with the changes before making a change related to the main activities of their units			
5. In case where something must be changed, the manager staff start to consider and plan to implement it immediately, without arguments			
6. The management staff promote healthy competitiveness upon implementing the contents of the changes			
7. The management staff make sure that all staff, lecturers understand clearly about the policies, values and objectives of their schools upon making the changes			
8. The management staff create favourable conditions and friendly environment for colleagues and subordinates to learn and help each other improve in the changes			
9. The management staff coordinate regularly with the managers in other departments in their schools to make the changes			
10. The management staff note the training their subordinates to improve their skills to perform their duties so they can achieve better results in the face of the changes.			
11. The leaders are willing to take, respond the changes and take the risks.			
12. The leaders shall choose the contents of the changes, and determine to complete them.			
13. The leaders shall take their initiatives; gather resources, and public for assistance.			
14. The management staff has methods to assess the results of the changes accurately and objectively to recognize the effectiveness of the changes.			

15. Know how to allocate the prior resources for the changes significantly impact on the trademark of their schools.			
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The study involved 280 VNU management staff who were divided into three groups:

- Group 1: Deans, Deputy Heads of Functional Departments, and Director of the Centres
- Group 2: Heads of Departments, and Deputy Directors of the Centres
- Group 3: Deputy Heads of Departments, Deputy Deans, and Heads of Functional Departments

The scores of adaptive capacity for the eight personnel (Deans, Deputy Heads of Functional Departments, Director of the Centres, Heads of Departments, Deputy Directors of the Centres, Deputy Heads of Departments, Deputy Deans, and Heads of Functional) involved in the study were measured using mean scores (descriptive statistics). The scores of adaptive capacity of the three groups were also analysed using inferential statistics. One way ANOVA was used to compare the groups identified.

The above survey is verified using in-depth interviews with selected VNU management staff from the University of Education and Economics at VNU.

FINDINGS

The findings in terms of the mean scores plot in Figure 1 showed that there is no difference among the eight personnel. Descriptive data of the scores are depicted in Table 2. The Heads of Functional Department has the lowest mean score, while the group of Deans has the highest mean score. In terms of the three identified groups, Group 1, 2 and 3, the mean scores shows average values at 60.27, 58.24 and 56.65 respectively.

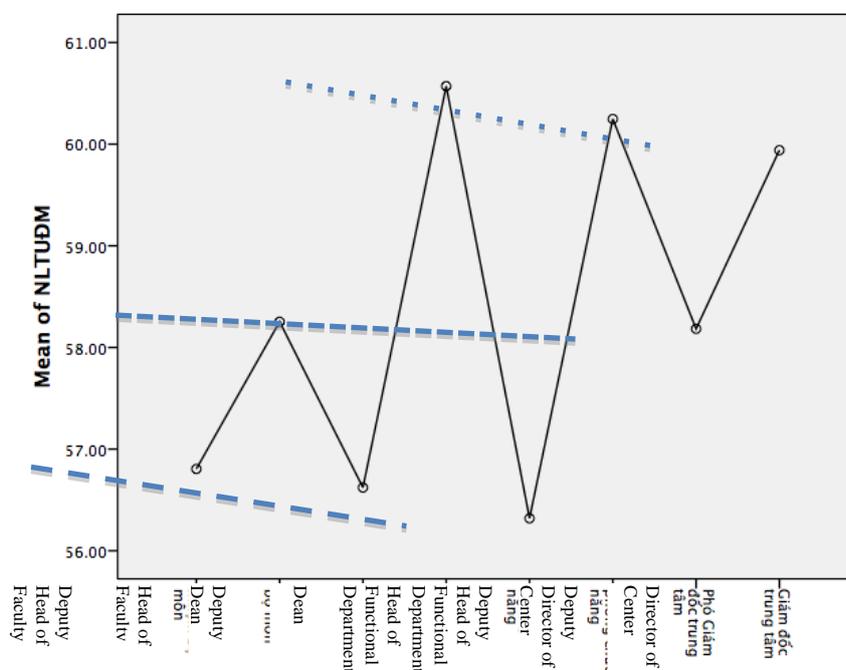


Figure 1: Average score of adaptive capacity among 8 different personnel

Table 2: Comparing the average score of adaptive capacity among the three groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Descriptive			
Section 1	63	60.2716	7.17514	.90398	58.4646	62.0786	41.67	79.17
Section 2	93	58.2455	8.35254	.86612	56.5253	59.9657	24.33	76.17
Section 3	124	56.6599	10.01594	.89946	54.8795	58.4404	19.17	85.17
Total	280	57.9992	8.98084	.53671	56.9427	59.0557	19.17	85.17

The one-way ANOVA test at confidence level $p=0.05$, shows that the differences are significant ($F=3.492$). The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3: One way Anova results for the average score of the adaptive capacity among the groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Among Groups	553.370	2	276.685	3.492	.032
Within Groups	21949.531	277	79.240		
Total	22502.901	279			

The findings from the interview sessions are described next. In response to the question, "Which factors reflect the adaptive capacity of a management staff?", one participant responded, *"In my opinion, management staff who are adaptive and persistent in explanation, persuasion, provision of full information; encouragement/supporting, as an example, sharing work, etc., and in some cases require regimes for the person who fails to fulfil the task when the unit makes a certain change (it is the task of challenge) after there are conditions for implementation, etc., show them about the possibility of success if they have determination and consensus to make such change."*

In general, interviewees recognise the criteria and indicators proposed. When asked "Which is your most impressive indicator in the framework of management staff's adaptability?", a participant stated, *"To achieve a successful change (related to adaptability of a management staff), the management staff must know how to persuade his/her subordinates, how to make they find that they really need to make a change, and it is the management staff that involve in the proposal and actively participate in the implementation of the changes"*. The follow-up request "Please tell me how to evaluate the adaptability of a management staff at the unit you are managing" was responded with the following statement, *"The foundation of adaptability is associated with a sense of responsibility, qualification, and profession; with knowledge and proper awareness of the change; with high sensitivity to new things, and a willingness to confront changes. It also appears in a sense of perfectionism; in sharing, cooperating, persuading, finding out strengths as well as ability to assess, believe someone, good foreign language (English), and ability to work under high pressure... Leaders must actually take action to create subordinate's trust"*.

The findings indicate that in order to enhance management staff's adaptability at VNU in the current innovative education era in Vietnam, the management staff must be sensitive to the changes. They must have the ability to understand positive and negative impacts of changes on their units and their university. They must also have the ability to overcome challenges due the changes in the most effective way.

The findings in this study suggest much can be done to improve that adaptive capacity of the management staff at VNU. Thus, it is necessary to seek and propose solutions to enhance

management staff's adaptability (Dang, 2015). The proposed solutions are listed here as in an effort to implement the Adaptive Capacity Framework at VNU.

Solution 1: Thorough understanding of the adaptive capacity framework for every management staff; requiring them to self-determine their own levels of adaptability when implementing changes at their educational institutions

The Adaptive Capacity Framework is a reference table for a management staff at VNU. The usage of the framework can be extended to other universities in Vietnam in order to enable a management staff to identify his/her adaptability to changes. The university management staff needs to consider the four criteria and the associated indicators proposed in the framework to identify their level of adaptability. They should be able to compare their ability in relations to the activities at their units. This can assist them in identifying their weaknesses and strengths. They can learn to identify areas of concern or figured propose practical solutions as a way to adapt to changes demanded by the current educational innovation. In order to acquire such adaptability skill, the ability of "reflection" to new things based on good analysis and projection must be acquired. Such ability demands ability from many aspects including vision and ability of self-adjustment.

Solution 2: Training of important skills related to adaptability of university's management staff when confronted with requirements to change in the current educationally innovative context.

University management staff needs the following set of skills:

Effective Self-identification and Organisation-identification

- (1) To identify impacting changes, staff must be able to self-assess and the surroundings. The self-assessment is a profound understanding about oneself and the existing environment; identifying their own weaknesses and strengths, demands, values and objectives to create the adaptability to changes. Calmness by having the ability to control and convert emotions to positive status and with desire to challenge new things is important. Awareness of surroundings: legal environment, work environment and other "mechanism" dominating their lives, works to identify where adaptation is required is crucial.
- (2) To identify changes, staff must be able to apply SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and Weakness are internal factors of a unit/university; while Opportunities and Threats are external factors. All of these factors have dynamic nature and are time-bound. A database consisting indicators for each SWOT quadrant must be considered. 'Strategies' or 'data' for projection should be explored.

Neutralization of unexpected effects

The following factors: Psychological factors, Cognitive factors, Beneficial factors, Resource factors (human-material-financial-information-time resources), Environmental factors, Management factors can be barriers during the adaptation process. It is necessary to have the right skills to overcome these barriers. Skills to be considered include:

- (1) Staff who are conservative, afraid of change, and other similar dispositions must be given more time to adapt. A working environment where people can have more confidence in managing changes must be created to instil confidence.
- (2) Staff who lack of understanding of the context of the change that is occurring must be involved directly to gain knowledge and skills by providing expertise.

- (3) Staff unsure of the benefit the effort and time spent in the adaptation process must be given the opportunity to understand the values and benefits of the change. A success scenario highlighting the development of the university, benefits for social community, the university, and the people can be used to assure them.
- (4) Staff who lacks the information, support, and motivation to change must be informed of the minimum requirements (expected duty), available resources (including time and information) and rewards. An assurance that arising problems during adaptation will be supported can reduce the staff anxiety.
- (5) In case of lack of unanimity in working environments such as being unable to get the consent of those involved, poor organizational culture, and poor confidential environment, ensure that all staff will have support from their leaders who will facilitate by playing their role as the "relationship links" to mobilize the community during the adaptation process. The university must develop its organisational culture towards an open, transparent and a democratic leadership thus creating a more favourable environment for a collective community with shared responsibilities.
- (6) Staff with low adaptability, low prestige and doesn't have the required capacities to successfully manage the changes must improve their professional skills and capacities, and strives to make the right decisions by being objective. Authority comes with responsibility to sustain the achieved results.

Motivation

Management staff should know how to motivate themselves and motivate the academic community. Management staff themselves must always be aspired to achieve the university's goals and to be progressive. They must be objective and fair in assessing the staff achievements and create an inspiring working environment.

Working relationship

Establish a good working relationship by understanding regulations at work, managing people and resolving conflicts in case of disagreement. In order to gain the ability to make best use of one's relations, one must learn to manage diversity (such as being open to idea and demands and avoid prejudices), and knowing how resolve arguments and arrive to an agreement. Change in the university will affect people. As such, multi-beneficial and multi-relational aspects of managing organizational relations to implement the education goals cannot be denied.

Flexible approaches in managing conflicts:

- Conflicts at "individual" level from disagreement with organizations or innovation policies: Pay attention to creating an working environment for "personal commitment" with the changes related to individual; pay attention in the development of individual and timely respond to their needs; increase communication and value the role of arbitration when handling the personal benefits and connecting the benefits (with a principle of "the three harmonious benefits") during the adaptation process.
- Conflicts in "group" level from disagreement with organizations or innovation policies: Pay attention to "changing the leadership style" of the manager of the changes, the principal should never stop learning, always find the opportunities to improve their adaptability and does well in these 5 roles: encourager or a "catalysis" to stimulate the changes; supporter throughout the duration of the changes; a manager who can handle well any situation; resource person; mediator who can maintain the stability. Additionally, they must work to strengthen the teamwork among the staff.

- Conflicts in “organizational” level from disagreement with innovation policies: Pay attention to the “implementation requirements”; have a “closer analysis on the implementation strategies”; pay importance to communication, have more discussions about the implementation possibilities, value the suitability and adaptability of one's department with a given situation and resource conditions.

Mediating Conflicts

The ability to mediate conflicts during the implementation of the changes requires the skills to detect and resolve any disagreement. If the disagreement is escalated into conflict, then it is necessary to use the appropriate management methods.

There are two common cause of conflicts, (i) lack of perception, skill and poor unanimity when implementing the changes; and (ii) conditions and resources with conflicting benefits. In order to mediate the conflicts, one needs to predict many factors and must have the knowledge and skills in communication psychology and management psychology. In order to minimize the conflicts, it is necessary to pay attention to the following ideals:

- (1) Being able to identify the levels of reaction from various subjects when implementing the changes, whether it is negative or positive.
- (2) Being able to clearly identify and explain the changes (content-feature-characteristic), because if unable to understand the nature of those changes.
- (3) Knowing how to persuade and support people to participate in changes.

Decision Making Skills (extracted from Dang (2015))

- (1) The skill required to analysis the situation, determine the basis for making decision for a specific change (be able to identify the context and characteristic of the change, consider the possibilities to implement the change in universities and measure the achieved results)
- (2) The skills required to determine what one needs to do, the methods, conditions, resources including the time needed; how to set up the parameters required for identifying and assessing the results and the methods to verify those results
- (3) The skills required to track, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the contents in the issued decision

CONCLUSION

In the context of changes in general and education reform in particular, it is necessary for all of the management staff working in universities to gain and develop their capacity to adapt. Adaptability or the skill to adapt to changes can be gained through many factors, it can be related to psychology, the ability to analyse, taking the necessary actions as well as the level of experience one has. Adaptive Capacity is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitude. It can be expressed as an ability to perform effective operation by supplementing and updating the university management staff with the four criteria: recognition, risk analysis, taking necessary actions, acquiring the necessary skills to ensure successful adaptation. The study presents the indicators associated with the criteria, the current state of adaptive capacity at VNU and the guidelines in forming the adaptive capacity framework in facing the reform towards education innovation in Vietnam.

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