Characteristics of Required Academic Change Leaders in Palestinian Universities in Light of Fullan's Framework for Change Leadership

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Abstract:

This study aimed at identifying the characteristics of academic change leaders in Palestinian universities in light of Michael Fullan's framework for change leadership. Using survey data from 165 academic leaders in three universities in the West Bank. The study examined leadership traits, core leadership components, and change sustainability. The results showed that although Palestinian academic leaders have high levels of interaction with their colleagues and research competence, they lack coherence, moral purpose, and strategic vision. The study ends with some recommendations for improving leadership performance in the process of educational change.

Keywords: Academic Leaders, Change Leadership, Fullan's Framework, Higher Education Reform, Palestinian Universities.

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خصائص قادة التغيير الأكاديمي المطلوبة في الجامعات الفلسطينية في ضوء إطار فولان لقيادة التغيير

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ملخص:

هدفت الدراسة تحديد خصائص قادة التغيير الأكاديمي في الجامعات الفلسطينية في ضوء إطار مايكل فولان لقيادة التغيير. من خلال استمارة تحليل بيانات 165 قائدًا أكاديميًا في ثلاث جامعات في الضفة الغربية، تم تحديد السمات القيادية، والمكونات الأساسية للقيادة، وعوامل استدامة التغيير. تشير النتائج إلى أن القادة الأكاديميين الفلسطينيين يظهرون مهارات قوية في بناء العلاقات وتبادل المعرفة، ولكن هناك فجوات في الاتساق، والغرض الأخلاقي، والرؤية الاستراتيجية. انتهت الدراسة إلى توصيات لتعزيز فاعلية القيادة في الجامعات الفلسطينية لمواجهة التحديات التعليمية وتحقيق التحول المؤسسي المستدام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القيادة الأكاديمية، إدارة التغيير، إطار فولان، إصلاح التعليم العالي، الجامعات الفلسطينية.

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Introduction

In the current era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Artificial Intelligence (AI), higher education, specifically university education, has become an urgent necessity for any society seeking to survive in this world of accelerating technological, social and economic changes. Higher education is one of the most important factors that contribute to the development of individuals and societies alike. The demand for qualified individuals with high skills and specialized knowledge is increasing with the increasing complexities of the labor market; therefore, university education is the key that opens the doors to opportunities and enhances the ability of individuals to achieve their ambitions.

In this context, Al-Deek (2024) emphasized that higher education institutions play a pivotal role in societal development, which requires continuous adaptation to the evolving educational, technological, and economic landscape. Moreover, academic change leadership in Palestinian universities faces many challenges, the most important of which are: political instability, financial constraints, and institutional inertia. These challenges have been compounded by the shifting global educational environments, the increasing reliance on technology, and the growing demand for new and creative ways of teaching and learning, which have in turn highlighted the need for adaptive leadership in academic institutions.

The concept of Change Leadership in education has emerged as an important topic of discussion over the past few decades, especially in societies where social, political, and economic factors affect institutional performance. Research has revealed that successful academic administrators also have the capacity to lead, motivate, and effectively execute changes in the institution (Fullan, 2007; Bass, 1990). These leaders are vital in ensuring that the institution is resilient, creative, and meets the necessary academic standards.

At the Palestinian level, universities are characterized by specific barriers, such as limited freedom to choose, lack of funds, and political uncertainty, all of which affect the institutions' development and change (Al-Deek, 2024). Nonetheless, Palestinian universities have shown strength, and leadership has been identified as a key driver of change. Leaders must be able to manage these barriers and ensure that their institutions continue to meet the standards of international universities.

Change leadership is different from conventional leadership approaches because it aims at achieving continuous development, partnership, and flexibility (Kotter, 1996). As pointed out by Fullan (2016), successful

change leaders possess qualities such as purpose, relationship, knowledge, and coherence to enable effective implementation of sustainable change in universities. These leaders do not only formulate new strategies but also foster a culture of everyone leading and changing wherein faculty and administrators together with the students, are all involved in the change management process. This paper aims to present a systematic review of the leadership characteristics by reviewing the relevant findings from the dissertation study by Ghassan Al-Deek and combining the findings with those from other scholarly papers.

Statement of the Problem

The capacity of universities to implement and enforce strategic change is dependent on the leadership capacity of academic administrators. Academic change leadership in the Palestinian higher education sector is operating in a context of bureaucratic constraints, financial limitations, faculty member resistance, and an ever-changing global and technological landscape that shapes the educational landscape (Al-Deek, 2024). While the importance of leadership in the change management process is well understood, there is no current research that examines what kind of leadership is most effective in bringing about change in Palestinian universities.

Despite the attempts made to modernize and align the higher education institutions in Palestine with international standards, the universities are characterized by fragmented decision making, policy implementation gaps and misaligned change initiatives. This is consistent with what Michael Fullan (2016) previously pointed out that the challenges facing higher education institutions have been exacerbated by the absence of structured leadership development programmes, which in turn has led to ineffective institutional governance and slow progress in educational transformation.

This study seeks to address these gaps by applying Fullan's Framework for Change Leadership to examine the leadership traits, competencies, and institutional factors that influence the effectiveness of academic leaders in driving sustainable change. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify the key leadership characteristics that contribute to successful change management in Palestinian universities.
2. Analyze the extent to which current academic leaders exhibit these characteristics and the areas that require improvement.
3. Examine the institutional barriers that hinder effective leadership and propose strategic interventions to enhance leadership effectiveness.

By addressing these objectives, this research contributes to the broader discourse on higher education reform, leadership development, and institutional resilience in Palestinian universities.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following four questions:

1. What are the key characteristics required for effective academic change leadership in Palestinian universities based on Fullan's framework?
2. How do Palestinian academic leaders perceive their own leadership competencies in relation to change management?
3. What gaps exist between the current leadership capabilities and the ideal Fullan model?
4. What recommendations can be made to strengthen leadership effectiveness in Palestinian universities?

Research Purposes

The primary objectives of this research are:

1. To identify essential leadership traits – Assessing the personal and professional characteristics necessary for successful academic change leadership.
2. To evaluate the current state of leadership in Palestinian universities – Investigating how academic leaders perceive their leadership roles and competencies.
3. To analyze institutional barriers to change leadership – Understanding the obstacles that hinder effective change implementation in Palestinian universities.
4. To provide strategic recommendations – Developing evidence-based strategies for improving leadership effectiveness and institutional resilience.

Theoretical Framework

Change leadership is an evolving field that integrates principles of organizational change, leadership theory, and strategic management. Michael Fullan's framework for change leadership is widely recognized for its effectiveness in educational settings, particularly in fostering sustainable reform and institutional development. This section explores the theoretical underpinnings of change leadership, drawing from Fullan's work and complementary theories, while also integrating insights from Ghassan Al-Deek's dissertation and recent scholarly contributions.

First: Foundations of Change Leadership

Change leadership is distinct from traditional management in that it

prioritizes transformational and adaptive strategies over administrative efficiency. According to Kotter (1996), effective change leadership requires a clear vision, stakeholder engagement, and an ability to navigate complex social and institutional dynamics. Fullan (2007) expanded on this by identifying moral purpose, relationship-building, knowledge-sharing, and coherence-making as fundamental to successful educational reform.

In the context of Palestinian universities, change leadership must contend with political instability, financial constraints, and cultural factors that influence institutional decision-making (Aldeek, 2024). The need for resilient and adaptive leadership is emphasized in various studies that highlight the role of adaptive leadership in higher education (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

Second: Fullan's Framework for Change Leadership

Michael Fullan is a known figure in the field of change, having contributed to the discourse for many years. What sets him apart is his ability to delve into the complexities of change in education and provide strategies to navigate through it.

Michael Fullan's framework for change leadership combines key elements that are crucial for effective and sustainable organizational transformation. According to Fullan (2010) having a moral purpose is the driving force behind meaningful change emphasizing the importance of making a difference. Acknowledging the complexities of change including its psychological impacts on individuals is essential for navigating through transformation (Fullan, 2007). Building trusting relationships and promoting collaboration are also highlighted as factors in creating a supportive environment for change (Fullan, 2020). Furthermore Fullan (2013) advocated for fostering a culture of learning and knowledge sharing to encourage innovation and improvement. Lastly ensuring that all efforts align with goals, known as coherence making is considered essential for the long-term success of change initiatives (Fullan, 2016). These components collectively form Fullan's framework to leading change and provide a robust framework for leaders aiming to implement lasting organizational transformations.

In his book "*The New Meaning of Educational Change*", Fullan (2007) explored the nature of change presenting it as a tapestry woven with dilemmas, ambivalences and paradoxes. According to him successful change requires reconciling steps, such as maintaining a clear vision while remaining open minded and finding a balance between support and pressure. He emphasized that educational change is not about processes but deeply

personal experiences within them. Fullan also emphasized the importance of culture in educational transformation. He believd that reshaping values, norms, practices and structures is essential for creating lasting change (Fullan, 2007). This transformation becomes embedded in the day to day operations of educators and leaders when the entire school community actively participates in improvement and innovation.

Overall, Fullan's work serves as a call to action, for all those involved in education. He strongly advocated for the idea that change's a two process. It involves both collective efforts and individual contributions. According to Fullan meaningful change arises from the combined actions of individuals leading to a way of thinking where numerous small endeavors culminate, in systemic shifts (Fullan, 2007).

In Fullan's perspective on change leadership relationships play a role. He encapsulated this notion by asserting that while strategies may revolve around rigor and innovation their ultimate success depends on the quality of relationships (Fullan, 2020).

Core Components of Fullan's Framework

Fullan's framework revolves around crucial elements each playing a vital role in the process of change. These elements encompass:

1. **Moral Purpose**: According to Fullan change should be motivated by a sense of purpose. It involves dedicating oneself to making an impact on individuals and communities (Fullan, 2010). This moral purpose serves as the foundation for all change efforts providing the motivation and guidance for reform.

2. **Understanding Change**: Fullan emphasized the importance of comprehending the essence of change itself. This entails understanding its dynamics. How it impacts people and organizations (Fullan, 2007). It involves recognizing the complexities and difficulties that come with change and finding ways to navigate through these challenges.

3. **Building Relationships**: An important part of Fullan's framework is understanding that building relationships is essential for driving change. By fostering trust and encouraging collaboration, among all those involved we can create an environment that supports change (Fullan, 2020).

4. **Sharing Knowledge**: Fullan emphasized the importance of creating and sharing knowledge to inspire innovation and progress. Leaders have a role, in creating an environment that encourages learning. Regarding this matter Fullan (2013) stressed the significance of nurturing a culture that

promotes the exchange and utilization of information to improve practices.

5. **Coherence Making**: Another aspect emphasized by Fullan (2016) is coherence establishment. This involves ensuring that efforts towards change are properly aligned and concentrated on achieving the organizations goals. It entails defining objectives aligning resources and coordinating actions to ensure that all aspects of the organization work, towards common objectives.

Leaders Personality Traits, in Fullan's Framework

According to Michael Fullan certain personality traits play a role for leaders who drive change. These traits including energy, enthusiasm and hope are essential for inspiring and motivating others throughout the change process.

1. **Energy**: Fullan highlighted the importance of leaders having a level of energy to effectively handle the demands of leading change. This energy not fuels their persistence. Also helps them remain resilient when faced with challenges (Fullan, 2007).

2. **Enthusiasm**: Enthusiasm is contagious, leaders who demonstrate enthusiasm about the change process can inspire their teams and stakeholders creating a momentum that propels the initiative forward (Fullan, 2010).

3. **Hope**: Sustaining efforts over the term requires hope. Fullan argued that leaders must maintain a sense of hope and optimism in the face of setbacks. This mindset encourages their teams. Keeps them committed to the purpose behind the change (Fullan, 2013).

These three traits are not solely innate; they can be nurtured through practice engaging with others and making a commitment, to personal and professional growth.

Change Sustainability in Fullan's Framework

Sustainability is an aspect of Fullan's framework as it focuses on ensuring long term success and continuous improvement of changes. Fullan offered strategies to ensure that changes are maintained over time:

1. **Fostering Intrinsic Motivation**: lasting transformation stems from a drive. Leaders should concentrate on establishing circumstances that enable individuals to discover significance and fulfillment in their work (Fullan, 2016).

2. **Developing Leadership Capacity**: Sustainability demands leadership throughout all levels of the organization, fostering a range of leaders

ensures that the progress does not rely on one person (Fullan, 2020).

3. **Creating a Culture of Accountability**: Cultivating a culture of accountability plays a role in sustaining change, this involves setting goals providing feedback and recognizing achievements by both individuals and teams (Fullan, 2007).

4. **Embedding Change into the Culture**: For change to truly endure it must become deeply rooted in the fabric of the organizations culture. This means incorporating practices and values into day, to day operations until they become the normal (Fullan, 2010).

Fullan's contributions reflect a commitment to understanding and promoting change in education. His insistence on perceiving change as an interconnected and systemic process serves as evidence for his vision of an evolving landscape.

In summary, Michael Fullan's model provides a structured approach to educational transformation, emphasizing the following key components:

1. Personality Traits of Leaders – Energy, enthusiasm, and hope are necessary for inspiring and sustaining change efforts (Fullan, 2001).

2. Core Leadership Components – Moral purpose, understanding change, relationship development, knowledge sharing, and coherence are essential in ensuring long-term reform (Fullan, 2007).

3. Sustainability Factors – Transparency, capacity building, and systems thinking are critical for embedding change within an institution's culture (Fullan, 2016).

Third: Complementary Theories in Change Leadership

Additional theories have also been complemented to Fullan's framework to offer more specific information on the challenges and advantages of change leadership in higher education, such as:

1. **Transformational Leadership Theory**: This theory emphasizes visionary leadership, motivation, and intellectual stimulation to effect change (Bass, 1990). Palestinian university leaders have to ensure the charism in combination with participative decision making to sustain the reforms.

2. **Kotter's Eight-Step Change Model**: Kotter's model also focuses on creating urgency, forming coalitions, developing a strategic vision, and achieving short-term wins to ensure the change is embedded in the organization (Kotter, 1996). Given the bureaucratic nature of Palestinian universities, Kotter's focus on the elimination of obstacles and strengthening of institutional change is particularly pertinent.

3. **Learning Organization Theory**: In this theory, universities are viewed as learning organizations – organizations that learn from experience and develop through feedback and learning processes (Senge, 2006). The development of cross departmental learning networks in Palestinian universities may increase the institutional flexibility and effectiveness of reforms.

Fourth: Challenges and Opportunities in Change Leadership

Al-Deek (2024) identified several barriers to change leadership in Palestinian universities, including:

− Fragmented decision-making that limits coherence in policy implementation.
− Resistance to change among faculty and staff, often due to entrenched institutional norms.
− Limited financial and technological resources, which hinder large-scale innovation.

Conversely, the study also highlighted opportunities for effective change leadership, such as:

− Strong commitment to knowledge sharing among academic leaders.
− A culture of transparency that facilitates stakeholder engagement.
− Growing international collaborations, which provide access to global best practices.

Fifth: The Role of Change Leadership in Higher Education Reform

Fullan (2020) argued that universities must adopt a systems-thinking approach to leadership, ensuring that change initiatives align with broader educational policies and national development goals. Al-Deek's model (2024) further suggests that structured leadership development programs tailored to the Palestinian context can enhance strategic vision and coherence-making among academic leaders.

The theoretical framework for this study integrates Fullan's change leadership model with complementary theories from transformational leadership, organizational learning, and strategic change management. The insights gained from Al-Deek's dissertation underscore the importance of developing cohesive, visionary, and adaptive leadership structures within Palestinian universities to navigate the challenges of educational transformation.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive analytical survey to explore the characteristics of academic change leaders in Palestinian universities. The

target population included academic administrators from three West Bank universities. A stratified random sampling technique ensured representation across administrative levels including vice-presidents, deans, vice-deans, and department heads. The final sample consisted of 165 academic leaders.

The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire designed in alignment with Fullan's Change Leadership Framework, comprising three dimensions:

1. Personality Traits (Energy, Enthusiasm, Hope).
2. Core Leadership Components (Moral Purpose, Understanding Change, Relationship Development, Knowledge Sharing, Coherence).
3. Change Sustainability Factors (Transparency, Capacity Building, Systems Thinking).

The tool was validated by a panel of educational experts, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (values ranged from 0.79 to 0.95). Data analyses were conducted using mean scores and standard deviations, with statistical tests applied to examine differences based on gender, position, and years of experience.

Findings and Analysis

Personality Traits of Academic Leaders

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of the Personality Traits of Academic Leaders

Personality Trait	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Level
Energy	4.19	0.52	High
Enthusiasm	4.26	0.57	High
Hope	4.05	0.58	High

The results indicated that academic leaders in Palestinian universities exhibit high levels of energy and enthusiasm, which are crucial for driving change initiatives. However, the slightly lower score for hope suggests that while leaders remain motivated, there may be concerns about the long-term sustainability and impact of change efforts. This reflects the broader challenges within Palestinian universities, such as political instability and financial constraints, which can affect leadership optimism and strategic vision.

Core Leadership Components

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the Core Leadership Components

Leadership Component	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Level
Moral Purpose	4.35	0.49	High
Understanding Change	4.34	0.52	High
Relationship Development	4.29	0.49	High

Knowledge Sharing	4.48	0.50	High
Coherence	4.04	0.58	Moderate

The findings highlighted strong moral purpose, knowledge sharing, and understanding of change among academic leaders. However, coherence scored the lowest among the core leadership components, indicating that while leaders are committed to change, aligning institutional policies and practices with long-term goals remains a challenge. This misalignment can lead to fragmented reforms that fail to achieve sustained improvements.

Change Sustainability Factors

Table 3: Means and standard deviations of the Change Sustainability Factors

Change Factor	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Level
Transparency	4.56	0.69	High
Capacity Building	4.46	0.69	High
Systems Thinking	4.38	0.73	High

The survey results suggested that Palestinian university leaders value transparency and capacity building as essential elements of change leadership. However, while systems thinking scored relatively high, qualitative responses suggest that institutional frameworks for long-term sustainability remain underdeveloped. Without structured mechanisms for institutionalizing change, universities may struggle to maintain reform momentum over time.

Variations in Leadership Perceptions by Job Position

Table 4: Means of the Variations in Leadership Perceptions by Job Position

Job Position	N	Mean Score
Vice-President	13	4.49
Dean	42	4.38
Vice-Dean	8	4.18
Head of Dept.	102	4.25
Total	165	4.30

An analysis of the leadership perceptions based on job position revealed that Vice-Presidents scored the highest in their perceptions of change leadership effectiveness, while Heads of Departments had slightly lower mean scores. This may indicate that senior administrators have a broader strategic vision of change leadership, whereas Heads of Departments, who deal with daily administrative challenges, may face more resistance in implementing reforms.

Variations in Leadership Perceptions by Years of Experience

Table 5: Means of the Variations in Leadership Perceptions by Years of Experience

Years of Experience	N	Mean Score
Less than 5 years	29	4.07
5-10 years	38	4.41
More than 10 years	98	4.32
Total	**165**	**4.30**

The analysis also indicated that leaders with more than 5 years of experience had significantly higher perceptions of change leadership effectiveness compared to those with less than 5 years. This finding suggests that experience plays a role in how leaders understand and implement institutional reforms, as those with more exposure to administrative roles tend to be more confident in their leadership strategies.

Gender Differences in Leadership Perceptions

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviation of the Gender Differences in Leadership Perceptions

Gender	N	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Male	132	4.32	0.48
Female	33	4.26	0.51
Total	**165**	**4.30**	**0.47**

To examine whether these differences were statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The result indicated that the difference in leadership perception between male and female academic leaders was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, we conclude that both groups exhibit comparable perceptions of change leadership, particularly in relation to knowledge sharing, transparency, and engagement. These findings align with global leadership studies which suggest that gender-based differences in leadership effectiveness have diminished in recent years.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that while Palestinian academic leaders exhibit strong relationship-building and knowledge-sharing skills, there are notable gaps in coherence, moral purpose, and strategic vision. The high scores in transparency and capacity building suggest that leaders are aware of the importance of communication and development within institutions. However, the moderate score in coherence highlights a challenge in aligning various institutional policies with overarching educational goals.

1. Leadership Strengths and Challenges

The survey results show that Palestinian university leaders are very energetic and enthusiastic, important qualities for changing the educational system. This is in line with Fullan (2007) who pointed out that change leaders must be highly motivated and committed in the process. However, while the leaders in Palestinian universities have these strengths, they are faced with certain challenges such as institutional rigidity, bureaucratic delays and limited funding opportunities that pose a challenge to long-term reform implementation (Al-Deek, 2024).

In addition, the study found that change and relationship understanding was rated highly by respondents, which indicates that academic leaders are aware of the dynamics of educational change and the need to work with stakeholders. However, as Fullan (2016) pointed out, understanding change is not enough without a clear plan for implementing it. This gap is visible in the low coherence scores, which mean that although the leaders may realize that change is needed, they fail to ensure that the reforms are integrated into the various levels of the institution in a more coherent manner.

2. The Role of Institutional Culture in Change Leadership

Institutional culture plays a critical role in shaping leadership effectiveness. The survey results suggest that while knowledge sharing is a strength among Palestinian academic leaders, cultural and institutional barriers often slow down reform processes. This finding aligns with Kotter's (1996) argument that organizational change requires the dismantling of entrenched cultural norms that resist innovation.

One of the key challenges noted in Al-Deek's (2024) dissertation is faculty resistance to change, often stemming from concerns over increased workloads, shifting expectations, and uncertainty regarding new policies. Research by Senge (2006) supports this finding, emphasizing that successful change leaders must foster a culture of continuous learning and participatory engagement to reduce resistance and build commitment to reform efforts.

3. Comparing Palestinian University Leadership with International Models

Comparing the results of this study with international literature reveals key similarities and differences in change leadership approaches. In well-established higher education systems, strategic planning and coherence-making are more robustly developed, contributing to long-term institutional success (Fullan, 2020). For example, studies on European and North American universities emphasized the role of leadership training programs,

structured governance models, and data-driven decision-making in fostering effective institutional change (Bass, 1990).

By contrast, Palestinian universities operate in a context of financial instability and political uncertainty, making it difficult to implement long-term strategic initiatives. Nonetheless, international studies suggested that even in resource-constrained environments, strong leadership development initiatives can significantly enhance institutional coherence and resilience (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). These findings underscore the importance of investing in leadership training programs that focus on strategic vision, change sustainability, and policy integration.

4. Practical Implications for Leadership Development in Palestinian Universities

Based on the findings, it is evident that Palestinian universities must adopt a more structured and strategic approach to leadership development. The following key strategies can help bridge the gap between current leadership capabilities and international best practices:

− Developing structured leadership training programs that emphasize strategic visioning, coherence-making, and policy alignment.
− Encouraging cross-departmental collaboration to break down institutional silos and ensure that reforms are consistently applied across different academic units.
− Strengthening participatory decision-making processes to increase faculty and staff engagement in change initiatives, thereby reducing resistance and fostering ownership of reforms.
− Leveraging technology and data analytics to support decision-making, track progress, and refine leadership strategies based on measurable outcomes.

5. Addressing the Gaps in Change Leadership

The study identifies several strengths in Palestinian academic leadership, including relationship and knowledge building as the weakest area. The results showed that there was a need for better strategic alignment, coherence and long-term planning. These challenges are in line with Fullan (2016) who pointed out that change leadership must be backed up by institutional structures that support the change management processes in the medium to long term.

Through filling these gaps, Palestinian universities can progress towards a more sustainable and effective change leadership model that will enable institutions to maintain their vitality and flexibility in the face of

growing complexity of the higher education environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Key Findings

This study's findings show that while Palestinian academic leaders are good at interpersonal relations and work collaboration, the absence of strategic vision and institutional coherence is a major problem. Specifically, the study revealed the following key insights:

1. **Strengths in leadership traits:** Universities in Palestinian societies have leaders who are highly enthusiastic, energetic and knowledge sharing, which are good drivers of educational change. However, hope was a bit lower than the rest, especially long-term hope, which was also lower than the rest, which could be due to the fact that the researchers were worried about the sustainability of the reforms because of the existing institutional barriers.

2. **Core leadership gaps:** Moral purpose and relationship development were rated high while coherence was rated the lowest which shows that there are problems in ensuring that policies, academic programs, and institutional strategies are consistent with the larger university goals.

3. **Barriers to change implementation:** This paper has also established that faculty resistance, fragmented decision making processes and inadequate financial and technological resources were the major challenges to change leadership.

4. **Need for sustainability mechanisms:** Despite good scores in transparency and capacity building, there are no structured ways of ensuring that the reforms are sustainable in the long run, and any changes in leadership or funding cycles affect the reforms.

These findings indicate that although Palestinian universities have the basic building blocks of transformational leadership, they need to improve institutional coherence, strategic planning, and change sustainability to address current and future challenges in higher education.

2. Recommendations for Enhancing Change Leadership

To address these gaps and capitalize on leadership strengths, Palestinian universities should implement the following strategic recommendations:

2.1. Strengthening Strategic Vision and Coherence

− Producing long-term strategic plans that incorporate change leadership principles into the institutional policies.

- Review the university governance structures to align with Fullan's core leadership components so that the leadership vision is in harmony with the academic practice.
- Implementing structure policy review mechanisms to be able to track the progress of the institution in achieving the set strategic change objectives.

2.2. Enhancing Leadership Development and Training

- Create leadership academies within the universities to offer training in strategic planning, decision making and coherence.
- Include change leadership modules into professional development programs for university administrators and faculty.
- Use international partnerships and practices to have academic leaders learn about effective change leadership from other countries' higher education systems.

2.3. Increasing Faculty and Stakeholder Engagement

- Adopting participatory governance to enhance the role of faculty in the decision-making process and to minimize faculty resistance to change.
- Offer faculty development grants to encourage academic staff to engage in the institution's reform processes.
- Support interdisciplinary practice to remove structural barriers and achieve a more holistic approach to academic leadership.

2.4. Establishing Sustainable Change Mechanisms

- Ensuring that leadership initiatives and policy changes have a structured monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in place to determine the effect of leadership initiatives and policy changes.
- Adopt adaptive learning systems to make sure that the universities are ready to face new challenges and seize new opportunities as they emerge.
- Establish feedback loops where students, faculty, and administrators can share their ideas for ongoing improvement.

By implementing these recommendations, Palestinian universities can strengthen their leadership structures, improve coherence, and foster sustainable institutional change, thereby enhancing their ability to adapt and thrive in the evolving higher education landscape.

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