The organizational change process during COVID-19 pandemic in a public university: The case of Kasetsart University, Thailand

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A B S T R A C T

This research paper is a qualitative case analysis research that utilizes Kotler's Eight Processes to accelerate change in accessing the experienced of Kasetsart University in terms of organizational change. The study utilized the empirical data from the KU website, memorandum, and announcement about university operations throughout the widespread COVID-19, and the interview was conducted with two key people knowledgeable in this subject. As an outcome, the study found out that KU experienced a digital organization transformation during COVID-19. Furthermore, the KU established the Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies focused on advancing digital innovation as an organizational development initiative. The lesson from the case study is that KU's preparedness, comprehensiveness, and cross-sectoral methodology were essential in successfully implementing change. Kotter's eight-step progression for accelerating the modification model was a valuable means to convey metamorphic modification in implementing digital transformation in the entire KU; thus, it is recommended for future researchers that the study results are the basis of reference in the digital transformation change in higher education. Most importantly, this can be converted in quantitative research wherein one variable construct is digital transformation change.

Suggested Citation (APA Style 7th Edition):

Geroche, J.B. & Yang, X. (2022). The organizational change process during COVID-19 pandemic in a public university: The case of Kasetsart University, Thailand. *International Research Journal of Science, Technology, Education, and Management*, 2(3), 26-37. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7136374

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 situation characterized a stimulating period and sporadic for higher education worldwide. The speed of global, economic, and technological growth makes change an inevitable feature of organizational life. (Stibe, 2020). Transformation is necessary for groups in developing, extremely aggressive industry settings. Principles of change illustrate that the efficiency of the groups can alter their plans, practices, and forms (Husain, 2018), and it was more noticeable throughout COVID-19 (Bapuji et al., 2021). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic challenged organizations and has been forced almost comprehensively into quick and essential change programs and has triggered a significant reconsideration of what means the job must be brought outside for the organization to survive. Thus, organizational development is needed during these circumstances. According to Ekman (2017), organizational development is a continuing determination and action intended to cultivate the establishment's competence to resolve its difficulties and renovate the situation over hands-on, joint, and active supervision of the structural environment and emphasizing comprehensive teamwork. Furthermore, the scientific planning and management process aims to transform the group's ethos, actions, and structure to enhance efficiency in resolving challenges and accomplishing its targets.

Kotler (2017) has augmented its eight-step procedure to provide organizations with additional capacities leading transformation beneath the situations of today's realm. The eight-step method for major transformation was refined from Dr. Kotter's observations of countless leaders and organizations demanding to convert or execute their strategies over four decades. Kotter supported the advocates of operating the eight steps simultaneously and constantly, and the standard is compliant adequately or similar to the highly adaptable administrative configurations. Kotler's eight processes to accelerate change are: (1) Build a sense of urgency. Recognize what you wish to accomplish. Managers must identify a prospect that will attract the intellect and hearts. It must motivate the workforce to bring about the change if the change is to succeed. (2) Make a guiding coalition. Kotter advises assembling a volunteer group of influential individuals from within the organization who can keep an eye on, plan, and communicate change efforts. (3) Develop a strategic vision and initiatives; spell out the view of the future and the steps that will make it a reality. (4) Enlist a volunteer army; the coalition provides leadership, but an army is necessary to enact change. To be successful, you will need a big group of employees that are enthusiastic about the change and capable of acting to produce the results. (5) Encourage action by eliminating obstacles. It may be recognizable to struggle experts based on the scrum master position. Here, the idea is the same. By removing obstacles like outdated structures or ineffective procedures, you may create the climate that will support your change endeavor. (6) Produce quick victories. Distributing significant victories can take some time. Seek opportunities to share quick victories that inspire your teams to advance the change. Notably, the modest changes must be connected to the vision so that individuals can understand the direction the organization is moving. (7) Maintain the current rate of acceleration. The objective is to develop and then hold speed. Building organizational resilience and significant change leadership would be beneficial. (8) System change. Acknowledging as a group that your company has a new method of working that directly contributes to results that are strategically important to your business. During an audit, new actions and operation methods are continued over time. Regular communication and acknowledging transformation successes are the key to linking the new ways of working to the organization's success.

Because of the disruptions brought on by COVID-19, organizations have been forced to change their business approaches to improve and adjust to the new, altered environment, a global pandemic that poses an existential danger and has significant effects on people as a workforce (Li, Sun, Tao, & Lee, 2021). The higher education facility mulls on the importance of organizational reform and development in the face of the epidemic. For instance, the Covid-19 outbreak forced school communities in several nations to adopt a new online teaching style and quickly understand that they needed to use online platforms and technologies to run the lessons. The capacity to use technologies proficiently to innovate teaching, tailor teaching-learning processes, and foster student connection while supporting their independent and cooperative work call for new abilities that are not exclusively digital. Instead, they depend more heavily on technology use (Paletta, 2020). The social implications on academic staff, the working impacts, institutional responses, and resource assistance were highlighted as the education barriers caused by the Covid19 epidemic in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, by Vanpetch and Sattayathamrongthian (2020).

Additionally, the type of international student mobility has evolved, the geographic pattern of international student mobility has become more pronounced, and the rivalry in the global study abroad market has grown. These factors have significantly reduced international student mobility due to the pandemic (Yang, Shen, & Xu, 2022). Jackaria (2022) claimed that five themes regarding instructors' preparation for the start of courses emerged. These include creating health protocols, making physical modifications to schools, creating instructional resources, preparing students for mental and social health, and learning new teaching techniques.

According to WHO Thailand (2020), Thailand responded satisfactorily to COVID-19's first wave in March 2020; the outbreak began at Bangkok's boxing stadium and bars and expanded to 68 provinces. Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim pilgrims also transmitted the infection. By May 25, 2020, there were 3042 total cases and 57 deaths, compared to 200 daily instances in March. All subsequent instances were diagnosed in Thai and non-Thai overseas passengers at state quarantine systems (Issac. et al., 2021). In addition, Thailand closed its schools and colleges for two weeks to contain the COVID-19 virus, which the WHO has labeled a global pandemic. After the covid19 outbreak in Thailand, several faculties are transitioning to new learning approaches. However, this problem will make older organizations reluctant to adopt new technology.

According to Ragpala (2022), during the COVID-19 outbreak, most schools were forced to immediately switch to online education, which presented benefits and difficulties for the students and teachers involved. Thus, teachers need ongoing professional development and access to information on educational trends in order to engage students effectively in the learning process. On the other hand, this disaster will encourage teachers to change their methods (Vanpetch & Sattayathamrongthian, 2020). Thus, this study examined the organizational change processed during the COVID-19 pandemic in a public university, particularly the case of Kasetsart University, Thailand. Furthermore, it explored the KU responses to organizational transformation during the epidemic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study examined organizational changes in Thai public higher education, focusing on Kasetsart University during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will specifically address the following issues:

1. How did KU handle organizational change during the pandemic?
2. During the pandemic, what KU organizational development initiatives were implemented?
3. What lesson will be learned from the study findings?

Scope/Coverage of the Study

The study's primary objective was to evaluate the organizational changes, particularly at Kasetsart University in Thailand, during the COVID-19 epidemic that hit the university's operation. The changes in organizational structure that the institution underwent as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic were the ultimate coverage of the study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper aims to conduct qualitative research as a case study that uses Kotler's eight processes to expedite change and gain access to Kasetsart University's experiences regarding organizational transformation. The study utilized the empirical and historical data about the university's operations during the COVID-19 epidemic found on the website, memorandum, and announcement of Kasetsart University. In addition, an interview was conducted with two significant people with expertise in this case.

Empirical Data

Exploration of KU as a Research and Public University and the Organizational Structure

Kasetsart University is Thailand's third-oldest agricultural university. KU offers Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in agriculture, agro-industry, architecture, business, education, economics, engineering, environmental studies, fisheries, forestry, humanities, physical sciences, social sciences, and veterinary medicine. KU was one of Thailand's nine national research institutions in 2010. Seventy thousand students attend Kasetsart University's four campuses in Chatuchak District, Kamphaeng Saen, Si Racha, and Chalermphrakiat, Sakon Nakhon Province. Every year, there are 40+ overseas students. KU's international students can participate in tours to Bangkok, Thai culinary and language classes, sports days, the KU International Food Fair, and the KU Buddy Program. Kasetsart University is a major higher education institution in Thailand and a famous university for overseas students. Kasetsart University has progressed and done much. It has become a nationally and internationally renowned comprehensive university. In the 2017 QS World University Rankings for agriculture and forestry, Kasetsart University is ranked 29th globally, 4th in Asia, and 1st in ASEAN (Qisan, 2019).

KU develops divisions to regulate and direct university operations, assign resources and tasks, and assure participation and co-determination. Since it is a prominent university with four campuses in Thailand, it subdivides and has hierarchical institutions with at least three formalized levels: the President, faculty, and department. It also has interdisciplinary centers, educational and research initiatives, infrastructures of various kinds, and coordinating bodies. A divisional organizational structure lets a major company divide its business into semi-autonomous groups. While ideal for larger organizations, this formal structure may benefit smaller businesses (Gillikin, 2019). Vertical communication ensures smooth organizational operations. The President approved financial allocation for traveling staff for teaching, marketing, business, or research in other countries. KU has a QA system. The National Education Act requires all higher education institutions to implement an IQA faculty-level system annually. The National Education Standards and Quality Assessment Organization develop External Quality Assurance EQA criteria that all higher education institutions must undergo external quality assessment regularly, at least once every five years after the last assessment, and present the results to relevant organizations and the public (IQHE, 2014). The KU Council representative, President, VPs, Deans, and Directors met weekly to discuss university challenges and improvements.

The "6Us" policy aspires to make the university green, digital, research, world-class, socially responsible, and pleasant. The 6Us strategy was launched in response to the rapidly changing environment, social conditions, global warming, and cutting-edge technology. The university introduced The King's Philosophy, collective knowledge, and worldwide knowledge. The three categories of knowledge are connected with Thai universities' Four Missions: creating well-qualified students, research excellence, academic services, and arts & culture conservation. KU alumni gain knowledge and moral ideals to become global citizens.

Kasetsart University's COVID-19 Fight

Kasetsart University created the COVID-19 Board of Emergency Committee. Kasetsart University has published various critical Advisories and Announcements, such as March 17, 2020, advisory regarding class operations and dates, including the management of exams and academic assessments, and March 20, 2020, advice regarding exams and online assessments. On March 21, 2020, the Bangkok Government published its Second Announcement regarding COVID-19, calling for the temporary closure of most malls and retail establishments, including all types and levels of schools and education centers in Bangkok, from March 22 to April 12, 2020. (KU, 2020, March 17).

Kasetsart University is deeply concerned about the safety, hygiene, and well-being of its students, employees, and other University-affiliated individuals. (1) From March 22 to April 12, 2020, all Bangkok-area faculties, departments, institutes, and offices will be closed. Faculty and staff should be allowed to work from home, save in veterinary clinics, finance divisions, ongoing testing laboratories, student dormitories, research and training facilities,

and legal offices. KU service providers also help with online education and video conferencing, campus security, public health offices, and operational divisions that handle procurement and staff salaries. All staff employees whose tasks are relevant to the above activities may be assigned to work on campus in staggered shifts (reducing the number of people at once working nearby) as needed to eliminate an unpleasant impact on the university's necessary operations. (2) Classroom operations, exams, academic evaluations, academic reports, or presentations must be conducted online or utilizing alternate ways, as indicated in prior Kasetsart University Announcements. (3) Campus offices outside Bangkok must follow provincial and municipal announcements. The Office Head, Directors, and Deans (approved administrators) must closely monitor working conditions to preserve healthy, hygienic surroundings and report these concerns to the office head/authorized administrator. (4) Vice Presidents/Office Heads may take extra measures/practices. The President has the final say if operations cannot be conducted after this announcement or if implementation challenges emerge.

Initiatives for Organizational Development at KU during COVID-19

Exit Strategies: Strategic Plan of Actions During COVID-19 Temporary Closure

An extensive Strategic Plan of Actions for the COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies has been launched by Kasetsart University. Thailand's urgent action plan in response to COVID-19 is being fully implemented with the help of the steps taken. Kasetsart University's faculties, departments, institutions, offices, students, and staff members recognize the significance of and are dedicated to promoting the objectives of this Strategic Plan for the resilience of society and the country. Indeed, on June 1, 2020, Dr. Chongrak Wachrinrat, Acting President of Kasetsart University, led the KU Online Discussion on Challenges in Higher Education Coping with COVID-19 with critical international partners to gain broader perspectives and to detail some of the proactive steps KU has already taken to ensure the university's academic integrity while offering a healthy, safe environment. Figure 1 illustrates the components of the KU Strategic Plan of Actions, which include student services, pedagogy and learning development, social and community responsibilities services, research and academic services, information systems, internationalization, administration and staff, and workplace wellness. The components and actions of the KU Strategic Plan of Action for COVID-19 are displayed in Table 1.
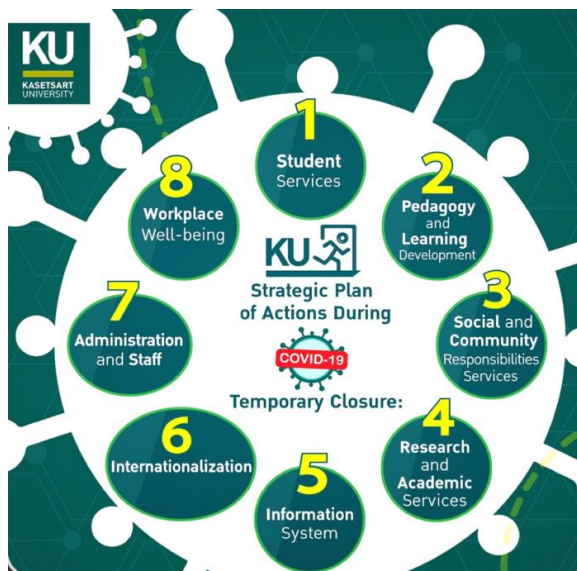

Figure 1: KU's Exit Strategies for the COVID-19 Temporary Closure
Kasetsaert University. (2020, March 31)

Table 1: Elements and Activities of KU Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19

KU Strategic Elements	Activities
Student services	(1) KU provided 500 million Baht emergency funds for students; which included: salary support for work as a research assistant, student loans, tuition reduction, or research funds to fight COVID-19, (2) Waived, reduced, or reimbursed university dormitory fees, (3) Adjusted student activities, and services to online formats, (4) Built student engagement using social media, (5) Provided funds for non-degree programs in entrepreneurship, focusing on skill development (learning new skills or updating skills already acquired), and (6)Offered online consulting service for students and online Happy Place Center
Pedagogy and Learning Development	(1)Provided online instruction using Edufarm (KU-LMS), (2) Supported online education tools and applications like Webex, Zoom, Loom, Google Meet and Classroom, and MS Team, (3) Established the Center of Excellence Online (CEOL) to train students and faculty and to develop alternative methods of instructions, (4) Delivered one-stop student services online, (5) Provided appropriate study tools, software, equipment, and IT services for online interactive teaching and learning, (6) Designed pre-requisite learning modules delivered online, (7) Offered safe but flexible ways for students to take exams in-person, (8) Enhanced the KU-ISEA system; improved the assessment of educational initiatives, and (9) Developed curricular-based degree programs and practical training opportunities with industrial sector enterprises
Social and Community Responsibilities Services	(1) Enabled the sharing of information n accessible databases via the online KU platform, (2) enhanced student's skills regarding a fundamental aspect of entrepreneurship using non-degree programs in the university credit bank system, and (3) established a learning platform for occupational development that will serve the local community and society at large by creating a Facebook pages-KU for All/KU Channel, (4)Created Kaset Fair as an online Facebook page or another online site that can be used for distributing agricultural goods, services, technologies, and innovations that will improve the financial health of low-income groups and leverage the national and international standards of distribution, (5) Supported volunteer work and activities of Alumni, staff, and students to help solve problems in the local society at large, and (6) Distributed KU products at reasonable costs for people facing financial challenges
Research and Academic Services	(1) Used Big Data to boost creativity and productivity; (2) boosted research and publication in national and international journals. (3)Improved technical skills (including releasing, updating, or developing multiple competencies) helpful to farmers and entrepreneurs using hybrid learning methods (Online+Demo+Live Practical Training), (4)Introduced helpful information about coping with or recovering from COVID-19 impacts using KU Webinar/KU Host Issue and Webinar to serve society's needs, (5) Suggested policy changes to the Thai government to combat COVI-19, and (6) Changed online service delivery techniques.
Information System	(1) Developed and used Big Data Application for ongoing university administration, instruction, research, and academic services. (2) Enhanced the university information system using KU Five-O, compromising OL-Learning, Services, Access, Collaboration, and Socialization. (3) Served the university administration and management with adequate information systems.
Internationalization	(1) Organize e-conference and e-seminars to sustain JU's academic reputation as a leading innovative university, (2) Expanded KU's academic advancement in the forms of bilateral or multilateral online conferences or seminars, (3) Promoted KU innovation and projects fighting COVID-19, (4) Made innovations and information available publicly, which may assist in solving significant problems and challenges in critical sectors of Thai society, explicitly farming, unemployment, entrepreneurial sectors, (5) Disseminated research more widely works on droughts, floods, fire, and pollution, and agriculture and intelligent agriculture, and (6) Expanded the role and empowered the university research centers or stations to assist the people in need actively.

Administration and staff	(1) Promoted and fully supported work from home by providing appropriate media and technologies and efficient tools, (2) Adjusted working formats to online platforms, using online modules such as O-Office, O-Meeting, O-Document, and ERP Online, (3) Developed online courses for academic staff and supporting staff, (4) Enhanced the skills and competencies of the university workforce at all leveling (including learning new skills improving existing skills, or gaining new competencies), (5) Shifted hygiene and health safety habits to become the new normal, (6) Developed technical skills and improved staff's foreign language literacy, and (7) Help faculty and staff to adjust their mindset and adapt to new aspects at work and for life in general
Workplace Well-being:	(1)Modified workplace, research areas, study spaces, and offices providing services complied with safety-first physical distancing policies, (2) Maximized the accessibility to services and resources using online services in all respects possible, (3) Supported virtual reality/augmented reality activities for the well-being of students and staff, (4) Maintained environmental hygiene in all organizations at all levels, and (5) Designed the campus environment and open space that complies with physical distancing policies, sharing information, and designing recommendations for public parks and public areas with the surrounding communities.

Source: Kasetsaert University. (2020, March 31)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Development Issue: Digital Organization Transformation

The unpredicted COVID-19 epidemic altered the entire higher education system. In a world of digital transformation, disruptive technology breakthroughs, and accelerated change, the university system must work to overcome this situation to remain competitive and offer high-quality education (Garca et al., 2021). Kasetsart University experienced organizational change, such as a significant shift in online learning influence; teaching funding has been increased to support online platforms, closure of many offices in the university, and most of the workforce working remotely. In addition, new management tools were introduced to deal with employees working from home (WFH). Many factors prepare people for sudden changes and disruptions; effective databases and communication strategies are beneficial for crisis management during the epidemic's peak.

Based on the Kasetsart University scenario during the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire university process was changed into digital transformation. As a result, KU established a strategic plan of action during COVID-19 temporary closure exit strategies with elements and activities entirely digitally transformed. The pandemic sparked a digital organizational transformation, and technological changes and activities are related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Fransson & Frisk, 2021). During COVID-19, digital transformation enhances student learning outcomes, faculty members' technical system implementation skills, staff productivity, and the workplace environment (Abdulrahim & Mabrouk, 2021).

The quick change in how technology is used also demonstrates how prepared a company is to deal with changes and external conditions, how adaptable the staff and team are, and how willing users are to transfer to new digital advances and quickly become aware of any flaws (Nienaber & Woodcok, 2020). Additionally, this quick transition frequently speeds up the use of technology, and the special effects are directly misleading because they were implemented by KU Administrators as soon as COVID-19 got underway to lessen the impact on all aspects of university operations.

Design and Evaluation of an Approach to Address the Organizational Development Issue

Application of Kotler's Eight-step Acceleration Model of Change

Table 2 shows the application of Kotter's eight-step to accelerate change to KU Digital Transformation during COVID-19. As reflected, each eight-step to accelerate change corresponds to the best practices at KU. For example, Kotlers (2017) described and summed up the eight-step below:

Build a Sense of Urgency

Make a compelling opportunity for exciting people to join and use it to transform your organization. Make the change's catalyst. Determine and discuss any current or impending crises or opportunities. Start with the truth and provide compelling justifications to elicit discussion and thought. To strengthen it, enlist the assistance of industry and external stakeholders, updated technology, outmoded equipment, and methods. Kotter discusses this as the "Big Opportunity" to engage the entire organization. Schemes used to create a sense of urgency in response to COVID-19, Kasetsart University has launched a comprehensive Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies. The actions taken are intended to fully implement Thailand's urgent action plan in response to COVID-19. Besides, the recent technology of KU was accelerated.

Make a Guiding Coalition

Gather a group with the power and enthusiasm to lead and support change. Recognize actual leaders and critical stakeholders. Coalition and governance systems are "powerful" in schools and groups. First, identify a governance structure, outline guiding coalition expectations, assess stakeholders to determine critical stakeholders, and create leadership action plans. Finally, the coalition team persuades people that change is essential and encourages others to remove barriers and adopt new practices (Barrow et al., 2020). Formation of the KU Board of Emergency Committee on the COVID-19 as a coalition to support the entire operations of the university and the KU Online Dialogue on Challenges in Higher Education Coping with COVID-19 with key international partners to gain broader insights and to detail some of the proactive steps KU has already taken to ensure the university's academic integrity while providing a healthy, safe environment.

Develop a strategic vision and initiatives

Share a vision to aid in guiding the change project and build strategic efforts to attain this objective. Create a vision to guide the change initiative. Regulate the core values of the transformation. Create a synopsis of the future state and ensure that the steering coalition understands it. Developing a vision for change speeds up the transformation process. (Bradt & Leverage, 2014; Kotter, 2014). The planned plan determines the vision and mission of KU, approving activities and validating the transformation as an expected outcome of the institution. For example, the 6 U's proactive strategy was tied to the vision that a unified shared objective across stakeholders is required to achieve the digital transformation transition (Digital University). Consequently, KU initiated the KU Strategies project using revolutionary technology.

Enlist a Volunteer Army

Create a massive group of people who are eager, ready, and ready to act immediately to create change. The guiding coalition models new behaviors while also providing instruction on them. Enables communication of the vision and generates a compelling message of change. The completion of outcomes from communicating the message at every opportunity in various situations is essential to drive change. In these steps, KU Enhanced the University's information system so that easy access to all the information.

Encourage Action by Eliminating Obstacles

Remove barriers to change, alter systems or structures that risk the vision's realization, and establish structures to detect resistance to change and identify potential obstacles. Recognize and honor those who bring about change. Help those resisting the change understand what is required by identifying them. Take prompt action to eliminate obstacles (both natural and human-made). Without extensive explanation and persuasion, some people will not accept the change. The information must be presented several times before it has any effect. Being consistent and starting communications earlier are crucial. KU improved staff proficiency in foreign languages, developed technical skills, and improved the skills. The competencies of the university workforce at all levels include learning new skills, improving existing skills, gaining new competencies, shifting hygiene and health safety habits to become the new normal, and assisting academics and staff in changing their perspectives and adjusting to new circumstances at work and in public life.

Produce Quick Successes

Volumes of minor and major activities should be continuously produced, tracked, evaluated, and celebrated, and their outcomes should be correlated. Celebrating those victories will inspire the volunteer army and encourage other staff to join. Success spreads like wildfire. Leverage user feedback and demonstrations of developed content prior to release and build user confidence. Deliver smaller portions of the project earlier. To maintain stakeholders' commitment, generating Short-Term Wins is necessary (Bradt & Leverage, 2014). KU announced its achievement on the Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 as the best strategy for managing COVID-19.

Maintain the Current Rate of Acceleration.

Applying credibility more and more to changing policies, organizations, and processes that do not support the vision is an effective strategy. Recruit, retain, and cultivate a workforce capable of carrying out the organization's mission and vision. Incorporate new ideas, projects, and topics into the development, and recruit more people to help out. Establishing policies and a structure to facilitate the transition is vital for the organization's long-term viability (Farkas, 2013). The progress toward the digital transformation is documented on a website created and maintained by KU.

System Change

Develop the methods to assure leadership growth and succession and explain the links between the new activities and organizational success. No strategic project, no matter how little, is finished unless it is integrated into daily operations. A new strategy or approach must become ingrained in the business's culture. The "new" method gradually replaces the "old" method as the accepted practice. To remain relevant to the leadership, stakeholders, and students and responsive to the changing educational environment, the transformation must be regularly assessed and updated. In order to meet the new criteria of digital higher education in Thailand, KU is removing its legacy systems and implementing new ones.

Table 2. Applications of Kotter's eight-step to Accelerate Change to KU Digital Transformation during COVID-19

Kotter's Eight-step to Accelerate Change	Best Practices at KU
1. Build a sense of urgency: Make stimulating individuals a priority by taking advantage of significant opportunities.	(1) Launched a Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies, and (2) Initiated accelerated technological innovation.
2. Make a guiding coalition: Bring a group of interested individuals to start, drive, and maintain change.	(1) Established the KU Board of Emergency Committee on COVID-19 and Launched the Online Dialogue together with other coalition

3. Develop strategic vision & initiatives: Shape a vision to help steer the change effort	(1) KU Proactive Policy (Digital University) linked the Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 (2) Initiated initiative of KU Strategies with technology innovation.
4. Enlist a volunteer army: Identify change agents to drive change	(1) Enhanced the university's information system so that easy access to all the information
5. Encourage action by eliminating obstacles: Existing hierarchies can limit transformation	(1) Developed technical skills, (2) helped staff members become more literate in foreign languages, (3) assisted faculty and staff in changing their mindsets and adapting to new situations at work and in general, and (4) improved the skills and competencies of the university workforce at all levels (including learning new skills, improving existing skills, or gaining new competencies).
6. Produce quick victories: Consistently produce, evaluate, and celebrate accomplishments	(1) KU announced its achievement on the Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 as the best strategy for managing COVID-19.
7. Maintain the current rate of acceleration: Use growing credibility to alter procedures, frameworks, and rules	(1) KU will develop and maintain an up-to-date website that will display the progression of the digital transformation.
8. System change: clearly articulate the linkages between the new habits and the organization's success.	(1) KU was withdrawing old systems process changes to become the new, fully digital normal.

Lessons Learned from the Case Study

Digital Preparedness in Adopting Digital Transformation during Covid-19

Digital preparedness in adopting digital transformation during COVID-19 is a lesson from this case. COVID-19 has shown which university in Thailand was digital-ready and which were not. Before COIVD-19, KU was a digital university, but it opened an opportunity for KU to be entirely digitally transformed to adopt the current pandemic scenario. It is because KU was already taking advantage of technology innovation, and during COVID-19, technology innovations were advanced to embrace the format of organizational development change in the entire university. Thus, KU easily digitally transformed the entire university operation during the pandemic. Therefore, preparedness has become essential to have the most out of digital technologies and to lessen digital differences, mainly during global crises, such as the covid-19 pandemic (Beaunoyer, Dupéré, & Guitton, 2020).

KU's Comprehensive and Cross-Sectoral Methodology

Creating a feeling of urgency is the first step in Kotter's eight-step process for accelerating change. KU did this by launching a comprehensive strategic action plan during COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies and initiating expedited technical innovation. Additionally, KU provides essential up-to-date information to the KU stakeholder and advocates for positive health behaviors, such as providing early advice to encourage people to wear masks in public even before international health guidelines were announced. KU is also responsible for delivering this information to the KU stakeholder. Not only on campus but elsewhere, the KU is the leader in a collaborative effort to blow down the spread of false information regarding COVID-19. During COVID-19, Kasetsart University also initiated an online conversation with other coalitions to enhance teaching, learning, and research activities.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 changed the entire process of higher education rapidly and digitally transformed. As a result, the higher education administrator was challenged to prepare for the digital transformation change in response to rapid change. This transformation required working with open-minded groups committed to ample opportunity. This transformation ignited a creative educational atmosphere indicating the mission and vision of the institution's strategic plan. The KU

responded with a pandemic focused on technological advancement, as reflected in the KU Strategic Plan of Actions during COVID-19 Temporary Closure: Exit Strategies.

To summarize, Kotter's eight-step method for accelerating the change model is a valuable instrument that can bring about transformative change in adopting digital transformation throughout all of KU. The model focused on the significance of a stepwise process in influencing transformative organizational change, and it considered each of Kotter's eight steps to be an essential process in evaluating the best practices of KU. Additionally, the model considered the fact that KU has eight steps. In addition, Kotter's model emphasizes the significance of ingraining the intended transformation into the organization's culture by utilizing consistent and laborious support, feedback, reinforcement, and acknowledgment of achievements.

RECOMMENDATION

The study's imperative analysis led the researchers to make the following recommendations (1) Kotter's eight-step method for accelerating the change model is a valuable instrument to bring about transformational change in digital transformation; it provides a roadmap for successful implementation for KU administrators and other higher education institutions. (2) For future researchers, this study's results will serve as a basis of reference in the digital transformation change in higher education. Most importantly, this can be converted in quantitative research wherein one variable construct is digital transformation change.

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