



INDIVIDUALIZED CONSIDERATION AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract

Public universities in Kenya experience frequent leadership transitions due to the contractual nature of top management positions, typically occurring every five years. The transitions often introduce varying leadership styles and operational approaches, posing challenges to organizational stability and effective change management. This study therefore sought to examine the relationship between individualized consideration, a key dimension of transformational leadership, and change management at public universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on the Transformational Leadership Theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a study population comprising 669 staff members from Chuka University as key informants. A stratified random sampling technique was used. The Yamane formula was used to arrive at a sample of 215 respondents. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which were pilot tested for reliability and validity. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 software. The findings from regression analysis indicated that individualized consideration significantly and positively affects change management in public universities. The study concluded that individualized consideration played a critical role in fostering a supportive environment for employees during organizational change. The study recommended that leaders in public universities should offer mentorship, coaching, emotional support, and career development opportunities to university

employees to help reduce resistance to change and promote smoother transitions. The study recommends that further studies should examine the mediating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between individualized consideration and employee engagement and change outcomes.

Keywords: Individualized Consideration, Change Management, Transformational Leadership, Public Universities, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Public universities in Kenya have faced significant challenges following the introduction of contractual terms for senior management by the University Act Cap 42 of 2012 (University Act, 2012). The legislation requirement was aimed at enhancing transparent governance, public trust, accountability, efficiency, and adoption of best practices in management within the higher education sector (Mukhwana, Kande & Too, 2017). However, the leadership-related challenges have resulted in instability, uncertainty, and the creation of a culture of short-term planning, where leaders prioritize immediate results over long-term strategic goals. This has impacted the performance outcomes of universities, and public universities' contribution to Kenya Vision 2030. (Kennie & Middlehurst, 2021; Litsulitsa, Kungu & Kiiru, 2024). Furthermore, the top management recruitment processes have disrupted the continuity of leadership and institutional vision. With each new appointment are policies that conflict with existing frameworks, thereby impacting the overall coherence of university governance (Muraguri, 2017). Additionally, the reliance on government directives complicates the decision-making process, as university leaders navigate between fulfilling national mandates and addressing the unique needs of their institutions (Mukhwana et al, 2017). As public universities in Kenya navigate these complex changes, there is a need for a leadership style that influences the orientation of the university employees as well as the direction they should take (Vlachopoulos, 2021;).

Individualized consideration, a dimension of transformational leadership, can lead to organizational readiness where employees are mentally and behaviorally prepared for the change (Vlachopoulos, 2021; Litsulitsa, Kungu & Kiiru, 2024). Individualized consideration is the inclusion of employees into the transformative change process. Mutua and Mbithi (2023) underscore the importance of individualized consideration in improving staff morale and facilitating smooth transitions during institutional reforms. However, there remains a gap in understanding how this leadership dimension can be systematically applied to manage broader organizational changes. Previous studies on the relationship between individualized consideration and change management have been concentrated on the banking sector

(Mokoena and Ncube (2020), health institutions (Ritter and Schmidt, 2022), public schools (Johnson and Perez, 2021), tech companies (Chen and Liu, 2023), hotel industry (Wambugu and Wainaina, 2024) and agricultural cooperatives (Mutua & Mbithi, 2021). There are limited studies on the implementation of change management in universities which raises a contextual gap (Vlachopoulos, 2021). Therefore, the main objective of this study was to examine the effect of individualized consideration on change management in public universities in Kenya. A Case of Chuka University

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transformational Leadership Theory

McGregor Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership by making a distinction between ordinary (transactional) leaders who engaged with followers, focused on higher-order intrinsic needs, and raised awareness about the significance of particular outcomes and novel ways in which those outcomes might be achieved, and extraordinary (transformational) leaders who engaged with followers and exchanged tangible rewards for the labour and loyalty of followers (Deng et al, 2022). According to theory, leaders motivate their followers to work toward the achievement of corporate goals by inspiring people to alter their expectations, perceptions, and work ethic via the strength of their vision and personality (Shikokoti, Okoth, Chepkonga, 2023). Bass (1985) expanded on Burns' (1978) concept of transformational leadership, arguing that effective leaders incorporate aspects of both transformational and transactional leadership. Bass's theory emphasizes the impact leaders have on followers, inspiring them to prioritize organizational goals over personal interests. Individualized consideration is a trait of a transformational leader who extends personalized attention to the followers so that they progress and develop themselves (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The theory of transformational leadership is closely associated with effective change management, as it centers on motivating and encouraging people to accept and initiate change. Leaders who focus on motivation, innovation, and personalized development face minimal resistance from employees and can initiate and implement change in their organizations (Chen & Liu, 2023).

Individualized Consideration

Individualized consideration refers to leaders' ability to provide personalized attention, mentorship and coaching, and support to their followers, fostering their personal and professional growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Individualized consideration is an important tenet of transformational leadership, focusing on how leaders attend to the unique needs, abilities, and

aspirations of each of their followers (Ritter and Schmidt (2022)). This leadership style encourages personal growth and development, helping followers reach their full potential (Chen and Liu (2023)). Leaders who embrace individualized consideration build trusting relationships and serve as a kind, encouraging resource to help followers reach their greatest potential within the organization (Mutua & Mbithi, 2021). When leaders take into account the various demands and skills of their followers, it makes them feel appreciated. By providing personalized coaching, emotional support, and feedback, leaders help their staff members grow and develop (Johnson & Perez, 2021). This enables workers to recognize and address their uncertainties and gives them a sense of value in their companies (Bass, 2008). The essential components of individualized consideration therefore include coaching, individualized attention, and the use of an open and consultative approach.

Change Management

Change Management refers to the systematic approach used by organizations to transition individuals, teams, and entire organizations from a current state to a desired future state (Shah, 2023). Change management involves planning, implementing, managing, and sustaining change initiatives to ensure they are successful and that the organization achieves its objectives. Effective change management addresses the human side of change, ensuring that those affected by the change are engaged, informed, and supported throughout the process. To accomplish the necessary business outcome, Cameron and Green (2019) claim that the tools, processes, and procedures utilized in change management are made to handle the human side of change. Phillips and Klein (2023) define change management as an organizational strategy that involves reallocating resources or critical activities to individuals or groups of individuals who are transitioning, developing, and growing to restructure the company. In cooperation with the stakeholders, this is accomplished through the use of a coordinated and structured strategy. However, as Kubai, Karanja and Kihara (2021) point out, organizations looking to adopt changes still face difficulties in managing transitions. This is because distinct aspects of change necessitate distinct combinations of change management techniques.

Schermerhorn and Bachrach (2023) found that the objective of change management is to maximize employees' capacity for adaptation and prevent altering their attitudes toward their work while implementing changes promptly in response to the needs of the organization. To accomplish the desired outcomes and lessen the detrimental effects on the workforce, organizations must offer innovative and acceptable methods of managing change to decrease resistance (Fasbender, Burmeister & Wang, 2023). Change management aids organizations in adapting to change so they can accomplish their objectives. It serves as a connection between

solutions and results, and it revolves around persons and their common accountability for converting change into advantageous consequences for the company (Winarto & Haryanto, 2023). Planned change management solutions involve sequential steps to modify individual and organizational behaviour ().

Change management involves various dimensions that leaders must navigate to ensure successful organizational transitions. Kotter (2023) identifies several critical dimensions of change management, including creating a sense of urgency, developing a guiding coalition, communicating the vision, and empowering broad-based action. These dimensions are crucial for fostering commitment and engagement during change initiatives. Furthermore, Burnes and Jackson (2022) emphasize the importance of sustaining change, highlighting that the reinforcement of new behaviors and practices is vital for long-term success. Their research illustrates how organizations that actively engage in these dimensions' experience smoother transitions and higher employee morale. The dimensions of change management utilized in the current study included creating a sense of urgency, communicating the vision, and empowering broad-based action. By focusing on these dimensions, the current study investigated how effective leadership influences the success of change initiatives within organizations.

Effect Of Individualized Consideration on Change Management

Empirical evidence has demonstrated that individualized consideration influences change management in different contexts. Ritter and Schmidt (2022) examined the role of individualized consideration in change management within German healthcare institutions. The study involved 350 healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and administrative staff, across 15 hospitals undergoing a transition to new electronic health record systems. Individualized consideration, a key element of transformational leadership, refers to leaders providing personalized support, mentoring, and attention to the individual needs of employees. The study found that leaders who practiced individualized consideration were better able to reduce resistance to the new system by addressing the specific concerns and developmental needs of their staff. Employees who received personalized support were more motivated to engage with the new technology and adapt to the changing work environment. Leaders who fostered a supportive atmosphere through one-on-one mentoring and active listening saw a 30% increase in employee satisfaction during the change process, which led to smoother implementation. The study highlighted the need for further investigation into how individualized consideration could be tailored for different professional roles within healthcare. While the results were promising for frontline staff, there was less clarity on how individualized

consideration impacts administrative personnel, suggesting a gap in understanding how leadership styles may need to be adapted based on professional hierarchies.

Johnson and Perez (2021) conducted a study on the influence of individualized consideration on change management in the context of educational reform. The study surveyed 200 high school teachers and principals from public schools in California that were undergoing curriculum restructuring. The researchers sought to understand how leaders' attention to the personal and professional development of their staff influenced the success of the change initiative. The findings indicated that school principals who employed individualized consideration by providing personalized feedback, offering professional development opportunities, and maintaining open communication fostered a more positive attitude towards the curriculum changes among teachers. This led to higher levels of engagement and innovation in the classroom. Teachers who felt their unique needs were recognized and supported were more likely to implement new teaching strategies effectively and adapt to the changes in curriculum requirements. Johnson and Perez (2021) noted a gap in research regarding the long-term impact of individualized consideration on teacher performance and student outcomes. While the study focused on the immediate effects of individualized consideration during the change process, further research was recommended to explore how sustained leadership support over time influences the lasting success of educational reforms.

Chen and Liu (2023) examined the role of individualized consideration in facilitating change management within Chinese tech companies. The study involved 400 employees from five tech firms in Beijing that were transitioning to agile work processes. The research aimed to assess how leaders' attention to the unique needs and developmental goals of employees impacted their ability to adapt to these new work structures. The findings showed that employees who received individualized attention from their leaders were more open to adopting the agile methodologies. Leaders who provided personalized coaching and feedback, as well as opportunities for career growth during the transition, helped reduce employee anxiety and resistance to the new workflows. Teams led by such leaders demonstrated higher levels of innovation and problem-solving capacity, which were critical for the successful adoption of agile practices. Chen and Liu (2023) identified a gap in understanding the scalability of individualized consideration in large organizations. While the approach was effective in small to medium-sized teams, the study suggested that future research should explore how this leadership style can be effectively implemented in larger, more complex organizational structures where personalized attention to every employee may be more difficult.

Mokoena and Ncube (2020) explored the role of individualized consideration in change management within the banking sector. The study surveyed 250 employees, including bank

tellers, managers, and IT staff from three major banks that were implementing a shift to digital banking services. The study focused on how individualized attention to employees' needs, such as training and emotional support, impacted the successful adoption of digital systems. The study found that employees who received individualized support from their managers were more likely to embrace the digital changes. Personalized coaching and one-on-one training sessions helped employees who were less technologically proficient to overcome their fears and gain the confidence to use the new systems. Managers who made an effort to address employees' individual concerns about job security and workload also experienced lower turnover rates during the transition period. Mokoena and Ncube (2020) pointed out a gap in research concerning how individualized consideration affects employees in highly hierarchical organizations like banks. While the study demonstrated the benefits of personalized support for lower-level employees, there was limited exploration of how individualized consideration could be applied to middle and upper management, who also play a critical role in facilitating change

Mutua and Mbithi (2021) investigated the role of individualized consideration in change management within Kenyan agricultural cooperatives. The study involved 180 respondents, including cooperative leaders, farmers, and administrative staff, from 10 cooperatives that were undergoing restructuring to improve efficiency and profitability. The study aimed to understand how leaders' attention to the personal and professional needs of cooperative members influenced their acceptance of new management practices. The findings revealed that cooperative leaders who provided individualized support to farmers through personalized training programs, regular feedback sessions, and financial guidance saw higher levels of engagement with the new practices. Farmers who felt personally supported by their leaders were more likely to adopt new agricultural technologies and management techniques, leading to better overall performance in the cooperatives. Mutua and Mbithi (2021) identified the need for further research into how individualized consideration can be sustained in resource-limited settings. While the study showed positive outcomes in cooperatives that received external funding, there was a lack of understanding of how leaders could maintain personalized support in contexts where resources are more constrained and external support is limited.

Wachira and Waweru (2023) conducted a study on individualized consideration in change management within the public education sector. The study involved 250 teachers and education officers from primary schools in Nairobi that were implementing new competency-based curricula. The research focused on how leaders' individualized support to teachers influenced their adoption of new teaching methods. The study found that school leaders who provided individualized mentoring and professional development opportunities helped teachers overcome initial resistance to the new curriculum. Teachers who received one-on-one coaching

and personalized resources were more confident in their ability to integrate the new methods into their classrooms. This resulted in improved teaching practices and a smoother transition to the new curriculum. Wachira and Waweru (2023) pointed to a gap in understanding how individualized consideration could be scaled to rural schools, where access to professional development resources is limited. While the study showed positive results in urban schools, there was little evidence on how this leadership style could be effectively applied in more remote areas with fewer educational resources and support systems.

Hypothesis

H₀₁; Individualized consideration has no significant relationship with change management of public universities in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is structured to illustrate the relationship between individualized consideration and change management in public universities in Kenya.

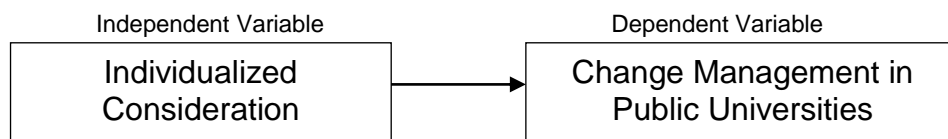


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for The Study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study's population consisted of 669 teaching and non-teaching staff at Chuka University, categorizing them into top management, middle-level managers, and operational staff. Chuka University is a public university that was chartered in 2013. The first decade of its existence saw significant expansion in infrastructure and student population, alongside evolving management approaches and increasing staff diversity. By 2022, the institution had become the largest educational center in Eastern Kenya, boasting an enrolment of approximately 20,000 students and producing over 4,000 graduates annually. In 2022, the founding Vice-Chancellor's resignation, followed shortly by the end of the council's mandate, signaled a period of transition and potential uncertainty in the institution's leadership structure. The study sought therefore to determine the effect of transformational leadership on change management at Chuka university.

The study employed a stratified sampling technique. The target population comprised 669 teaching and non-teaching staff members of Chuka. A sample size of 250 participants was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. Primary data was collected via a structured questionnaire created by the researcher that was organized into sections reflecting key dimensions of individualized consideration and change management. The questionnaires employed a Likert scale to capture the intensity of attitudes. Data analysis involved the use of SPSS Version 26, beginning with descriptive statistics to summarize demographic data and key variables. Pearson's correlation was used to explore relationships between leadership aspects and change management, while a multiple regression model assessed the predictive ability of individualized consideration on change management. Results were presented using tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

The main objective was to examine the effect of individualized consideration on change management in public universities in Kenya. The summary findings of the descriptive statistics for individualized considerations are consolidated and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Individualized Consideration

Research Variable	Mean	SD
Leadership empathizes with workers' concerns	3.5	1.18
Leadership attends to the work-related needs of employees	3.41	1.14
Leadership organizes regular coaching and training programs to enhance staff skills	3.10	1.20
Leadership mentors junior staff to promote professional growth	3.70	1.10
Recognizes staff who contribute outstandingly to the University's goals	3.86	1.08

The findings in Table 1 that the university leaders practice individualized consideration address the specific concerns and development needs of employees. University managers may want to examine this variable as initiate and implement change as it may influence an employee's readiness to change.

The summary findings of the descriptive statistics for change management are consolidated and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for change management

Aspect	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Positive Response %
The university has smooth transitions	71	3.66	1.19	57.75
The university fosters a desire to support and participate in the change process	71	3.73	1.22	60.56
The leadership has created awareness of the need for change	71	3.65	1.24	57.75
University has experienced significant resistance to change	71	4.06	1.05	73.24
Change is not always accepted	71	3.55	1.27	63.38
Employees struggle to adjust to change	71	3.85	1.25	67.61
The university has a framework for ensuring a high change success rate	71	3.73	1.26	69.01
The university has strategies for addressing resistance to change	71	4.00	1.18	76.06
Employees are satisfied with the changes	71	3.56	1.13	54.93
Stakeholders are satisfied with the change process	71	3.59	1.04	53.52

Overall, the summary indicates that the mean scores for the aspects of change management range from 3.55 to 4.06. This indicated that respondents tend to have moderately positive views on various aspects of change management. This suggests that university employees weigh the positive consequences of change management as significant and are willing to embrace the change.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient between the change management individualized was computed to determine whether there was a positive or negative association between the constructs of transformational leadership. The results of analysis are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of Correlation Analysis

Transformational Leadership Aspect	Change Management	
	Pearson's Correlation	p-value
Individualized Consideration	0.631	0.000

The results indicated a positive correlation between individualized consideration and change management ($r=0.631$, $p<0.000$). The findings showed a positive and significant relationship between individualized consideration and change management in public universities in Kenya. The findings implied that an increase in individualized consideration of university leadership will lead to an increase in change management in public universities in Kenya. The findings concurred with Ritter and Schmidt (2022) which found that leaders who practiced individualized consideration were able to reduce resistance to the change.

Regression Analysis

A linear regression analysis was applied to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between individualized consideration and change management.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Change Management (dependent variable),

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Regression coefficients

X1 = Individualized Consideration

ε = Error term.

Table 4: Effect of Individualized Consideration on Change Management

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	0.892	0.796	0.791	0.2874	
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	68.254	4	17.064	206.398	0.000
Residual	17.346	210	0.083		
Total	85.6	214			
Coefficients					
Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	P-value
(Constant)	0.182	0.098		1.857	
Individualized Consideration	0.189	0.038	0.182	4.974	0.016

Based on the adjusted R^2 value in the model summary, the overall regression model was successful in explaining 79.6 percent of the adjusted variance in change management. The findings indicated that 79.6% of the variance in change management was explained by individualized consideration while the remaining 20.4% of the variance in change management could be explained by other variables that were not included in the study.

ANOVA was used to establish the significance of the regression model. In testing the significance level, the statistical significance was considered significant if the p-value was less or equal to 0.05. From Table 4, the p-value is 0.00 and the F-value is 206.398, the regression model is statistically significant in predicting the influence on change management.

Furthermore, the findings showed that individualized consideration had a significant influence on change management ($\beta=0.189$, $t = 4.974$, $p<0.05$). Thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between individualized consideration and change management of public universities in Kenya. The findings are in agreement with a study by Avolio and Bass (2004) which found that leaders who engage in individualized consideration are better equipped to motivate employees, thereby facilitating smoother transitions during organizational change. Similarly, the study concurred with Rowold and Heinitz (2007) which found a strong positive correlation between individualized consideration and successful change management in organizational settings, further reinforcing the importance of personalized leadership practices in overcoming resistance to change.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between individualized consideration, a key dimension of transformational leadership, and change management in Kenyan public universities. The findings contribute to the transformational leadership theory by reinforcing the importance of individualized consideration in driving successful organizational outcomes. While transformational leadership theory often emphasizes broader dimensions such as inspirational motivation and idealized influence, this study demonstrates the distinct impact of individualized attention and support on change management. Future research should delve deeper into this specific leadership practice, particularly in different organizational settings, to further clarify how personalized leadership fosters change.

For leadership in public universities, the study recommends the need to cultivate a culture of individualized consideration. University leaders should prioritize personalized mentorship, regularly engage with staff on a one-on-one basis, and tailor development opportunities according to the unique needs of their employees. Investing in leadership

development programs that emphasize transformational leadership practices, specifically individualized consideration, could enhance staff engagement and reduce resistance to change. Leaders who take time to understand and support their staff during transitions are likely to see smoother implementation of reforms and a more cohesive organizational climate.

At the policy level, educational policymakers and university management should design frameworks that encourage the adoption of transformational leadership practices. This could include incorporating leadership training that focuses on individualized consideration into university leadership curricula or performance management systems. Such policies would ensure that leaders across public universities are equipped with the skills needed to guide their institutions through change effectively. Additionally, human resource policies that promote regular leader-employee engagement and tailored professional development opportunities should be prioritized to ensure sustained organizational growth and adaptability.

Finally, the study recommends that further research be done using a longitudinal design. Furthermore, future studies should examine the mediating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between individualized consideration and employee engagement and change outcomes.

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