

Acceptance of organizational change in higher education: implementing quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions

قبول التغيير التنظيمي في التعليم العالي: تطبيق ضمان الجودة في مؤسسات التعليم العالي الجزائرية

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Abstract:

Higher education is confronted with many challenges in its environment, which are the result of the different mutations that the world knew in the last years. And in order to cope with these new conditions, many changes were operated in the higher education sector, and one of these organizational changes was the implementation of the quality assurance system. So, this paper aimed to investigate academics 'acceptance of organizational change within Algerian higher education institutions. The results showed that there is a low level of acceptance of organizational change related to both managerial and personal determinants, it revealed also that academics 'demographic characteristics have no correlation with the acceptance of the organizational change.

Keywords: organizational change, quality assurance, acceptance

ملخص:

يواجه التعليم العالي العديد من التحديات في بيئته، وهي نتيجة التحولات المختلفة التي عرفها العالم في السنوات الماضية. ولمواكبة هذه الظروف الجديدة، تم إجراء العديد من التغييرات في قطاع التعليم العالي، وكان أحد هذه التغييرات التنظيمية هو تطبيق نظام ضمان الجودة. لذلك هدف هذا البحث إلى التحقيق في مدى قبول الأكاديميين للتغيير التنظيمي داخل مؤسسات التعليم العالي الجزائرية. وأظهرت النتائج انخفاض مستوى قبول التغيير التنظيمي المتعلق بالمحددات الإدارية والشخصية، كما كشفت أن الخصائص الديموغرافية للأكاديميين لا علاقة لها بقبول التغيير التنظيمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التغيير التنظيمي، ضمان الجودة، القبول.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time, higher education institutions were considered as rigid and stable systems, and their values remained intact despite the constant changes in their environment¹. But in recent years, HEIs were faced with significant changes on so many levels (finance, technology, growing competition, public scrutiny, and demographical changes)², and this holistic environment gave higher education a more important place regarding political, social, and economic roles. And it is now considered as a solution to dilemmas in different fields³.

All of these conditions led to the higher education sector to adopt new procedures and policies that aim to keep HEIs efficient, and one of these recent changes in this sector is the implementation of quality assurance systems. Hence, Algerian higher education institutions were not an exception when it comes to the implementation of QA systems; and like any other change initiative, it was handled differently by actors (change managers and academics). So in this research, we are going to focus on the level of acceptance of organizational change in higher education by academics and the level of acceptance according to demographic characteristics of academics.

So, in this research, we are going to focus our study on change management in Algerian higher education institutions, and we are going to take the implementation of quality assurance systems in Algerian higher education institutions as an example for organizational change. To go deeper into this subject, the main question was formulated:

what is the level of academics' acceptance of quality assurance implementation in Algerian higher education institutions? Other sub-questions followed to have a clearer vision of this subject:
-Is there a correlation between demographic characteristics (Gender, Years of experience, and academic rank) of academics on the acceptance of organizational change in Algerian higher education institutions?

-Hypotheses:

We developed the following hypotheses that will help us to understand more our subject of research:

- there is a correlation between academics' demographic characteristics (Gender, Years of experience, and academic rank) and the acceptance of organizational change in Algerian higher education institutions.

-Importance of the study: This study focuses on a determinant factor in every organizational change initiative, which is the acceptance of change, and we decided to choose Algerian higher

¹ Storberg-Walker, J., & Torracco, R, Change and Higher Education: A Multidisciplinary Approach, ERIC Clearinghouse, Austin, TX, 2004, p 811.

² Eckel, P., & Kezar, A, Key Strategies for Making New Institutional Sense: Ingredients to Higher Education Transformation, *Higher Education Policy*, N°(16), p 42.

³ Maassen, P et al. (2012). *Effects of Higher Education Reforms: Change Dynamics*. Sense Publishers, Netherlands, 2012.

education institutions as a field of our study because of the limited number of changes that they knew since their creation, which can lead to an important resistance by the human factor. And the studies that were done by researchers in this subject focused more on business organizations and few of them treated it in Algerian higher education institutions.

-Research objectives:

This research tries to:

- Determine the most important determinants of acceptance of the organizational change.
- Check the level of academics 'acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions.
- Check the impact of academics' demographic characteristics on the level of acceptance of the implementation of QA.

-Research approach: This study is a descriptive research which follows a quantitative approach, to collect and analyze the data, and to attain our research objectives.

2. Conceptual framework:

Reasons that drive organizations to change differ from one to another and HEIs have particular properties that made researchers study the organizational change in these institutions separately from other organizations.

2.1. What are the drivers for change in higher education?¹

According to Chandler (2013), four reasons are driving change in higher education:

- **Technology:** Technology impacted teaching approaches and it created new methods of learning, and it also opened the path to virtual universities which are considered as competitors to traditional universities.
- **Globalization:** It impacted job markets worldwide, and it presented global standards and systems which aim to make the mobility between nations easier for students who represent a source of income to many HEIs.
- **Competition:** HEIs are knowing a non-stop growing competition not only locally but on an international level, and with the decrease of dependence on governmental funds, universities are now searching for new sources of income, which can only be realized with a high level of attraction to national and foreign students.
- **Accountability:** Authorities put universities under pressure to be more accountable on two levels (performance and financial support).

2.2. Quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions:

« It is in the context of strong international competition and of rapid technological change that Algeria is rising to the challenge to improve the quality of higher education. »¹

¹ Chandler, N, *Braced for Turbulence: Understanding and Managing Resistance to Change in the Higher Education Sector.* management, N° 05,2013,p243-244

The Algerian higher education system knew several reforms to keep up with all these changes. And one of the biggest reforms was the implementation of the LMD (Licence-Master-Doctorat) system in 2004². This system was first introduced in the bologna process to modernize higher education systems across Europe and make them more compatible so that the mobility of students and job seekers would be easier within the European Union. ³

This process has another goal which is strengthening quality assurance in HEIs (Bologna process and European higher education area). Following the same steps, quality assurance of the higher education system was implemented in Algeria, and these practices were held to ensure its effectiveness: ⁴

-2010: The creation of the Commission for the Implementation of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CIAQES) whose objective is the implementation of the QA in HEIs.

-The installation of quality control units (QAC) in HEIs. - The appointment of Quality Managers who supervise the activities of cells in quality management.

-2016: the adoption of the National Referential (RNAQES).

- The launch of the self-assessment.

Many studies revealed that the implementation of quality assurance knew different levels and types of resistance among academics, in the empirical study of Newton (2002), it was pointed that one of the reasons that lead to this resistance was that academics see QA practices as an act of distrust and managerial concern⁵. Hence, it can decrease their motivation. In Algeria, the study of Bouzid & Berrouche (2012) estimates that resistance to change is one of the possible constraints to QA⁶. Another empirical study by Regad(2014) found that the fear of evaluation, additional effort and the loss of independence were the main factors that cause resistance to QA⁷.

3. Research design:

This study is descriptive research that follows a quantitative approach; a self-administered survey questionnaire is used for data collection. That is analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 22 for Windows.

3.1.Participants:

Samples of 115

higher education academics were selected randomly, from various Algerian HEIs.

¹ Berrouche, Z., & berkane, y, *La mise en place du système LMD en Algérie :entre la nécessité d'une réforme et les difficultés du terrain*. Revue des Sciences Économiques et de Gestion, V°7, N° 7,2007, p 4.

² Algerian ministry of higher education. Retrieved from: https://www.mesrs.dz/en_US (25/06/2020)

³ Bologna process and European higher education area. Retrieved from : <https://ec.europa.eu/> (10/06/2020)

⁴ Kouraiche, N, *Assurance Qualité Dans L'enseignement Supérieur En Algérie :Tendances Et Pratiques*. dirassat, V°10,N°2,2019,p 338.

⁵ Newton , J. , *Views from Below: Academics coping with quality*, Quality in Higher Education., V°8, N°1, 2002,p 59.

⁶ Bouzid, N., & Berrouche, Z, *Assurance qualité dans l'enseignement supérieur*,Commission Nationale pour l'Implémentation de l'Assurance Qualité dans l'Enseignement Supérieur, 2012,p 52.

⁷ Regad S, *The application of the Quality Assurance System in Algerian Higher Education Institutions: Its Prospects and Obstacles*, Field Study of Higher Education Institutions of the East, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Setif 1, Faculty of Economic, Business and Management Sciences, 2014,p238.

3.2. Procedure:

The survey instrument was administered to the participants via e-mail, and it included the purpose of the study.

3.3. Instrument validity:

The questionnaire was presented to a group of experts in management, and several modifications were made based on their remarks.

3.4. Reliability test:

To measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire, we used the coefficient Cronbach's alpha for Likert scale questions, to make sure that all the items mentioned in the questionnaire measure the same construct. This coefficient ranges from 0 to 1 and the closer it is to 1 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale.¹

Table 1. Cronbach's α coefficient

scales	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Managerial determinants of acceptance of organizational change	19	0,885
Academics' attitudes towards organizational change	7	0,602
All items	26	0,861

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS V22 outcomes

Table n° (1) shows that the Cronbach's α is 0,602 for the scale that measures Academics' attitudes towards organizational change and 0,861 for all the items of the instrument, which indicates that the questionnaire has good reliability.²

3.5. Measurement scales:

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire that was divided into three sections.

-Section (1) measured the academics' demographic background. -
Section (2) measured the managerial determinants of acceptance of the organizational change (the implementation of quality assurance) among academics in HEIs. This section was divided into four categories: -Understanding the rationale, communication, participative-management, and trust in leadership.

-Section (3) measured Academics' attitudes towards organizational change. The items of the two last sections were rated by a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for positive items and vice versa for negative items.

3.6. Data analysis:

Data collected was analyzed by using: -means and standard deviation coefficients to check the level of acceptance of organizational change in Algerian higher education institutions.

-To test our hypotheses, we used Cramer's V coefficient and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

¹ Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R, *Making sense of Cronbach's alpha*, International Journal of Medical Education, N°2, P 55.

² George, p., & Mallery, d. , *Using SPSS for Windows Step by Step: A Simple Guide and Reference*, pearson education., London,(ed. 4 th), 2003, p 103.

4. Findings:

In this research, the acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance among academics is studied on terms of:

-The determinants of acceptance of quality assurance implementation among academics in Algerian higher education institutions.

-The influence of demographic characteristics (Gender, Years of experience, and academic rank) of academics on the acceptance of organizational change in Algerian higher education institutions.

4.1. Demography of Respondents:

The demographic data for participants showed that 57,4 % of them were male and 42,6 % were female, and the majority of whom were between 30 and 39 years of age (65,2%). And according to the figures, 33,9 % of the respondents were senior lecturer class B, and a high proportion of them had experienced between 5 and 10 years (40,9%).

Table 2. The demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristics	Category	Frequencies (n)	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	57,4
	Female	49	42,6
Age	Under 30	13	11,3
	30-39	75	65,2
	40-49	21	18,3
	50-59	6	5,2
	>60	Assistant	/
Academic rank	professor class A	31	27
	Assistant professor class B	20	17,4
	Senior lecturer class A	24	20,9
	Senior lecturer class B	39	33,9
	Professor	1	0,9
Years of experience	<5 years	39	33,9
	5-10 years	47	40,9
	> 10 years	29	25,2
Total	/	115	100

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPPSS V22 outcomes

4.2. Q1-What are the determinants of acceptance of quality assurance implementation among academics in Algerian higher education institutions?

In this research, scales were designed to measure the possible barriers to organizational change, so we focused on determinants that may have an impact on the acceptance of quality assurance implementation in Algerian higher education institutions, with '1' indicating the lowest mean which

means that the factors related to the acceptance of change are considered to be barriers and the inverse for the highest mean '5'.

Table3. Determinants of acceptance of organizational change in Algerian HEIs

Determinants of acceptance of organizational change in Algerian HEIs	Rank	Mean	Standard deviation
Trust in leadership	3	2,43	1,06
Participative management	2	2,53	0,94
communication	5	2,03	1,07
Understanding the rationale	1	2,73	0,93
Academics' attitudes towards organizational change	4	2,20	0,92
All items	/	2,38	0,77

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS V22 outcomes

Note: 1- 2,59= low, 2,60-3,39 =moderate, 3,40-5= high

Table n°3 shows academics' perceptions of the determinants of acceptance of organizational change in Algerian HEIs, and the results revealed that there is low acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions by academics (statistical mean=2,38). Academics ranged low all the determinants of the acceptance. Mean scores ranged from (2,03) for 'Communication determinants' to (2,73) for 'Understanding the rationale'. For 'Academics' attitudes towards organizational change' score was (2, 20), whereas 'Trust in leadership' mean score was (2, 43), final results for 'Participative management' showed a low score mean of (2,53).

The questionnaire responses showed various sub-determinants of acceptance of quality assurance implementation that were given low rates by academics. Such as the lack of a detailed explanation of quality assurance systems in an organized and continuous manner with a statistical mean of (1,90), another source of non-acceptance is the fear of academics of losing power with a statistical mean of (1,75). Also, Academics see that their opinions are not being taken into account by their administration (mean=1, 98), and they classified the non-communication of the results of the implementation of quality assurance on its different stages (mean=1,94) as a source of non-acceptance of change.

4.3. Q2. Is there any correlation between acceptance of organizational change by academics and their demographic characteristics?

We developed the following hypothesis to examine the impact of demographic variables (Gender, Years of experience, and academic rank) on acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions.

H0: there is no correlation between acceptance of organizational change by academics in Algerian HEIs and their demographic characteristics (gender, years of experience, academic rank).

H1: there is a correlation between acceptance of organizational change by academics in Algerian HEIs and their demographic characteristics (gender, years of experience, academic rank)

4.3.1. Acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance and gender:

In order to test the correlation between our independent variable gender and the acceptance of organizational change in Algerian HEIs (based on Managerial determinants of acceptance of organizational change and Academics' attitudes towards organizational change), we measured the coefficient Cramer's V, and the results are presented in table n°4.

Table 4. Correlation (gender* Determinants of acceptance of organizational change)

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Phi Cramer's V	0,693	0,543
	0,693	0,543

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS V22 outcomes

The results of hypothesis testing that used Cramer's V coefficient show that the sig.>0.05, which indicates that there is no correlation between gender and the acceptance of quality assurance implementation. So, male and female academics act in the same way toward the implementation of quality assurance in higher education institutions.

4.3.2. Acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance and years of experience:

To see if there is a correlation between the independent variable years of experience, and the acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian HEIs, we measured the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and the results are presented in table n°5.

Table 5: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

	Years of experience
Determinants of the acceptance	
correlation coefficient	-0,16
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,864
N	115

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS V22 outcomes

The results in table (5) revealed that the Sig.>0, 05 which indicates that there is no correlation between academics' years of experience and determinants of acceptance of the implementation of QA in Algerian HEIs.

4.3.3. Acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance and academic rank:

To see if there is a correlation between the independent variable 'academic rank' and the acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian HEIs.

We measured the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and the results are presented in table n°6.

Table 6. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

	Years of experience
Determinants of the acceptance	
correlation coefficient	-0,128
Sig. (2-tailed)	0,172
N	115

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS V22 outcomes

The results in table (6) revealed that the Sig.>0,05 which indicates that there is no correlation between academics' academic rank' and determinants of acceptance of QA implementation in Algerian HEIs.

5. Results and discussion:

5.1. Acceptance of organizational change in Algerian higher education institutions:

The implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions is an organizational change that was faced by a certain level of resistance by academics. And in our research, we found a low acceptance of organizational change, and various determinants were constituted as barriers to the implementation of quality assurance from academics 'perspective, ' communication' was rated as the most important barrier and this goes along with Chandler(2013) that cited poor communication as a main cause of resistance to change because it leads to a lack of vision and direction which creates a negative impact on the change process.¹

Academics' attitude towards organizational change contributed also to low acceptance of organizational change, and this was explained by Nordvall, (1982) who sees teaching as a highly independent effort, which makes it hard for academics to follow conducted procedures that are more likely present in industrial processes and should not be present in academia.²

Another managerial determinant that contributed to low acceptance of organizational change was the trust in leadership that was low because of change leaders not taking academics' feedbacks and opinions into account which created a gap between the two parties. Diamond (2006) gave multiple explanations to this lack of trust in HE leaders such as the fact that they tend to preserve the status quo rather than working on changes, and many leaders lack management skills too³, which creates resistance to different changes.

The results showed also a lack of participative management, which was also a barrier to organizational change. As academics see that their lack of participation in decision making or the process of the implementation of quality assurance led to a certain level of resistance, so to guarantee a high-quality change academics must be involved in the implementation process. The only determinant that had a moderate level of acceptance was 'understanding the rationale' and

¹ Chandler N, *op. cit*, p 246

² Nordvall, R. , *The Process of Change In Higher Education Institutions*. American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C. AAHE-ERI,1986,p 5.

³ Diamond, a. ,*The Early Development of Executive Functions*. Dans E. Bialystok, & F. Craik, *Lifespan cognition: Mechanisms of change*,Oxford University Press,2006, p 76

academics had a medium knowledge and understanding of the goals, standards, and results of implementing quality assurance in higher education.

5.2. Acceptance of the implementation of quality assurance in Algerian higher education institutions and demographic characteristics:

5.2.1. Gender:

Our research showed that there is no correlation between the level of acceptance of organizational change and academics 'gender which means that gender is not a factor that impacts the level of acceptance of the implementation of QA in higher education institutions, and both female and male academics have the same perceptions on the determinants of acceptance of the organizational change.

5.2.2. Years of experience:

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient results showed us that there is no correlation between the level of acceptance of the implementation of QA and academics' years of experience, and it was faced with a low level of acceptance from both academics with new experience and the more experienced ones.

5.2.3. Academic rank:

According to Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, there is no correlation between the acceptance of the implementation of QA and academics' academic ranks, which indicates that academics from all ranks manifested the same level of acceptance to organizational change.

6. Conclusion:

In this research, we found that there is a low level of acceptance of implementing quality assurance in Algerian HEIs. Due to management-related factors as academics pointed out that their institutions did not pay attention to 'communication', 'participative management', and that they lack 'trust in leadership'. Academics 'personal factors were a source of resistance to organizational change and contributed also to a low level of acceptance of the organizational change.

Furthermore, the tests of our first hypothesis showed that there is no correlation between the level of acceptance of organizational change based on academics' (gender, years of experience, academic rank). Participative management can play a role too in making the change more acceptable to academics as it eliminates resistance to change.

So HEIs management should take into consideration that their managerial actions have an important impact on the change initiative and that any shortage can lead to an academic resistance, which can be a reason of failure for the organizational change.

❖ Suggestions:

Our research tried to study the organizational change in higher education institutions, which are different from business organizations that are usually being the subject of the studies. So, we suggest to our fellow researchers to address more this subject since HEIs know several changes, and we recommend focusing on the human factor as it is a key to the success of any change initiative.

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