DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP STYLES INSPIRE
EMPLOYEES TO ADAPT TO CHANGE, AT THE
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LAOS (NUOL)

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Declaration

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This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project entitled: “Appropriate leadership styles inspire employees to adapt to change, at the National University of Laos (NUOL)” is submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Business.

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ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a significant role in the development of organisations and it is imperative for motivating and influencing people in the workplace during times of change. Furthermore, leadership is a crucial element in communicating the strategic direction and motivating employees to be dedicated to organisational goals. Thus, without an appropriate leadership style, an organisation cannot sustain itself and survive in a changing environment.

This research project deployed a qualitative approach to investigate the perspectives of leaders in the Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM) in Laos about the importance of leadership in the organisation. Semi-structured interviews were employed to identify the appropriate leadership styles being used in the FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change. This research project contents of five main objectives: to explore the understanding by leaders in FEBM of the term “leadership style”, to investigate the leadership style currently used in FEBM, to determine what is the most appropriate leadership style to improve performance of the FEBM workforce in times of change, to determine the key capacities leaders should have in order to influence employees to adapt to change, and to identify challenges that might become barriers for leaders to implement change. Hence, to achieve these objectives of this research project, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 respondents who had senior management roles in the FEBM. This included the Dean and two vice-deans, as well as heads of department and the deputy heads of department from five departments. The data was analysed and interpreted by using the thematic method. The findings of this research project are intended to provide significant guidelines for leaders in the Lao higher education sectors to lead organisations to accomplish the desired goals in times of change.

The results of the findings revealed that there are five main leadership styles that leaders in the FEBM employed in order to inspire people to adapt to change. These are transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic/participative leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and the autocratic leadership style. Moreover, it is interesting to note that some leaders executed more than one leadership style to motivate employees to participate in the change process. This is because the leaders would change their leadership styles based on the situations and the level of satisfaction of the employees.

The study concluded that the FEBM leaders have an extensive understanding about the most suitable ways to motivate employees in times of change. This will enable the organisation to promote and sustain their capabilities to develop their organisation in a long-term. In addition, the researcher strongly believes that the results of the research could provide useful information for
leaders to build on this knowledge base. Hence, the leaders would be able to create additional new knowledge of leadership practices so as to have a positive impact on organisational performance in the National University of Laos (NUOL) in the future.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB    Asian Development Bank
AEC    ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN  Association of South East Asian Nations
FEBM   Faculty of Economics and Business Management
Lao PDR Lao People Democratic Republic
LG     Leadership group
CL     Change leader
MDGS   Millennium Development Goals
MoES   Ministry of Education and Sports
NUOL   National University of Laos
NSEDP  National Socio-Economic Development Plan
WTO    World Trade Organisation

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1. Introduction and background

Leadership plays a significant role in the development of organisations and it is imperative for motivating and influencing people in the workplace in times of uncertainty and change (Armstrong, 2012). Yadav, Bhatnagar, and Singh (2012) share the same point of view that leadership is a main factor in contributing to the better performance of employees. Hence, in the rapidly changing environment of today’s business, adapting quickly to the changes will bring massive benefits to the organisations. In addition, due to the current highly competitive business environment and unpredictability of change, leadership has a relatively large impact on employees’ motivation and attitude in the workplace (Yadav et al., 2012). Sraha (2011) claims that choosing an appropriate leadership model will enable the organisations to have an immediate response to the changing business environment. Thus, it requires businesses to develop and improve effective leadership in the organisation in order to implement changes.

It is appropriate to say that change is necessary to drive the development of the organisation in order to shift the strategies to fit the needs of customers, satisfy the expectation of shareholders and adapt to social, political and global developments (Sraha, 2011). According to Sraha (2011), creating a shared vision, establishing a plan, having a clear strategy, and implementing suitable leadership styles will inspire and motivate employees to work effectively toward the organisational goals. Moreover, he also argues that without proper communication and the inclusion of employees in the decision making process, the organisation would not be able to accomplish the set goals. Therefore, in order to ensure high productivity and development in the organisation in times of change, it is imperative for the organisation to have effective leadership styles to seek competitive advantage and improve performance.

In the case of Lao PDR, leadership also plays a significant role in organisational performance due to the need to adapt competencies for entering into regional and global markets (Parameswaran, 2013). Gandossy, Tucker, and Verma (2006), assert that apparently one of the most appropriate leadership styles for an organisation in Lao PDR is called ‘systemic leadership’ which focuses on empowering subordinates to take their own responsibilities and make their own decisions. This approach helps the organisation to motivate and inspire employees to work effectively as they will feel confident to get the job done. However, apart
from the afore-mentioned leadership style, there are many approaches to leadership that can be used in the education sector in Lao PDR, and these are presented in the next section.

1.2. Problem description

Lao People’s Democratic Republic (LAO PDR) is in a period of dynamic change (United Nations, 2012). Since 1986, the country has implemented the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) to transform the economy from centrally planned to market oriented (Phannalangsi, 2011; Phimphanthavong, 2012). Moreover, since 2005 the Lao economic structure has been changed from a subsistence agriculture economy based on raw materials to a market-oriented economy based on processing. Lao PDR introduced the Seventh National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) (2011-2015) which consists of four dynamic objectives aimed to increase national economic growth and maintain the country’s stability and security. This includes mind-set, human resource development, mechanism regime, administrative rules, and poverty reduction by mobilizing resources and implementing special policies and constructing strategic basic infrastructure. The 7th NSEDp has made recent advances in social development and significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and the government has the aim of moving to developed country status from the ranks of the least developed countries by 2020 (National Assembly, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). Therefore, the government motivates businesses to develop their services and performance, especially in the construction, food processing and services sectors which are the key areas for boosting economic growth in the country (World Bank, 2014).

On 2 February 2013, Laos became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which aims to boost economic growth and increase the capability of trade between Laos and other countries (Parameswaran, 2013; World Trade Organisation, 2014). Being a member of WTO is positive since it opens the Laos economy to the global market (Kunze, 2013). This can be done by reducing customs tariffs and other trade barriers, and opening services markets. Moreover, WTO accession will provide more opportunities for Laos to improve trade and investment through increasing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country (Kyophilavong, Takamatsu, & Ko, 2010). As a result, the amount of FDI has increased already from US$187 million in 2003 to US$450 million in 2011 (Mukherjee, 2012). Despite the fact that WTO membership provides major benefits for the Laos’ economy, local businesses are still facing challenges in terms of strong competition from powerful foreign
investors. As Lao PDR is a developing country, it is believed by Kyophilavong et al. (2010) that the WTO accession might provide only minor benefits for the nation’s economy.

Currently, the Lao PDR is proposing to join the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, and this will provide various opportunities and challenges for the local businesses to improve and enhance their capabilities of trading in the global market (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008). This is because the AEC will merge ASEAN countries into a single and product based market that allows free movement of services, investment, capital and skilled labour with more than 600 million customers from ASEAN nations such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines (Doyle, 2012; Runckel, 2012). This means that while the Lao PDR is gaining more opportunities to export products to the ASEAN regions without any customs or tax fees, its economy also confronts threats. For instance, the government will lose revenue due to the reduction of import tariffs. Moreover, the quality of domestic products are claimed to be lower than overseas which will be the biggest challenge for the local companies (Runckel, 2012; Vientiane Times, 2013). In other words, the AEC will generate significant change that might have both positive opportunities and new challenges for the Lao PDR. Hence, in order to boost the preparedness of the Lao government and the private sector in regard to improving local businesses’ capabilities becoming a member of the AEC, the issues of ASEAN integration need to be addressed.

One of the main reasons for this is that the Lao PDR lack a skilled workforce, which have education and expertise in business management. In the meantime, many final year students are worried about their job security after Lao PDR becoming a member of the AEC as the quality of Lao PDR’s education is not as good as neighbouring countries. Due to the free flow of foreign labour, preparing for the country’s readiness to become an AEC member in 2015 is the priority task for both the Lao government and the private sector. This includes developing the quality of education and improving educational standards to meet the needs of the regional market. Hence, in order to ensure that graduates have more opportunities to get a job and enable them to compete with skilled labour from other ASEAN countries, the government is focusing on developing the education system such that it is ready for the upcoming challenges and opportunities AEC membership. The Lao government is seeking assistance from many organisations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in terms of providing funds and professional advice, especially in the education sector (Siharath, n.d).
This is because developing educational leadership at all levels is the fundamental element for improving educational, social and economic performance (Grogan, 2013).

In general, the education system in the Lao PDR consists of four levels, which are under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). This includes pre-primary school, primary school (grades 1-5), lower secondary school (grades 6-9), upper secondary school (grades 10-12) and tertiary education (Basic education quality and access in Lao PDR, 2014; Education system in Laos, 2012). Moreover, there are five Universities in Lao PDR: the National University of Laos (NUOL) - Vientiane Capital; Souphanouvong University – Luang Prabang province; Savannakhet University – Savannakhet province; Champasak University – Champasak province, and the University of Health Sciences – Vientiane Capital. The Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM) at the National University of Laos (NUOL) is the main higher educational institution, which puts emphasis on the training of quality human resources in the areas of economics and management. It is expected to build a skilled labour force in order to meet the demand for an educated workforce to strengthen the strategic planning for competition in the world market. However, lack of personal resources and the sort of schooling facilities and financial resources are the biggest obstacles for developing human resources and capacity building in the Laos’ education system (United Nations, 2012). The FEBM must address the urgent issues of those requirements, hence over the 19 years of establishing the faculty since 1995, there have been many changes that the organisation has undergone to adapt to the changing economic circumstances. According to Moman Basham (2012), it is critical for the higher education to develop its competence in terms of information and communication technologies in order to meet the demand for qualified educators who have enough knowledge and expertise in business.

During the reforms responding to each period of change, leadership is a highly crucial factor in helping the organisation overcome employee’s resistance. Moreover, finding an appropriate leadership style to deal with employees is also essential for the organisation to accomplish its goals (Sraha, 2011). This is because managers alone cannot make a change for the whole organisation; it needs the participation of every member to move the organisation from the current place into the new environment. Moreover, resistance to change is an unavoidable circumstance that leaders have to tackle. Therefore, it is necessary for the leaders at FEBM to fully understand and so be able to choose the most suitable leadership styles to
implement change in the organisation. This not only helps the organisation successfully improve its performance, but also increases the capability of teachers and lecturers to have more inspiration to share their knowledge and expertise with the students who will be the main factors in the country’s future development. Hence, this leads to the research question, namely “what are the leadership styles that are most suitable to motivate employees in times of change at Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM), National University of Laos (NUOL)?”.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the project

1.3.1. Research aim

Appropriate leadership styles in times of change are crucial in order for organisations, especially in the government sectors in Lao PDR, to overcome the difficult circumstances and make employees feel ambitious and willing to participate in implementing the changes. In addition, in order to be prepared to become a member of the AEC in 2015, the FEBM has developed and improved its organisational structure and curricula to produce the effective skilled workforces in business to fulfil the demands of the country’s markets. This appears to be the challenge for the leaders in FEBM namely - how to handle those changes in order to improve the productivity of the organisation. Therefore, the aim of this research is to “identify practical leadership styles of the leaders in FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change”

Based on the aim of this research project, the researcher emphasises the leaders’ perspectives about the leadership style they are using in the organisation in order to inspire employees when change is introduced. Hence, the employees’ point of view is not included in this study.

1.3.2. Research objectives

- To explore the understanding by leaders in FEBM of the term “leadership style”
- To investigate the leadership styles currently used in FEBM
- To determine the most appropriate leadership style/styles to improve performance of the FEBM workforce in times of change
- To determine the key capabilities leaders should have in order to influence employees to adapt to change
- To identify challenges that might become barriers for leaders to implement change
1.4. Research questions

According to the aim and objectives, the main research question of this research project is: **What should the practical leadership styles of the leaders in FEBM be to inspire employees in times of change?**

The following are the sub research questions:

A. What is the understanding of leaders about the role of leadership styles in an organisation?
B. Which particular model of leadership style is currently used to inspire people in times of change in the FEBM?
C. What capabilities should leaders in the FEBM have in order to inspire employees to adapt to change?
D. What are the challenges for the leaders to implement change in the FEBM?
E. What is the key leadership style that the leaders in the FEBM should have in order to inspire employees in times of change?

1.5. Hypotheses

There are three hypotheses regarding the aim and objectives of the research project namely:

H01 the leaders in the FEBM do not fully understand the term “leadership” in the organisation

H02 the leaders in the FEBM fully understand the term “leadership style” being used in the organisation

H03 a specific leadership style in the FEBM is appropriate to inspire employees in times of change

1.6. Data collection

This research project used semi-structured interviews as a research method. This is because this research project focused on the study of leadership styles being used to inspire employees to adapt to change which is not the common topic in Lao PDR, especially in the higher education sector. The semi-structured interview method helps the researcher gain rich-information and gives the researcher an opportunity to approach the participants in many different ways. Moreover, by using this method, further information and specific terms about
leadership styles can be explained to the participants who do not fully understand. As a result, this approach helps the researcher collects reliable data to create valid findings for the research. There are 12 samples in this study that are considered to represent a leader in the Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM), National University of Laos (NUOL).

1.7. Outline of thesis

This research project consists of six chapters.

Chapter One introduces the overall concept for, and overview of this study. This includes the background and problem description which demonstrate general information about the importance of leadership in the organisation, especially in times of change. The reasons why the researcher believes it important to study this issue are identified. Moreover, this chapter outlines the aims, objectives and research question of the thesis.

Chapter Two critically summarises the literature related to leadership styles, change management and motivation theories.

Chapter Three identifies the particular research methods used for this study. This includes research methodology, research paradigm, sample selection, pilot study, data collection and data analysis. An explanation of semi-structured interview is also provided as it is the sole method deployed for this research. Moreover, the validity of results and ethical issues are carefully explained.

Chapter Four provides the results for the data collected and the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the leaders in FEBM. This chapter identifies the themes from the answers of the participants. As different participants are likely to have different answers and perspectives, the researcher identified common themes in order to produce valid results for the project.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the research according to the objectives of the research project. Many aspects of the research findings are identified as a theme and a comparison is made with the relevant theories in order to find valid results for the research questions and objectives.
Chapter Six presents the conclusions and the results of the research findings. Recommendations and the strengths and weaknesses of this research project are also addressed here.

The next chapter reviews the literature associated with leadership styles, which influence employees to adapt to change in the organisation. An explanation of change management and resistance to change is also provided.
Chapter two: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

In chapter one the reasons why the researcher conducted this research project was introduced. It explained how important it was for the organisation to know and understand its leadership style in order to handle change in the workplace. Thus, it will provide more opportunities for leaders to inspire employees to adapt to change, especially in the government sector in the Lao PDR.

This chapter focuses on the literature associated with theories of leadership and motivation, which influence employees to adapt to change in the organisation. Eight different leadership styles are identified to provide a framework for the researching findings of this research project. Additionally, change management theories related to the research aims and objectives are also discussed. Finally, this chapter critically explores motivation theories to help leaders find the most appropriate ways to influence employees to implement change in the organisation.

2.2. Leadership overview

In the aggressively competitive environment, nowadays it is imperative for an organisation to have an effective leader to help the organisation run smoothly and efficiently. Historically, it is difficult to find a single perfect definition of leadership that describes the characteristics of an effective leader in the organisation (Chemers, 2014). Northouse (2013) says, “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). This is supported by Robbins and Judge (2014), who define leadership as the capabilities of an individual to influence a group in order to achieve a vision and accomplish set goals of an organisation. Silva (2014), however, argues that not all people in higher positions are considered as leaders all the time. This means that some people are recognised as the leaders for some groups of people and in some circumstances.

According to Northouse (2013), there are two common forms of leadership: assigned and emergent leadership. Assigned leadership refers to a leader who is promoted or has a formal title in the organisation. In contrast, emergent leadership refers to an individual who is able to influence other members in a group or community without a formal title in the organisation.
In other words, an emergent leader is not derived from their formal positions, but from the way other members respond to them (Silva, 2014).

Lynham and Chermack (2006) highlight that leadership plays a significant role in helping the organisation influence individuals' attitude toward the planned change. The study of Shams-Ur-Rehman, Shareef, Mahmood, and Ishaque (2012, p. 617) conclude that “leadership is always a fascinating subject in any current job. In fact, it is the most important aspect of human behaviour”. Furthermore, Bennis and Nanus add that there are four strategies of effective leaders to lead an organisation toward the set goals (as cited in Chemers, 2014). Firstly, effective leaders must have a clear vision about what they want to achieve for the organisation (Bush, 2011). Northouse (2013) elaborates on this point, starting that the vision has to be simple, understandable, beneficial and energy creating. Secondly, communicating the vision is very important in motivating and inspiring employees to fully understand organisational strategies. Thus, when the organisation has communicated a clear vision, employees at every level will be able to adapt and implement the tasks effectively and efficiently. Thirdly, the leaders have to show their commitment and make subordinates trust in, and be confident in following that vision (Khan, Ghazali, & Isha, 2014). Related to this, providing employees with the autonomy to make their own decisions will create high commitment to work (Humphrey, 2014). Hence, creating trust is essential for leaders to influence followers to accomplish the vision and achieve organisational goals. Fourthly, it is imperative for the leaders to utilise their capabilities, personal intelligence, energy and commitment to bring about success for the organisations.

According to Filan and Seagren (2003), the role of academic leaders is a crucial element in energising employees’ motivation through communicating organisational vision and mission in order to achieve the college or university’s goals (as cited in Sackdanouvong, 2013). Leadership in the process of change is perceived to be a crucial element for successful change (Daft & Lane, 2015). Saengaloun (2012) supports this idea and added that the academic leader has to act as a manager and leader as the same time to encourage high quality of performance. This includes planning, organising, managing and evaluating as well as leading. Therefore, it is important for leaders to have professional knowledge, skills and particular leadership style in order to successfully bring about the change in an organisation (Humphrey, 2014).
In terms of higher education sectors, especially in developing countries, it is even more important to have suitable leadership styles to improve the education quality in a changing environment (Al-Husseini, Elbeltagi, & Dosa, 2013). This is because leadership style is the main element for the leaders to motivate and influence people to engage with innovations in the workplace. This is supported by the research of Faghihi (2012) who affirmed that employing a proper leadership style not only helps the organisation improve employees’ performance, but also has a significant impact on promoting employees’ motivation. Therefore, the concept of leadership styles has gained more attention recently, because many organisations believe that leadership is the crucial element to success (Lussier & Achua, 2010; Northouse, 2013). According to Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009), leaders using appropriate styles would be able to encourage employees to have more inspiration to develop their personal skills and strengthen potential growth in order to help them to be fully successful in the organisation. Faghihi (2012) and Millar (2010) conclude that there are many different types of leadership such as autocratic, bureaucratic, laissez-faire, charismatic, democratic, participative, situational, transactional and transformational leadership. However, Rad and Yarnohanadian (2006) criticise this approach since no permanent leadership style can apply to all situations in the organisation because different situations need different leadership approaches to accomplish the tasks (as cited in Faghihi, 2012). Hence, leaders should know and understand when to exhibit a particular leadership style in order to gain the most effective outcomes (Faghihi, 2012; Harris, 2014).

Bryman (2007) states that effective academic leaders should act as role models for their subordinates. This aspect is very important in the higher education sector because leaders have to know and understand the specific disciplinary field properly in order to help academic staff improve their professional skills effectively. Educational leaders need to “walk the talk” to build and maintain the trust of their subordinates (Hayes, 2014; Millar, 2010). This requires a leader to be a role model to cultivate trustworthiness in a complex change environment. In order to do this, leaders should have a clear picture of what they want to drive the organisation toward the future, and know their own capabilities and how they will direct all members to achieve the organisational goals (Ali, 2012).

Based on the study by Millar (2010), implementing change in an educational organisation is difficult and complex as its very nature is to promote teacher’s performance and increase student outcomes. Thus, it needs leaders who can adapt and exercise varieties of leadership
styles appropriate to the circumstances in the organisations. According to the study by Moos (2000) on global and national perspectives on leadership, effective leaders in the educational sector need to have capabilities to communicate a clear direction or vision to all members. Additionally, motivation skill is another significant role to ensure successful change for the organisation. Millar (2010) also argues that changes in the organisations are related to transforming individuals’ beliefs, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Therefore, utilising appropriate leadership approaches will effectively help the organisations overcome the complexity of change.

2.3. Trait theory of leadership

Northouse (2013) states that deploying the leadership trait approach involves identifying the personal qualities and main characteristics of effective leaders, which distinguish leaders from followers. He concludes that there are five major leadership traits: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability. These are discussed in more detail below:

- Intelligence or intellectual ability is one of the most important traits for leaders. Effective leaders tend to have intellectual abilities such as strong verbal ability, perceptual ability and are able to think critically.

- Self-confidence is also an important trait of a good leader. This is because self-confidence refers to the competencies and skills of leaders to understand and believe in individual capabilities. Self-confidence includes the qualities of self-esteem and self-assurance. Since leadership aims to influence and motivate people toward the set goals, self-confidence helps leaders ensure that the ways they lead and persuade followers are appropriate and suitable for the purpose of an organisation.

- Determination: leaders with determination have a clear mission and vision in order to accomplish the set goals. Determination means having the capabilities to diminish the obstacles and give advice to subordinates when needed. Moreover, the characteristics of leaders with determination include initiative, persistence, dominance, and drive.

- Integrity: integrity is one of the basic characteristics of effective leaders who are loyal, dependable and not deceptive. Leaders with integrity are able to motivate and convince subordinates to perform better because employees believe and trust in what the leaders do.
- Sociability: leaders with great social skills play a significant role in creating good relationships among subordinates. Social leaders place a high value on people’s needs and has concern for the well-being of their subordinates (Humphrey, 2014).

According to Thammavong (2007), not all leaders possess all of the traits mentioned above. Many studies about leadership traits are unable to conclude whether each trait is necessary for the effectiveness of the organisation. However, in the education sector leaders are required to have some of the leadership traits in order to be able to develop high quality human resources necessary for society.

2.4. Leadership and management

Cuban (1988) argues that the definition and concept of leadership and that of management always overlap (as cited in Bush, 2008). He further explains that leadership is associated with positive change, while management is considered as a maintaining activity. Management is a process of maintaining and utilising internal resources for the achievement of organisational goals (Rao & Kumar, 2010). This can be done through planning, organising, directing, budgeting, problem solving and controlling all resources and operations in order to drive the organisation to accomplish the desired goals and objectives. On the other hand, leadership is a means of creating change in the organisation which includes influencing, monitoring, communicating, and inspiring employees toward the common goals (Chemers, 2014). This argument is well supported by Tichy and Devanna (1986) and Kotter (1990) who argue that “management is concerned with maintaining the existing organisation, whereas leadership is concerned with change (as cited in Hayes, 2014, p167).

Moreover, leaders play a very significant role in the organisation in terms of improving its performance and assisting people to achieve the common goals. Hence, Bennis and Nanus (1985) distinguish managers and leaders as so: “managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right things” (as cited in Northouse, 2013, p. 11). However, the notion of both leadership and management processes are to influence and support people to achieve an effective outcome (DiMattia, 2013). Therefore, both managers and leaders are the fundamental elements driving the business toward its prosperity and success. Although many empirical researchers attempt to distinguish the term leadership and management, Bryman (2007) points out that “the term is being used in ways that did not distinguish them in a precise or consistent way” (p. 694).
In the environment of change, leadership is a crucial element for success of the organisation. Hayes (2014) points out that during the change process, it is essential for leaders to communicate the important and urgent need for change to all members in the organisation. He further explains that even if people know and understand the advantageous outcomes of change for the organisation, some might still be concerned and so resist participating in the change process, particularly because they may fear to lose, or lack of control over the change. This uncertainty is a major issue for goal achievement (Jones & Recardo, 2013). Based on the view of Graetz, Rimmer, Smith, and Lawrence (2011), “leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment” (p. 145). Therefore, Hayes (2014) concludes that in times of change both managers and leaders play a significant role in inspiring and motivating employees to support the change.

Based on the concept of leadership presented above, it assists the researcher to identify the role of leadership style and understand the core capabilities for leaders to deal with change in an organisation. This refers to the research sub-questions A and C for this research project and also sheds light on the main research question.

### 2.5. Transformational leadership

Mir and Abbasi (2012) describe how transformational leadership refers to the leadership style in which leaders inspire and motivate subordinates to work in an environment of trust and empowerment. Robbins and Judge (2014) assert “Transformational leaders inspire followers to transcend their self-interests for the good of the organisation and can have an extraordinary effect on their followers” (p. 188). Boonstra (2013) emphasises that transformational leaders have capabilities for trusting others and building trust. Hence, leaders who practice transformational leadership are willing to listen to others and place high value upon all members (Ali, 2012).

In terms of the government sector, the study of Voon, Lo, Ngui, and Ayob (2011) reveal that transformational leadership is significant for managing government organisations to improve employees’ satisfaction. They also claim that transformational leaders make the followers believe that they are one of the significant elements in the success of the company. As suggested in the work of Bodla and Nawaz (2010), the transformational leadership style is
often recognised as involving a charismatic leader who motivates employees by stimulating their intellectual competencies, inspiring them, and providing guidance when it is required in order to lead them to the expected goals. Northouse (2013) and Didin, Basri, Rusdi, and Samad (2014) explain that transformational leadership is a process of change which focuses on emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals. Moreover, Betroci (2009) concurs, noting that transformational leaders influence subordinates by strengthening and giving them knowledge, tools, and resources in order to inspire them to accomplish the set goals and improve individual performance (as cited in Al-Husseini et al., 2013). Transformational leadership is considered to be the best leadership style due to it containing all characteristics of exceptional leaders (Mir & Abbasi, 2012). Moreover, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) point out that a transformational leadership style has a significant impact on increasing employees’ satisfaction and productivities. Additionally, transformational leadership is also considered as the fundamental approach to influence and drive change in the educational organisation because it allows leaders to share the organisational values and goals with all members in order to develop employees performance (Didin et al., 2014; Mir & Abbasi, 2012). Hence, the study of Sao, Taylor, Hill, Zhang, Tesluk and Lorinkova (2012), on how employees react to change conclude that transformational leadership is a significant leadership style in terms of increasing commitment and reducing the level of resistance to change in the organisation (as cited in Humphrey, 2014).

2.6. Transactional leadership

Groves and LaRocca (2011) assert that, “transactional leaders rely on power, rewards, and sanctions of their official position to influence followers to demonstrate the requisite performance” (as cited in Marion & Gonzales, 2014, p. 159). In other words, transactional leaders are able to satisfy subordinates by rewarding and praising those with good performance (Voon et al., 2011). As Northouse (2013) explains, transactional leaders influence subordinates by providing contingent rewards which are based on the expectation of leaders to gain better performance. With this kind of leadership, the leaders usually have their own standards for achievement and they will provide a reward in exchange for employees accomplishing better performance (Voon et al., 2011). In addition, Voon et al. (2011) add that leaders with transactional leadership will monitor subordinates and intervene in order to ensure that all jobs are done and performed better to meet the set standard. In contrast to transformational leaders, transactional leaders focus on getting work done rather than considering the preferences of subordinates (Winkler, 2010).
Charismatic leadership refers to a leader who shows the ability to trust and have concern for others. Charismatic leaders motivate people by attracting their attention and increasing their level of ambition (Pinnow, 2011). Rowe and Guerrero (2013) emphasise that charismatic leaders lead subordinates through their behaviours and attitudes. In addition, Northouse (2013) describes how charismatic leaders tend to have good communication skills, lots of self-confidence and the ability to inspire higher performance from subordinates. Furthermore, charismatic leaders are able to envision the future and have the capability to lead the followers toward that vision (Giffin & Fleet, 2014). Giffin and Fleet (2014) also conclude that charismatic leaders are willing to help subordinates develop their performance by energising and emphasising employees’ confidence in order to accomplish the goals in the workplace. In addition, Goetsch and Davis (2013) point out that charismatic leadership occurs when leaders utilise their talents, skills and personalities to influence the employees. Based on the study by Vlachos, Panagopoulos, and Rapp (2013), charismatic leadership has a major impact on employees’ job satisfaction and improves working performance as the charismatic leaders influence followers by focusing on communicating the vision throughout in the organisation.

Robbins and Judge (2014) believe that individuals are born with traits that make them charismatic. They suggest that charismatic leaders are likely to be extroverted, self-confident and achievement-oriented. Charismatic leaders tend to have a clear vision and be able to communicate the vision statement to all members in an organisation to articulate an overarching goal. In contrast, many argue that charismatic leadership can be trained and learnt (Chemers, 2014).

Charismatic leaders influence followers through words and actions, by attempting to build a good example for the followers to follow and imitate (Gill, 2011). Moreover, in order to enhance performance, charismatic leaders also promote cooperation and provide mature support at work to encourage employees to be more motivated (Robbins & Judge, 2014).

Generally, charismatic leadership seems to have a close similarity with transformational leadership in terms of characteristics and concepts. However, there are some differentiations between the two styles of leadership, which have been studied by many scholars. Robins, Judge, Odendaal, and Roodt (2009), revealed that charismatic leadership is a part of
transformational leadership. This is because many researchers argue that the term transformational leadership is broader than charismatic leadership in a sense of meaning and characteristics. Moreover, transformational leaders have a major distinction from charismatic leaders in the way they motivate and inspire followers in the organisation. This type of leadership not only inspires employees to believe in the organisational vision, but also helps followers believe in themselves and improve their capabilities to become the new leaders in the near future (Humphrey, 2014; Rowe & Guerrero, 2013). Du Plessis and Frederick (2010) concludes that, transformational leaders encourage people to work beyond expectations in order to accomplish the tasks, whilst, charismatic leaders just get the people to follow them so the organisation might collapse when the leader is not being there.

2.8. Authentic leadership

Northouse (2013) argues that there is no perfect definition to encapsulate the characteristics and functions of authentic leadership. He points out that authentic leadership can be defined in terms of intrapersonal, interpersonal and developmental perspectives. This suggests that authentic leadership refers to the leader’s self-knowledge, self-regulation and self-concept deriving from life experiences which could not be copied by others (Humphrey, 2014). Moreover, an authentic leader is able to develop experience, knowledge and skills over a lifetime (Gatling & Harrah, 2014). Leaders with an authentic leadership style fully understand and know the potential capabilities of the organisation (Boonstra, 2013). Hence, as authentic leaders know exactly what is happening both inside and outside the organisation they will be able to control and tackle problems effectively.

Coetsee and Flood (2013) explain that an authentic leader is a true leader who knows and understands their own capabilities, strengths and weaknesses. Authentic leaders have a clear vision and mission to motivate and lead followers to accomplish set goals. Authentic leaders motivate employees by giving examples and leading from the heart (George, 2010). This means that authentic leaders have capabilities to motivate employees through their passion for work, empathy and compassion for the followers in order to enhance trust and relationships within the organisation. Leaders with an authentic approach are not afraid to discuss with employees emotional and sensitive circumstances. As a result, employees are able to access and approach leaders easily (Rowe & Guerrero, 2013).
In addition, Goetsch and Davis (2013) suggest that self-consciousness is the key characteristic of authentic leaders which shows the ability of leaders to consider the high sense of moral right and wrong, honesty and integrity. Moreover, authentic leaders are considered to be ethical leaders who emphasise a high level of transparency and positivity standards (Wilde, 2013). Their openness will support the working environment and increase employees’ performance.

2.9. Servant leadership

Greenleaf (1970) defines servant leadership as a leader who provides subordinates with a chance to develop their talent and assists followers to achieve corporate goals (as cited in Trompenaars & Voerman, 2009). In order to fulfil the needs of people in the organisation, effective leaders help followers develop their capabilities, nurture them and support them to enhance their performance (Northouse, 2013; Vinod & Sudhakar, 2011). Northouse (2013) indicates that servant leaders emphasise employees’ satisfaction as a first priority. The servant leader empowers employees and assists them to improve and develop their knowledge and skills in order to increase employees’ performance (Rowe & Guerrero, 2013). Moreover, Rowe and Guerrero (2013) also assert that a servant leader is a person who is open-minded and willing to listen to his/her subordinates, so that they will understand the potential and the weaknesses of the employees. Therefore, employing a servant leadership style will ensure a strong relationship between leader and subordinates as well as strengthening the quality of an organisation (Dean, 2014).

Since servant leaders emphasise serving the needs of others, their main characteristics consist of listening, empathising, practising stewardship, persuading, and actively developing followers’ potential (Robbins & Judge, 2014). In addition, Northouse (2013) expands on this by highlighting ten key characteristics of servant leader: “listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment, and building community” (p. 221). Therefore, servant leadership is recognised as “a leadership style that is beneficial to organisations by awakening, engaging, and developing employees, as well as beneficial to followers or employees by engaging people as whole individuals with heart, mind and spirit” (as cited in Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, p. 5). Thus, leaders who practise a servant leadership style lead the organisation by focusing on improving organisational performance as well as maintaining employees’ satisfaction (Humphrey, 2014).
2.10. Leadership styles

1) Autocratic leadership

“An autocratic leader is the one who tends to centralise authority and derive power from position, control of rewards and coercion” (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009, p. 42). This is supported by Adeniyi (2010) who concludes that autocratic leaders lead the followers by directing and controlling the whole process in the organisation. This approach is also called “directional leadership” because leaders take full responsibility for making decisions and do not allow followers to be involved in the decision making process. In other words, coercive power is used in this approach in order to achieve the common goals. Northouse (2013) states, “coercion involves the use of force to effect change” (p. 11). Leaders who employ coercive power are concerned about their own interest and goals; in contrast, they overlook and ignore employees’ wants and needs. In addition, an autocratic leader is task-oriented; one who prioritises improving performance over employee satisfaction (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Autocratic leadership affects employees’ performance and creates an atmosphere of fear (Pride, Hughes, & Kapoor, 2013). This is because autocratic leaders are unwilling to be open to, and accept the ideas from their subordinates, especially from those in the lower levels. Autocratic leaders dislike working with subordinates with expertise, skill and knowledge. As a result, this type of leader will decrease motivation and discourage employees in the workplace, which leads to diminished work performance in the organisation. Gill (2011) concludes that leaders who practice autocratic leadership would motivate followers only in the short-term to accomplish specific tasks. Hence, this leadership style is not suitable for the tasks which need high quality work because employees might complete the tasks in response to orders from managers and not be concerned about the quality of the performance.

2) Democratic or participative leadership

Unlike autocratic leadership, democratic leadership is the leadership style that focuses on people’s needs rather than the outcomes. According to Pride et al. (2013), a democratic leader refers to “one who holds final responsibility, but also delegates authority to others, who helps to determine work assignment; communication is active upward and downward” (p. 171). The democratic leadership is also called consensus leadership. Leaders who practice this style of leadership consider the followers as the important element of success in the organisation. Democratic leaders are willing to listen to others’ ideas and allow subordinates to speak out.
Employees at every level have an equal chance to share their ideas and comments, and are involved in the decision-making process (Humphrey, 2014). Leaders adopting this style have clear vision and mission in order to motivate employees to accomplish the goals. Democratic leaders consider that communication among leaders and followers is a significant tool to help all members in the organisation interacts with each other. This will improve the working environment and increase employees’ performance.

Moreover, democratic leaders allow followers who have expertise, knowledge and skills to take responsibility for a particular task. Democratic leaders play a role to guide and give advice to subordinates and take all the ideas from subordinates into consideration before making a final decision that is based on the agreement and majority views of the team members (Boonyachai, 2011). Democratic leaders believe that providing authority to subordinates will motivate them to improve their capabilities in order to complete the given assignments. Northouse (2013) shares this view and adds that the democratic approach helps the leaders increase the commitment of subordinates. This is because employees may feel involved in the decision-making process and are recognised as the important elements in the organisation.

However, Pride et al. (2013) argue that practicing a democratic leadership style is time consuming. This is because there are many people involved in the decision-making process and it takes time for each member to express their ideas and comments to all members. Pride et al. (2013) claim that the democratic leadership style is not the best choice in an emergency. In addition, Goetsch and Davis (2013) also criticise the style insofar as democratic leaders tend to choose the popular decision rather than the best decision. This means that the majority agreement from all members might not be the most appropriate solution for the organisation. Therefore, executing this type of leadership may ultimately lead to the failure of the organisation. Moreover, Crisp and Turner (2009) conclude that democratic leadership requires high expertise amongst employees to make good decisions and complete the assigned tasks. Hence, democratic/participative leadership style may not work well for tasks in a highly structured environment with unskilled workers (Humphrey, 2014).

3) **Laissez-faire leadership**

According to Wood (2014), *laissez-faire* is a French phrase which means “do nothing”. Laissez-faire leaders dislike providing guidance or any direction to their subordinates. Laissez-faire leadership is considered as a non-leadership approach because leaders abdicate
leaders fail to develop employees’ capabilities (Chaudhry & Javed, 2013; Northouse, 2013). Leaders in this style have no real authority because they allow members to develop and take responsibility for decision-making. Laissez-faire leaders avoid making a final decision and delay responding to urgent situations (Sosik & Jung, 2010). Laissez-faire leaders could develop relationships between leaders and followers effectively. This is because followers are allowed to make their own decisions with minimal advice, guidance and support from the leaders (Khan, Ramzan, & Ahmed, 2011). In other words, leaders do not involve themselves or interfere in the decision-making process and instead let the subordinates do the work in their own ways. Leaders employing a laissez-faire leadership style need to have a full range of expertise and skills amongst the employees to ensure all the assigned works are achieved otherwise it ultimately leads to the failure of the organisation (Ricketts & Ricketts, 2013). Based on the research study by Khan et al. (2011), the laissez-faire leadership style bears no relationship to what is needed to motivate and convince employees in both public and private higher education institutions. Therefore, before employing the laissez-faire leadership style, leaders should carefully consider whether or not it an appropriate approach to employ to motivate employees in times of change.

2.11. Appropriate styles for educational sector

In an educational sector where leadership is a key element in the effectiveness of the school, especially in times of change, many scholars attempted to identify the most suitable leadership style to motivate employees to adapt to change and minimise a level of people’s resistance in organisation. Based on the key leadership styles above, it can be clearly seen that different approaches have their own advantages to handle change in different circumstances. This is well supported by Harris (2014) who asserts that different people have different styles of leadership and it depends on the situations and employees’ behaviours. According to the study by Tombaugh (2005), combination leadership style is the best way to implement change in an organisation as leaders can adapt their leadership approach to inspire and motivate employees in different situations flexibly. Moreover, Carnall and By (2014) confirm that the most appropriate approach to achieve change is to consider specific leadership styles for a particular circumstance in order to encourage employees to adapt to change. The factors related to changing leadership styles include organisational structure, objectives and goals, team and individual knowledge and skills, and satisfying employees at different levels. In education, “high quality of educational leadership at all levels is very important, and is fundamental for improving educational, social and education outcomes.”
(Kittiphanh, 2011, p. 1). However, there is still limited research on educational leadership in the Lao PDR. Consequently, this research project will be a useful guideline for leaders in the education sector to understand more about the importance of leadership styles in the organisation.

**Figure 1: Applicable leadership styles in the higher education sectors in the Lao PDR**

Source: Developed by the author based on this study (2015)

Figure 1: portrays a summary of appropriate leadership styles applicable to education in the Lao PDR based on the literature reviews above. These styles are transformational leadership, transactional leadership, charismatic leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, autocratic leadership, democratic/participative leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. These leadership styles are selected based on circumstances in the organisation in order to convince and motivate employees to adapt to change.

Therefore, based on the characteristics of leadership and leadership styles discussed above, it refers to research sub-question A of this research project and supports the main research question.
2.12. Change management

An effective strategy is one of the key factors in driving an organisation toward success. Identifying a suitable change approach is also important to gain competitive advantage for the organisation (Campbell, 2014). Different schools of thought identify the importance of organisational change in different ways. Some argue that organisational change is the process of improving and developing an organisation to become a successful and sustainable business. Others claim that organisational change will give the organisation a competitive advantage in the contemporary, highly competitive environment. Furthermore, some say that organisational change is vital for the very survival of an organisation. According to Campbell (2014), there are many management tools and methods for change which depend on the situation of each organisation. This means that what works for one organisation might not work for others. Darnell (2013) concludes that change theories are based on seven primary principles: senders and receivers, resistance and comfort, authority for change, value systems, incremental versus radical changes, the right answer is not enough and change is a process.

**Figure 2: principles of change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senders and receivers</td>
<td>The change needs to be communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance and comfort</td>
<td>Employees will either fight or accept the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority for change</td>
<td>The person dealing with the change must have the authority within the company to make the change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value systems</td>
<td>Will the change match the values of the employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental versus radical changes</td>
<td>Small steps or one big change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right answer is not enough</td>
<td>It takes more than just a good solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is a process</td>
<td>Time is a component to contend with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted by the researcher from Darnell (2013, p. 2)
With reference to Figure 2, firstly, ‘senders and receivers’ mean the change needs to be communicated among employees in an organisation. Campbell (2014) asserts that communicating a clear direction through a proper channel is a crucial element for successful change in the organisation. It allows people to have a clear goal in mind and know what direction they are heading. Secondly, ‘resistance and comfort’ refer to the behaviours of people in the organisation who would either be against or accept the change because each individual will resist the change differently based on their beliefs and self-interest. As Jones and Recardo (2013) argue, some people might resist the change due to mis-diagnosing the expected outcomes of the change. In contrast, some may find the change as an opportunity to develop themselves and improve their capabilities at work (Hayes, 2014). Thirdly, ‘authority for change’ plays a significant role in implementing change in an organisation successfully. This is because in times of change, visible and executive sponsorships are crucial for motivating and convincing employees to adapt to change effectively. Fourthly, the ‘values of systems’ of the employees should be considered as a primary factor to consider before implementing change. This can be done by supporting employees to take responsibility for their tasks and make them feel involved in the process of change in the organisation. Furthermore, the time needed for implementing change depends on the size and type of the change in each organisation; this relates to the fifth principle ‘incremental versus radical change’. Hence, the change management process should be flexible and suitable for each situation of change. Fifthly, ‘the right answer is not enough’ means that there is no one perfect solution for the organisation to deal with resistance, one might work with some employees but not with others. Thus, in order to avoid resistance to change, change leaders should consider whether the solution designed is appropriate to employ in the organisation or not. Sixthly, it must be recognised that ‘change is a process’ so time is needed for implementing change in order to ensure that all employees are able to participate in the change process effectively.

Organisational change refers to a set of different actions that results in shifting directions and processes that affect the way in which organisations work (Darnell, 2013). This is supported by Fritzenschaft (2014) who concludes that a change management process relates to the activities that help employees get ready, be willing and accept the change that occurs in the organisation. The organisations’ requirement to change derives from the level of dissatisfaction with an old structure or the current situation of organisational management being not effective for business growth. To handle the changes, it is crucial for the
organisation to have a clear plan, mission, vision and goals that is understandable and communicable among all levels of employees.

Currently, change management becomes the main responsibility for most managers who must envisage adaptation to a foreseeable and unforeseeable change in future (Pinnow, 2011). This is because without effective management of change and a lack of leadership skills, a leader often fails to implement a successful change in an organisation (Robbins & Judge, 2014). Therefore, in times of change, an organisation needs to have an individual or group of people – known as ‘change agent’ - who are able to motivate and influence other individuals in the organisation to accomplish a common goal (Mehta, 2009). According to Lunenburg (2010), a change agent is “anyone who has the skill and power to stimulate, facilitate and coordinate the change effort” (p. 1). Ven and Sun (2011) and Waddell, Creed, Cummings, and Worley (2014) explain that a change agent is considered to be Organisational Development (OD) practitioners who are the main factor in improving performance and helping to implement a planned change in the organisation. The OD practitioners are referred to as internal and external consultants in terms of their abilities for diagnosing problems, improving solutions and putting the change process into practice. Additionally, the key roles of the OD practitioners are assisting followers to develop a change process in an organisation and evaluating the outcomes of implementation (Cameron & Green, 2012; Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010).

It is obvious that employees interpret change as uncertainty and represent a situation of ambiguity in that their positions and jobs might be affected negatively. This is because when a change is introduced most people are not comfortable in unknown territory, based on many number of reasons, such as fear of the unknown, fear of the known, loss of stability and security, loss of identity, and loss of relationships (Jones & Recardo, 2013). Based on Carnall and By (2014), implementing change is difficult and a challenge for all organisations as it is directly related to human behaviours. Thus, it is imperative for leaders to understand the nature of their subordinates in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Finch (2012) shares this view and points out that any change introduced within an organisation will affect employees’ behaviours as it brings about uncertainty and an environment of fear. Hence, to implement change effectively, change managers must be able to deal with resistance by creating confidence and trust in the workplace so as to persuade employees to move to a better future for the organisation (Jones & Recardo, 2013). Moreover, change managers need to provide
support for people to embrace change and create a new environment, which meets the needs of individuals.

2.12.1. Resistance to change

Spector (2010) asserts that the need for change in educational organisations is derived from external forces, especially in the government sector. In other words, in a period of dynamic change, the education sector is required to increase its abilities to produce a high quality of human resources to fulfil the needs of society. Even though different views of organisations recognise change management in different names, such as ‘strategic business configuration’, ‘business transformation’, or ‘organisational development’, change management aims to promote and improve the organisation performance (Faghihi, 2012). Therefore, it is important to encourage every member in the organisation to think, behave, work and perform differently from what they have done in order to overcome any detrimental impact of external and internal forces (Yılmaz & Kılıçoğlu, 2013).

Resistance to change is a critical element to consider for success when implementing change in an organisation (Fritzenschaft, 2014). In addition, conflicts, disagreements and resistance are often the consequences of a change process that might have a negative impact on an organisation’s performance (Hayes, 2014). However, Spector (2010) argues that naturally employees do not resist change itself; they resist the way that leaders implement the change and the outcomes of the change. Therefore, leaders need to know and understand the reasons behind the resistance of employees in order to find the suitable solutions to handle the problem (Hayes, 2014).

Spector (2010) asserts that resistance to change occurs when employees do not accept reasons and requirements for change. The research literature on resistance concludes that people resist change for many reasons, such as misunderstanding the initiative purpose of change, a lack of information and an improper change management system (Graetz et al., 2011). Even though most business leaders and organisational professors recognise the importance of change in their organisations, understanding how to implement change management is still an issue (Jones & Recardo, 2013). The individuals tend to resist change due to the uncertainty of the consequences of the change process and this influences employees’ beliefs and attitudes toward change (Shah & Shah, 2010).
Robbins and Judge (2014) argue that resistance to change can be positive for an organisation if the reasons and requirements for change are fully discussed among leaders and employees. This will provide a change agent with opportunities to explain and clarify the change effort, so that he/she will encourage and inspire people to be willing to implement change. Moreover, Entrekin and Scott-Ladd (2014) share the same point of view and assert that being able to identify and understand employees’ needs before implementing the change process will provide leaders with an opportunity to prevent the resistance to change in the organisation. Therefore, discussion and communication are the most effective ways to help leaders identify the preferences of other members in an organisation in order to modify the change to consider the response of individuals (Doppelt, 2010).

2.12.2. Lewin’s change model

During a period of change in an organisation, resistance to change is an unavoidable phenomenon that a leader must be prepared for to tackle it successfully. Based on Lewin’s (1947) change model, it is believed that when the change is introduced people prefer to stay in their own comfort zones rather than move to the new environment. Hence, in order to handle the resistance and help employees adapt to change, the Lewin’s change (1947) model (see Figure 3.) consists of three stages of change: unfreezing, freezing and refreezing (Waddell et al., 2014).

**Figure 3: Lewin’s three-step model**

Unfreeze

Take action
Make changes
Involve people

Move

Examine status quo
Increase driving forces for change
Decrease resisting forces against change

Make change permanent
Establish new way of things
Reward desired outcomes

Refreeze

Source: Cameron and Green (2012, p. 122)
Unfreezing involves motivating people to confront the change process and to be ready to change (Burke, 2014). According to Entrekin and Scott-Ladd (2014), the unfreezing stage is about eliminating and reducing obstacles and barriers which might cause resistance and conflict in the organisation. Unfreezing is the process of changing the attitudes and behaviour of employees and the working environment (Spector, 2010). This stage probably is the hardest and the most challenging part for the leaders to shift from the current situation into the new desired workplace environment with the agreement of all members. In order to do that, the benefits of change must be addressed to convince and motivate employees (Connelly, 2014). Hayes (2014), in contrast, argues that identifying the dissatisfying outcomes of the current state would be one of the most effective approaches to motivate and inspire employees to participate in the change process. Hence, revealing the need for change will help to energise and motivate employees in all levels to participate in the change process. Moreover, in this stage leaders or change agents’ roles are very important in building the strong commitment of all members to move forward the set goals (Cameron & Green, 2012).

Moving (Freezing) is the stage of implementing the change in an organisation. Communication and time are the fundamental elements for the organisation to be successful in the transition period. Even though people are educated in and communicated with about the changes, it might take time for them to understand and accept the unfamiliar structure and process (Entrekin & Scott-Ladd, 2014). Hence, at this stage assistance is needed to ensure that all members are supported by training or coaching (Thompson, 2014). To be successful in this stage, the clear vision of leaders is the most important factor, because it will help leaders identify, plan and implement the appropriate strategies. This is supported by Burke (2014), who asserts that in the moving or changing stage of organisational change, all members in the organisation need to understand the planned change and see things in different ways in order to accomplish organisational goals.

Refreezing occurs when the transition change stage is reached and people are confident enough to implement the change. Entrekin and Scott-Ladd (2014) point out that the aim of refreezing is “to re-stabilise the organisation by cementing the new pattern of behaviours, relationships and culture” (p. 78). The refreezing stage will reinforce the change process from the former stage to be the new norm in an organisation (Waddell et al., 2014). Therefore, refreezing the change is very significant.
for the outcome of an organisation because if refreezing is not completed or the change is not implemented properly then change will be ineffective (Burke, 2014).

2.12.3. Kotter’s 8-step change model

The 8-step change model is based on the theory of John Kotter (1996) and is underpinned by the view that the process of change is likely related to the urgent needs for change in the organisation (Northouse, 2013). Kotter (1996) found that communicating the urgency for change to employees will increase the need for change in the organisations. Kotter’s 8-step change model is illustrated by Figure 4. and is elaborated below:

**Figure 4: Cycle of change**

- Increase the urgency for change
- Anchor the changes in corporate culture
- Build on the change
- Create short-term wins
- Remove obstacle
- Build a team dedicated to change
- Create a vision for change
- Communicate the vision
- Anchor the changes in corporate culture

Source: Cameron and Green (2012, p. 127)

1) **Increase the urgency for change:** Kotter (1996) suggests that creating a sense of urgency for change by frequently talking about the importance of developing the organisation with employees will encourage a perception that change is needed (Erskine, 2013). This is the very first stage for leaders to pay more attention to convincing people to move from their comfort zone to the new environment. Cameron and Green (2012) share this view and suggest that discussing the benefits of change which are expected to be obtained in the future will also motivate employees to adapt
to change. Creating a sense of urgency is the most essential factor for motivating people to know and understand the need for change in the organisation (Fritzenschaft, 2013). In addition, Erskine (2013) points out that to communicate the reasons for, and the purposes of change to employees, at all levels, is crucial to transform the change process. The organisation also should explain the consequences of not changing and the impact on the organisation and members if they cannot make the change happen so that it would increase the realisation of the need for change and encourage commitment to that change (Graetz et al., 2011).

2) **Build a team dedicated to change**: After increasing the sense of urgency for change, determining authority and boundaries for responding to the change are important to making a change happen (Erskine, 2013). This includes allocating people who have expertise knowledge and skills to accomplish the organisational goals. The team members play a significant role in promoting a change initiative. To do this, the key change-related roles namely change agent and sponsor need to be identified (Fritzenschaft, 2013). In addition, Cameron and Green (2012) propose that assembling a powerful guiding coalition will ensure the success of the change project.

3) **Create a vision for change**: Kotter (1996) believes that having a clear vision helps the organisation motivate employees to achieve the change process (McDonald & Stockley, 2010). Creating the vision will encourage employees to understand and enable them to move in the same direction to accomplish the common goals (Cameron & Green, 2012). Fritzenschaft (2013) emphasises that the vision should be understandable and identify the expected outcomes of the change process in the future. As a result, the clear visionary will increase working performance as employees could perceive the possible improvement of their careers. Moreover, the organisation should develop its strategies to help the employees accomplish the set goals.

4) **Communicate the vision**: Kotter (1996) suggests that during times of change leaders should continuously communicate the vision of the organisation to employees as much as possible (Cameron & Green, 2012). Moreover, Kotter (1996) also recommends that the organisation should apply various communication channels and help employees understand the organisational vision and goals. Therefore, the guiding coalition is the key role model for new behaviours (Fritzenschaft, 2014; McDonald & Stockley, 2010).
5) **Remove obstacles:** In this stage leaders are required to be able to empower and guide the coalition to motivate and encourage employees to adapt to change (McDonald & Stockley, 2010). This will help the organisation find suitable solutions to eliminating barriers and solving problems, especially for the ones that resist the change. Moreover, encouraging the formation of a coalition among employees will ensure the strong capabilities of its members to implement the change process. In order to do this, leaders should make employees feel safe and confident in taking on responsibilities for the planned change.

6) **Create short-term wins:** After the vision and the new strategies are developed, creating short-term wins is another mission which leaders should take into account (Fritzenschaft, 2013). These short-term visible improvements will motivate employees to improve their performance as they can see the process of implementing change producing positive effects. This is because in the change initiative stage, employees who are involved in the changing process should be recognised and rewarded in order to pursue the long-term goals (McDonald & Stockley, 2010).

7) **Build on the change:** Kotter (1996) argues that many organisations fail to change because they declare victory too soon (Cameron & Green, 2012). Thus, in order to ensure the success of the organisation leaders need to identify what should be improved and which actions bring about success, and which will lead to failure. This can be done by encouraging, energising and promoting the rewards to individuals involved in the improvement of the change process. In addition, in order to build change effectively, leaders should establish a new milestone to encourage and inspire other members involve in the change (Fritzenschaft, 2014).

8) **Anchor the changes in corporate culture:** After the change is developed, Kotter (1996) suggests institutionalising the change as a corporate culture that it is essential to ensure employees become familiar with, and understand the new behaviours in the organisation (Roe, 2014).

From the above overview of Lewin’s (1947) three-step change model and Kotter’s (1996) 8-step change model, it can be concluded that leaders play a significant role in leading effective change in the organisation, especially in times of wider change. Lewin’s (1947) change model is the simplest model for understanding the organisational change process. This model is known as having three stages: Unfreezing-Moving (freezing)-Refreezing. The first stage starts with the motivation to change, as Lewin (1947) believes that creating the need for
change can be the most effective way to get people ready and willing to adapt to the changing environment. He then suggests that during the change process, communication is the fundamental element to influence employees to embrace the new attitude toward change in the organisation. As a result, a new norm will be stabilised (re-freezing) once the change is accepted and people in the organisation feel familiar and comfortable with their routines. Hence, it can be concluded that the change model of Lewin (1947) reflects the reality that all organisations need to continuously consider change in order to survive and sustain their strategic advantages in a highly competitive environment.

Unlike Lewin’s (1947) change model, Kotter’s (1996) 8-step change model addresses the process of implementing the change in more detail. In order to encourage and enhance high commitment to change, Kotter (1996) believes that the first three steps: - creating a climate of change, building a team dedicated to change and creating a vision for change - are the crucial elements for motivating employees to understand and accept the process of change. The next two steps are concerned with engaging and enabling the organisation – communicating the vision and removing obstacles. The last three steps in Kotter’s (1996) change model refer to the process of implementing and sustaining change: creating short-term wins, building on the change and anchoring the changes in corporate culture. Therefore, to gain the most effective outcomes during the change process, leaders should integrate and adapt these change management models to motivate people in the organisation in times of change.

2.13. Motivation theory

Currently, many organisations place a significant value on motivating employees to improve performance and maintain organisational competitive advantage. Motivation is related to human resource management, because it links to the ways managers and leaders deal with people in the organisation (Nelson & Quick, 2013). Employee motivation is the most challenging task in the organisation due to the difficulty in understanding the reason why some people are motivated and keen to work, while others are relatively passive and do not want to take more responsibilities. Hence, it is imperative for the organisation to consider the effective ways to motivate and develop their human resources in the organisation (Shivarudrappa, Ramachandra, & Gopalakrishna, 2010).

2.13.1. Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs theory

The theory of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs is one of the most well-known theories of motivation, which consists a hierarchy of five levels of needs. Maslow (1943) believes that in
order to motivate and improve employees’ performance, managers need to pay more attention to developing a workplace environment that encourages and satisfies the needs of employees (as cited in Chapman, 2014). Maslow (1943) argues that the basic needs that people require to be fulfilled are both physical and economic (Nelson & Quick, 2013). Moreover, Maslow (1943) adds that people have different levels of needs, and that the lowest level is the most powerful of all needs. This means that the more people’s basic needs are satisfied, the higher of needs will grow (Lester, 2013).

**Figure 5: Maslow’s Need Hierarchy**

![Maslow's Need Hierarchy Diagram](image)

Source: Based on Nelson and Quick (2013, p. 166)

As Figure 5. demonstrates, the lowest level of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs is called physiological needs which consist of breathing, food, water, sex, sleep and so on. According to Griffin, in the organisation physiological needs refer to reasonable wages and working conditions (as cited in Čížek, 2012). The second level is safety needs which are the need to seek protection and security. In the case of employees, safety needs represent the needs of job security, adequate insurance, and retirement packages. Social needs are the third stage in Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs which covers the needs of love, belonging, friendship, and social interaction. As parallel to the workplace acceptance and companionship are considered as the social needs for the employees which need to be recognised and be an
important part of the organisation (Cherry, 2014). The next stage of Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs is the esteem needs. These include self-esteem, status, reputation, achievement and responsibility. In the organisational view, the esteem needs are represented by job title, recognition, and prestige. The highest level of needs is self-actualisation which refers to personal growth and fulfilment (Burton, 2012). Since people have more than one need and the level of needs differs from person to person, leaders thus need to recognise and understand all the levels of employees’ needs in order to manage and fulfil those needs in suitable ways (Datta, 2010). Nelson and Quick (2013) conclude that when one level of need is met, people are automatically motivated and move to the higher level of needs. Therefore, it can be said that the level of needs will rise to a higher level when people are fully satisfied and gain what they want.

2.13.2. McGregor’s Theory X and theory Y

The theory X and theory Y of McGregor (1960) is based on the hierarchy of need theory of Maslow (1943). He believes that different people have different kind of needs (Nelson & Quick, 2013). However, as depicted in Figure 5. above, McGregor (1960) divided Maslow’s need theory into two main groups. He suggests, then, that physiological and safety needs are recognised as “lower level” needs, whilst the needs of social, esteem, and self-actualisation are considered as “higher level” needs. According to Cameron and Green (2012), the theory X refers to employees who lack ambition, are lazy, dislike responsibility, are resistant to change and self-centred. Hence, managers and leaders have to control and motivate them by rewarding or punishing. The theory X employees need close supervision and require extra support all the time. In contrast, people under theory Y are more active, willing to accept responsibility and eager to work in order to contribute to organisational success. Therefore, leaders in the organisation need to be aware of how to motivate and inspire different kinds of people. This is because sometimes incentives, such as money and praise, may not motivate all employees in the organisation, and other social factors might be more important to increase higher motivation in the workplace.

2.13.3. Frederick Herzberg’s two-factor theory

Frederick Herzberg’s (1987) two-factor theory appears to parallel Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory. However, Herzberg (1987) believes that besides the certain factors which an organisation utilises to motivate employees (Motivator factors), leaders should understand and know the factors that might make employees dissatisfied (Hygiene factors) (Riley, 2012).
Richard (2012) explains that the motivator factors, such as responsibility, recognition and achievement, will satisfy employees in the workplaces, while the hygiene factors, which include policy, salary and interpersonal relationships - will cause employee dissatisfaction. Pride, Hughes, and Kapoor (2012) conclude that any one organisation might have a large or small number of employees who dissatisfied and de-motivated. Therefore, many alternative approaches should be applied in order to motivate employees to encourage better performance.

In the education sector, work motivation is a fundamental factor in ensuring a positive environment in the organisation, especially when change is introduced. A lower level of satisfaction will affect the organisation’s performance, which might lead to the failure of the change process. Moreover, when the change could not implement well leader who reponse as a change agent should be prepared to fine other alternative ways to deal with unexpected issues. Therefore, in order to implement change successfully leaders need to understand and know how to motivate and influence employees to participate in the change process.

2.13. Summary

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the main theories associated with the research objectives to support the research findings. Firstly, the literature related to the importance of leadership was reviewed. This included the definition of leadership, leadership and management, and how leadership’s importance for the success of the organisation.

Secondly, this chapter presented the different types of leadership which are used in organisations: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, charismatic leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership. Moreover, three common styles of leadership were also identified; namely, autocratic leadership, democratic leadership and laissez-faire leadership style.

Thirdly, change management theories were discussed in order to understand the concept of change management and how to deal with resistance to change in the organisation. In this part, Lewin’s (1947) change model and Kotter’s (1996) 8-step change model were explained.

Finally, different types of motivation theories were identified in order to help the researcher understand ways to inspire employees to adapt to change in the organisation.
Therefore, by studying leadership theories, leadership styles and change management theories in this research project will provide valuable information and knowledge in terms of appropriate leadership styles and the suitable change management process to help leaders motivate employees to effectively participate in the change process. Moreover, this will help the organisations deal with resistance to change and overcome the difficulty in the organisation.

The next chapter will identify and discuss the research methodology which was employed in this research project.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In chapter Two the key literature on leadership styles, change management theories and motivation theories was reviewed to help the researcher find suitable theories to support the research findings and answer the research questions posed in this research project.

This chapter describes the research methodology and research paradigms in order to identify an appropriate tool for data collection. The quantitative and qualitative approaches are presented, and the researcher explains the reason why the qualitative approach is selected and adapted for this research project. A semi-structured interview method was executed in this study. Key issues associated with sample selection, data collection and data analysis are discussed in detail in order to avoid errors and invalid results. Ethical issues related to this project are addressed at the end of this chapter.

3.2. Research design and Methodology

3.2.1. Overview of research methodologies used in leadership styles and change management studies

Leadership is one of the most popular research topics for many management researchers (Inyang, 2013). This is because they believe that leadership plays a significant role in bringing about the kind of organisational success that was outlined in chapter Two. Moreover, Inyang (2013) also concludes that using an appropriate leadership style in the organisation is not only of importance for improving organisational performance but also being able to motivate employees to be more ambitious, especially in times of change.

According to Hogan and Kaiser (2005), most of the studies of leadership tend to emphasise leadership traits, effectiveness of leaders, and leadership styles. Bryman and Stephens (1996) conclude that many researchers use a qualitative approach as a method for leadership study. Furthermore, many researchers pay more attention to studying leadership styles used in an organisation, especially in times of change. This is evident in the studies of Nave (2006), Stahl (2007), Buckingham (2005), Ireland and Hitt (2005), and Plowman, Solansky, and Beck (2007) (as cited in Aziz, Abdullah, & Tajudin, 2013). Therefore, this researcher strongly believes that this research project, which investigates whether an appropriate
leadership style will inspire employees to adapt to change will provide valuable information for further research, particularly in the Lao context.

3.2.2. Research methodology

Methodology is the way in which the researcher synthesises the methods into the research processes. This is supported by Barbour (2014) and Creswell (2014) who define methodology as a process in which the researcher attempts to achieve systematically, and with the support of data, the answer to a question, the resolution of a problem, or a greater understanding of a phenomenon.

This includes collecting, evaluating, and interpreting data according to the objectives of the researchers (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Ranjan and Das (2011) further explain that methodology contains the studies of interest areas which researchers intended to analyse. This enables the researcher to select the appropriate technique and methods used for data collection which is vital in order to achieve effective research outcomes.

Ng and Coakes (2014) point out that methodology is about the attitudes and beliefs of the researcher toward the nature of things in the world. Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012) conclude “methodology is based upon critical thinking about the nature of reality and how we can understand it” (p. 15). Moreover, Scott and Morrison (2006) explain that methodology plays a significant role in determining rational strategies, methods and approaches which researchers will employ in a research project (as cited in Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison, 2012).

3.2.3. Research paradigms

Research paradigms address the philosophical dimensions of social sciences. Jonker and Pennink (2010) explain that a research paradigm is a set of core beliefs, knowledge and assumptions of a researcher about how the world is perceived (as cited in Wahyuni, 2012). Wahyuni (2012) and Du Plessis and Frederick (2010) suggest that ontology (the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) are the two main types of philosophical dimensions which are used to distinguish research paradigms. In terms of ontology, the objectivist believes that a single reality exists which does not rely on social actors. In contrast, the term epistemology indicates what we can know about the world and how we can know it (Pascale, 2011). In other words, “epistemology is about the nature of knowledge and
addresses the question of what it is possible to know. What counts as knowledge determines how meaningful knowledge can be generated (and what it is seen to represent)” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 29)

Additionally, there are commonly referenced and differentiated paradigms: positivist (naive realism), interpretive (constructivism), critical and postmodern/post structural (Tracy, 2012). The interpretive paradigm attempts to understand and interpret the world regarding its actors (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). According to Bryman (2012), positivist perspectives are more likely to emphasise the proving of theory and realise that social science should be studied through the application of the methods of the natural science. In contrast, the interpretivist argues that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, p. 111). Additionally, in order for the researcher to understand the actions, it is necessary to explore subjective meanings and actions of social actors.

Therefore, this research project used interpretivism as a research paradigm to help the researcher answer the research questions in order to meet the objectives. This is because the researcher believed that an individual leader would perceive and interpret situations differently. Interpretivism will help the researcher understand the subjective reality of the leaders in FEBM in order to be able to make sense of and understand their motives, actions and intentions in a way that is meaningful.

3.2.4. Quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative approach

Quantitative research converts phenomena such as social in to quantitative data so that it can be statistically analysed and then some statements/predictions are made about the phenomena. In other words, quantitative approach does focus on numbers to explain phenomena and relationships (Bryman, 2012; Patton & Cochran, 2007). The aim of applying a quantitative approach to research is to identify cause and effect of the hypothesis and make predictions of the outcomes (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Jonhnson & Christensen, 2008). The outcome of a quantitative approach is often derived from data collection from questionnaires. Hence, applying quantitative research can help researchers answer particular research questions effectively.
In addition, the quantitative approach is not expensive, because nowadays researchers can easily collect the quantitative data by using the internet via e-mails, blogs and other websites. Moreover, large numbers of samples can have more accurate and reliable results (Mukherji & Albon, 2010). Furthermore, a quantitative approach is more likely to produce more accurate findings than a qualitative approach due to the researcher’s staying out of the context in order to avoid biases (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). However, there are some negative aspects of quantitative approach. This is because the quantitative approach is mainly based on questionnaires which might lead to insufficient interaction between the researcher and respondents. In other words, a lack of communication with participants could result in misunderstandings and the meaning of the questions could be interpreted in the wrong context. As a result, the researcher would not be able to get accurate information which would lead to invalid results and research findings.

**Qualitative approach**

According to Jha (2008), qualitative data are defined as “detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, observed behaviours, direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories” (p. 45). Thus, the aim of using a qualitative approach is to study in-depth the specific issue in order to explore and understand people’s beliefs and behaviours. Neuman (2011) states that a qualitative approach examines the collection of data by generating the theory according to the outcome of the research findings. Therefore, a qualitative approach is suitable for examining a topic which is very sensitive and requires disclosure information from a participant (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011).

As qualitative approaches emphasise an in-depth understanding of individuals’ beliefs and behaviours, a qualitative approach can deploy instruments such as interviews, observation and surveys, and work with a small group of people (Tracy, 2012). By interacting directly with the participants, the researchers will gain more insightful information which means the data interpretation process can be more concise and correct. Furthermore, the information, which the participants disclose to the researchers, through facial expression, intonation and movement, are important elements for the researchers when interpreting the responses and so enhance the results of the study. Field notes and memos are also used to help the researcher when he/she analyses the data (Dawson, 2009). In addition, qualitative research can help researchers to answer research questions clearly, because they can have conversations to
obtain information from people in an organisation. The result of the qualitative approach derives from the interpretation and synthesis of the information within the specific context. The aim of qualitative research is to acquire a deep understanding about the problem, so the organisations can use the outcome to improve performance and find solutions (Silverman, 2013). Therefore, this research will employ the qualitative method as a data collecting methodology.

According to the purpose and objectives of this research project, the qualitative approach is the most appropriate method. Due to the complex nature of leadership in the government sector, especially in Lao PDR, it was clear to the researcher that using a qualitative approach would ensure that the right information was obtained. Moreover, as this research project’s population was quite small, using the semi-structured interview method was not only possible, but also the most suitable.

3.2.5. Rationale for a qualitative approach to research

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and the target participants were the deans and heads of departments in the Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM), National University of Laos (NUOL). This was because the researcher wanted to investigate and understand the leadership styles which are used in times of change in the FEBM; hence senior managers in the organisation would be the key sources of the information. Their opinions about the issues would best to contribute to the research findings, as they are the group of people who implement change in the organisation. Moreover, the terms “change management” and “leadership styles” used in order to inspire employees in the organisation are not commonly used by leaders in the higher education sector, particularly in the FEBM. Therefore, using semi-structured interview to ask the participants individually would help the researcher gain accurate and valid information to answer research questions.

As the size of the population is quite small, using the interview method was judged to be the most suitable in this research situation. In addition, by deploying semi-structured interviews would make participants feel more comfortable and willing to answer the questions more so than using a quantitative method like a survey questionnaire. This is because normally the interviewer will start with the general questions to make the participants feel familiar and at ease to disclose during the conversation. Moreover, the interviewer may prompt the interviewees and change the question structures in order to make them clear depending on the
interview environment (Galletta, 2013). The researcher employs qualitative method to attempt to understand the reality of specific organisation and understand occurring phenomena from the perspectives of participants who are involved (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Therefore, the gathering of in-depth information and holding further discussion through conducting interviews help the researcher better understand the real phenomenon in the organisation.

Additionally, using semi-structured interviews helps the researcher to obtain rich information from the participants and enables the research to gain valid data for answering the research questions. As a result, the researcher would be able to ensure the accuracy of the research findings. Denscombe (2010) suggests that the qualitative approach is appropriate for conducting business research because researchers are able to enhance their ideas regarding the critical and intellectual dimensions of human thoughts and business operation processes.

Therefore, using the qualitative approach ensures that the researcher can get the right information, validity and reliable data (Piotrowski, 2012). Thus, this researcher decided that the qualitative approach would enable the identification and investigation of the perspectives of FEBM leaders toward the appropriate leadership styles being used to inspire employees to adapt to change.

### 3.3. Sample selection

Based on the objectives and methodology of this study, non-probability sampling was considered as the most appropriate sampling for the research. According to Adams, Khan, and Raeside (2014) and Saunders et al. (2012), sample selection has two basic techniques: probability or representative sampling and non-probability or judgement sampling. A probability sample means every element of the population of the sample has a chance to be selected equally, while a non-probability sample refers to the opportunity of a sample to be selected depending on personal judgment and the sample method. As Saunders et al. (2012) point out, in order to answer research questions and meet the objectives of the research project, non-probability sampling is very suitable for the researcher to undertake in-depth study and gain an information-rich focus with a small sample size.

Unlike probability sampling, the non-probability sampling has no rules for sample collection (Wilson, 2010). This means that the purpose and objectives of the research are more
important than the sample size. This is because the researcher aims to gain theoretical insights through the interview method, rather than focusing on the entire population.

From a range of non-probability sampling techniques, the judgemental sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2012) was seen as the most appropriate to answer the research questions and meet the objectives of this research project. This is because purposive or judgemental sampling is an approach that enables researchers to use their judgement to choose a suitable case to help them gain the best information to answer research questions and achieve the objectives. Purposive sampling is suitable for the researcher who wants to adapt the grounded theory strategy. The researcher uses the purposive sampling technique to select information-rich cases with a specific situation or specific purpose in mind (Wilson, 2010).

3.3.1. Semi-structured interview sample

In this research project, the FEBM, National University of Laos (NUOL) was used as a case study for data collection. The sample size was determined based on the objectives of this study. The participants are all in the position of senior managers in the FEBM and are directly responsible for implementing change in the organisation (NUOL). This research was conducted via interviewing 12 participants including the Dean and two Deputy Deans, nine from the five departments including the Heads and Deputy Heads. The criteria used to select the participants were that they could be considered as the senior managers who hold higher positions in five departments: Economics, Commerce, Business Management, Finance – Banking and Accounting. Based on their roles and positions, the researcher considered such participants to be the most appropriate sources from whom to gain information-rich material to answer research questions and to meet research objectives. The sample selection criteria was based on the aim and objectives of this research project which proposed to identify the appropriate leadership style being used in the FEBM in order to inspire employees to adapt to change. Thus, this research project focused mainly on the leaders’ perspectives on their leadership style that they think is the most effective approach to motivate and inspire employees when there is a change in the organisation.

Even though this research project interviewed only 12 participants from FEBM, all participants were expected to provide and support the most valuable information for the study because all of them hold the roles and positions of senior managers in the organisation. Moreover, all participants have the knowledge and experience which are needed to answer the research questions. As pointed out by Saunders et al. (2012), there are no rules or fixed
number for the size of the sample for non-probability sampling because the strategy for selecting the case depends on the purpose, research questions and research objectives of this researcher. The face-to-face interview provided an opportunity and facilitated this researcher in avoiding possible errors which can occur if the participants do not truly understand the meaning of the questions. This is because the researcher could explain and provide more examples to guide the participants in their understanding of the concepts and ideas in the interview questions. Hence, by employing semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to focus on the perspectives of the FEBM leaders in terms of the leadership styles which are used in the organisation and gain the most valuable information to help answer the research question correctly.

3.3.2. Selection of participants

This research project was conducted in Laos. Therefore, before the interviews took place, the researcher contacted the Dean of FEBM to ask for permission for data collection via interviews. After the approval letter was obtained, the Personnel Department communicated to all potential respondents as to the purpose and objectives of the research project. Moreover, the potential respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and there would be no harmful consequence to any person who did not wish to participate in this research project.

The Personal Department then sent the relevant documents, such as the information sheet, consent form and interview questions, to all potential respondents to read and understand the purpose and concepts of the study. If the respondents agreed to participate in this research project, they had to sign the consent form, provide contact information and return these to the Personal Department to be collected by the researcher. After all the documents were collected, the researcher started to contact the potential respondents directly by email and telephone to confirm and to make an appointment for the interviews. The researcher attempted to find the most suitable and convenient time for the participants to conduct the interviews.

3.4. Scope of research project

The purpose and objectives of this research project focus on the study of leadership styles which inspire employees in FEBM in times of change. The project was conducted in Laos, where English is not an official language used in daily life. Hence, all interview questions
were translated into the Lao language in order to avoid unexpected errors and misunderstandings. The participants held positions as leaders and senior managers in the FEBM. Therefore, the researcher strongly believed that their knowledge and experiences could help the researcher gain valid data so as to produce accurate research findings. The reasons for conducting this research project were as follows:

- Since the Lao PDR became a member of the WTO in 2003 and intended to become a member of the AEC in 2015, the government and the private sector needed to improve and develop their capabilities in order to bring Lao PDR into the global market. This was particularly important for the FEBM since it is the main higher education institution in Lao PDR which supplies knowledgeable and skilful human resources for society each year. Hence, an appropriate leadership style within the organisation is vital for the success of the organisation.

- In addition, the researcher has been working for the FEBM for 4 years. Therefore, the researcher is strongly interested in studying the leadership area, particularly the leadership style and change management approach of this organisation. Moreover, the researcher believed that finding an appropriate leadership style and suitable approach to change management to be used in the organisation in times of change would help the higher education sector in Lao PDR improve and develop its performance in the future.

- Therefore, the researcher strongly believed that this research project would further support the researcher’s future career in terms of improving performance in the organisation. In addition, the researcher is also able to extend the knowledge and experience gained from this research project to other researchers and organisations in order to continue further research projects in other contexts.

3.5. Research method

The research method plays a significant role in helping the researcher identify the most appropriate way for collecting the data. This is because the research method refers to particular ways or tools for data collection and how the researcher will analyse the collected data to get valid results. This is supported by Kothari (2004) who stated that “research methods may be understood as all those methods/techniques that are used for conduction of research” (p. 7). Hence, choosing the research methods for collecting the data depends on the aim and objectives of the research project. Therefore, the researcher is required to have in-depth knowledge and understanding of research methods (Saunders et al., 2012).
3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

Based on the aim of this research project the focus is on identifying the most appropriate leadership styles which inspire employees in times of change. Moreover, the study focused on the leaders in FEBM who are directly responsible for implementing change in the organisation. Hence, a semi-structured interview is the method that the researcher chose for data collection. Due to the complex nature of leadership in the government sector, especially in Lao PDR, using a qualitative approach would ensure that the researcher could get the right information which is needed to support the research findings. Moreover, as the size of the population is quite small, the semi-structured interview method was deemed to be the most suitable in this situation. Bryman (2012) concludes that interviews are normally divided into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. This is because the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to gain data from interviewees by asking lists of questions to find out their opinions, perceptions, understanding of their work, as well as their experiences.

The semi-structured interview is the most popular type of interview for qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Saunders et al. (2012) state that before conducting the semi-structured interviews the researcher always has clear lists of issues and questions which are needed to be addressed and answered. This research project was conducted during July and August 2014 by using face-to-face interviews. The duration of interview was approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. The interviewees were asked the questions about general issues relating to the leadership field. This is because the researcher attempted to make the interviewees feel more comfortable and confident in answering the series of questions during the interview section. In addition, the researcher was in a position to change the wording or question structure depending on the ways the interviewees answered the questions and on the flow of the conversation. The semi-structured interview is useful because it allows interviewees to have opportunities to speak widely about the issues raised by the researcher. The researcher focused on the interviewees’ perspectives by asking open-ended questions. Moreover, the questions did not emphasise solely “what” and “how”, but also asked the participants “why” for further clarification. Thus, the researcher was able to gain a full understanding of interviewees’ opinions and perspectives toward the issues.

3.5.2. Data collection

This research deployed semi-structured interviews as a method to collect the data. According to Rabionet (2011) and Braun and Clarke (2013), the semi-structured interview, which is also
known as the interview guide approach, allows the interviewer to ask the set of questions to elicit answers based on the aims and objectives of the research project. This assists the interviewees to understand the concepts of the questions and they are then able to discuss the issues in more detail. Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend that before conducting semi-structured interviews the researchers prepare a set of questions to ask the interviewees with regards to the objectives of the research project. Moreover, Denscombe (2007) explains that in order to get an effective result from a semi-structured interview, the questions need to be clear and understandable for the interviewees. The author also suggests that for each set of interviews the researcher should ensure that the questions encourage answers which might introduce information that had not arisen before.

This research project conducted interviews with one participant per day. This is as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (1995) where they propose not conducting more than one interview in a day because researchers need to focus and pay attention to every detail during the interview to get the right information for finding the most accurate results (as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thus, if the researchers do more than one interview in a day, the researcher would not be able to concentrate and might miss some questions. Moreover, the researchers could lose concentration and accidentally mix up all the information.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews in July and August 2014 with 12 managers in the FEBM. According to Beretvas and Leavy (2013) it is possible to say that 12 interviewees is a significant number for the researcher to obtain reliable data. Due to the qualitative research focusing on in-depth responses from the participants, the researcher needs to have appropriate tools to help to record all valuable information (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Therefore, in each section of the interviews, an audio recorder was used to ensure that the researcher did not miss any detail from interviewees (Kothari, 2004). Additionally, as the interviews were conducted in the Lao language, the transcriptions were translated into English in order to analyse the results in the next stage.

In this study, there were no gifts or any inducements received by any of the participants. In addition, all participants were asked to check the transcripts for accuracy after finishing the interviews and were informed that they could correct the transcripts and withdraw from the project two weeks after the interview.
3.6. Pilot study

According to Jonh Adams et al. (2014), there are two phases of data collection: pre-testing and main study. The pre-testing is conducted as a means to examine whether or not the interview questions are appropriate for the main study by using a small sub-sample. The results of the pre-test (pilot) help the researcher to improve and develop the interview questions. This can be done by redesigning the word order and reconsidering question structure, if the researcher finds that the interview questions cannot cover all the research sub-questions. Hence, this helps the researcher minimise errors when conducting the actual study.

Based on the importance of conducting a pilot study and in order to avoid unexpected errors, the researcher invited five employees who work as senior lecturers at FEBM to participate in the pilot test. These lecturers were asked to give constructive feedback and comments on the set of semi-structured questions. This is because they are knowledgeable people who have enough experience in providing advice to their students to undertake thesis and research projects. Therefore, the researcher strongly believed that they would be able to give suggestions and feedback for further improvement of the semi-structured interview questions. After executing the pilot study, the respondents provided very useful feedback and valuable recommendations for those questions which might have ambiguous meanings and be difficult to understand. Hence, the researcher did change wording and create new questions to avoid biases and minimise problems in the future. Initially there were 25 interview questions in the semi-structured question set for the interview. After pilot testing, the researcher cut some questions that had similar meanings and did not help the researcher answer the main research question. Hence, the interview questions were reduced to 19 for this research project.

3.7. Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of transforming raw data into the results or findings of the research (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Neuman (2011) defines data analysis as “examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising, and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data” (p. 448). This research used an inductive approach instead of a deductive approach as a data analysis method. This is because the inductive approach begins with observing specific interactions, conceptualising general patterns from these observations, making tentative claims and drawing conclusions.
that build theory. The deductive method begins with a broad or general theory, then makes an assumption or a hypothesis about the social world on the basis of this theory. Then, the research is conducted to test the hypothesis and the evidence gathered from the research will be used to confirm or disconfirm the original theory (Tracy, 2012).

This research project employs thematic analysis because it is the most common methodology used to analyse qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process of thematic analysis includes transcription, reading and familiarisation, taking note of items of potential interest, coding-complete, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing – finalising analysis. As suggested by Galletta (2013), coding is used in the process of qualitative data analysis in order to categorise the data in line with the research questions. According to Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2013), after defining the code, the researcher examines the links between code categories and other examples, and then the results or findings are discussed and interpreted.

Once the interviews are completed, the researcher transcribes the interviews from the audio recorder into written content. The researcher did this soon after the conversations were completed to keep an accurate context for the interviews in terms of gesture, body language and facial expression. As suggested by Beretvas and Leavy (2013), the interviewer needs to transcribe the interview into written content as soon as possible after the interview session. This is because the interviewer is more likely to be able to remember the body language, the atmosphere and the nonverbal signs of the interaction better than if she/he waits to finish all the interviews and transcribes them all at once. Thus, it ensures that the researcher gets accurate information to carry out the analysis.

After transcribing the interviews, the researcher needs to read the transcriptions to become familiar with the content of the interviews. This will help the researcher to summarise and identify key concepts, themes, patterns and categories which were revealed in the interviews (Merriam, 2009). Then coding will be used to identify the interesting patterns and aspects of all data that relate to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Wilson (2010) and Zikmund, Babin, Carr, and Griffin (2013) suggest that coding could be a key word, theme or category based on the purpose of the research project and which the researcher found interesting and relevant to the research questions.
With thematic coding, the researcher can employ many types of data to focus on specific acts, reports, conversations, behaviours, activities, setting, interactions, contacts, actions, conditions, strategies or practices (Cohen et al., 2011). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2013) state that “a code is a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why you think a particular bit of data may be a useful” (p. 207). This is also supported by Cohen et al. (2011), who state that coding helps the researcher identify the link between the data collected and the meaning of findings based on the research questions. This research project used CL1-CL12 (CL: Change leader) as letter and number coding of the participants (senior leaders) in the interviews. In addition, LG1-LG2 (LG: leadership group) was coded for the groups based on their position where LG1 refers to dean and heads of departments while LG2 refers to vice deans and department deputies respectively. This helped the researcher recognise and identify themes from the interviews easily.

Additionally, after grouping similar data and recognising the relationship among categories, the researcher interpreted the results of the dataset based on the aim of the research project. In this stage, the researcher attempted to identify the connections between all categories derived from the transcriptions of each interview in order for accurate results. Finally, the researcher developed and tested the hypotheses in order to find out whether or not the relationships among categories are positive (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). After testing the hypotheses, if the results oppose the research’s data, the research will provide an alternative explanation to clarify the reasons for the negative cases. As a result, valid conclusions and an explanatory theory would be created (Wilson, 2010). The researcher would then be able to write the full report of the research project.

Therefore, this research project employed the inductive approach as a data analysis method. Thematic coding is used to analyse the qualitative data which used CL1-CL12 and LG1-LG2 as a letter to code and identify the participants and groups. Finally, the researcher also tested the hypotheses of the study.

3.8. Validity of result

Validity is a tool to measure whether or not a set of questions truly reflects and addresses the accuracy of the research project’s findings (Barbour, 2014; Bryman, 2012). Hence, the validity of results is a crucial factor that the researcher needs to carefully focus on.
In order to ensure that the researcher does not miss any single detail from the interviews, an audio recorder should be used to record the participants. Using a recorder helps the researcher to pay more attention to the conversation and interact with the interviewees without worrying about missing any information. Furthermore, it also allows the researcher to be able to observe and make notes during the interviews (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2014). This was very helpful to gain accurate and valid information when the researcher did a transcription after the interviews.

The interviews for this research took at least 30 minutes and were not longer than one hour. As suggested by John Adams et al. (2014), this researcher contacted the participants via Email, telephone or in person to confirm a time and date for the interviews and the location where the interview was to take place. Throughout the interview sections, the researcher used the meeting room located in FEBM as a place for interviews because it was convenient and suitable for all participants to meet at their place of work.

To avoid offending the participants and effectively get valid and complete information, the researcher’s approached and interviewed the participants in a professional and appropriate manner to show respect to all participants. At the beginning of an interview, the researcher explained in brief about the research project and its objectives in order to ensure the participants clearly understood and had no concerns about the purpose of interview. In addition, the researcher asked the subjects the general questions to lead them to understand the concepts of the study (Adams et al., 2014). Before getting into more detail, the researcher attempted to explain the reasons why the subjects were selected and what the researcher wanted to achieve from their interviews. Furthermore, the researcher also indicated how the data would be used and confirmed that all personal information about the subjects would be kept confidential and anonymous. Therefore, validity of result is crucial for the qualitative research to reach high quality study.

The validity of results play a significant role in indicating whether the interview questions to be employed can measure the concept of the research project. Hence, the researcher emphasised the validity of the result by considering many aspects that related to concepts and purposes of the research project. This included wearing suitable and appropriate clothing and approaching interviewees in a professional manner.
3.9. Ethical issues

Ethics is a set of principles and guidelines about how a researcher conducts research when dealing with the research participants. Aluwihare-Sanaranayake (2012), defines ethics as the consideration of doing the right things which would not impact or harm the participants. Moreover, Saunders et al. (2012) assert that research ethics refers to the considerations of the researchers to carefully design how to manage the process of the research from identifying the topic to analysing the results.

This research project critically considers all relevant ethical issues based on the Unitec Research Ethics Committee guidelines (UREC, 2009). This is because this research study was conducted in the Lao PDR where people are very sensitive and concerned about ethics. However, this research will not focus on any ethnic group or nationality. It focuses mainly on the leadership styles of the leaders in the FEBM and the way that they influence employees in the times of change (Lapan et al., 2013). This research caused no harm to participants; before conducting the interviews, all participants were informed and asked for permission and approval to ensure that they understood the purpose of the research. This was done by sending a formal approval letter to the selected participants. Moreover, the key information about the research was provided for all participants as they could use it to consider either withdrawing or continuing the interview process. This is because when the participants were informed about the objectives and purpose of the research that they would be involved, then they would be aware of, and fully understand the research procedures.

The interview questions were designed not to harm or offend the participants. The respondents were made comfortable about sharing their knowledge and experience with the interviewer as the questions focused solely on the information which related to the research objectives. The interviewees had the right to protect their privacy when they felt the questions were not appropriate, so they could refuse to answer or reject the interview (if they wished to do so). The study would not identify the name or position of the participants in any part of the research to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Furthermore, the researcher only expressed the truth based on justice and fairness to ensure that all data collected from the participants were used solely for the purpose of the research. The researcher would also contribute to the accuracy of data analysis by guiding it towards meaningful findings and outcomes.
3.10. Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this research project. The semi-structured interview approach was the method that the researcher employed for this research project. This is because this method enabled the researcher to gain rich information to answer the research questions. Moreover, this study provided a discussion of research methodology and research paradigms. The interpretivism approach was chosen as a research paradigm to help the researcher answer the research questions in order to achieve the objective of the research project. This research employed the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with 12 participants who were ranked as senior managers in the FEBM. The rational for a qualitative approach to research and sample selection was explored in-depth, as was the strength of participant selection, semi-structured interviews, data collection, pilot study and data analysis. Finally, the validity of results and ethical issues were discussed to consider the accuracy of the research findings.

The next chapter discusses the results of the data collected through semi-structured interviews with the 12 participants. The results are based on the answers from all participants regarding their understanding, knowledge, experience and perspectives toward leadership styles being used in their organisation during times of change.
Chapter Four: Findings

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter identified and discussed the research methodology and qualitative method of semi-structured interviews which were used in this research project. Moreover, it also outlined the procedure of participant selection, the research method for data collection and data analysis. Finally, the validity of results and ethical issues, which refer to the accuracy of the findings, were also discussed.

This chapter provides a summary of the data results and findings from the semi-structured interviews that the researcher conducted with the 12 FEBM participants. The research design emphasises investigating the perspectives of senior managers in FEBM on change management and the leadership styles being used in order to inspire their subordinates in times of change. To do this, understandings of the importance of leadership styles and the key capabilities of leadership in the organization were discussed in the interviews. Moreover, the challenges and obstacles to implementing the change process were also discussed.

The results and findings from the semi-structured interviews identified and contributed new knowledge and understanding of the role of academic leaders in change management and appropriate leadership styles used to inspire employees to adapt to change. In addition, the results can help FEBM leaders to understand the key roles of leaders in times of change and recognise the core competencies needed by effective leaders to cope with unexpected resistance to change in the organisation. Furthermore, this chapter also presents the potential capabilities for the FEBM leaders to improve their capabilities to inspire employees when the change is needed.

4.2. Interview results and findings

This chapter summarises all the data results and findings collected from the 12 senior managers at FEBM by using the semi-structured interview method. The letter and number was used to code the interview participants in order to avoid identification and ensure there is no harm to all participants, including CL1, CL2, CL3, CL4, CL5, CL6, CL7, CL8, CL9, CL10, CL11, and CL12 (CL: Change Leader). Moreover, the participants were divided into two groups based on their position in the organisation. LG1 (LG: Leadership Group)
represented the dean and heads of department, while LG2 represented the vice deans and deputies of each department.

The semi-structured interview questions (see appendix 1) were designed to ask senior managers in FEBM to express their understandings about the importance of leadership in the organisation. Moreover, the interview assisted the researcher to answer the research questions and find out the perspectives of appropriate leadership styles which senior managers in FEBM used to inspire employees in times of change in the context of higher education in Lao PDR.

The research questions for the semi-structured interviews started from general to specific questions in order to develop an understanding of the current leadership in the organisation. In addition, the researcher also provided brief definitions and elaborated upon them for those participants who were not familiar with the terms “leadership” and “leadership styles”. Thus, the participants fully understood the questions and were able to give relevant information to the researcher. As a result, this ensured the validity of the result of the research findings.

4.2.1. Research question one

What is your understanding of the term “leadership” in the organisation?

The term “leadership” was considered as the most appropriate first question to ask all respondents about their understanding of leadership in the organisation. This is because this research project aims to identify the appropriate leadership style being used in the Lao education sector, especially in FEBM. Without understanding the term “leadership”, the leadership style could not be identified. Therefore, this question examined whether or not the FEBM leaders clearly understand and recognise the importance of leadership in the organisation. This section helped the researcher answer the research sub-question A.

The interview results revealed that all participants understood and recognised the importance of leadership in the organisation as is evident in the following excerpts:

*The word leadership refers to a group of people who are able to motivate and convince members in the organisation to work effectively without any pressure (LG1-CL7).*

*Effective leaders have to have a clear vision and understand the subordinates’ needs. In other words, good leadership means we have a good plan and effective strategies in the
organisation and are able to evaluate the performance (LG1-CL3, CL4, CL10; LG2-CL2 & CL6).

Leaders play a significant role in terms of providing a good example to other employees. This means that leaders have to show their capabilities to accomplish the tasks. Moreover, leaders need to provide a clear direction and guidelines in order to assist employees to work effectively. As a result, when employees trust and believe in the capabilities and a vision of the leaders, it will help the organisation eliminate obstacles during the change process and achieve the desired goals easily (LG1-CL1, CL12; LG2-CL8).

Leaders have to be creative in terms of managing and controlling change in the organisation. Effective leaders have to think forward and find different alternative ways to get the work done. Moreover, another characteristic that I think very important for leaders is adaptation. This is because some leaders prefer to do the same things and do not want to practice different approaches to improve organisational performance. In contrast, some people are overly focused on changing regarding the new technology and knowledge, especially those who are just graduating from overseas. Therefore, adaptation is the most appropriate way to improve the organisation in the developing country, especially in the Lao PDR. Hence, time is needed to get people to adapt to the new environment (LG1-CL1).

Leaders have to empower subordinates to take responsibilities for their own duties. Besides, leaders need to give some advice and guidance in order to assist employees develop their capabilities in particular areas of work. As a result, subordinates will be able to make a decision effectively when the leaders are not around (LG1-CL1, CL9 & CL3).

Furthermore, leadership means sharing the information with members in the organisation, especially in times of change (LG1-CL1). During the environment of change, communication is a crucial element to encourage and motivate employees to adapt to change. This is because without clear information and proper communication, resistance to change will occur and affect the organisational performance in the future.

In order to be an effective leader in an organisation, we have to have good expertise and knowledge, especially leaders in the academic sector. As we are working in the education sector, prestige and reputation are very important. If we do not have both, people might not respect and admire us (LG2-CL11).
4.2.2. Research question two

What are the key capabilities that leaders in the higher education sector should have in order to inspire employees in the organisation?

The question on the key capability of leaders in the higher education sector asked the respondents to identify the additional competencies which leaders should have apart from those given in answer to the above question. This second question examined whether or not the leaders know and understand the main capability of a leader in the education sector. This enables the researcher to identify the leaders’ perspectives on educational leadership and helped the researcher answer the research sub-question C. Below are participant comments that exemplify answer to this question:

Leaders in the higher education sector have to have the capabilities to do research. I mean in the academic sector, leaders need to develop and improve their professional skills all the time. Thus, the best way to do that is writing a research project which not only help the leaders gain more knowledge and experiences in a particular field, but also strengthen their academic skills as well. Moreover, leaders should attend seminars and workshops to present and make other people know about our faculty (LG1-CL1).

In the education sector, the key capabilities of leaders are knowing and understanding leadership theory. Leaders need to have higher knowledge and experience in the particular field that they are working in, which is necessary to bring about the success of the organisation (LG1-CL3, CL4, CL7 & CL12; LG2-CL2).

Another important capacity of leaders in the education sector is motivation skill. In times of change in the organisation, leaders should be able to persuade and inspire employees to know and understand the reasons for change. This will help employees pay more attention to working which leads to better outcomes for the organisation. Moreover, leaders should also be able to lead by setting an example for all members. This means that you have to do it first to gain more trust from employees in order to inspire them to follow what you expect (LG1-CL7; LG2-CL5).

I think ethical matters are the most important thing that top managers should have, especially in the higher education sector (LG2-CL8).
4.2.3. Research question three

What are the important roles of leadership to inspire employees in the FEBM?

The question about the important roles of leadership asked the respondents whether the leaders in FEBM consider that leadership is the important element to inspire employees in the organisation. After interviewing, the responses revealed that the respondents have many different perspectives on the important roles of leadership which are based on their own experience and responsibilities. This section answers research sub-question A of this research project.

In order to inspire employees in the higher education sector, it is believed that understanding and recognising employees’ needs is one of the most effective methods for improving organisational performance. This can be done by helping employees improve and develop their abilities and skills to overcome their weaknesses. In addition, it is necessary to have a clear vision and mission to accomplish the set goals. Besides setting a plan and creating vision and mission, it is very important to communicate the vision to all members and allow them to share their ideas in the decision making process. This will help the leaders enable to motivate and convince employees to perform better. Moreover, employees will be more motivated when they have a chance to take their own responsibility and are empowered to make decisions. These ideas can be found in the following excerpts from the interviewees:

Basically, leaders need to know the employees’ abilities, then search what areas they need to improve or develop. Hence, we can help them overcome their weaknesses (LG1-CL1).

Good leaders should be able to convince and inspire employees to work by considering the mutual benefits for all members. I mean good leaders have to serve others first rather than be concerned about their own interest. Leaders have to lead by the heart and make sure that people under their supervision are well (LG2-CL2).

Leaders have to have communication skills, not only communicate with their subordinates, but also communicate with other leaders or managers. This means that leaders have to know how to communicate and negotiate with other people in order to gain benefits for each other (LG1-CL1; LG2-CL8).

I strongly believe that the success of the organisation is derived from having effective leaders. Thus, if leaders do not have particular knowledge and skills, and cannot persuade
employees, I can guarantee that they would never be able to lead people to meet the set goals (LG1-CL12; LG2-CL2).

I think leaders should lead by providing an example for followers to follow their vision. Moreover, leaders should also be able to apply management skills in order to control the changing process in the organisation. Hence, effective leaders should be a good leader as well as a good manager (LG1-CL3 & CL4).

Allowing employees to share ideas and be involved in the decision-making process is another way to motivate and inspire people to participate in the change process (LG2-CL5).

As we are working for the government, leaders should respect and admire employees who have outstanding performance in order to create a good working environment in the organisation and increase employees’ commitment to accomplish their tasks (LG2-CL6).

To motivate followers in the organisation, leaders should set a plan and make a clear mission to accomplish the desired goals. This includes short and long-term planning. In addition, leaders need to be able to foresee the opportunities and threats which might occur in the future. Moreover, when we have a clear plan we have to assign the individual to take responsibilities for the job regarding their capabilities. Furthermore, we should empower them to make their own decisions based on their positions. In addition, we need to evaluate and monitor working procedures. As a result, the leaders will be able to find alternative ways to assist and persuade employees to participate in the change process in the organisation. Moreover, giving advice and providing support to all members is another alternative method to make employees feel more active and willing to perform a better job. Therefore, when we already have a plan, we have to have an evaluation system to measure whether employees performed toward the same goals or not. Thus, if the tasks are not completed, the issues will be clarified and resolved immediately (LG1-CL7; LG2-CL8).

4.2.4. Research question four

Are you familiar with the term “leadership style”?

This question surveyed whether the FEBM leaders were familiar with and understood the term “leadership style”. This helped the researcher to identify the perspectives of FEBM’s leaders towards the different styles of leadership. After interviewing, there were nine out of the 12 respondents identified as knowing and understanding the term “leadership styles”
(LG1-CL1, CL4, CL7, CL9 & CL12; LG2-CL6, CL8, CL10 & CL11), while the other three respondents were not really sure what leadership style is and how it works in the organisation. Hence, brief explanations about leadership styles were needed to clarify and add to the understanding of those interviewees (LG1-CL3; LG2-CL2 & CL5).

In addition, the researcher asked further questions related to the leadership capabilities and leadership styles as described in the next section:

4.2.4.1. How would you describe your leadership style to inspire employees to adapt to change in order to improve organisational performance?

Based on the interviews, it was revealed, as the excerpts below illustrate, that the FEBM leaders have different styles of leadership to inspire their subordinates based on the circumstances and the different kinds of people they have to deal with. This question supports research sub-question B.

Taking about leadership style, I prefer to do it first and convince others to follow my vision. I think this style is suitable for the Lao culture. However, I do not mean we have to use this style all the time. I might change or adapt the ways that I approach people depending on what kind of people am I dealing with. In sum, definitely my leadership style is charisma (LG1-CL1).

I prefer combination leadership style. I try to act as an example for the followers and let them learn and follow my advice. I believe that when the subordinates have trust and believe in me, they will feel confident to get the job done as they know where they are heading to (LG2-CL2).

My style is trying to expand ideas from others perspectives. Information sharing is also important for me to stimulate new ideas from every member. Moreover, the decision-making process is not based on the leader only; individuals have equal chance to contribute their thoughts to make the best decision for the organisation. This is because in the Lao PDR we work as a team and every person has to discuss and communicate with each other to get the job done. By applying this style of leadership, we can ensure that the final decision is best suited for all members and will motivate employees to work effectively (LG1-CL3 & CL4; LG2-CL2, CL5 & CL6).
Human resource is the most valuable factor for the success of the organisation. However, different people have different perspectives toward satisfaction in the workplace. Thus, leaders have to fully understand employees’ needs in order to motivate and influence them in times of change in the organisation. This will ensure that the assigned tasks are suitable and appropriate for every member. As a result, the outcome of the performance would be more effective (LG1-CL7 & CL12).

When I assign the work, I let employees think first and then give them some advice to ensure that all the processing of tasks is going well. I will act as a coach or supervisor to help them if they have problems. This style will help to improve the capacity of people in the organisation because employees can develop the way of their thinking, know how to solve problem and justify their own decisions (LG2-CL8).

Personally, I employ the combination style: empowering and controlling. It is not a democratic or autocratic style, but in between. I mean when we assign work to individuals, sometimes we need to observe, control and evaluate their performance. It depends on the situation. We cannot confirm and use the only style in our organisation. Moreover, sometimes the laissez-faire leadership style is used to motivate employees in times of change. I employ this type of leadership style when I feel confident that my employees clearly understand the concept and function of the organisation. This is because under the laissez-faire leadership style, I could empower my employees and let them perform the tasks and make their own decisions with some advice and guidelines (LG1-CL9).

I think harmonising or brainstorming would be suitable to describe my style. This is because in the academic sector leaders have to respect others’ ideas and perspectives. Thus, sharing would be an appropriate word to describe my leadership style rather than leading (LG2-CL11).

An alternative view as stated by one respondent was that being a leader in higher education, especially in the government sector, involved having to lead based on the rules and policy of the organisation. Leaders have to ensure that all the tasks are done and completed whatever happens in the organisation.

My leadership style is based on the rules and policy of the organisation. This means that everyone needs to follow the rules and agreement of the National University of Laos. Moreover, every individual has to complete their work no matter how they think and feel
about the change because this is the agreement from the top managers in the faculty. The most important thing is we should ensure that we have a clear plan for every week or month regarding the yearly plan. This will help the organisation enable to evaluate employees’ performance whether the outcomes meet the organisational goals or not (LG2-CL10).

4.2.4.2. Do you think your leadership style effectively inspires employees in times of change?

This research question asked the respondents to evaluate their leadership style, whether they were satisfied with their style, or they wanted to employ other styles of leadership for a better outcome. Based on the interviews, all senior managers in FEBM noted that their leadership styles are the most suitable approaches to inspire employees in the organisation. However, some argued that it is very hard to evaluate the satisfaction of their employees and it needs time to convince employees to adapt to change. At the same time, the participants also suggested that applying man views are contained in the following excerpts:

*Overall so far so good (LG1-CL1; LG2-CL11). This is because the majority of our work is completed. Comparing the number of our staff and the high workload we can say that our division is ranked one of the top in terms of achieving alternative leadership styles will be more effective to motivate employees in times of change. These goals in our faculty. This achievement is derived from the solidarity of our members and effective cooperation. Moreover, when I am not in the office, my deputies also can work on behalf of me effectively (LG1-CL1).*

*There are the differentiations between leaders in private and government sectors so styles are not interchangeable. In the government sector leaders will make a decision based on the agreement of all members. While, in the private sector the CEO is the most powerful person who can decide the directions for all people in an organisation. Therefore, I think that my leadership style is appropriate to use in our organisation as we are working for the government (LG2-CL2).*

*I think that being a participative leader has many positive points. However, time consuming is one of the drawbacks of this style, especially when we want to make an urgent or important decision. Actually, employing many styles depending on the situations will be the effective way to lead in times of change in the organisation (LG1-CL4).*
I think the democratic leadership style is the most appropriate approach and fair for every member in the organisation. This is because working for the government sector, we cannot force or tell people to follow every step of the leaders. Thus, by employing democratic leadership style, people will have more chance to share their ideas and be involved in the decision-making process which will increase employees’ commitment to accomplish the organisational goals (LG2-CL5 & CL6).

Recently, there was a big change in our organisation and each leader has different styles to lead their subordinates. Moreover, lots of urgent work needs to be done quicker. Therefore, in this circumstance we have to emphasise tasks rather than people in order to complete the tasks. So, I tried to make it balance and focus on people’s needs as well. Sometimes I know that it is difficult to keep people happy and satisfied. However, I’ve tried my best to influence employees when there is a change by considering the needs of employees as a priority. As a result, the outcomes of the performance would be more effective, especially in times of change (LG1-CL7).

My leadership style might have some weak points, such as when we treat them like friends or family members too much; they might not respect us to some extent. But overall it doesn’t have any problems. And I am even more satisfy with the outcome of my members in the department. The most important thing is we have to be a good example for them first, then they will follow and imitate you automatically (LG2-CL8).

4.2.4.3. In your view, do you think each senior manager in FEBM has potential capabilities to lead in times of change?

This research question was asked to examine the perspectives of senior managers in FEBM toward their colleagues’ capabilities of leading employees when change is needed. The respondents critically evaluated their co-workers who are holding similar positions as senior managers in the organisation. The interviews revealed that almost all participants agree that the senior managers in the FEBM have enough capacities in terms of professional skills and knowledge to inspire employees to adapt to change. However, as can be seen in the excerpts below, the managers still see a need to develop and improve employee capabilities in order to generate a high quality of human resources for society.

Talking about the potential capabilities of the leaders in the FEBM, overall, some have and some do not. But I could not measure in percentage (LG1-CL3). This is because some leaders
play a significant role to lead their subordinates as I can see that all members in their departments or divisions admire and respect them. Moreover, it also can be seen that the leaders could motivate their people to adapt to change effectively. For instance, when the change is needed, people under the supervision of some leaders in the FEBM could complete the tasks successfully without resistance or conflict within the organisation (LG1-CL1).

On the other hand, I would say that the majority of employees in our organisation are not yet completely accepting and satisfied with the leadership style of the leaders. This is because there are contradictions and lack of communication between leaders and employees in terms of the way of thinking. As a result, it might affect a working environment which leads to low quality of performance. Hence, I think all leaders should be open-minded and try to understand more about their subordinates’ preferences, especially in terms of their needs and capabilities at work (LG2-CL2).

Generally, the position of leader in our country derives from the constitution rather than based on their capabilities. Therefore, some of leaders might have limited background of knowledge and right capacity to lead employees in the organisation (LG1-CL4).

I think it is not about knowledge and skills of leaders, it is about their understanding and the ways of improving their performance, especially, the way they communicate with other people. In order for success in the organisation, leaders not only need to have expertise knowledge and skills, they should know how to communicate their vision with all members. This does not mean telling employees what to do, but explaining why they have to do it and what would be the benefits for individuals and organisation after the change taking place. Overall, the senior managers responsible for change in our organisation definitely have a high level of knowledge and skills in terms of promoting change and achieving better performance. However, sometimes they still lack the capabilities to communicate with members in the organisation which would minimise employees’ satisfaction and motivation during the change process. Thus, the leaders have to pay more attention to information sharing throughout the organisation in order to ensure that all members understand the organisational missions and vision correctly. This is because every individual is a crucial element to bring about the success to the organisation. Hence, if the organisation lose one of the members, it would face a terrible problem in the future (LG2-CL5 & CL6).
4.2.5. Research question five

What core competencies do you think the leaders in FEBM should have in order to motivate higher performance from employees in times of change?

The issue of core capabilities is asked as the fifth question in this research project. This question determined the key competencies that leaders in higher education should have to inspire employees to adapt to change. The core competencies are the fundamental elements to enable the organisation to achieve its goals. Therefore, if the leaders do not have suitable knowledge and skills to overcome the changing environment in the organisation, ultimately conflict and resistance to change will occur. This question assisted the researcher to answer sub-question C of this research project.

The respondents emphasised that in terms of being a good leader, the ability to deal with different kinds of people is crucial, especially when change is needed. Moreover, leaders should have abilities to develop and communicate a vision and mission to all members in the organisation. In addition, effective leaders should know and understand the needs of employees and help them develop their knowledge and skills in order to ensure the success of the organisation. Furthermore, leaders should accept and openly listen to their employees’ opinions to build trust and strengthen good relationships among members. These ideas are encapsulated in the following excerpts:

*Leaders have to know and possess the abilities of dealing with different kinds of people. This means that top managers need to have full skills and knowledge to communicate and negotiate with members in the organisation (LG1-CL1).*

*Another important point is that leaders have to know and understand theory of leadership and accept others’ perspectives (LG2-CL2).*

*Moreover, leaders should know and understand organisational structure. This includes setting a clear policy, vision and mission. Besides, communicating the vision to all members in the organisation is also important for implementing the change. This is because clear plan and valid information will help people understand and get ready to implement the change (LG2-CL2, CL5 & CL8). Hence, employees will be more motivated to participate in the change process.*
In order to be an effective leader, it requires leader to have knowledge and be able to foresee the future. It means that good leaders need to think carefully before taking any decision because it might affect themselves as well as a whole organisation (LG1-CL4).

Leaders should make employees feel involved in the organisation by listening to them and trying to understand their needs. Moreover, leaders have to help employees improve their capabilities and develop their personal skills (LG2-CL5 & CL8).

Leaders should have a clear plan or clear vision and have the evaluation system to examine the quality of the outcomes (LG-CL6 & CL8). This will ensure that employees are heading to the same direction and sharing the same goals.

One important thing we have to remember is that we are working in the academic sector, which has three main functions include doing research, teaching and providing service to society. Therefore, leaders in the education sector are required to have all three competencies in order to be the effective leaders (LG2-CL11).

4.2.6. Research question six

When there is a change in your organisation, is there any resistance to change?

The majority of the respondents agreed that when the change is introduced there would be some groups of people who resist the change and are unwilling to participate in the change process. This is because when the change is introduced it not only affects the structure and system of the organisation, but also impacts people in the organisation as well. Therefore, resistance to change is an undeniable circumstance for all organisations. However, some said that resistance is not the appropriate word to use in the Lao context because Lao people do not obviously show their emotions that they are not satisfied or resist the change. In other words, people will do their assigned jobs as usual, but at a lower level of effort as they are not motivated to work. Hence, this section helps the researcher answer the research sub-question D. Excerpts from responses to question six are as follows:

Resistance to change is like the waves under water. This is because even though some people resist and do not accept the change, they would follow and keep the process of change going at the lower level of motivation and commitment. Moreover, there would be lots of questions and unsatisfied thought deep inside their heart regarding the reason why they have to change
the way they work. Hence, when implementing change it might take some time to get the job done, because some people are not willing to do their tasks (LG2-CL2).

Actually, the term of resistance might not really be appropriate in the Lao context because regarding the policy in our country we cannot resist the rules or agreement of the organisation. However, there might be some people who are dissatisfied and unhappy to follow and be involved in the process of change if there is no clear communication. But in practice we have to accept it (LG1-CL4).

Absolutely, when there is a change in the organisation, not only our faculty, it always has some groups of people who do not want to accept and resist the change (LG2-CL10).

When there is a change in the organisation, even big or small, there would be some group of people who are against and resist the change. Thus, we cannot avoid it (LG1-CL12).

4.2.6.1. What are the possible causes for the resistance?

The interviews revealed that the reasons for resistance in the FEBM vary from person to person depend on their positions, responsibilities and expectations. As the excerpts below show, the respondents elaborated on this by stating that some people are unwilling to change because they do not want to move from their comfort zone. The fear of losing their job is another cause for the resistance to change. However, the main reasons for resistance to change relate to misunderstanding and a lack of communication between leaders and employees.

Different people have different perspectives regarding the change process. Some people might resist the change because they expected to be promoted to a higher position. In addition, some might fear losing their job (LG1-CL3; LG2-CL8 & CL10).

Conflict in the organisation comes from the misunderstanding between people. Moreover, lack of communication in the organisation is the major reason for resistance. In addition, it might be because of information sharing gap, I mean the information that top managers know and information, which employees know, might not be the same. If the top managers think they did the right thing they have to explain the reason why they decided to do that. Moreover, leaders should give employees the responsibilities and empower them to make their own decisions, but need to be based on the capabilities of each individual (LG1-CL4; LG2-CL5, CL8 & CL11).
Resistance might occur because of the leadership style or the way of leading is not appropriate and does not meet the goal of management strategies. As a result, it would lead to resistance, as people are not happy about the change process. In other words, people would not accept to participate and adapt to change if there is no plan or working schedule during the change process. Moreover, unclear structure, vision and missions are another reason for resistance in the organisation. This is because employees do not really know what their responsibilities are and what would be the outcomes of the tasks. Thus, it would be very difficult for employees to work in the uncertainty and changing environment (LG1-CL7 & CL12; LG2-CL6 & CL10).

People who resist the change are the one who do not want to follow the rule and policy in the organisation (LG2-CL10).

4.2.6.2. How did you overcome resistance to change?

As the resistance to change is an unavoidable phenomenon in the organisation, this question asked the respondents to identify the possible ways which are used to deal with the resistance. The excerpts below exemplify the FEBM leaders’ view that communication is the most effective way to motivate and inspire people during the change process. This is because at the beginning of the change in the organisation people might feel uncomfortable and fear moving into the new environment. Therefore, clarifying and communicating the reasons for change to all members in the organisation would help to convince employees to adapt to change effectively. Besides, having a clear organisational structure, providing extra activities among employees and giving praise as an incentive are considered as an effective method to help the organisation overcome resistance to change.

There are many alternative ways to handle the resistance. For instance, identifying and communicating the objectives and purposes of the change to members in all levels in the organisation in order to convince them to accept and implement the process of change. We know and understand that when the change is introduced no one will be satisfied and accept the change in the first stage. Hence, we have to communicate with all members about the reasons why do we need to change from the previous system to the new one. In addition, the leaders should openly discuss with employees in all levels to find out the most suitable way to implement the change to accomplish the organisational goals (LG1-CL3, CL4, CL7, CL9 & CL12; LG2-CL10 & CL11).
As I said people in the organisation do not disclose matters to each other which has caused problems for our faculty for many years. Therefore, if we can solve this issue I think it will be easier to reduce the level of resistance in our organisation. This can be done by having extra activities among the members to let them have more chances to interact with one another. As a result, when the change is needed people in a whole organisation will get ready to adapt into the new environment together and help each other overcome the hardship circumstances in the future (LG2-CL8).

In order to convince people to participate in the change process, the organisation should have a good structure and clear working system which is able to evaluate employees’ performance (LG2-CL6).

Giving the praises to the one who did an excellent job will help the organisation inspire and motivate people to accomplish their duties (LG2-CL10).

4.2.6.3. What are the challenges that prevent the leaders from inspiring people to adapt to change?

During the period of change in the organisation, resistance to change is the major problem which might affect the organisational performance. Therefore, this research question asked the respondents to identify the challenges occurring in times of change in the organisation. This question supports the researcher answers the research sub-question D. A range of the FEBM leaders’ responses follows:

During the change process, there might be some conflicts in the organisation between who is unsatisfied and leaders, which affect our performance to in some extent. But we have to explain them and help understand the reasons behind the process of change (LG2-CL5).

The challenge that prevents leaders implementing the change in the organisation is lack of job evaluation process. This is because having a plan is not enough to ensure the quality of work if we do not have the key indicator to evaluate the performance in the organisation. We do not really know how people think and act in the organisation, especially the one who resists the change. Therefore, to prevent problems associated with resistance to change leaders should change the way of thinking, accept ideas from others and be open-minded by listening and considering the needs of their employees. If they can do that, I am pretty sure
that the organisation would be able to overcome the turbulent times no matter how big the change is (LG2-CL8).

It was the most difficult time for the top managers in order to find the most suitable ways to overcome the hardship in the period of change; especially we have to consider the alternative ways that have a minor impact for all members. Moreover, we could not change to the new system immediately; hence, time consuming change is one of the challenges for us (LG1-CL9; LG2-CL10).

In general, there was no aggressive resistance which affected the process of implementing change. Hence, it is not really the obstacle to prevent the performance in the organisation (LG1-CL12; LG2-CL11). Anyway, communication is still needed to motivate and influence employees to adapt to change.

4.2.7. Research question seven

What is the key leadership style that the leaders in FEBM should have in order to promote better productivity performance?

While question four asked about the leadership style that every respondent used to inspire employees in the organisation, this research question identified the key leadership styles which the leaders in FEBM agreed are the most suitable to implement in their organisation. This question was asked to answer research sub-question E.

As can be seen from the excerpts below, the majority of participants stated that there is no one perfect leadership style that fits the organisation. Hence, leaders should adapt and employ all styles of leadership based on the particular situation during the change process. In addition, other respondents recommended another leadership style according to their own preference approaches.

We have to adapt all styles of leadership, but the frequency of using might be different depending on the situations. We could not identify exactly which leadership style we will employ to lead people in the organisation. This is because Lao education is being changed all the time and very quickly compared to other developed countries where their education is already developed (LG1-CL1 & CL9). Hence, when the change is needed, the leaders have to consider how they will encourage their employees to adapt to the new environment of working.
I think that leaders should be more open-minded, accept others’ point of views. If they can do this, it would help the organisation improve performance in times of change. Moreover, leaders should learn from, and exchange knowledge with other educational institutions (LG2-CL2).

Leaders should be honest and have knowledge in leadership and management fields (LG1-CL3).

I might change or adapt the ways that I approach people depending on what kind of people I am dealing with. This is because different people may need different types of leading and communicating, so I have to find the most appropriate ways to talk to them in order to improve their performance (LG1-CL1).

Talking about leadership styles in education sectors, I prefer participative leadership to others because this style of leadership will ensure that all issues and problems are identified and discussed by other senior managers in the organisation. As a result, we will be able to select the best solution to improve the organisational performance during the change process (LG1-CL4).

I think applying democratic leadership style would be better than transactional leadership style. Leaders have to believe and trust in the employees’ capabilities because leaders cannot do everything by themselves. Thus, leaders should empower and support employees to do the tasks with some guidance and assistances. As a result, employees will be more motivated and will do their best to get the job done (LG2-CL5).

In the organisation, leaders should emphasise employees’ satisfaction and solidarity among members. When employees could not complete their jobs, leaders should ask and find out the reason why they cannot work properly (LG1-CL7). This will help the organisation resolve the problems immediately and prevent an undesired issue that might occur in the future.

According to my style, I prefer to control and manage people based on the rules and policy of the organisation. To do this, I have to explain and clarify the reasons why we need to change and why we have to develop our organisation. This will help employees understand more about the importance of change. In addition, we have to evaluate employees’ performance in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our members. To sum up, the most important thing is we have to follow the rules (LG2-CL10).
4.2.8. Research question eight

What should the organisation do to improve the capabilities of leaders in order to inspire employees when the change is needed?

Ability to motivate and inspire employees in times of change seems to be the critical issues that the organisation has to carefully consider. Hence, this research question surveyed the perspectives of FEBM leaders to generate further recommendations on how to develop and improve the capabilities of leaders to handle the resistance when change is introduced in the organisation.

Based on the interviews, it revealed that providing workshops and seminars for the senior managers to learn about and practise leadership are the most appropriate methods to improve the capacities of the leaders in FEBM. Moreover, some respondents also suggested that doing research would help the leaders strengthen their knowledge and professional skills in their academic areas. Even though there are many workshops and training programs available, some argued that the leaders hardly put what they have learned into practice. Hence, it is strongly believed that alongside attending a particular seminar, leaders should adapt what they have learned and apply it to the organisation.

_Talking about developing capacities of leaders in our faculty, I think we have to compare and learn from other universities both inside the country and from overseas. Leaders have to be more open-minded, accept new ideas from others and put them into practice (LG1-CL1, CL4, CL7, CL9 & CL12; LG2-CL5, CL6 & CL10)._ 

_Moreover, not only top managers need to develop their capabilities, all employees in the organisation should have an equal chance to develop themselves in order to become a better leader in the future (LG1-CL4; LG2-CL10)._ 

_Leaders in the education sectors need to do more research, improve the capabilities of the language in order to communicate effectively. Moreover, doing research also helps the leaders improve their knowledge and skills in their own professional fields (LG1-CL3)._ 

_Moreover, we should have a retreat program for all members in our organisation. This will help to strengthen the good relationships among employees and managers. In addition, people will get to know their colleagues better, thus, they will work together easier. As a_
result, it will generate better working environment in the organisation when the change is needed (LG2-CL5).

Actually, we organise leadership workshops and training every year. But those knowledge and skills from the training are not applied in practice properly. This means that the lesson learnt from the exchange program are not used in the organisation. Therefore, in order to develop the organisation, the most important thing is the leaders should apply all knowledge and skills learnt from others not just stay the same and not do anything (LG1-CL1; LG2-CL8).

4.3. Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the semi-structured interviews with 12 senior managers in FEBM. The interviews revealed that all respondents fully understood and know the important term “leadership” in the organisation. With respect to the leadership style, three participants were still unfamiliar with the term “leadership style” in the organisation, while other respondents understood and could identify their leadership style without further explanation. Based on the interviews, some of the key leadership styles which are deemed the most appropriate and suitable for higher education, especially in the FEBM were identified.

Regarding resistance to change, all respondents expressed the view that misunderstanding and lack of communication at the beginning stage of the change process are the main causes of resistance and conflict in the organisation. Therefore, leaders should communicate the vision of the organisation to employees at all levels to inspire them to implement the change effectively. In addition, it is critical that the reasons for change are identified in order to motivate and convince people to understand and be willing to adapt to change.

Having interpreted the research findings, there appear to be three common themes which have surfaced: First, the key capacities of effective leaders, second, the roles of leaders and third, the appropriate leadership styles in times of change.

Further discussion of these significant findings is undertaken in the next chapter utilising the relevant literature presented in chapter two.
Chapter Five: Discussion of the findings

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the important findings obtained from the data reported in chapter four. In addition, the relevant literature and theories from chapter two are used to contextualise the discussion of the findings. The findings are discussed based on the categorised themes under the headings of the research sub-questions.

5.2. Understanding the term “leadership”

Hypothesis one

H01 the leaders in the FEBM do not fully understand the term “leadership” in the organisation.

The aim of this research project is to “identify practical leadership styles of the leaders in FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change”. Hence, in order to identify the leadership styles, it is important to have a clear understanding of what leadership is and what effective leaders do. However, there is very limited literature about leadership styles being practised in the Lao education sector. Thus, it is interesting to study whether the senior managers in this sector recognise the importance of leadership in the organisation. This section enables the researcher to determine the perceptions of FEBM’s leaders toward the importance of leadership in the organisation. Therefore, by asking the perspectives of senior managers in the FEBM about the importance of leadership roles in the organisation the researcher is able to answer research sub-question A “what is the understanding of the role of leadership style in an organisation?” and H01.

The interviews revealed that the participants from LG1 and LG2 comprehensively know and understand the term leadership in the organisation. Initially, some respondents could give their perspectives on the importance of leadership in the organisation directly, while, some took time to think first before answering. This might be because some of the respondents are lecturers who work for economics departments, so they would not be quite as familiar with the theory of leadership as those who specialise in the business management field.

It was found that the respondents emphasised that leadership is a crucial element in the success of the organisation, especially in the FEBM which corresponds with the study of
Hayes (2014). This is because recently the Lao education sector has tried to improve its quality and capabilities to meet the needs of globalisation, as Lao PDR proposes to become a member of the AEC by 2015. Therefore, in response to the complex and challenging circumstances, the education sector in Lao PDR, especially higher education, places a significant value on changing the education system in order to build high quality human resources for new markets. In order to achieve this goal, effective leaders are the main factors to encourage and inspire subordinates to work beyond expectation towards the success of the organisation. This perspective aligns with Ali (2012) who affirms that the leader is considered as a change agent in the organisation who has abilities to inspire and stimulate employees toward the desired goals. Moreover, several authors further highlight that leadership refers to the capabilities of individuals to motivate and influence other people to accomplish a set goal in an organisation (Northouse, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2014; Rowe & Guerrero, 2013)

Moreover, the five senior managers (LG1-CL3, CL4, CL10; LG2-CL2 & CL6) pointed out that leadership means having a clear vision and mission in order to guide followers toward the desired goals in the organisation. To achieve this, the leader is a fundamental factor in distributing and communicating the organisational vision and mission to all members. The respondents strongly believed that understanding the organisational vision and goal would motivate and inspire employees, especially in times of change. This perspective aligns with Bush (2011) who reinforces this notion that visionary leaders are crucial to strengthening employees’ ambition to accomplish the organisational goals. Based on Daft (2013), a vision statement assists the organisation in providing the direction to all members in the most effective way as it creates new challenges and opportunities to propel the organisation towards its desired achievement. Therefore, it can be concluded that almost half of the respondents appeared to understand the importance of generating a goal and vision in order to bring about the change in the organisation.

Another interesting point is that the majority of respondents said leadership is about having trust and belief in subordinates’ capabilities. It is very important to provide employees with the opportunities to take responsibilities for the tasks and enable them to make their own decisions. Hence, empowerment is a critical factor for organisational achievement. This finding corroborates Boonstra’s (2013) idea that besides the capability of distributing the vision and foreseeing the possible opportunities in the future, empowering employees to have
their own responsibilities and make their own decisions is another important factor to encourage employees in the organisation.

Moreover, the respondents pointed out that effective leadership should function as a good example to all members in the organisation, so that employees can learn and imitate the good habit and behaviours from the leaders. This perspective is supported by Khan et al. (2014) who demonstrate that leaders are role models insofar as they motivate and influence employees to accomplish the desired goals. Leaders are the main factors in encouraging employees to adapt to the change environment. Hence, without leaders who take responsibility for leading change, the organisation could not implement the change effectively.

Based on the findings above, the hypothesis H01 - the leaders in FEBM do not fully understand the term of leadership in the organisation – is not supported, as all leaders know and understand the importance of the term leadership in the organisation. The findings of the research revealed that the FEBM leaders effectively recognised the importance of leadership to encourage employees’ commitments to the organisation. As such, this section also helped the researcher answer the research sub-question, A which asked if the leaders in the FEBM significantly understand the important role of leaders to help people achieve the desired goals of the organisation.

5.3. The leadership styles being used in the FEBM

Hypothesis Two

H02 the leaders in FEBM fully understand the term “leadership style” being used in the organisation

To identify the appropriate leadership styles which will help to inspire employees to adapt to change in the organisation, it is necessary to know and understand the leadership styles currently used in the organisation. In other words, leaders should know their potential capabilities of what their capacities are, what they can do and how they will do it. This will help to increase employees’ satisfaction and motivate them to be willing to implement the change.

Initially, three respondents stated that they were not familiar with the term “leadership style” and did not even know how it works in the organisation. However, after a brief explanation of
different styles of leadership, it was clear that they could understand and were able to identify their own styles of leadership which matched and so were suitable for accomplishing the desired goals in the organisation.

The findings from the 12 respondents who answered the research sub-question B are presented below “Which particular model of leadership style is currently used to inspire people in times of change in FEBM?” According to the in-depth interviews, all senior managers in the FEBM said that they employ a variety of styles of leadership in order to inspire their subordinates depending on situations in the organisation and the level of satisfactions of the individuals. This may because the respondents have been in the organisation for a long time and have a large amount of experience so fully understand how the system works. As a result, they know and understand the most appropriate approaches to inspire subordinates to adapt to change. Thus, they said that the leadership styles being used to motivate employees to adapt to change are critically chosen based on the employees’ satisfaction and the specific situations in the organisation. During the interviews, the majority of respondents were not confident enough to explain their own leadership styles to the researcher. This might be because they were not sure how to give the name to their styles of leadership. Some respondents said that they had read and learned about the leadership styles before, but that was long time ago, so they might not be able to provide the correct names and characteristics of their styles to the researcher. To avoid any problems and keep the information as accurate as possible, the researcher asked the respondents to just describe the ways that they attempted to motivate their employees to adapt to change. Then, the researcher would be able to compare the answers to the leadership styles listed in the literature review. Therefore, according to the semi-structured interviews, there are five common leadership styles being used to inspire employees in the FEBM which are discussed below:

5.3.1. Transformational leadership style

The study revealed that the majority of respondents executed the transformational leadership style to inspire employees in the organisation in times of change. This is based on the perspectives of senior managers in the FEBM (LG1-CL1, CL4, CL7 & CL12; LG2-CL2, CL5, CL6 & CL8) who pointed out that they lead subordinates by providing guidelines and giving them opportunities to get involved in the decision-making process. The respondents believe that it is critical to use this style of leadership as it works well, especially in the higher education sector in the Lao PDR. This may be because the decision-making process in
the government sector in Lao PDR is still based on consensus-based agreement among people in the organisations. In other words, individuals have an equal chance to contribute their thoughts and perspectives to make the best decisions for the organisation. Furthermore, they identified another important role of transformational leaders; that is, to develop and improve employees’ knowledge and skills in order to strengthen the competitive advantages of the organisation.

These findings are well supported by Voon et al. (2011) who conclude that transformational leadership is one of the most appropriate leadership styles in the government sector. They argue that leaders who practice the transformational style would transcend their self-interest for the common good and place a high value on developing members’ knowledge and skills. From the findings, it can be clearly seen that the FEBM leaders are significantly concerned with, and care about building good relationships among subordinates, whereby leaders emphasise emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals. This finding comports with these researchers Mir and Abbasi (2012). Moreover, the transformational leadership style helps the organisation receive high commitment and reduces the level of resistance to change (Humphrey, 2014). Hence, it might be the reason why the majority of the FEBM leaders believe that transformational leadership style is the most appropriate approach to lead the organisation accomplish a desired goal.

Moreover, scholars believe that leaders who practise this approach could bring about successful change into the organisation as they can make employees feel involved and valued in the organisation (Bodla & Nawaz, 2010; Boonstra, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2014). Furthermore, it was clearly commented by Al-Husseini et al. (2013) that transformational leaders influence and inspire employees by providing guidelines and strengthening subordinates’ knowledge and capabilities. The literature review showed that employees who work for transformational leaders can be more motivated to participate in implementing a change process because employees will feel that they are being trusted, so they will be more committed to accomplishing the organisational goals (Al-Husseini et al., 2013; Bodla & Nawaz, 2010; Mir & Abbasi, 2012; Riley, 2012; Voon et al., 2011). Hence, the transformational leadership approach is considered widely to be the fundamental effective leadership style to encourage change in education institutions (Didin et al., 2014).
5.3.2. Charismatic leadership style

Another leadership style that can be observed from the interviews is the charismatic leadership style. The respondents (LG1-CL1; LG2-CL2) stated that they always lead by providing good examples and trying to make employees trust and believe in their vision. The leaders strongly believe that providing guidelines and communicating the organisational vision to all members are important to encourage high performance in the workplace. In addition, the respondents also explained that when change is properly explained and communicated to employees, they are more likely to feel safe and secure about working in the new environment in order to accomplish the common goals.

These findings resonated with the literature; and several researchers point out that charismatic leaders always have a clear goal and are able to communicate the organisational vision to the members at all levels effectively (Giffin & Fleet, 2014; Northouse, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2013). This also aligns with the work of Gill (2011) who argues that under charismatic leadership employees feel more confident about participating in the change process. This is because leaders who practise the charismatic leadership style tend to understand their followers’ needs and help them to develop their capabilities to meet the expectations of the tasks (Robbins & Judge, 2014). Moreover, charismatic leaders motivate employees by providing a good example to make employees trust and believe in the organisational vision and goals (Gill, 2011). The findings also corroborate the ideas of Vlachos et al. (2013) that charismatic leaders are able to motivate and inspire employees because they know their own capabilities and have a clear goal by which to accomplish the desired achievement of the organisation. In other words, leaders who assume a charismatic leadership style tends to be able to foresee the future and so set a clear plan to handle the expected circumstances (Chemers, 2014; Robbins & Judge, 2014). Therefore, based on the characteristics and capabilities of leaders who practise the charismatic leadership style, it can be concluded that this type of leader is another effective approach that is suitable to employ in the Lao education context.

5.3.3. Democratic/participative leadership style

Democratic leadership is another leadership style that FEBM leaders execute to lead the employees, especially when there is a change in the organisation. According to two participants (LG1-CL4 & CL9), it is important to be people-oriented which means focusing on individuals’ needs rather than forcing the employees to complete the tasks (Pride et al.,
2013). These two participants explained that the democratic approach allows employees with expertise to work based on their own knowledge and experience. Moreover, another interviewee also stated, “in the Lao PDR we work as a team and every individual has an equal chance to share and communicate their opinions in order to get the job done”. This shows that he/she strongly believe that the democratic leadership style is suitable for the Lao organisation to overcome an unavoidable change.

Research conducted by Boonyachai (2011) reinforces this thematic finding that leaders who employ a democratic leadership style tend to give direction and act as a coach then allow the followers to make their own decisions. This type of leader works well when employees want to get involved in the decision-making process and are keen to develop their capabilities. From the interviews, one participant commented that those adopting a democratic leadership style could enhance relationships between leaders and followers, because followers can give feedback and contribute ideas to the leaders in the organisation during the communication process (Boonyachai, 2011). Humphrey (2014) shares the same point of view and states that under the democratic leadership style employees will have an equal chance to share, comment and be involved in the decision-making process. As a result, the organisation could minimise the level of resistance and conflict in times of change.

However, the democratic leadership style might not be the best choice in an emergency situation, as Pride et al. (2013) argue, since involving many people in the decision-making process is time-consuming. Moreover, democratic leaders tend to choose a final decision based on the majority agreement which might not be the best solution for the organisation (Goetsch & Davis, 2013). Therefore, it can be concluded that the democratic leadership style might help the organisation encourage high commitment from employees, but it may not work well in some particular circumstances (Crisp & Turner, 2009).

5.3.4. Laissez-faire leadership style

From the findings of the semi-structured interviews, one respondent (LG1-CL9) utilised the laissez-faire leadership style to motivate employees in the FEBM. The respondent explained that he/she adopts the laissez-faire leadership style when the employees fully know and understand the policy and working systems in the organisation. In orders words, the laissez-faire leadership style will be used if the employees have expert knowledge and skills to accomplish the tasks without supervision from the leaders.
This perspective is contra to the study of Chaudhry and Javed (2013) who stated that the laissez-faire leadership style is an appropriate approach to motivate employees if compared to other styles of leadership. Leaders who practise this type of leadership do not truly motivate employees because they do not have real authority to respond in an urgent situation (Boonyachai, 2011). In addition, under the laissez-faire leadership style, the leaders dislike providing guidance and assisting employees to perform the tasks (Khan et al., 2011; Wood, 2014). As a result, the laissez-faire leaders would fail to develop employees’ capabilities which might have a negative impact on the organisation in the near future. Thus, it can be concluded that this style of leadership encourages minimal commitment, provides little guidance and functions poorly when urgent decision-making is required. Even though laissez-faire leaders could develop and strengthen good relationships among employees, these relationships would exist only for a short period.

5.3.5. Autocratic leadership style

It is interesting to note that an autocratic approach is also one of the leadership styles being used in the FEBM. Based on the semi-structured interviews, one of the respondents (LG2-CL10) was found to have described her leadership style as being based on the rules and policy of the organisation. The respondent believes that being completely task-oriented is the best approach to lead the organisation toward the desired goals, especially during the change process. As a result, the leaders will be able to ensure that all the tasks is done and completed.

Even though autocratic leadership style enables leaders to lead employees complete the tasks, it seems to be a negative and not recommend from many scholars. This can be seen by the study of Bass and Bass (2009) who criticise that autocratic leaders place high value on accomplishing organisational mission rather than concern about individual’s needs. This perspective align with the study of Pride et al. (2013), Adeniyi (2010), and Northouse (2013) who argue that leaders who practice autocratic leadership style often use their coercive power to direct and control employees. This would cause stress and pressure environment in the work place which could affect working performance of employees. Besides, the autocratic leaders is considered as directional leaders who always take full responsibility for taking decision and not allow followers to be involved in the decision-making process in the organisation. Hence, this type of leadership could motivate employees only in a short-term and could not promote better outcomes as people do not feel involved and valued in the organisation (Gill, 2011). Therefore, it could be concluded that autocratic leadership style
might not be the appropriate approach to inspire employees to adapt to change (Pride et al., 2013).

The findings for the five leadership styles answered the research sub-question B of this research project, namely, “Which particular model of leadership styles is currently used to inspire people in times of change in FEBM?” These findings revealed that there are many different styles of leadership being used in the FEBM based on personal perspectives and preferences of each leader. Therefore, it can be summarised that there are five leadership styles that the FEBM leaders adopting to inspire employees in the organisation in times of change. These five approaches are listed as follows:

1. Transformational leadership style
2. Charismatic leadership style
3. Democratic leadership style
4. Laissez-faire leadership style
5. Autocratic leadership style

Therefore, based on the result of the findings, this study supports the H02 that the leaders in FEBM fully understand the term of leadership style being used in the organisation and answers research sub-question B.

5.4. Suitable key capabilities

The study shows that all respondents are aware of the core concepts of leadership roles in the higher education sector that are crucial to motivating employees in times of change. The participants from both groups (LG1 and LG2) agreed and commented that the most important role of leaders in the education sector to help employees enhance their capabilities when there is a change in organisation is to demonstrate communication skills. It is interesting to note that informing employees so they can understand the reasons for change is a critical tool when preparing for the change process. The participant (LG2-CL2) stated that leaders should be able to communicate organisational vision, strategies and mission with members at all levels. This will help the organisation ensure that employees are moving in the same direction in order to accomplish the common goals. Explaining what is going on in the organisation
and providing the reasons for implementing change will increase employees engagement and help them adapt to change effectively (Northouse, 2013). These significant findings resonate with the research of several scholars who emphasise that during times of change leaders should continually communicate organisational vision and mission with employees through various channels as a means of guiding employees to implement change successfully (Cameron & Green, 2012; Fritzenschaft, 2014; McDonald & Stockley, 2010). Hence, if educational leaders do not have the capabilities to communicate and establish the organisational vision and goals to people, they may be unable to lead their organisations successfully through the change process (Moos, 2000).

Educational leaders should exhibit expert knowledge about doing research and have professional skill in a particular area. One of the participants (LG2-CL11) said that “leaders in the education sector are required to have three main functions include doing research, teaching and providing service to society”. The respondent strongly believes that having professional knowledge and skills not only helps leaders increase their capability for doing research, but also helps them to improve curricula in the faculty. This is endorsed by Millar (2010) and Faghihi (2012) who both indicate that the most important capabilities of educational leaders is understanding their specific field properly in order to be a role model to assist the academic stuff improve their professional skills and increase employees engagement. As the FEBM is attempting to improve and develop its organisation for becoming a member of the AEC in 2015, it is even more important for educational leaders to develop their knowledge and skills to compete in forthcoming new environment.

It is also interesting to note that motivation skill is another key capability that academic leaders should have in order to inspire employees when there is a change in the organisation. Based on the semi-structured interviews, the participants suggested that considering subordinates’ needs is a crucial element to motivate and support effective performance in the organisation in times of change. This aligns with the study of Nelson and Quick (2013) and Lester (2013) who conclude that people will be more motivated when they feel satisfied and get what they expected. In order to understand and know employees’ needs, leaders should be open-minded and allow employees to be involved in the decision-making process which will help the leaders encourage employees in the organisation to implement the change successfully. Hence, leaders should act as role models to inspire employees to enthusiastically contribute towards achieving the organisational goals.
5.5. Key leadership styles to inspire employees in times of change

Hypothesis

H 03 a specific leadership style in FEBM is appropriate to inspire employees in times of change

This section helps the researcher to answer the research sub-question E of this research project, namely “What is the key leadership style that the leaders should have in order to inspire employees in times of change” and addressed H03. The research findings showed that the senior managers in the FEBM recognised that no permanent leadership style perfectly motivates employees at all times. Leaders need to adapt their approaches depending on the environment and the situations in the organisation in order to fit the needs of all employees. The participants believed that implementing change in the organisation apparently refers to the abilities of leaders to influence and motivate employees to adapt to change. Thus, they suggested that it is significant to know and understand the nature of individuals in the organisation in order to lead the change successfully. Due to the complexity in the organisation, leaders have to know what kind of leadership styles should be used in order to control and manage change. This is because different people have different perspectives about the change process which requires different leadership styles to handle those circumstances. As a result, leaders will be able to convince and motivate people to adapt to change. Hence, the participants agreed that executing more than one leadership style would be the most appropriate solution to successfully implementing change in the organisation.

It is obvious that in the higher education sector, especially in the FEBM, implementing or introducing change might not be as difficult if compared to other organisations. This is because employees in the educational organisation are people who have a high-level of knowledge and skills, and most of them are teachers and lecturers. However, it does not mean that there is no challenge or any obstacle to inspire them to participate in the change process.

The thematic finding came from the empirical data and can be supported by several researchers who argue that leaders could employ various leadership styles to motivate and inspire employees to adapt to change. Millar (2010) argues that in the environment of change in the higher education sectors, diverse alternative leadership approaches regarding the situation are required in order to influence people to participate in the change process effectively. This is because change in the organisations refers to the transformation of
individuals’ beliefs, thought, feelings and behaviours. Thus, without a proper leadership style, the organisation would not be able to implement the change successfully. As a result, once the leaders are able to adapt and exercise the appropriate leadership styles to overcome the complexity of change in the organisation, they can ensure the most effective outcomes in order to fulfil the needs of all employees (Faghihi, 2012).

Therefore, it can be concluded that a combination leadership style is the most appropriate approach for leaders in the FEBM to inspire and motivate employees to adapt to change. In sum, the findings of this research project support the H03 that *a specific leadership style in FEBM is appropriate to inspire employees in times of change*. The result of the findings indicated that the leaders in the FEBM executed more than one leadership style based on the different situations in order to encourage motivate employees participate in the change process. The leaders believe that different situations need different approaches to tackle with. Hence, the hypothesis H03 is well supported and accepted. In addition, the research findings also help the researcher answer the research sub-question E.

5.6. The challenges to implement change

It is apparent that during the change process leaders still face the difficulties and obstacles to convince and motivate employees to adapt to change. Even though leaders have chosen the most appropriate leadership styles that best suit for every situation in order to motivate and inspire employees to implement the change, some challenges remain. Thus, it can be clearly seen that during the implementing process of change, resistance to change is the major barrier for success in the FEBM.

As one of this research project’s interviewees aptly put it, resistance to change is like “the waves under water” that might cause some problems for the organisation. Participants further explained that during the periods of change, people might not show their reactions toward the change conspicuously, but it would affect organisational performance and slow down working progress. When this happens, it will become a challenge for the leaders to find a suitable approach to handle this issue. From the in-depth interview discussions, it can be seen that misunderstandings and a lack of communication are the main reasons for the resistance depending on the individuals’ position, responsibilities and expectations of the outcomes of the change process. For instance, the participants (LG1-CL3; LG2-CL8 & CL10) commented that some people might resist the change due to the fear of losing jobs and various benefits
after the change has taken place. Moreover, some respondents also pointed out that an information-sharing gap, with no proper communication channels between leaders and subordinates throughout the organisation before the change takes place is another source of resistance to change. As one of the respondents (LG1-CL1) said, “the majority of employees in our organisation still do not accept and are not satisfied with the leadership styles of the leaders due to lack of communication between leaders and employees”. These significant findings align with Carnall and By (2014) who affirm that implementing change is difficult and a challenge for all organisation as it has to deal with human behaviours. Spector (2010) concurs that individuals’ expectations of the change process are the main obstacles to achieve the desired goals. The results of the semi-structured interviews clearly showed that leaders would face challenges to inspire employees to adapt to change if they cannot communicate the objectives and benefits of change throughout the organisation precisely. This concords with the work of Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu (2013).

In addition, the respondents (LG1-CL9; LG2-CL10) complained that another challenge for leaders when implementing change is that the process is time consuming. The literature review revealed strong support for the view that the change process required a good deal of time; time is needed to educate and persuade employees to adapt their behaviours and attitudes for the new environment in order to successfully gain the expected outcomes (Burke, 2014; Hayes, 2014). The respondents acknowledged this and commented that time constrains were a huge challenge for leaders trying to implement change successfully. Based on both Lewin’s (1947) and Kotter’s (1996) change models, time is identified as a fundamental element in bringing about successful change. These perspectives are echoed in a number of other studies (Entrekin & Scott-Ladd, 2014; Fritzenschaft, 2013). Therefore, leaders in higher education need to have proper time management skills in order to overcome a key challenge of the change process.

Another major challenge that emerged from the data was the issue of developing leaders’ capability to handle the change process. It was clearly stated by one respondent (LG1-CL1) that some senior managers in the FEBM still lack the particular knowledge and skills to motivate and inspire their subordinates to adapt to change. Even though seminars and training about leadership are provided regularly, the respondents from both groups (LG1 and LG2) affirmed that there is a little chance for leaders to apply the lessons learnt. The respondents stated that the main reason why the senior managers in the FEBM seldom employ the
knowledge and skills learnt from the training into practice is that the theories might not be suitable and not even appropriate for adaptation to the organisation. Moreover, FEBM senior managers might think that their approaches to leading in the organisation are effective enough to handle resistance and conflict among people when implementing change. The respondents also said that there is no proper system to evaluate organisational performance after implementing change. As a result, it requires the senior managers in the FEBM, who are responsible for change to recognise the importance of particular leadership styles in order to ensure that employees are motivated to adapt to change.

Hence, the results of the research findings explain some of the challenges for the leaders in the FEBM to implement change and help the researcher answer the research sub-question D of this research project.

5.7. Summary

This chapter discussed the empirical data from the semi-structured interviews in relation to the literature review undertaken in chapter two. The discussion started with the question to identify the understanding of leaders in the FEMB of the term “leadership”. It revealed that overall the senior managers recognised and understood that leadership is a significant element in helping leaders successfully establish a change in the organisation. Then the discussion moved further to discover the leadership styles being used in the FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change. From the findings, it can be clearly seen that there are five leadership styles being used in the FEBM. Each style of leadership is used based on the characteristics and preferences of the leaders. Those leadership styles are: transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic/participative leadership, laissez-fairs leadership and autocratic leadership. In the area of the appropriate leadership style to inspire employees in times of change, it was observed that all respondents employed more than one leadership approach to motivate their employees to adapt to change depending on the situation and the different kind of employees they were dealing with. It appeared that the majority of interviewees employed transformational leadership style, while one or two leaders in the FEBM favour other leadership styles. Finally, the key leadership capabilities and the challenges to implement change were also discussed with a focus on time constraints, training not being put into practice and the lack of proper communication skills.
Chapter six draws research conclusions in response to the research questions. In addition, the strengths, limitations and recommendations for further study are also addressed.
Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings of the research project by highlighting the key aspects to answer the research questions. The chapter then moves on to make recommendations for leaders in the FEBM to enhance their leadership skills in order to inspire employees to adapt to change effectively in future. Finally, the limitations and further research opportunities are also presented.

6.2. Research conclusion

To achieve the aim of the research project “identify practical leadership styles of the leaders in FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change”. Twelve senior managers who hold positions as leaders in the FEBM were invited to participate. By employing a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews, the researcher identified the perspectives of leaders regarding the importance of leadership, leadership styles and the challenges to implement the change process.

6.2.1. The understanding of the term “leadership”

The study revealed that all senior managers in the FEBM acknowledged and commented that leadership plays a significant role in motivating and inspiring employees, especially in times of change. This research showed that employees expected to have an effective leader who has a clear goal, mission and vision to lead the organisation toward the desired outcomes. The finding was echoed by Ali (2012) who notes that leaders are perceived as change agents who possess significant knowledge and skills to bring about the successful change to the organisation. Several researchers also reinforce these findings that when the change is introduced into the organisation, leaders appear to be a crucial element to energise and motivate subordinates to participate in the change process (Northouse, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2014; Rowe & Guerrero, 2013). Bush (2011) and Daft (2013) support this perspective and further explain that employees will be more motivated under the supervision of leaders who lead by giving clear directions and well organised plans.

The findings of this research also indicated that leaders play a significant role in showing trust in subordinates, thus empowering them to make their own decisions based on leaders’ guidance and support. This finding is supported by Boonstra (2013) who proposes that
providing employees with the opportunities to take responsibilities for the tasks and enabling them to make their own decisions are the fundamental elements to promoting higher motivation for implementing change. It is concluded that the leaders in the FEBM effectively play a significant role in promoting the desired outcomes in times of change in the organisation. Therefore, these research findings did not support the H01 that *the leaders in the FEBM do not fully understand the term of leadership in the organisation* and answered the research sub-question A “what is the understanding on the role of leadership style in an organisation?”.

6.2.2. The leadership styles being used in the FEBM

This research project has identified a range of leadership styles being used in the FEBM. Based on the semi-structured interviews, it emerged that there are five leadership style that the leaders in the FEBM apply to inspire employees in times of change.

1. Transformational leadership style

The results showed that transformational leadership is one of the famous approaches that leaders in the FEBM employed. This is because the transformational leadership style was expressed by the majority of interviewees. While the other styles were not mentioned by many participants. Leaders believed that employees would become more motivated and ambitious to work if they are trusted and empowered under the supervision of their leaders. Moreover, the findings also concluded that leaders who practise this style of leadership tend to have the capabilities to develop and improve subordinates’ skills and knowledge in order to strengthen organisational performance. Based on the literature review, it is evident that the transformational leadership style is considered among scholars as one of the most effective approaches for leaders to utilise to inspire and motivate employees in times of change. Thus this research project’s significant findings are well supported by several authors who argue that the transformational leadership style makes employees feel involved and valued in the organisation (Al-Husseini et al., 2013; Bodla & Nawaz, 2010; Voon et al., 2011). It is concluded, then, that the transformational leadership style is suitable to motivate and inspire employees to adapt to change because leaders have a capability to transcend their self-interests for the good of the organisation and can have an extraordinary effect on their followers.
2. Charismatic leadership style

In addition, two respondents employed the charismatic leadership approach to encourage high performance in the workplace. The results of the findings showed that the leader (LG1-LS1) tends to lead by providing a good example and guidelines to make employees trust and believe in the organisational goals and vision. This finding is well supported by several authors who state that leaders who practice this style of leadership motivate and inspire subordinates by providing good examples in order to build trust and believe in the organisation (Gill, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2014; Vlachos et al., 2013). Charismatic leaders understand follower needs and try to help subordinates to improve and develop their capabilities. Hence, under this type of leadership, leaders would be able to motivate and inspire their employees to participate in the change process effectively (Vlachos et al., 2013). In conclusion, charismatic leadership style is one of the most appropriate approaches for leaders to encourage high commitment from employees in times of change when employees feel trust and believe in the leaders’ vision and capabilities.

3. Democratic/Participative leadership style

Moreover, democratic/participative leadership style is also employed where the leader’s emphasis is people-oriented rather than focused on completing tasks. This style of leadership allows people in the organisation equally to share their ideas and perspectives through the decision-making process. The FEBM leaders stated that this type of leadership style is appropriate for Laos’s organisations in order to motivate employees to adapt to change. Employees under this leadership style tend to have high expertise and knowledge in a particular field to fulfil the tasks, but still need support and advice from their leaders (Humphrey, 2014). Even though the democratic leadership style works well on inspiring and motivating employees to be involved in the decision-making process, it may not guarantee that the final decision is the best solution for leading the organisation to achieve goals (Crisp & Turner, 2009; Goetsch & Davis, 2013; Pride et al., 2013). It is thus concluded that in the organisation where employees are expected to have high knowledge and skills and need minor support from leaders, democratic/participative leadership style is the most appropriate tool for leaders to execute in order to inspire employees to adapt to change.

4. Laissez-faire leadership style

The laissez-faire leadership style is another practical leadership style that FEBM leaders executed to inspire employees to adapt to change. The result of the findings indicated that
leaders employed a laissez-faire leadership style if they found that all employees fully understood the policy and working systems of the organisation. However, based on the literature review, the laissez-faire approach is not appropriate to practice during the change process (Khan et al., 2011; Ricketts & Ricketts, 2013; Sosik & Jung, 2010). This is because this type of leader has no real authority, avoids making important decisions and does not provide support to their subordinates. Hence, the laissez-faire leadership style may help leaders motivate and influence employees for some situations, but it is not the ideal style to perform the tasks in times of change. A conclusion can be drawn that the laissez-faire leadership style might suit some situations where subordinates are proactive and need minimal guidance and support from the leaders.

5. Autocratic leadership style

It is interesting to note that the FEBM leaders also adopt autocratic leadership style to help them motivate employees in times of change. The findings from the semi-structured interviews showed that sometimes a leader needs to execute the autocratic leadership style to get a job done without considering subordinates’ needs. It is believed that the autocratic leadership style focuses too much on the tasks and ignores the subordinates’ capabilities and satisfactions (Adeniyi, 2010). Leaders who practice this type of leadership tend to create an environment of fear within the organisation (Pride et al., 2013). This is because autocratic leaders are not willing to be open-minded and do not accept the ideas from people in lower positions. Hence, like the laissez-faire leadership style, the autocratic leadership approach could force employees to perform the assigned tasks, but it is not a suitable tool for motivating employees to participate in the change process in the organisation.

A conclusion, therefore, can be drawn that different people have different styles of leadership to motivate and inspire employees to adapt to change. The result of the findings revealed that there are five different leadership styles have been mentioned. From the interviews and discussions, one or two participants only mentioned some of the five leadership styles. Those styles were transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic/participative leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and autocratic leadership. The FEBM leaders based on their perspectives have chosen these main leadership styles and preferences in terms of what they think might best suit Lao tertiary organisations. Therefore, based on the findings, the five leadership styles would be most appropriate and suitable for the FEBM leaders to overcome the change in the organisation.
6.2.3. Suitable key capabilities

Unlike other organisations, higher education institutions require leaders to have high skills and abilities to do research in order to help subordinates and students develop their personal and professional skills in the future. The results from the semi-structured interviews showed that the important role of educational leadership is to develop and enhance their capabilities of doing academic research. The leaders also stressed that researching and writing are crucial skills for academic leaders to promote their institutions throughout the society.

Another significant capability of leaders is having communication skills. It is believed that effective organisational vision and mission may not help the organisation successfully achieve the desired change if leaders do not possess the capability to communicate those objectives and goals to all employees. Thus, in order to help the organisation motivate and inspire employees to participate in the change process, it is necessary to inform employees at all levels of the reasons for change (Fritzenschaft, 2014; Millar, 2010). This will help the organisation ensure that every individual is working in the same direction in order to achieve the common goals.

Having the skill to motivate is also an essential capability for leaders to encourage employees to participate in implementing change. This can be done by allowing employees to participate in the decision-making process to discover the most suitable solution for the organisation. Thus, employees will feel involved and valued for being able to contribute to the success of the organisation (Lester, 2013; Nelson & Quick, 2013).

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that in order to be successful in times of change, educational leaders are required to have three important capabilities: the professional skills associated with doing research, communication skills and the skill to motivate others.

6.2.4. Key leadership styles to inspire employees in times of change

The study revealed that the FEBM leaders executed more than one leadership style in order to motivate and inspire employees to adapt to change. It is obvious that no single leadership approach will work for all situations in the organisations. Leaders should carefully consider and adapt the most appropriate approaches to handle the needs in different circumstances. Millar (2010) and Faghihi (2012) support this view and comment that to implement change in the organisation successfully, leaders must adopt a combination style of leadership in order to gain the most effective outcomes. This is because different situations need different
leadership approaches to accomplish the desired goals. A conclusion, therefore, can be drawn that the leadership style that is the best for leaders depends on the specific situation as judged by the leaders.

6.2.5. The challenges to implement change

Results from the semi-structured interviews indicated that despite the FEBM leaders having observed that their leadership styles effectively motivate and inspire employees in times of change, some obstacles and difficulties still occurred during the change process. It is obvious that resistance to change is a huge problem which can prevent implementing change from being a success. The findings showed that misunderstanding of, and a lack of communication about the reasons for change are the main causes of resistance. This significant of finding is supported by the study of Yılmaz and Kılıçoğlu (2013), which demonstrated that the most challenging and difficult aspects of inspiring employees to adapt to change is how to educate and persuade employees to understand and accept the planned change of the organisation. Therefore, leaders should have a proper communication channel to communicate the reasons for change to all employees.

A conclusion can be drawn from this research project that the lack of a proper communication channel to reach employees would cause resistance to change which might prevent leaders from implementing the change effectively. Therefore, it is imperative for the leaders in the FEBM to possess the capabilities to communicate and motivate employees to participate in the change process.

6.3. Recommendations for leaders in FEBM

Although the results of the research findings revealed that FEBM leaders recognised the importance of leadership roles and significantly executed appropriate leadership styles to motivate employees throughout the change process, the leaders still need to improve and so consider other possible ways to gain better outcomes for the future.

6.3.1. Recommendation One

The academic leaders in the FEBM should seek knowledge and develop their capabilities by attending seminars and workshops on leadership to be ready to deal with conflict and resistance during the implementation of change.
The findings show that FEBM leaders play a significant role in promoting and motivating employees during the change process in the organisation. The leaders are considered as change agents who bring about the change and encourage employees toward the desired improvement. Hence, the second recommendation is that all academic leaders in the FEBM should continuously develop and strengthen their capability through seeking out additional seminars and workshops on leadership skills. The researcher strongly believes that this will help the leaders minimise the challenges of implementing change and gain more effective outcomes from the change process.

6.3.2. Recommendation Two

FEBM leaders should gain knowledge about leadership and management in order to effectively influence employees in the organisation.

Besides leadership skills, further knowledge about leadership and management are others crucial factors that leaders in academic sector need to focus on. This is because management skills would assist leaders to deal more effectively with different types of people in a variety of situations. Moreover, with management skills leaders will be able to allocate human resources in organisation to suitable tasks and positions. Moreover, with management skills, leaders also able to manage and develop themselves to make a good decision for organisation. As a result, this can help leaders deal with resistance the change in organisation effectively.

6.3.3. Recommendation Three

Key institutions, including the National University of Laos (NUOL) and the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) should create a key performance index (KPI) to monitor, control and evaluate the organisational performance. This is critically important for the organisation to improve leaders’ capabilities for leading effective change.

Based on the findings, some respondents stated that besides a clear mission and vision which motivate employees to accomplish the desired goals, key performance index is another important factor that the organisation should have in order to control and evaluate whether or not every individual in the organisation is heading in the same direction. Hence, what might be the third recommendation is that the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the higher education institutions in Laos should work together to create a suitable evaluation
system to monitor and control the organisational performance for effective change. This would help the change leaders be able to manage and prepare for the change effectively.

6.3.4. Recommendation Four

Leaders should continuously improve and develop their leadership style by focusing on other alternative approaches to motivating employees to gain the most effective outcomes in times of change.

The findings showed that leaders, especially the senior managers who are responsible for the change should continuously practise their leadership style as depicted in Figure 1. Applicable leadership styles in the higher education sectors in the Lao PDR (p. 22). Together with these, leaders should improve their capabilities to inspire employees to adapt to change by employing other alternative leadership styles that might promote better outcomes for the organisation. These perspectives are echoed in the literature review (Carnall & By, 2014; Faghihi, 2012; Harris, 2014; Millar, 2010).

According to these main findings, it is recommended that the leaders in the FEBM should find other suitable leadership styles to inspire employees in times of change to ensure that all staff members are doing what the organisation expect. As a result, the organisation will be able to achieve the desired goals in times of change.

6.3.5. Recommendation Five

Leaders should clearly articulate the goals and objectives of the change process to employees at all levels in order to get employees involved in implementing change.

In relation to the perspectives of effective leaders, the results of the findings showed that effective leaders need to have the capability to communicate and express the organisational mission and vision to all members. Without proper communication and clear understanding of these aspects, employees’ motivation might decrease, causing negative outcomes for the organisation. These potential effects are echoed in the literature.

The fourth recommendation outlines that the leaders should pay more attention to increasing employees’ motivation in times of change. To do this, leaders should be more open-minded and willing to listen to employees' perspectives. Furthermore, leaders should effectively
communicate the organisational goals and objectives to employees to ensure that they clearly understand and know what is expected of them to achieve during the change process.

6.3.6. Recommendation Six

Leaders should adopt the change models of Lewin and Kotter in order to deal with resistance to change and be able to motivate and encourage employees to adapt to change effectively.

The findings of the research project showed that the leaders in the FEBM are facing some difficulties during the change process. This is because some people still resist the change and dislike participating in implementing the change in the organisation. Therefore, this research project strongly recommends that the leaders should practise either Lewin’s or Kotter’s change model in order to motivate and inspire employees to adapt to change. These models will help the leaders know and understand the most suitable ways to communicate to the employees the reasons for, and consequences of change. These models were explored in this project’s literature review (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1947).

6.3.7. Recommendation Seven

According to the semi-structured interviews, sometimes a person’s leader role is derived from the constitution among FEBM senior lecturers rather than being based on their own capabilities. This means that some people might become a leader without understanding and knowing the exact role of what leadership is. As a result, they would not be able to lead employees to complete the organisational goal in a pressure situation. Therefore, to ensure that the organisation has leaders with the potential to make a change in the organisation, it should select leaders on the basis of a consensus decision rather than on the assumption that applicants would be good leaders and motivate employees to adapt to change effectively.

6.4. Strengths and limitations

6.4.1. The strengths of the research project

The validity and reliability of the data collection are considered a significant strength of this research project. Even though the semi-structured interview was the only data collection method deployed, the data collection process was carefully conducted to ensure the accuracy of the research findings. Moreover, the sample selection criteria were chosen based on the aim and objectives of this research project, which proposed to identify the appropriate leadership style being used to inspire employees in the FEBM to adapt to change. Thus, the
senior managers who are holding the positions to implement the change were selected to participate in this research project. As a result, this ensured that all the information gained was accurate and reliable and so could support the research findings (Bryman, 2012; Piotrowski, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, the researcher approached and interviewed the participants in a professional and appropriate manner in order to avoid offending the participants and to gain valid and information-rich results.

Moreover, the researcher’s working experience and knowledge as a lecturer in higher education in Lao PDR is another strong point since it assisted the researcher in encouraging the participants to provide the relevant information to support the research findings.

A further strength of this research is that all participants were willing to be involved and share their perspectives to provide the most useful information for this research project. In essence, the researcher had ensured that the participants were very well prepared to fully understand the aim and purpose of this research study before participating in the interviews. Moreover, all the interview sections were conducted in a convenient and suitable place in order to avoid any interruptions while the interviews were taking place.

6.4.2. The limitations of the research project

There are some limitations regarding the nature of the research topic, which must be kept in mind when reading this research project. In terms of the aim of this research study, which focused on identifying the appropriate leadership styles in the education sectors in Laos to inspire employees in times of change, there was a limited amount of research studies. Hence, the first limitation of this study was a gap in the literature regarding leadership styles in relation to managing change in higher education in developing countries, especially in the context of the Lao PDR.

A related limitation of this research project is that it drew on research that has been undertaken mainly to study in Pakistan, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. However, the issues raised in these studies do correspond with the findings in the Lao higher education context.

Turning to the limitations of the project itself, even though the 12 participants provided extremely information-rich data which, in turn, enabled the researcher to produce significant findings, it would have been more useful to have increased the sample size. Conducting
interviews with all the leaders in the FEBM to discover the most appropriate leadership styles in the organisation would have added much more detail.

Another important point in relation to the sample is that the teachers within the department team were not part of this study. Thus, their views and perspectives and understanding about the leaders were missing from the data. These perspectives would have been interesting and informative to include and analyse in order to gain a better understanding about the appropriate leadership styles which are needed to successfully implement change in the higher education sector.

The final limitation is that this research project was conducted only in the FEBM, so the results of the study might not be representative of the overall perspectives of leaders in other educational institutions in Laos.

6.5. Further research opportunities

The researcher would like to recommend that further research should be conducted using a larger database. Data should be collected from more faculties throughout the Lao higher education sector, including both private and public institutions. Thus, the findings of further study could either support or challenge the findings of this study. This would significantly contribute to a wider knowledge base for the study of the most suitable leadership styles to inspire employees in the Lao higher education sector to adapt to change in the long term.

Moreover, the researcher would like to suggest that the research methodology should be expanded to include interviews and questionnaires with employees at all levels in the organisation to discover different perspectives on the leadership styles which are most suitable to inspire employees to adapt to change. This would provide a broader range of perspectives and so enable contrasts and comparisons to be made with the findings of this research project.

Since this research project was conducted in the Lao context, similar research could be conducted in other countries in order to compare the result between the leadership styles in Lao PDR and those in another country. Thus, it would generate useful information for leaders to understand and know which leadership styles work well in different countries. As a result, the leaders could learn from and adapt the most significant approaches to suit their own institutions.
6.6. Summary

The findings from the study indicated that leadership style is a crucial element to bring about success for tertiary organisations in a highly competitive environment. The focal point of this research was to identify the appropriate leadership style to inspire employees in the FEBM to adapt to change. In order for academic leaders in the FEBM to motivate people to effectively participate in the change process, there are five key leadership approaches currently being used. These are transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, democratic/participative leadership, laissez-faire leadership and autocratic leadership. It was, however, shown that some leadership styles might not help the leaders to motivate employees to successfully overcome the change process in the long term. From the findings, it can be concluded that a combination leadership style is the most suitable approach to execute to accomplish the desired outcomes in times of change in the FEBM. The researcher strongly believes that the findings of this research project could provide useful information for leaders to build on their knowledge base. This could result in new knowledge of leadership practices to have an appropriate impact on organisational performance in the tertiary environment in Lao PDR in the future.
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APPENDIES

APPENDIX 1: Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interview questions

I. The understanding of leaders in FEBM in terms of leadership roles
   1. What is your understanding the term of leadership in the organisation?
   2. In your view, what are the key capabilities of leaders in the higher education sector should have in order to inspire employees in the organisation?
   3. What are the importance roles of leadership to inspire employees in FEBM?
      - Do you think leadership important to the success to implement the change in an organisation? Why and how?

II. Determine leadership styles which improve performance of the FEBM workforces in times of change
   4. Are you familiar with the term of “leadership styles”?
      - If yes,
        4.1. How would you describe your leadership style to inspire employees to adapt to change in order to improve organisational performance?
        4.2. Do you think your leadership style effectively inspires employees in times of change? Why?
        4.3. How effective do leaders in FEBM play their roles in terms of inspiring employees to adapt to change?
        4.4. Do you think each senior manager in FEBM has potential capabilities to lead in times of change? Why or Why not?
      - If no, the researcher will give a brief explanation for them

III. The key competencies of leaders in FEBM to inspire employees to adapt to change
   5. In your perspective, what core competencies should the leaders in FEBM have in order to motivate higher performance from employees in times of change?
   6. How effective do leaders in FEBM inspire employees when the change is needed?

IV. The challenges for the leaders when implementing the change in the organisation
   7. Is there any resistance to change in your organisation when the change is introduced?
      - If yes,
        7.1. What are the challenges prevent the leaders from inspire people to adapt to change?
7.2. How do you overcome resistance to change?
7.3. Why do the employees tend to resist change?
   - If no,
7.4. What would you do to make employees more motivated to implement the change in order to ensure a better performance?

V. The key capabilities needed for leaders
8. In your view, what would the organisation do to improve the capabilities of leaders in FEBM in order to inspire employees when the change is needed?
9. What is the key leadership style that the leaders in FEBM should have in order to promote better productivities performance?
10. What is a key leadership style the leaders in FEBM should have in order to persuade productivity performance?
11. In your perspective, what would the organisation do to help the leaders in FEBM improve their capabilities to lead employees to adapt to change?

Note: Do you have any other comments on the roles of leadership in relation to inspiring employees to adapt to change?

Thank you very much for your valuable time to contribute informative information, answers, and comments to this interview.
APPENDIX 2: Information sheet: For participants

Information for participants

Research Project Title: Identifying the appropriate leadership styles to inspire employees in times of change, in the National University of Laos (NUOL)

My name is Soulita Tiengmany who is the researcher of this topic. I am a Master of Business student at Unitec Institute of Technology. This research project is a part of requirement to fulfil my degree programme. My research aim is to identify practical leadership styles of the leaders in FEBM, which inspire employees in times of change.

What we are doing

I would like to find out the most effective leadership styles, which have been used to implement the change in the Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM). Participating with this project you will help me investigate the important of leadership roles in the organisation when the change is needed.

What it will mean for you

I would like to interview and ask you some questions about leadership styles and the important of leadership to make a better change in your organisation. The interview will take around one hour to discuss all the questions related to the research objectives. The interview will be held in your organisation and I will contact you regularly to find the most suitable time for us to conduct the interview. I promise that all information will be treated confidentially and will not be identified in the public.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This does not stop you from changing your mind if you wish to withdraw from the project. However, because of our schedule, any withdrawals must be done within 2 weeks after we have interviewed you.

Your name and information that may identify you will be kept completely confidential. All information collected from you will be stored on a password protected file and only you, the three researchers and our supervisors will have access to this information.

Please contact us if you need more information about the project. At any time if you have any concerns about the research project you can contact our supervisor:

My supervisor is Prof. Pieter S Nel, phone 815 4321 ext. 7026 or email pnel@unitec.ac.nz
UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1041

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26.6.14 to 26.6.15. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

My name is Soulita Tiengmany. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Business degree in the School of Education at Unitec New Zealand and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is: to identify which particular leadership styles that the leaders in FEBM used to inspire employees in the times of change.

I request your participation in the following way:

Honestly answering all the relevant questions in the interview.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. The results of the research activity will not be seen by any other person in your organisation without the prior agreement of everyone involved. You are free to ask me not to use any of the information you have given, and you can, if you wish, ask to see the Thesis before it is submitted for examination.

I hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find your involvement interesting. If you have any queries about the research, you may contact my principal supervisor at Unitec New Zealand.

My supervisor is: Prof. Pieter S Nel phone: 815-4321 ext. 7026 or email: pnel@unitec.ac.nz

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1041

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26.6.14 to 26.6.15. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
APPENDIX 4: Participant consent form

Research Project Title: “Suitable leadership styles inspire employees in times of change, in the National University of Laos (NUOL)”

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this if I don't want to and I may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of the research project.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who will know what I have said will be the researchers and their supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on a computer at Unitec for a period of 5 years.

I understand that my discussion with the researcher will be taped and transcribed.

I understand that I can see the finished research document.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Signature: ………………………….. Date: ……………………………

Project Researcher: …Soulita Tiengmany…. Date: ……………………………

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1041

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 26.6.14 to 26.6.15. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
June 23, 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing this letter to support Soulita Tiengmany, who is currently undertaking Master’s degree research, Identifying appropriate leadership styles inspire employees to adapt to change, at the National University of Laos (NUOL). Soulita is a New Zealand ASEAN Scholar Award (NAZID) scholarship holder, currently enrolled in the Master of Business programme at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Soulita’s research project focus is on identifying practical leadership styles being used in Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM) to inspire employees in times of change. The objectives of this research project are to investigate what are the leadership styles used in FEBM, to determine what is the key leadership style for leaders to improve performance of the FEBM workforce in times of change should be and to identify the challenges that might become the barriers for leaders to implement change.

Therefore, the fieldwork component of this research requires Soulita conducts interviews in FEBM in order to gain an insight understanding of leaders to the importance of leadership styles being used in the organisation.

As this study is based on participatory research technique the research finding will be useful insights for planning, implementing and managing effective change activities for FEBM to enhance performance. She expects to undertake her fieldwork in July 2014.

If you require further information, please contact me directly at +64 9 815 4321 ext 7026 or email: pnel@unitec.ac.nz

Sincerely yours,

Professor Pieter S Nel

Department of Management and Marketing

Faculty of Creative Industries and Business