Exploring the Influence of Transformational Leadership, Institutional culture, and Strategic Change on Institutional Effectiveness in Higher Education

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Abstract: *The emphasis of this study is placed on enhancing understanding of how transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change form an effectual model of influence on institutional effectiveness in higher education. The study used the descriptive analytical method and approached the study problem with a case study design. The primary research instrument comprised a semi-structured interview with 4 informants from the case study university who were purposefully selected based on their willingness and knowledgeability as knowledgeable and willing informants are assumed to provide accurate and rich data which contributes to explain and enhance understanding of study problem. The study clarified the relationship among three key factors of influence on institutional effectiveness in Palestinian higher education, namely, transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change. It revealed learned lessons necessary to guide the practice of Palestinian universities toward more effectiveness and adaptiveness in the face of brutally demanding external environment.*

Keywords— higher education; transformational leadership; institutional culture; strategic change; institutional effectiveness

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank (2012) emphasized the rising significance of higher education in economic growth in a world intensely dominated by global knowledge economies and growing competitiveness. Higher education is a potential force to encourage economic growth by expanding employment and raising productivity through preparing highly skilled workforce for the various economic activities, increasing technological capacity, and leading research to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity. Obviously, investing in higher education is a key process toward the wellbeing of individuals and nations.

However, various scholars claimed that Palestinian universities are ineffective as they cannot adapt to numerous changing realities in their environment. The biggest threat is the massively growing public demand on higher education. An increasing public hunger for higher education has placed further pressures on universities and resulted in various severe chronic problems in terms of student access to higher education, institutional capacity to contain large numbers of students, rising demands for educational quality, the relevance of institutional outcomes to the labor market, and institutional governance (AlSubu', 2009; Hashweh, Hashweh, & Berryman, 2003). Accordingly, universities in Palestine suffer from a serious dilemma of misalignment with their external environments, the matter which caused them to grow more ineffective and incapable of adaptively addressing these environmental threats.

Therefore, the critical question that ascended is whether universities are effective and capable to support economic and social development in Palestine. This question encouraged authentic interventions to address these critical concerns of effectiveness. The starting step to revitalizing Palestinian higher education is probably to identify the key factors which potentially predict institutional effectiveness in Palestinian universities. In this respect, and informed by an extensive review of literature, this study identified transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change as key determinants of university institutional effectiveness in Palestine.

Hence, the major contribution of this study is to provide keen insights into the link which exists among transformational leadership, institutional culture, strategic change, and institutional effectiveness through learning first-hand from key informants from the target university. This qualitative exploration enhances our understanding of the nature of the relationship that exists among such key factors. Also, it provides performance implications and learned lessons with regard to how these crucial organizational factors interact to form an effectual model of influence on institutional effectiveness in higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has become an area of optimal interest to researchers, policy makers, and scholars due to its obvious link to the wellbeing of nations. It is envisioned as a powerful force to drive sustained and competitive economic development and social welfare and stability. Because the

world in the 21st century is increasingly organized around global knowledge economies, where education and knowledge are treated as human capital that is utilized for high value social and economic return, higher education has become a growing industry as well as an area of intense public demand. Therefore, various governmental and institutional policies are ever more mandated to drive and support this view across the globe (Jenks, 2008). As a result, higher education is now at the core of nations' awareness, and national strategies and policies are aimed at enhancing higher education systems as producers of highly qualified individuals as well as intellectual leaders who actively participate in economic activities.

Even though, as demands for enhanced contribution of higher education in building nations' capacities grow, challenges and external pressures on higher education also increase in ways which may enormously undermine its effectiveness. From the international perspective, many pressures and challenges were reported to exert a substantial influence on higher education (Stensaker & Norgard, 2001; Cummings et al., 2005; Hanna, 2003; Obenchain et al., 2002; & Eckel, Hill, and Green, 1998). That is, institutions of higher education face a double-sided pressure where they are pressurized to meet growing demands for national and international standardization associated with powerful external challenges which have extreme consequences on their effectiveness. Such stressful challenges include keeping higher education affordable in an age of growing public demand on higher education while controlling tight financial situation; containing large numbers of students coupled with growing demands for educational quality, effectiveness, and efficiency; meeting the demands of globalization and the resulting expulsion of knowledge inside and outside academia; and serving the needs of local and international labor markets by introducing new technological skills for the industry.

From the perspective of Palestinian higher education, two official reports revealed major environmental threats to higher education which were associated with detrimental deterioration in its effectiveness. The first report (AlSubu', 2009 & Hashweh, Hashweh, & Berryman, 2003) emphasized that although Palestinian universities improved in terms of a noticeable increase in student enrolment, yet this seems to place further persistent challenges on the Palestinian universities. First of all, Palestinian universities face a problem of student access to higher education and institutional capacity to contain large number of students. Pressurized with massively growing public demand on higher education, universities are required to make higher education affordable despite that they are incapable of containing large numbers of students which exceed their capacity. This is associated with decreased fund, inadequate database, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient number of qualified teachers, restrictions to academic personnel mobility due to the occupation, and inadequate access to and use of ICT.

Second, the intense growth in student enrolment created increasing demands for educational quality in Palestinian higher education. Educational quality in universities has deteriorated in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in terms of neglected teacher quality, faculty overloads, increased student-teacher ratio, journal-teacher ratio, and percentage of teachers holding specific degrees.

Third, the issue of how responsive higher education is to the demands of economic growth and individual welfare was considered a critical challenge to higher education in Palestine. Market demand for higher education graduates is getting low due to deteriorating economic development which is combined with high rates of population growth. Consequently, there are high rates of unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza. Also, there are evident signs of an unfavorable and adverse misalignment between higher education and the local labor market. For example, universities have inappropriate production in certain disciplines and have irregular and un-established relationship with the local market. Employers commonly report that higher education graduates are too theoretical, lacking proper work ethics, under qualified, deficient at English language skills, and lacking management and entrepreneurial skills. Other aspects of irrelevance in higher education was explained in growing market demands for new programs and appropriate production to support the economy compared to disproportions in program enrolment distribution from one side and imbalances in enrolment distribution between universities and technical colleges from the other.

The need for creating a proper connection between Palestinian higher education and the local labor market was further emphasized by the Education Development Strategic Plan 2008-2012 which was launched by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2008). The focal point of this plan focused on the incremental transformation of higher education from a supply-oriented into a more demand-oriented sector as a major goal to accomplish in order to maximize the relevance between university outputs and the labor market needs and to guarantee quality education.

Fourth, Palestinian higher education lacks an effective governance model. Palestinian universities have different types of governing bodies. Governmental universities have advisory councils, public institutions have boards of trustees (except for Al-Quds open university which has advisory board), and private institutions have boards of directors. There are clear manifestations of weak governance in Palestinian higher education. For instance, boards do not meet regularly, not all boards provide financial oversight, and many of the boards do not set the strategic direction of their institutions.

The deteriorating conditions of Palestinian higher education denote that it may have ignored vital factors which potentially account for their effectiveness, namely, strategic change, transformational leadership, and institutional culture (Abushawish, Ali & Jamil, 2013). Universities have

seemingly been unaware of the changing nature of change in organizations in the 21st century as they are rooted in traditional simple, first order change which is no longer fitting the increasing impetus and scope of organizational change (Anderson & Anderson. 2010; Balogun, 2001; Koning, 2010; & Van De Ven, 1993). They have ignored strategic change which is a more powerful and an appropriate fit for organizations today. Consequently, they are incapable of anticipating change and adaptively responding to ever changing unpredictable environmental conditions which detrimentally diminish their effectiveness. Therefore, they have to make strategic change a top priority on their agendas by means of changing their cultures, strategies, structures, and systems. Because they have not developed a proper capacity for strategic change, they are likely to fail to reposition themselves in the face of increasingly competitive and unpredictable environmental forces and, therefore, suffer from misalignment with their environments and grow more ineffective. Hence, the question of whether Palestinian universities implement a strategic change approach or not is truly an issue of success and even survival because strategic change can lead to breakthrough results in ways which foster institutional effectiveness (Anderson & Anderson 2010).

In addition, the suggestion that Palestinian universities are becoming increasingly ineffective due to their incapability to address powerful environmental threats signifies a critical absence of an effective leadership approach for change. This is clearly established in the literature as transformational leadership is claimed to be significantly associated with institutional effectiveness (Scully; 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Al-Otaibi 2006; Clatt & Hiebert, 2001; & Sarros & Santora, 2001), and that it influences institutional effectiveness through strategic change (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). It is inferred that universities have become ineffective due to ignoring the critical role of transformational leadership in planning and implementing strategic change to create a proper connection with their environment and, in turn, to become more effective. A snapshot of the current situation can be summarizes this way: the reason why Palestinian universities are growing ineffective is that they lack effective leaders who are capable of meeting the demands of the rather complicated strategic change. Universities need a new breed of leaders who are change-centered and capable of leading universities through transformation by transforming culture, inspiring followers to pursue into the prescribed direction, and fostering innovation and transformation (Marshall, 2011; Benitez, Davidson, & Flaxman, 2009; Pagan, 2008; Bass & Riggio, 2006; & Lievens, Van Geit, & Coetsier, 1997).

Hence, the shift of organizational emphasis to strategic change as a more fitting type to the increasing impetus and scope of organizational change has increased demands for a new breed of change-centered, innovative leaders who are capable of leading organizations through transformation to achieve results beyond expectations. In this context, transformational leadership is believed to be "the best-fitting model for effective leadership in today's world" (Bass &

Riggio, 2006, p. 224). It envisions new directions and strategies and inspires others to move toward the desired strategic outcomes. It also satisfies people's desire for universal leader across cultures. Therefore, it is believed to be a powerful predictor of leadership and thus of institutional effectiveness (Bass & Riggio, 2006; & Schell IV, Youngblood & Farrington, 2008). As organizational survival basically depends on institutional effectiveness which, in turn, is vitally affected by the leader's style of leadership, most organizations seek to develop transformational capacity in order to be responsive to change and to cope with powerful forces present in their external environments so that they can achieve institutional effectiveness and success.

Nevertheless, transformational leadership and institutional culture are mutually dependent. The literature on leadership-culture relationship shows that institutional culture is a key determinant of leadership and institutional effectiveness (Michaelis, Stgmaier, & Sonntag, 2010; Lin & McDonough III, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schein, 2004; Kulkarni, 2010; Block, 2002; & Fullan & Hargreaves1996). Transformational leaders need the support of a strong institutional culture to achieve institutional effectiveness through strategic change. What this infers is that institutional culture enhances the role of leadership and facilitates strategic change. Organizations with a weak culture that are dominated by old traditions, values, and regulations usually have poor performance because theses cultural elements hamper innovation and change.

Furthermore, the present weak university-environment connection and the deteriorating institutional effectiveness necessitates the need to create a more adaptive institutional culture as a key adaptive organizational element. Shaping a strong culture is the starting step toward institutional effectiveness because without a well-established culture no vision, mission, or strategy will contribute to corporate strategic change and success (Marshall, 2011; Peterson & Deal, 2009; Schein, 2004; Singh & Bhandarker, 1990). It is inferred that universities need to be aware that leadership, institutional culture, and institutional effectiveness are significantly interconnected (Kulkarni, 2010; Michaelis, Stgmaier, & Sonntag, 2010; Lin & McDonough III, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schein, 2004; Block, 2002; & Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Key persons in these universities need to embrace the powerful role of culture as an adaptive organizational tool. Institutional culture is basically grounded in the organizational paradigm which guides organizational strategy, practices, and behaviors toward the prescribed organizational direction. Because culture comprises a set of organizational assumptions derived from collective understanding of organizational capability and environmental threats (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2005), it has a strong potential for influencing the formulation of organizational strategy in universities toward creating a proper connection between them and their environment in ways which account for enhanced institutional effectiveness.

Furthermore, a second major source of motivation for conducting this study is the reported gaps in the body of research as related to the link among transformational leadership, institutional culture, strategic change, and institutional effectiveness. Most importantly, Sarros, Cooper, and Santora (2008) asserted that there is a little empirical evidence of the hypothetical connection among transformational leadership, institutional culture, and innovation which contribute to organizational change. In addition, Jaskyte (2004) confirmed that the empirical investigation of the link between leadership and innovation, as a critical contributor to organizational change, has been ignored in the literature. Also, despite numerous theoretical conclusions about the effectiveness of transformational leadership, there is no empirical evidence of how effective transformational leaders are in educational settings (Stewart, 2006). Besides, despite frequent theoretical associations between leadership and culture in the literature, there has been little empirical evidence of this link and its implications to practitioners. (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000, p. 771). Finally, the potential role of culture has been ignored in most leadership-performance relationship studies (Jing and Avery, 2008). In this regard, the current qualitative study will enhance our understanding of how these factors relate to one another in the context of Palestinian higher education..

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The principal objective of this qualitative data analysis is to enhance understanding of how transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change serve as a model of influence on institutional effectiveness in the context of higher education through answering the following qualitative questions:

1. How do the respondents perceive the current state of transformational
   leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change? what factors contributed to this perception of these variables?
2. How does Transformational Leadership influence Institutional effectiveness and Strategic Change?
3. How does Institutional culture affect the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Strategic Change?
4. How does Strategic Change mediate the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Institutional effectiveness?

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods are primarily based on interpreting human behaviors and experiences in a given phenomenon. In this respect, interviews form the most commonly used qualitative data collection method in educational settings (Given et al, 2008). For purposes of this study, semi-structured interviews constituted the primary technique for the qualitative data collection. Ruane (2005) stated that "the interview is a purposeful conversation wherein the interviewer has a set of research agenda - i.e., key points or questions that must be addressed" (p.149). According to Hancock (1998), an interview is a major qualitative method of data collection, which involves three types: highly structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Unlike the highly structured interviews which involve tightly structured questionnaire-like questions, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to use topic-based open-ended questions to investigate certain topics in ways which provide opportunities for detailed discussion during the interview.

The sample consisted of 4 informants who were purposefully selected from target university on the basis of their knowledgeability and willingness to respond. Knowledgeable and willing informants have the potential to provide accurate and rich data (Kumar, 1989). Therefore, 4 informants with at least ten years of experience were selected. The interviews were conducted by means of direct question and answer sessions between the researcher and these informants. The interview questions that were informed by the main guiding qualitative questions were validated by requesting expert judges to ensure that the questions are relevant and investigate what they are supposed to investigate.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic because it is the mother tongue of the informants. To ensure valid responses, the participants were informed of the objectives, the significance, and the procedures of the interview. They were guaranteed that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality. For this purpose, the real names of the interviewees were not used and were coded according to the order in which the interviews were conducted (i.e. interviewee 1). Written records of the interview sessions were kept through taking extensive notes during the interviews, and these were supplemented by means of video-recording for truly capturing the data from the informants. The resulting written verbatim transcripts constituted the research data (Ruane, 2005).

Subsequent to the data collection, established techniques were used to analyze the qualitative data for coding and developing themes out of the initial narratives (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Miller, 2000; & Given et al, 2008). That is, thematic analysis was employed through utilizing the following six steps in analyzing the data obtained from the interviews: (1) Organizing the data for analysis through transcribing interviews; (2) Preliminarily exploring the data by skimming the interview transcripts to grasp a general sense of it; (3) Coding initial narratives and developing themes and descriptions by combining similar codes together as well as interrelating themes to tell a narrative; (4) Presenting qualitative findings both through constructing narratives and visual displays such as figures, tables, and diagrams; (5) Interpreting the presented findings through introducing personal insights, relating the findings to the literature, and suggesting recommendations or future research; and (6) Ensuring validity of the finding by applying

Member Checking and Peer Review techniques (Creswell, 2012).

In order to ensure the credibility of the interview data, two techniques were used based on determining how accurately the interview findings reflect reality in the university under investigation. These two techniques enabled the researcher to utilize various standpoints of participants and outsiders respectively regarding the validity of findings. The finest technique used by the researcher to establish validity of findings is Member Checking. In this technique, accounts by the informants were paraphrased back to them by the researcher during the interview to ensure credibility of the collected data. The second technique is Peer Review where a person who is familiar with the study discipline and problem was invited by the researcher to review the interview process and the data findings. Peer reviewers are particularly crucial because they provide support concerning the methodology and the interpretations involved (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By means of thematic analysis, the analysis of the qualitative data provided sufficient answers to the qualitative guiding questions. The qualitative findings yielded six major themes which are assumed to provide insightful explanation and understanding of the manner transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change influence institutional effectiveness in higher education. These key themes are presented below to explain the quantitative findings of the current study.

4.1 Qualitative Question One

How do the respondents perceive the current state of transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change as identified in phase one; what factors contributed to this perception of these variables?

Informants' responses mirrored the reality of transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change in the current university and yielded two significant themes. The first theme dealt with how the informants perceived the current state of transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change and its relative causes. The second theme described perceived key antecedents for successful implementation of transformational leadership in Palestinian higher education.

4.1.1 Theme1: Perspectives on Current Transformational Leadership, Institutional culture, and strategic Change in Palestinian Higher Education: Reality and Causes

4.1.1.1 Perceived Level of Transformational Leadership

Exploration of the qualitative data revealed consistent responses from informants to questions relating to the reality of transformational leadership and whether the perceived transformational leadership affected institutional effectiveness in the target university. Transformational leadership was reported to be high at the case study university. The qualitative exploration also revealed that this perceived level of transformational leadership was attributed to specific factors.

Responses from the informants demonstrated a common agreement on the reality of transformational leadership at the university. They consistently indicated that the level of transformational leadership is moderately high and that this corresponded to the current leadership style of the university. Contradictory remarks, however, emerged from two informants with the first stating that transformational leadership may have developed accidentally, i.e., not an intentional approach, and the other indicating that the level of transformational leadership could be higher as respondents to the questionnaire may have had inadequate understanding of the construct and thus underestimated it. Nevertheless, the general tendency in the interview data was that, in reality, transformational leadership is at moderately high level, and that the informants felt comfortable about it. This feeling was due to the sense that there is no idealism in leadership. There was a clear indication that the results reflected a leadership orientation toward adopting more transformational aspects of leadership. An account from one interviewee put it this way:

> The results really reflect the general tendency (of the university) and that the university leadership is becoming more oriented toward transformational leadership…… We are moving in the right direction.
>
> Interviewee 1, dean

Another interviewee noted:
> This is true. The results reflect a transformational style of leadership.
>
> Interviewee 3, lecturer

However, there was a common view among the informants of the need to improve the transformational competency of the university as certain organizational aspects were reported to be inadequately improving. An example of such weak aspects was the relevance between the university outcomes and the demands of the local labor market. This need for improvement was further explained:

> Yet, we need further improvement in this field to cope with the international developments. We are in need to improve our educational and leadership processes. For

example, there is a slow improvement in e-learning and interactive learning, and the gap between the university outcomes and the demands of the local market is widening.

> Interviewee 1, dean

In order to grasp a detailed view concerning the reality of transformational leadership at the university, the informants were requested to explain the underlying causes which led to the perceived level of transformational leadership at the university. Their accounts revealed that the perceived level of transformational leadership was a natural result of a new leadership orientation that has developed over time. This evolution of leadership across time was explained as follows:

> Yes, transformational leadership is an effective leadership approach for the university. In the beginning we used scientific leadership. Then, we had orientation toward more human-oriented leadership styles until we finally became oriented toward transformational leadership.
>
> Interviewee 4, dean

4.1.1.2 Reality of Institutional culture

The qualitative findings of the current study revealed that the interview participants' responses reflected positive views of their university culture. The participants confirmed that the university has a moderately transformational culture. This type of culture denoted a moderate presence of the 4 Is, implying that the university is effective (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this respect, an account from a participant expressed a favorable view of his university culture by stating that:

> This is true and there are various proofs for this (type of culture): Threatening and toughness are rarely used with employees and student because the causes that lead to such unfavorable practices are not present due to the existence of a clear culture that prevents misbehavior.
>
> Interviewee 4, dean

The driving force for the existence of such an effective culture was suggested to be a sustaining system of values which pervaded throughout the university such as participative leadership, virtue, justice, mutual understanding, collaboration, commitment, collective suffering, and collective responsibility. A respondent claimed that:

The university has good values such as virtue, discipline, commitment, and the just and fair implementation of the system of regulations and laws on people.

> Interviewee 1, dean

Nevertheless, participants signaled a growing demand to improve some cultural aspects at the university. They indicated that although the university culture was considered effective, it is nevertheless not ideal. Certain aspects should be considered for improvement to increase the influence of institutional culture on the university performance such as the university systems, work routine, role perception, the relationship between the university leadership and employees, the university-community connections, and the university leadership's assumptions about change. An interview respondent's remarks on the current university culture highlighted this need for improvement:

> It is true (that the current culture is moderately transformational), yet the current culture needs improvement with regard to university systems, work routine, role perception, leadership-employees relationships, and university-community connections.
>
> Interviewee 1, dean

While another respondent denoted that unsupportive leadership assumptions of change is a critical cultural aspect that needs reconsideration:

> We have financial difficulties as well as difficulties relating to leadership assumptions about change.
>
> Interviewee 2, dean

4.1.1.3 Challenges to Strategic Change

As far as strategic change in the target university is concerned, exploration of related data revealed that the university has a moderately high capacity for strategic change. The informants indicated that the university had a good, yet not ideal, capability for strategic change planning and implementation. As expected, this capability was shaped because the university has the required qualified personnel. As noted by an informant:

> Generally the situation is good but it still needs further improvement, particularly in the mechanism required for enhancing the implementation of plans.
>
> Interviewee 1, dean

Nevertheless, the informants admitted that the university faced difficulties pertaining, in particular, to the implementation of strategic change, suggesting that the university must improve its methods of change implementation. In this context, various forces were reported to negatively affect the university's capability for strategic change implementation. First of all, the external environment of the university was perceived as a major difficulty to implementing strategic change. Given the complicated current sociopolitical and economic conditions in Palestine, the external environment is extremely unstable and, thus, very unpredictable in ways which place greater pressures on the part of the university. The effect of this extremely unstable environment was suggested to be so complicated that it imposed further activities and tasks that had not initially been included in the strategic plan to address unpredictable external changes and challenges. The interruption of such extra activities meant that strategic plans were not fully accomplished. This difficulty was best described in this account:

> Some objectives were achieved by 70-80% whereas some others were not achieved. This is because of many promptly intercepting activities from outside the strategic plan which are imposed due to the current changes, emergencies, the current political situation, the occupation, and the blockade.
>
> Interviewee 4, dean

Another proposed difficulty that inhibited strategic change implementation at the university related to reduced financial capacity. It was indicated that the university had been undergoing financial difficulties because of the current political and economic conditions in Palestine. This meant that the university was not in shape for full range of strategic change planning and implementation. That is, significant areas of change might have been bypassed as a result of financial difficulties.

It was also assumed that the underlying assumptions of the university leadership about change probably exerted a regressive effect on strategic change implementation. The inference is that the university leadership might not be in full favor of change; rather it preferred keeping the current state unless it was forced to address abrupt challenges seriously affecting it. The previous conclusions about the reality of strategic change at the university were manifested in these remarks:

> We have only 70% of the capacity for strategic change because we have financial difficulties as well as

difficulties relating to leadership assumptions about change.

> Interviewee 2, dean

It is, thus, indicated that the university tended to apply an abrupt response, reactive approach when facing compelling environmental challenges that threatened its existence rather than creating new realities by means of incrementally changing its existing institutional culture and strategy. This indicates university leaders' favoritism of keeping the current state while engaging in strategic change in case of abruptly threatening challenges.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Key Antecedents to Transformational Leadership Implementation

The qualitative data analysis related to transformational leadership raised a second major theme revolving around crucial antecedents to transformational leadership. It was evident that some concerns emerged about key antecedents that need to be attained in order to assume successful implementation of transformational leadership in Palestinian higher education. Therefore, more consideration must be given to its antecedents in Palestinian higher education. Thus, the qualitative findings revealed that the potential success of transformational leadership in Palestinian higher education is contingent on meeting certain conditions or antecedents.

The first and most important antecedent to transformational leadership implementation in Palestinian higher education involved adequately understanding the construct. The informants reported that there is a need to understand transformational leadership because there is a substantial degree of complexity associated with it. This sort of complexity causes a great deal of uncertainty that hinders introducing transformational leadership into Palestinian universities. Therefore, it is inferred that there is a compelling need to first understand transformational leadership by means of organizational learning and training. As a respondent put it:

> Transformational leadership is definitely important, but leadership by exception is better because transformational leadership is a high level leadership approach, and our Arab World does not yet reach an adequate degree of understanding it. However, both can be combined.
>
> Interviewee 2, dean

It was thus indicated that adequate understanding of transformational leadership guarantees an appropriate use as well as a proper atmosphere for an effective implementation of transformational leadership in Palestinian higher education.

Exploration of the qualitative data illustrated a second antecedent, namely, adopting a university-driven versus a private-sector driven leadership style. Concerns of the informants were placed on adapting transformational leadership to suit the context of higher education because universities are different from the business sector which seeks only profit. In contrary, Palestinian universities have a scientific role with a focus placed on providing the society with highly qualified individuals to participate in its growth and development. The indication is that the transformational styles that worked well for industry and business may not be applicable to Palestinian higher education. While the informants illustrated the need for transformational leadership in Palestinian universities, they also valued inclusive, participative, and democratic aspects of leadership. This denoted that transformational leadership should be adapted to universities in the sense that it is inclusive and participative rather than directive in order to maximize its impact on employees and the university as a whole. Such a call for a participative style of transformational leadership was best fitted in this comment:

> Although transformational leadership is mainly linked with the private sector, but it can be implemented in the university in condition that it should be implemented differently from the way it is implemented in the private sector.
> Interviewee 3, lecturer

The last antecedent that was revealed in the qualitative data was the need for attaining governmental and social support. This antecedent presumes an effective system of leadership thinking and practice in which institutional leadership, the government, and the society play vital roles. Accounts by the informants revealed that for transformational leadership to turn Palestinian universities into effective bodies, transformational leaders need the full support of the government and the society. As no leadership stands alone, its effectiveness basically depends on the provision of competent human resources, financial resources, and technology. Comments from a participant illustrated this needed type of support as an antecedent for leadership success:

> Although transformational leadership creates organizational transformation, yet it needs resources, and support in terms of human, financial, and technological support from the government and the society. This is what is meant by system.
> Interviewee1, dean

Thus, the needed support can be provided in these terms so that leaders have all the needed human capital and the instruments to transform the university into highly effective body.

4.2 Qualitative Question Two

How does Transformational Leadership influence Institutional effectiveness and Strategic Change?

To gain good understanding of how transformational leadership can predict institutional effectiveness and strategic change, a qualitative exploration was conducted to provide more insights into the potential explanatory power of transformational leadership from the views of key informants from the target university. Exploration of the qualitative data resulted in the following theme:

4.2.1 Theme 3: Transformational Leadership: Potentiality for Palestinian Higher Education

Responses from the informants to questions relating to whether transformational leadership is a potential component of a successful university were in line with the general results of the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the literature. The various responses revealed the relevance of transformational leadership for the context of higher education. Yet, the views of informants varied from instant agreement to conditional agreement in perceiving it to be a key predictor of institutional effectiveness and strategic change at Palestinian universities.

Most of the informants valued transformational leadership as a superior leadership approach to increase university effectiveness. These views of effective transformational leadership were based on its established impacts in various settings including industry, business, and higher education. One informant confirmed that transformational leadership is a very effective style of leadership. He said:

> No doubt, using such a modern leadership style as transformational leadership makes us more capable of investing our resources to achieve our goals. Its effectiveness is proven.
> Interviewee 4, dean

Therefore, based on their perception of transformational leadership, these informants presented a keen interest in the introduction of transformational leadership into Palestinian higher education to elevate the level of institutional effectiveness.

The informants also believed that transformational leadership is the best fitting leadership approach for change. They conceived it to be an adaptive leadership style with a capability to align the university with the rapidly changing environment. These views painted a conclusive picture of transformational leadership's influence on university

effectiveness through inspiring and motivating employees and focusing on organizational vision and mission to institutionalize change to cope with the changing world outside the university. Perhaps the most striking illustration about the role of transformational leadership in university adaptation to change came from this account:

> Transformational leadership is crucial to adapt to the external environment through change, not by imitating others. Therefore, we need a transformational leader because this type of leader creates change, not merely awaiting it.
>
> Interviewee 1, dean

As such, the qualitative data revealed that there is sufficient consciousness of the need for change as a pathway for increased institutional effectiveness, and that this change can be attained by adopting an effective leadership approach like transformational leadership. This conclusion was grounded on the fact that transformational leadership is an adaptive leadership approach to change. It is, therefore, perceived as a relevant leadership style for change in the context of Palestinian higher education.

Nevertheless, two of the informants expressed an ambivalent view of an effective transformational leadership in Palestinian universities. However, their views were themselves distinct. The first informant justified his attitude by stating that there is no ideal leadership approach for organizations today. That is, transformational leadership needs to be synergized with other leadership styles for maximum impact in the university. The other informant related his view to the complexity associated with transformational leadership implementation stating that the Arab world is not yet ready to adequately understand and apply it. He claimed that:

> Transformational leadership is definitely important, but leadership by exception (authorization) is better because transformational leadership is a high level leadership approach, and our Arab World does not yet reach an adequate degree of understanding it. However, both can be combined.
>
> Interviewee 2, lecturer

Nevertheless, both participants concluded that transformational leadership can be potentially applicable to Palestinian higher education in association with other organizational elements or leadership styles. A respondent's comment emphasized this conditional need for transformational leadership by saying:

> The authentic use and the proper understanding of transformational leadership and setting the ground for collective establishment of shared vision and mission and in planning in addition to supporting institutional culture would certainly lead to success. All these (elements) facilitate a better investment in our resources to achieve our goals.
>
> Interviewee 4, dean

The impact of perceived transformational leadership on institutional effectiveness was also explored through asking the informants whether the current leadership style affected the university performance. The resulting qualitative findings were in line with the previous literature stating that organizations are more effective when their leaders are transformational (e.g., Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hancott, 2005; and Jandaghi, Matin, & Farjami, 2009).

Generally, the informants were of the attitude that transformational leadership accounted for better university performance, implying that their university was more effective because its leadership was transformational. Their views suggested that transformational leadership incrementally increased the university's performance in terms of significant improvement of outcomes. Reported indicators denoting such increased effectiveness included expansion in academic programs, international prizes, institutional ranking, and a greater proportion of positions obtained by the university's graduates in the labor market compared to those obtained by the graduates of other universities. The underlying assumption which can be constructed from the various accounts raised by the informants is that transformational leadership accounts for more effectiveness in Palestinian universities because it is a change-oriented leadership approach. One participant illustrated this assumption by affirming that:

> This (transformational leadership) approach enormously influenced the university, and this influence is indicated by the amount of change taking place in academic programs, international prizes.… Our graduates are taking 45% of the total positions available in the government and the UNRWA.
>
> Interviewee 1, dean

Thus, analysis of the interview data presented sufficient evidence that transformational leadership is potentially a key determinant of institutional effectiveness. Transformational leadership can exert a substantial influence on institutional effectiveness in Palestinian universities by means of inspiring

employees to act in the prescribed direction and creating successful change or transformation to enable the university to face the important challenges present in its environment. Transformational leadership was also perceived to promote the university internal capability by maximizing the use of its resources and opportunities for effectiveness and success.

In conclusion, transformational leadership is potentially a powerful force in Palestinian institutions of higher education. When the university leadership was perceived to be transformational, performance was also envisioned to increase and vice versa. Such qualitative finding as revealed by the informants supported previous findings about the favorable association between transformational leadership and institutional effectiveness. For this reason, transformational leadership is demonstrated to be a key factor of institutional effectiveness in Palestinian higher education.

4.3 Qualitative Question 3

How does Institutional culture influence the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Strategic Change?

Informants' views on the way institutional culture enhances the transformational leadership influence on strategic change were explored. This qualitative exploration resulted in two themes. The first theme explored the role of institutional culture in fostering the transformational leadership-strategic change link in the target university, and the other demonstrated the need for an interactive effect of transformational leadership and institutional culture on strategic change.

4.3.1 Theme 4: Role of Institutional Culture in the Transformational Leadership-Strategic Change Relationship

With respect to the role of institutional culture in the effect of transformational leadership on strategic change, the examination of this link resulted in insightful explanations. Generally, institutional culture at the target university was theorized to support the link between transformational leadership and strategic change. The informants attributed this influence of institutional culture on the link between transformational leadership and strategic change to the existence of core values which significantly enhanced organizational commitment to change. Such reported values included participative leadership, moral authority, and organizational commitment. This perceived positive role of culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic change was highlighted by a participant:

> Yes, the current institutional culture supports leadership influence on change because it is based on shared responsibility. This culture resulted

from long-endured suffering by the occupation, the matter which led to increased commitment and loyalty.
> Interviewee 3, lecturer

Even so, there were clear implications that institutional culture at the university is not ideally effective. These implications may explain why institutional culture negatively affected the influence of transformational leadership on strategic change. As previously stated, a growing need to improve some cultural aspects at the university was necessitated to increase the influence of institutional culture on the university's performance. This denoted that these aspects may not be appropriately improving. Such cultural aspects included university systems, work routine, role perception, leader-employee relationships, and university-community connections. This need was apparent in the following comments highlighting this strong need for improvement:

> It is true (that the current culture is moderately transformational), yet the current culture needs improvement with regard to university systems, work routine, role perception, leadership-employees relationships, and university-community connections.
> Interviewee 1, dean

Although informants initially perceived a favorable role of institutional culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic change, the weakness of such central cultural aspects somehow reflected university leadership assumptions that may not be in full support of change, which, therefore, may suppress the influence of institutional culture on this relationship. The implication of such weakening cultural aspects is that the shaped university culture may not be nurturing independent and critical thinking, creativity, and innovation in the leader and the led because it values maintaining the current state rather than reframing problems, questioning underlying assumptions, and approaching old situations in new ways. Therefore, informants may be satisfied with their university culture but may not be realizing what and how certain cultural elements may contribute to inversed effect on the leadership-change relationship.

In addition, the suggested inappropriate leadership-employee relationship meant that the university leadership may not be serving as coaches and mentors. That is, there were no established channels for personalized communication through which senior university leaders could build the capacities of their employees and satisfy their needs for growth and development. Consequently, these leaders may not gain highly committed and engaged employees who are supportive of change. Hence, because the university culture

does not value strong leadership-employee relationship, it was likely to inhibit the influence of transformational leadership on strategic change simply because even if the employees were committed to their university, they may not be aware or capable of proceeding in the prescribed organizational direction. While these employees were committed to doing their jobs right, their work might not be aligned with the organizational vision and mission.

Moreover, it was inferred from the responses that the university developed an adaptive capability in response to instant and unpredictable external challenges. However, an inference could be made that the university tended to respond principally to abrupt compelling environmental challenges threatening its existence rather than pervasively, incrementally changing its existing institutional culture and strategy. Given the sociopolitical and economic conditions of the Palestinian society, it is probably very common for institutions of higher education to follow an abrupt and reactive response approach to forceful environmental challenges because the environment is increasingly very unstable and unpredictable. Yet, this approach to change indicated that the university leadership functioned in a reactive, not a proactive, manner. This type of response does not guarantee that the university leadership's assumptions were centered on change. Rather, it indicates that the university leadership favors maintaining the current state while tending to address abruptly compelling environmental challenges instantly affecting it. This situation was summed up in this account:

> The university has the capability to address any emergency or abrupt problem quickly because it has an appropriate institutional culture. In 2000, the road was closed by the occupation, the matter which resulted in depriving employees and students from the south to come to the university. The university overcame this problem within 7 days by opening a new branch in the south when only 5 weeks were remaining to end the semester…… Also, during the war on Gaza in 2008-2009 the university was heavily bombarded and its labs and lecture halls were greatly destroyed. Yet, one week after the war, new labs were prepared and the university contacted other universities for a compensation program for its students.
> Interviewee 4, dean

In support of this reactive response tendency of the university, a view of university leadership assumptions that are unsupportive of change was also described. This view suggested that the university leadership had restraining underlying assumptions about change. Therefore, such cultural assumptions probably can exert an adverse effect on the influence of transformational leadership on strategic change. What can be inferred is that the university leadership might not be in full favor of change; thus preferring keeping the current state unless it was compelled to address abrupt challenges seriously affecting it. To this end, an informant commented:

> We have only 70% of the capacity for strategic change because we have financial difficulties as well as difficulties relating to leadership assumptions about change.
> Interviewee 2, dean

These conclusions indicated that institutional culture can exert an adverse role in the influence of transformational leadership on strategic change when it lacks crucial change-oriented cultural assumptions and elements. It was clearly indicated that the university leadership does not favor change because it rooted in cultural assumptions grounded in maintaining the current state while allowing for reactive responses to abrupt environmental challenges affecting the university. This approach, however, does not provide the needed cultural support for the influence of leadership on strategic change. Instead, it more likely to keep the university responsive to certain compelling external pressures rather than being innovative in the sense that it could create new realities by changing its culture and strategies. Nevertheless, the university was able to balance consistency needs with maintaining the status quo through this approach. Yet, the qualitative findings indicated that the university has not shifted its emphasis from simple change to a more complicated large-scale type of change which requires a shift in institutional culture, strategy, and structure.

The qualitative findings relating to the effect of institutional culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic change as perceived by informants were consistent with previously established findings in the literature. For example, Obenchain, Johnson, and Dion (2002) favored institutional cultures that develop cultural values of growth, innovation, and flexibility for institutions of higher education because these specific types of culture are likely to nurture innovation more frequently than others. However, Jaskyte (2004) realized that the influence of leadership on innovativeness was inhibited by a stability-infused culture, as transformational leadership was not associated with innovativeness due to the existence of this culture type. In addition, Bass and Riggio (2006) confirmed that organizations that were perceived as successful were led by transformational leaders who maintained a timeless philosophy based on meeting consistency needs and leadership for change. In addition, Yiing and Ahmed (2009) revealed that supportive cultures, but not bureaucratic culture, significantly moderated the relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational commitment. Also, Sherbagi

(2007) concluded that leadership and institutional culture are significant antecedents of organizational commitment which, in return, enhances organizational performance by increasing joint employee contribution to the organization.

4.3.2 Theme 5: Transformational Leadership and Institutional culture: Potential Synergism in Palestinian Higher Education

In response to whether transformational leadership independently predicts strategic change in Palestinian higher education, the informants provided critical insights into potential interaction between transformational leadership and institutional culture. While transformational leadership was viewed as a primary factor of university success, by itself it would fall short of improving university capabilities to implement successful strategic change. This belief that was expressed in the interviews indicated that transformational leadership may not be equally effective in all settings because it is contingent on other organizational factors that may affect its influence on strategic change. Whereas various factors were initially suggested to affect this influence, i.e., human, financial, and physical resources, and technology, institutional culture emerged as the most powerful force to interact with transformational leadership in the context of strategic change in the target universities. This is supported by Michaelis, Stgmaier, and Sonntag (2010) and Lin and McDonough III (2009) who stated that the influence of transformational leadership on change is not the same under all conditions because other contextual factors, precisely institutional culture, affect this influence. Such view of the link between transformational leadership and institutional culture was elaborated by an informant:

> Strategic change requires other factors besides transformational leadership…. This is very likely (that institutional culture is another component of change success) because it facilitates commitment and loyalty. These influential values contribute to successful strategic change.
> Interviewee 3, lecturer

There was a strong agreement among the informants that the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic change is dependent on institutional culture. Even effective forms of transformational leadership may not adequately result in strategic change without the role of specific types of institutional culture. Institutional culture sets organizational assumptions, goals, and criteria which, in turn, align leaders and followers with the prescribed direction of the university, thus affecting the overall change and performance of the university. Therefore, a strong feeling was developed across the informants implying that the success or failure of change is contingent on the type of culture present

in the university, with a view in favor of a more supportive culture. That is, institutional culture either supports or undermines leadership influence on strategic change based on whether it is infused with values and assumptions supportive of change. This idea was best illustrated in this account:

> Culture guides the behaviors of employees, and success or failure basically depends on the existing institutional culture. It also encourages satisfaction, cooperation, collective work, and loyalty. Therefore, if the current institutional culture was based on carelessness and rejecting responsibility, failure would be the fatal end.
> Interviewee 1, dean

This finding is in line with previously established findings stating that transformational leadership and institutional culture are tightly interrelated (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Schein, 2004; and Kulkarni, 2010). It is also in supported by Yiing and Ahmed (2009) who concluded that innovative and supportive cultures, but not a bureaucratic culture, significantly moderated the relationship between leadership and organizational commitment.

The potential favorable effect that a supportive institutional culture can have in facilitating the implementation of strategic change in the university was also present in the minds of informants. Institutional culture was commonly seen as a repertoire of deep organizational values and assumptions which drive and align individual as well as organizational behaviors with the strategic direction of the university. Therefore, a contribution of culture to organizational stability was manifest in terms of creating a sense of organizational identity. This identity, in turn, acts as a powerful stabilizing force in the university, causing the cultural assumptions and values to persist over time while creating opportunities for maintaining employees focused on such core organizational elements such as vision, mission, and objectives. Put another way, it creates a collective sense of vision and mission-oriented responsibility which is driven by persistent cultural assumptions and values in ways which facilitate strategic change. Therefore, what the qualitative findings denote is that transformational leadership and institutional culture have the potential to work in combination to influence strategic change. As one participant put it:

> Institutional culture reflects a system of current organizational values which make all those present at the university site to have the sense of "We" rather than "I". The pervasiveness of such type of culture enables new employees

to engage in work. Therefore, the university takes into account setting the conditions for new employees to learn the prevailing institutional culture through work. This leads to commitment and elimination of misbehavior which if happened would be so narrowly committed. The practice of culture achieves the expected goals through the active participation of employees and students, and the presence of institutional culture creates stability.

<div align="right">Interviewee 4, dean.</div>

What the previous findings indicate is that there is a potential for synergism between transformational leadership and institutional culture in Palestinian higher education. Therefore, greater emphasis should be given to understanding these two determinants of strategic change so that they are properly incorporated and combined in the context of Palestinian universities for increased capability of strategic change. The link between transformational leadership and institutional culture is consistent with the findings of Block (2002) who found that employees who rated their leaders as highly transformational were more likely to have positive views of their institutional culture, thus denoting that transformational leadership and institutional culture exist in combination.

4.4 Qualitative Question 4

How does Strategic Change mediate the relationship between Transformational Leadership and Institutional effectiveness?

Informants' perspectives on how strategic change mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and institutional effectiveness were also explored. This qualitative exploration revealed one major theme concerned with how far strategic change is needed, implemented, and influential in Palestinian higher education.

4.4.1 Theme 6: Strategic Change: Incontestable Need and Impact in Palestinian Higher Education

Investigation of the qualitative data with regard to the role of strategic change revealed a clear need for strategic change planning and implementation in Palestinian higher education. The informants believed that strategic change is potentially a critical factor for university success. This implies that senior leadership can improve the university performance through planning and implementing strategic change to maximize the use of its resources and opportunities. This positive view of strategic change stemmed from the concept that it principally contributes to institutional effectiveness in different ways. For one thing, strategic change involves a revolutionary change in

attitudes and ways of thinking throughout the university. As such, strategic change creates a learning community in which employees are engaged in organizational learning to improve the internal capability of the university in the face of ever changing environment. Furthermore, it refers to a highly planned, methodological approach of change. Therefore, it has the likeliness of having higher rates of success where mistakes are maximally reduced. It also deals with the future of the university where strategies are formulated to effectively address current and future environmental issues affecting the university. Accordingly, strategic change meaningfully contributes to internal capability improvement and, in return, raises the university performance and capability to expand in its environment. A respondent summarized the need for strategic change by stating that:

> Strategic change is required both in its radical and partial forms because it is a planned change with reduced likeliness for mistakes and higher rates of success.
> <div align="right">Interviewee 3, lecturer</div>

The impact of perceived strategic change was an issue of interest is this research. Informants' responses to whether the latest university strategic plans were successful yielded a plain perspective about how effective strategic change was in the university. The informants conceptualized their university to incrementally improve its capacity for strategic change over time. Although previous strategies were not meeting expectations, they provided the strategic planning teams with a rich experience that guided the formulation of the newest strategies. For instance, the first strategic plan of 2004 was out of reach and, therefore, was not satisfactorily accomplished due to considerably long time span for implementation combined with an ever changing environment. Yet, it was overtly expressed that a thorough assessment of this strategic plan provided the university with prosperous lessons which informed the formulation of the next strategic plan of 2011. Therefore, those strategies were reported to serve as a general framework for developing a cohesive direction for the university. As a result, the university's capacity for strategic change improved. This incremental capacity building of strategic change was pointed out:

> The previous strategic plans and initiatives served to prescribe a strategic direction for the university, and they provided us with rich experience as we took advantage of them. The first strategic plan of 2004 was not as successful as expected because of a long time span of implementation in an era of uncertainty and wars. We revised the first plan and benefited a lot from it in the context of

the second plan of 2011 which was successful. We are currently proceeding in the right direction.

Interviewee 1, dean.

A major outcome of this improved capacity for strategic change at the university was increased alignment with the prescribed direction of the university. A significant manifestation of this impact of strategic change on the university performance was realized in terms of notable academic achievements, better university ranking, and higher ratio of students taking in jobs in the local labor market, thus denoting enhanced university effectiveness. This impact of strategic change on the university performance was described:

I am not sure (that the latest strategic plans were successful) but there are great achievements in academics ….. Normally, the success of strategic plans in the academic side increased the university effectiveness.

Interviewee 3, lecturer

Thus, strategic change is a vital component through which university leaders can enhance university performance. This finding was consistent with the quantitative findings of the current study stating when the university had high levels of transformational leadership and strategic change, it was perceived by the participants to be effective. Thus, it provided insights into the manner I which strategic change mediated the influence of transformational leadership on institutional effectiveness.

5. LEARNED LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The qualitative exploration of the relationships existing among the variables of the current study yielded three significant lessons of key relevance to Palestinian higher education. These lessons are potentially so important that they may provide a ground for informing and guiding policy making concerning institutional effectiveness in Palestinian higher education.

5.1 Lesson 1: For Better or Worse, Strategic Change is a Prevailing Force

The first lesson which can be learned from this qualitative exploration is that for better or worse strategic change is a prevailing force. In the case of higher levels of strategic change, university performance is supposed to improve. Thus, it is inferred that in the case of poor competence for strategic change, the university performance would deteriorate. Therefore, it was concluded that strategic change is a key predictor of institutional effectiveness. This finding was supported by Anderson and Anderson (2010), Bass and

Riggio (2006), Van De Ven (1993), and Singh and Bhandarker (1990) who stated that strategic change influences institutional effectiveness in terms of increasing organizational capability to cope with rapidly changing environment through adapting organizational strategies and assumptions. Therefore, institutions of higher education must shift their emphasis from first-order, simple type of change to a more radical type of change known as strategic change to cope with the increased momentum for organizational change in higher education.

5.2 Lesson 2: Transformational Leadership and Institutional culture are Vital for Effective Strategic Change

The second lesson implies that in order for Palestinian universities to implement successful strategic change, they must emphasize two principal organizational factors of influence on strategic change. The first is transformational leadership. It was evident from the qualitative analysis that the extent to which strategic change was successful was contingent on the presence of effective forms of leadership. This was manifested in the university under investigation. For instance, capability for strategic change was perceived higher at the university when the university leadership was also perceived moderately transformational. Similarly, in contrast, it would be lower if the university leadership was ineffective. This is consistent with the previous literature on leadership and change which has shown that the success of change is conditional on the degree transformational leadership is present in the organization (Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Mulla, 2010; & Bass & Riggio, 2006).

The second factor of influence on strategic change was suggested to be the prevailing institutional culture of the university. Exploration of the reality of strategic change in the target university revealed that the university capability for strategic change planning and implementation was also greatly affected by the degree to which the university culture was perceived to be effective. When institutional culture was perceived higher, the university capability for strategic change was also perceived higher. Therefore, an inference can be made that a low capability for strategic change may be an outcome of ineffective university culture. This is in line with Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington (2005) who explained that institutional culture informs the formulation of organizational strategy in ways which contribute to proper organizational alignment with the external environment. It is also consistent with Bass and Riggio (2006) and Schein (2004) who confirmed that leaders tend to improve organizational performance through strategic change by means of creating certain types of institutional culture.

5.3 Lesson 3: Transformational Leadership and Institutional culture do not Simply Exist; They Synergize to Create a Combined Effect on Strategic Change

The third lesson is that strategic change does not simply require the presence of effective transformational leadership and institutional culture. Rather, it necessitates a proper synergism between transformational leadership and institutional culture. That is, the success of strategic change in the context of Palestinian higher education is contingent on the degree to which transformational leadership and institutional culture synergize to bring about a combined effect on strategic change. Therefore, greater emphasis must be placed on developing highly effective forms of transformational leadership and institutional culture to maximize their combined influence on strategic change, and thus, on university effectiveness. This greatest concern emerged from the qualitative analysis which indicated that ignoring certain aspects of transformational leadership and institutional culture weakens these specific types and, in return, may inhibit their favorable influence on strategic change.

The current qualitative exploration provided clear endorsement of the needed synergism between transformational leadership and institutional culture. For instance, the qualitative findings provided significant evidence for an inverse effect of institutional culture in the relationship between transformational leadership and strategic change at the university due to unfavorable university leadership's assumptions about change combined with undermined cultural aspects that were relevant to change. What this indicates is that, for better or worse, transformational leadership and institutional culture interact to influence institutional effectiveness through strategic change.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the qualitative study concluded that transformational leadership, institutional culture, and strategic change are potentially significant predictors of institutional effectiveness in Palestinian higher education. Supported by previous literature, this study provided clear endorsement of the needed synergism between transformational leadership and institutional culture. It revealed that unattended key leadership dimensions of optimal relevance to change such as intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration combined with the presence of unfavorable university leadership's assumptions about change may hinder institutional capacity to plan and implement strategic change in ways which also impede institutional effectiveness. It was therefore indicated that improving such key transformational leadership dimensions and reinforcing university assumptions supportive of change may account for a combined favorable

influence of transformational leadership and institutional culture on strategic change and, in turn, help institutions of higher education to become more effective and adaptive.

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