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The teachers' change management competency in educational human resource management and organizational development: evidence from the Mekong delta, Vietnam

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Abstract: Amid accelerating educational reforms and growing organizational complexity, change management competency has emerged as a key determinant of leadership effectiveness in educational institutions. This study examines the current state of change management competencies across five dimensions: awareness and motivation for change, planning and implementation, communication and commitment building, management of resistance, and evaluation, adjustment, and sustainability of change. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to educational leaders and practitioners. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to assess competency levels and internal consistency across dimensions. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrate relatively strong competencies in communication, commitment building, and openness to change. However, comparatively lower levels were observed in strategic planning, proactive handling of barriers, and evidence-based evaluation for sustaining change over time. These results reveal a gap between positive attitudes toward change and the capacity to institutionalize change sustainably. The study highlights the need for targeted professional development focusing on adaptive leadership, systematic evaluation, and long-term change sustainability. The findings contribute empirical evidence to the literature on educational change management and provide practical implications for leadership development in reform-oriented educational contexts. This study specifically focuses on educational administrators as the key agents responsible for initiating, implementing, and sustaining change processes in schools

Keywords: change management competency; educational leadership; organizational change; sustainability

1. Introduction

Contemporary educational institutions and organizations are increasingly required to respond to the combined pressures of globalization, digital transformation, and rapid socio-economic change. In this context, managing and leading change has gradually emerged as a central professional competency rather than a situational or short-term managerial task. Change is now widely understood as an ongoing condition, requiring continuous adaptation, innovation, and sustainable development. Previous research suggests that the outcomes of change initiatives are influenced less by formal strategies or material resources than by human capacity to interpret, enact, and sustain change over time. Such capacity is commonly reflected in the ability to recognize the need for change and motivate others, plan and organize implementation, communicate and mobilize participation, manage conflict and resistance, and evaluate, adjust, and

maintain change processes. Nevertheless, empirical evidence indicates that these competencies are often unevenly developed and inconsistently applied in practice.

In Vietnam, particularly within the field of education and educational management, the demand for fundamental and comprehensive reform under the orientations and policies of the Party and the State has placed considerable pressure on administrators, lecturers, and learners. Despite the implementation of various training and professional development programs related to management and leadership, the development of change management competencies remains constrained. These limitations are evident in a lack of proactive engagement, inconsistent implementation practices, and difficulties in sustaining change outcomes over the long term.

Organizational capacity plays a critical role in sustaining educational change. According to Bryk et al., long-term improvement in educational institutions depends on relational trust and supportive organizational conditions. Relational trust facilitates collaboration among stakeholders, reduces uncertainty, and enhances openness to innovation. Organizational conditions such as leadership support, school culture, and institutional structures provide the foundation for effective change implementation. These factors shape administrators' ability to manage change processes and influence the sustainability of reform initiatives.

Resistance to change has been widely examined as a multidimensional construct. Oreg (2003) conceptualizes resistance through four dimensions: routine seeking, emotional reaction to imposed change, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity. In addition, system justification theory proposed by Jost et al. (2004) explains individuals' tendency to preserve the status quo because existing systems provide psychological stability and predictability. In educational organizations, these tendencies may manifest as reluctance to adopt new policies, practices, or management approaches.

Acceptance of change depends not only on organizational conditions but also on individuals' perceived capabilities. Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory (1995) explains how individuals adopt innovations at different rates depending on their readiness and openness to change. Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977, 1997) further suggests that individuals who believe in their capability to perform tasks successfully are more likely to engage positively with change initiatives. In the context of educational management, administrators with strong self-efficacy are more confident in implementing reforms and managing uncertainty.

In response to these issues, the present study focuses on examining the current state of change management competencies across five core competency domains, as reflected in five sets of empirical findings. Through in-depth analysis and discussion of these results, the study seeks to identify key strengths, existing limitations, and underlying causes, thereby providing a scientific basis for proposing solutions aimed at enhancing management effectiveness and promoting sustainable development in the context of ongoing educational reform.

Based on the previous studies, this study proposes a multi-level integrated framework to explain change management competency among educational administrators. At the individual level, self-efficacy influences administrators' attitudes and confidence in responding to change initiatives. This framework integrates individual, organizational, and change-specific factors in explaining administrators'

change management competency. At the organizational level, relational trust and supportive organizational conditions create an environment that facilitates collaboration and effective change implementation. At the change-specific level, the perceived meaning and necessity of change shape individuals' willingness to accept or resist new initiatives. Resistance to change is conceptualized based on Oreg's multidimensional model, while acceptance of change is informed by Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory. These factors interact dynamically to influence administrators' change management competency in educational institutions. The framework is used as a conceptual lens to interpret the empirical findings rather than as a model for statistical hypothesis testing.

2. Research methodology

In the Vietnamese educational context, the roles of "teachers" and "administrators" are functionally distinct. Teachers are primarily responsible for instructional activities, whereas administrators (e.g., principals and vice-principals) are responsible for school leadership and management, including decision-making related to organizational change. This study specifically focuses on educational administrators, as they play a central role in initiating, implementing, and managing change processes within schools.

The sample consisted of 306 managers and administrators, including 79 males (25.8%) and 227 females (74.2%). This study used a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional design. This method allows for the collection of data at a descriptive level and the analysis of defined objectives (if any) between the principal variables in the survey sample. Ethical Assurance: All participants were informed of the research objectives, ensuring voluntariness and confidentiality of information. The survey instrument was developed based on established theoretical frameworks of change management and adapted from prior validated scales.

Content validity was ensured through expert review involving three specialists in educational management and organizational change. Construct validity was examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), with factor loadings exceeding 0.5 for all items. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. The results indicated acceptable internal consistency across all constructs, with values ranging from 0.78 to 0.91, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). These results confirm that the instrument is both valid and reliable for measuring change management competency in the studied context.

Although the sample was selected using a convenience sampling approach, efforts were made to ensure its representativeness. The proportion of female participants (74.2%) is consistent with the gender distribution in the Vietnamese education sector, where female staff constitutes a majority according to reports from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). Therefore, the sample is considered to reasonably reflect the demographic characteristics of educational administrators in the Mekong Delta region.

3. Research results

3.1. The concept of change management in educational institutions

Change management can be understood as a deliberate process through which managers guide, organize, lead, and sustain improvements within an organization in order to adapt to new contexts and enhance organizational effectiveness. In the educational sector, change management extends beyond adjustments to structures, procedures, or technologies; it also exerts a profound influence on the professional perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of teachers, administrators, and other relevant educational stakeholders.

According to Lewin (1951), organizational change unfolds through three fundamental stages: (1) unfreezing, (2) changing, and (3) refreezing. Building on this framework, Kotter (1996, 2012) developed an eight-step model that highlights the role of leadership in creating urgency, mobilizing people, and institutionalizing change outcomes. These two models are widely regarded as foundational theoretical frameworks and remain adaptable to contemporary educational management contexts.

Change management in educational institutions can be understood as a deliberate and systematic process aimed at guiding, organizing, directing, and controlling changes in goals, organizational structures, curricula, instructional approaches, human resources, and school culture in response to emerging educational demands. This process encompasses preparation for change, implementation, and consolidation in order to ensure organizational stability and sustainable development (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996, 2012; Burnes, 2017).

Within educational settings, change management extends beyond technical adjustments and involves deeper transformations in organizational culture, professional beliefs, and staff behavior. This process is closely linked to leadership roles and the managerial competencies of educational leaders (Fullan, 2016, 2020; Bush, 2020). Empirical studies conducted in Vietnam similarly emphasize change management as a core competency for educational administrators in the context of comprehensive reform and digital transformation (Đặng Xuân Hải et al., 2016; Nguyễn Văn Hùng, 2022).

3.2. The ability to predict and prepare for change

The capacity to recognize and motivate change is reflected in educational administrators' ability to identify reform demands, anticipate educational development trends, and establish a shared understanding of the urgency of change. According to Lewin (1951), the unfreezing stage plays a critical role in weakening existing states of equilibrium, thereby creating conditions for the emergence of new behaviors and practices.

Kotter (1996) emphasizes that establishing a sense of urgency and building a guiding coalition are essential prerequisites for successfully initiating change. In educational institutions, this competency is demonstrated through aligning innovation initiatives with learners' needs, curriculum requirements, and the school's long-term development orientation. When educational leaders can clearly articulate the meaning

and benefits of change, teachers are more likely to accept and actively engage in improvement activities.

Effective change management requires educational leaders to anticipate transformation needs and prepare clear strategic directions in advance (Oumoudian, 2025). Forecasting trends and integrating technological applications not only help position educational institutions within a dynamic environment but also facilitate the unfreezing phase in Lewin's model, during which individuals and organizations become more receptive to new change initiatives. Such preparation reduces resistance and enhances teachers' and staff members' readiness to embrace innovation (Vasel, 2025). Implementing change initiatives further requires leaders not only to understand reform objectives but also to coordinate actions along a systematic roadmap. Within Kotter's framework, empowering individuals and removing obstacles are critical steps that enable teachers to participate proactively in innovative practices, while Lewin highlights the importance of actual behavioral transition during the *changing* phase following adequate preparation (unfreezing) (Oumoudian, 2025). These processes reflect a continuous capacity for improvement and innovation aimed at ensuring that teaching and management practices remain aligned with current educational demands.

The capacity to forecast and prepare for change refers to administrators' ability to analyze contextual conditions, identify emerging trends, anticipate potential impacts, and establish necessary preconditions prior to implementation. This competency corresponds to the unfreezing stage in Lewin's (1951) model and the step of creating a sense of urgency in Kotter's eight-step framework (Kotter, 1996, 2012). In educational contexts, forecasting change is closely associated with the use of data, evidence, and policy analysis to identify challenges and opportunities at an early stage (OECD, 2020, 2023). Recent studies further highlight the growing role of data analytics and trend forecasting in contemporary educational management (Mao et al., 2024). In Vietnam, several scholars argue that strong preparatory capacity for change helps mitigate resistance and reduce risks during educational reform processes (Nguyễn Thị Hiền, 2024; Lê Thị Đỗ Quyên, 2025).

3.3. Planning and implementation coordination competency

Once initial awareness and motivation have been established, the change management process moves into the design and implementation phase. This competency involves developing a clear innovation vision and translating it into concrete objectives, plans, and solutions that are aligned with the school's practical conditions.

According to Kotter (1996), articulating a clear change vision and strategy before translating that vision into concrete actions helps organizations avoid ambiguity and inconsistency during implementation. In educational management, planning competency further requires leaders to structure change initiatives into distinct phases, balance short-term and long-term objectives, and proactively prepare flexible alternatives to respond to emerging challenges. Detailed planning and the segmentation of innovation activities are essential during the changing stage in both Lewin's and Kotter's models. Strategic clarity and well-defined plans enable leaders to maintain coherence throughout implementation and reduce the risk of disruption or

premature stagnation in the change process (Oumoudian, 2025). At the same time, coordination with parents and the wider community to strengthen support and engagement represents a key step in Kotter's model, facilitating the implementation of more profound and wide-ranging changes (Oumoudian, 2025).

Planning and implementation coordination competency can be understood as the ability to formulate objectives and roadmaps, allocate resources, and coordinate relevant stakeholders throughout the change implementation process. This competency is central to the changing phase in Lewin's (1951) model and corresponds to the stages of vision building, strategy development, and action implementation in Kotter's framework (Kotter, 1996, 2012). In educational management, effective change planning must ensure systematic structure, feasibility, and flexibility, while being closely linked to coordination among leaders, teachers, staff, and related stakeholders (Burnes, 2017; Bush, 2020). Fullan (2016, 2020) emphasizes that change implementation in schools is effective only when planning is accompanied by organizational learning and continuous professional support. This perspective is also reflected in professional development materials for educational administrators in Vietnam (Đặng Khắc Ánh, 2022; Nguyễn Văn Hùng et al., 2025).

3.4. The ability to build consensus and mobilize the team

People are at the center of all educational change. Therefore, the capacity to mobilize and lead staff plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of change management. Kotter (2012) argues that empowering individuals, removing psychological barriers, and encouraging initiative are critical for translating a change vision into practical action. In school settings, this competency is reflected in democratic leadership styles, the ability to listen and consult teachers, the effective use of subject-based professional teams, and the cultivation of a collaborative school culture. When teachers feel respected and involved in decision-making processes, they are more likely to develop shared commitment and demonstrate greater willingness to adjust teaching methods and organizational practices.

Building consensus and mobilizing participation can be considered the core of change management in education, reflecting Kotter's principles of empowering action and forming guiding coalitions. These practices encourage teachers and staff to assume proactive roles in the change process, thereby contributing to the development of a positive culture of innovation (Oumoudian, 2025). Similarly, Lewin emphasizes that sustainable change must be supported by broad participation from organizational members.

Consensus-building and staff mobilization competency refers to the ability to cultivate support, trust, and commitment among administrators and teachers toward the goals and content of change. Kotter (1996, 2012) identifies this capacity as a decisive factor in successful change through the formation of guiding coalitions and the effective communication of the change vision. In educational contexts, where change initiatives often encounter resistance rooted in professional routines, this competency is closely associated with ethical leadership, distributed leadership, and motivational practices (Bush, 2020; Northouse, 2022). Fullan (2016) and Senge et al. (2012) further suggest that building professional learning communities within schools

provides a foundation for sustaining long-term consensus. Empirical studies in Vietnam likewise highlight the importance of staff mobilization in instructional innovation and school governance reform (Nguyễn Văn Hùng, 2022; Phạm Hồng Quang & Nguyễn Danh Nam, 2025).

3.5. The ability to deliver short-term results and consolidate progress

In Kotter's model, generating short-term wins represents a strategic step for sustaining momentum and encouraging continued support from both school leaders and teachers. These early successes serve as tangible evidence that change produces practical benefits, thereby strengthening trust and commitment among organizational members (Oumoudian, 2025). At the same time, recognizing and reinforcing such achievements aligns with the refreezing stage in Lewin's model, during which change processes are stabilized and integrated into routine organizational practices.

This competency is reflected in administrators' ability to design, acknowledge, and disseminate early achievements in order to maintain motivation for ongoing change. Kotter (1996, 2012) regards short-term wins as a critical factor in consolidating confidence and preventing regression to previous states.

In educational contexts, short-term outcomes may include improvements in teaching practices, student learning results, or positive shifts in teachers' attitudes. Consolidating change processes requires alignment with internal policy adjustments and the institutionalization of new practices, corresponding to the refreezing stage in Lewin's (1951) framework. Empirical studies in Vietnam likewise emphasize the role of school leadership in sustaining and scaling change outcomes over time (Đặng Xuân Hải et al., 2016; Lê, C., 2025).

3.6. The ability to manage feedback, risk, and continuous adaptation

Communication functions as a unifying thread throughout the entire change management process. According to Kotter (1996), effective communication is not merely the transmission of information, but a process of meaning-making that enables organizational members to understand why change is necessary *and* what benefits it brings. In educational institutions, communication and commitment-building competency are reflected in the timely sharing of information, the management of teachers' expectations, and the recognition and reinforcement of early positive outcomes. The creation of short-term wins plays a critical role in sustaining motivation, strengthening trust, and reducing resistance to subsequent stages of change.

Risk management and feedback responsiveness constitute essential elements in both major change management models. Kotter emphasizes continuous communication and the removal of obstacles, highlighting the importance of anticipating reactions and addressing opposition to maintain implementation momentum. Lewin, by contrast, underscores that stabilizing a new state requires ongoing adaptation to feedback from practice and continuous adjustment of change strategies (Oumoudian, 2025). This dimension is particularly salient in educational contexts, where change affects the behaviors, attitudes, and professional beliefs of diverse stakeholder groups.

Feedback, risk management, and continuous adaptation competency refers to the ability to collect and analyze feedback, identify potential risks, and make timely adjustments to change strategies during implementation. Burnes (2017) and the OECD (2020) argue that educational change is inherently complex, requiring a high degree of flexibility and adaptability from educational leaders.

In the context of digital transformation and contemporary educational reform, this competency has become especially critical for mitigating negative impacts and enhancing overall management effectiveness (Lê Thị Đỗ Quyên, 2025; Vassel, 2025). Both international and domestic studies converge on the view that successful change is a process of continuous adjustment rather than a fixed sequence of linear actions (Fullan, 2020; Nguyễn Thị Hiền, 2024).

3.7. The capacity for evaluating, training, and self-reflecting on leadership

The final stage of change management involves sustaining and institutionalizing achieved outcomes. Lewin (1951) refers to this phase as refreezing, during which new behaviors must be reinforced to become established organizational norms.

Kotter (2012) argues that change becomes truly sustainable only when it is embedded within organizational culture. In educational management, this competency encompasses the use of criteria and evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of innovation, the adjustment of plans based on practical feedback, and the enhancement of professional development and technological application to support teachers' long-term adaptation. At the same time, leaders' self-evaluation and ongoing adjustment of leadership styles play an important role in preventing disruption to the change process.

Successful change models extend beyond implementation to include continuous evaluation and organizational learning. The use of pilot initiatives, timely information sharing, and systematic capacity building facilitates cycles of organizational learning, which are central to contemporary educational change management (Oumoudian, 2025). Reflective practice and leadership self-assessment enable managers to proactively refine strategies and address unfavorable conditions during reform implementation. Evaluation, professional development, and leadership self-reflection competency refers to administrators' ability to assess change processes and outcomes, develop personal and professional capacities, and learn from practice. The CIPP evaluation model proposed by Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017) provides a robust framework for assessing change in educational organizations. Fullan (2020) and Northouse (2022) further emphasize that reflective practice constitutes the foundation of adaptive leadership and lifelong learning. Domestic training materials and curricula likewise affirm evaluation and self-development as essential requirements for educational administrators in reform contexts (Học viện Chính trị quốc gia Hồ Chí Minh, 2021; Nguyễn Trọng Lăng, 2023; Nguyễn Văn Hùng et al., 2025).

Table 1 presents the results of the assessment of participants' competency in recognizing and motivating change, thereby reflecting their levels of understanding, attitudes, and readiness to engage in the change process within the research context.

Table 1. Cognitive abilities and motivation for change.

Serial	Content	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	DTB	DLC
1	I proactively anticipate and guide changes in the educational institution where I work.	2.0	25.5	41.2	31.4	3.02	0.805
2	I seriously implement changes related to curriculum, teaching methods, and educational management.	2.6	16.0	43.5	37.9	3.17	0.786
3	I regularly seek opportunities to innovate and improve educational activities in a timely and continuous manner.	1.6	18.0	43.5	36.9	3.16	0.769
4	I always look for creative solutions to enhance the quality of education at the school.	1.0	16.3	45.1	37.6	3.19	0.737
5	I always link curriculum changes to the learning needs and development of learners.	1.6	10.5	42.8	45.1	3.31	0.724
6	I always clearly define the scientific and practical basis for each curriculum change in the school.	2.0	13.7	45.4	38.9	3.21	0.749
Average GPA						3.17	0.761

The survey results indicate that participants' capacity for proactively forecasting, orienting, and implementing change in educational institutions is at a fairly good level, with an overall mean score (M) of 3.17 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.761, reflecting a relatively high degree of consensus among respondents. Item 1 (proactive forecasting and orientation of change) recorded the lowest mean score (M = 3.02). Although the majority of responses were concentrated at levels 3 and 4 (72.6%), a considerable proportion of respondents (27.5%) selected levels 1 and 2. This finding suggests that the strategic forecasting capacity of a segment of participants remains limited, with change orientation tending to be more reactive than proactive.

Items 2 and 3 (implementing changes in curricula and teaching methods; seeking opportunities for innovation) yielded mean scores of 3.17 and 3.16, respectively, indicating relatively strong performance in terms of execution and continuous improvement. More than 36% of respondents rated these items at level 4, reflecting a willingness to engage in innovation initiatives when supportive policies or favorable conditions are in place. Item 4 (seeking creative solutions to enhance educational quality) achieved a mean score of 3.19, with over 82.7% of responses at levels 3 and 4. This result suggests that creative capacity has begun to emerge; however, it remains fragmented at the individual level and has not yet developed into a sustained culture of innovation within schools.

Item 5 (linking change initiatives to learners' needs and development) recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.31) and the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.724), indicating a high level of agreement regarding learner-centered orientations in the implementation of change programs, which is consistent with current educational reform directions. Item 6 (identifying the scientific and practical foundations of change initiatives) obtained a mean score of 3.21, suggesting that innovation efforts are generally grounded in certain rationales, although a proportion of respondents have yet to prioritize scientific rigor and empirical evidence.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that participants' capacity to recognize, orient, and implement change is at a fairly good level, as reflected in positive attitudes toward innovation, a learner-centered focus, and a general willingness to engage in reform efforts. Nevertheless, strategic forecasting capacity, proactive orientation, and system-level innovation remain limited. This indicates that change processes in educational

institutions are often driven more by immediate demands or top-down directives than by long-term strategic vision. Accordingly, there is a need for targeted capacity-building measures in change management that emphasize strategic thinking, scientific grounding, and sustainability, particularly through enhancing administrators' and teachers' abilities in contextual analysis, forecasting, and long-term change planning.

Based on specific evaluation criteria, **Table 2** presents the current status of participants' competencies in planning, designing, and organizing the implementation of change, reflecting their ability to translate awareness into action throughout the reform process.

Table 2. Capacity for planning, designing, and implementing change.

Serial	Content	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	ĐTB	ĐLC
1	The change plans and programs I implement are always clear, easy to understand, and feasible.	0.7	8.8	46.7	43.8	3.34	0.664
2	I break down innovation plans into appropriate phases for easier management and execution.	1.3	13.4	48.0	37.3	3.21	0.718
3	I implement short-term innovation solutions to create positive initial results for the school.	3.3	16.0	48.0	32.7	3.10	0.781
4	I develop systematic plans for long-term educational innovation programs.	0.7	8.5	43.8	47.1	3.37	0.667
5	I always prepare flexible options to respond to situations that arise during the innovation process.	0.7	15.0	43.5	40.8	3.25	0.726
6	I organize pilot activities to verify effectiveness before scaling up the innovation.	1.6	20.3	41.8	36.3	3.13	0.785
7	I proactively prepare for subsequent innovation activities when the current innovation program is nearing completion.	3.6	16.3	45.1	35.0	3.11	0.804
Average GPA						3.21	0.735

The survey results indicate that participants' competency in planning, designing, and organizing the implementation of change is at a fairly good level, with an overall mean score (M) of 3.21 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.735. This suggests that most participants are able to develop and implement innovation plans at a relatively adequate level, while the limited dispersion of responses reflects a relatively high degree of consensus.

Item 1 (clear, understandable, and feasible change plans and programs) recorded a mean score of 3.34, with 90.5% of responses at levels 3 and 4, indicating that the majority of participants are capable of formulating change plans that are reasonably specific and aligned with the practical conditions of their schools. Item 4 (developing long-term plans for innovation programs) achieved the highest mean score (M = 3.37) and the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.667), reflecting strong consistency in both perception and practice regarding the importance of long-term strategic planning in change management.

Items 2 (dividing plans into distinct phases) and 5 (preparing flexible alternatives to respond to emerging situations) yielded mean scores of 3.21 and 3.25, respectively, suggesting that participants have developed an awareness of process-based management and the need for flexibility in organizing change implementation. In contrast, Item 3 (implementing short-term innovation initiatives to generate initial results) obtained a mean score of 3.10, which is below the overall average. This finding indicates that the creation of short-term wins, an important factor for sustaining

motivation and reinforcing trust during change processes, has not yet been implemented effectively or consistently.

Items 6 (organizing pilot activities prior to scaling up) and 7 (preparing for subsequent innovation initiatives) recorded mean scores of 3.13 and 3.11, respectively. These results reflect limitations in cyclical innovation thinking and evidence-based management, as a proportion of participants have not sufficiently emphasized experimentation, evaluation, and the systematic transfer of innovation outcomes.

Overall, the results presented in **Table 2** show that participants' competency in planning, designing, and organizing change implementation is at a fairly good level, particularly in terms of developing clear, feasible, and long-term-oriented plans. However, more tactical aspects of implementation, such as generating short-term results, conducting pilot initiatives, and preparing for subsequent cycles of change, remain limited. This suggests that change management in educational institutions currently tends to emphasize planning at the conceptual level rather than practice-oriented, cyclical management, and that a clear model of continuous, evidence-based innovation has yet to be firmly established. Accordingly, greater attention should be given to strengthening competencies in process-oriented implementation, expanding pilot testing and evaluation, and sustaining motivation through short-term achievements in order to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of school-based change initiatives.

Based on specific indicators, **Table 3** presents the current status of participants' capacity to mobilize and lead people throughout the change process, reflecting their ability to influence, inspire, and coordinate human resources toward the achievement of innovation objectives.

Table 3. The ability to mobilize and lead people in the change process.

Serial	Content	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	DTB	DLC
1	I am open to receiving feedback, suggestions, and opportunities for innovation from colleagues and stakeholders.	0.3	5.9	34.0	59.8	3.53	0.622
2	I collaborate closely with parents, the community, and educational stakeholders throughout the innovation process.	3.3	12.7	45.1	38.9	3.20	0.781
3	I consult with administrators, teachers, and staff before making important decisions.	1.3	13.7	44.4	40.5	3.24	0.734
4	I build consensus and commitment among the teaching staff in innovation activities.	2.0	11.4	44.8	41.8	3.26	0.737
5	I leverage the role of professional teams/groups as a foundation for change management.	2.3	12.4	44.1	41.2	3.24	0.756
6	I work closely with innovative and change-minded individuals within the school.	0.7	8.5	49.3	41.5	3.32	0.653
7	I encourage teachers and staff to openly share their opinions and express their concerns about change.	1.3	6.2	36.6	55.9	3.47	0.673
Average GPA						3.32	0.708

The survey results indicate that participants' capacity to mobilize and lead people during the change process is at a fairly good to near-strong level, with an overall mean score (M) of 3.32 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.708. This finding reflects relatively positive and fairly consistent evaluations of leadership capacity in building consensus and encouraging staff participation in innovation processes.

Item 1 (openness to receiving ideas, proposals, and opportunities for innovation) achieved the highest mean score ($M = 3.53$), with 93.8% of responses at levels 3 and 4, and the lowest standard deviation ($SD = 0.622$). This result indicates that participants demonstrate a clear, open and participatory leadership style, characterized by listening and encouraging involvement, which facilitates the emergence of grassroots innovation initiatives. Item 7 (encouraging the sharing of opinions and concerns during change) also recorded a high mean score ($M = 3.47$), reflecting the ability to create a psychologically safe environment in which teachers and staff feel confident to express their views, thereby reducing resistance during the change process.

Item 6 (collaboration with individuals who demonstrate an innovative mindset) obtained a mean score of 3.32, suggesting that participants are able to build a core group to drive change, consistent with the principles of distributed leadership and the diffusion of positive influence within organizations. Items 3, 4, and 5 (consultation prior to decision-making; building consensus and commitment; and promoting the role of professional teams or subject groups) yielded mean scores ranging from 3.24 to 3.26, indicating a relatively even level of implementation. However, the proportion of responses at level 2 remains between 11.4% and 13.7%, suggesting that in some cases, consultation and commitment-building practices are not applied consistently.

Item 2 (coordination with parents, communities, and other educational stakeholders) recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.20$) and the highest standard deviation ($SD = 0.781$), indicating notable variation among participants. This finding reflects the practical challenges associated with mobilizing external resources beyond the school in the change process, as such collaboration has not yet become a routine or systematic practice.

Overall, the results presented in **Table 3** show that participants' capacity to mobilize and lead people represents a notable strength in change management, particularly in terms of listening, encouraging participation, and fostering a democratic working environment. This capacity plays a critical role in reducing resistance and increasing acceptance of innovation within schools. However, limitations remain in coordinating with external educational stakeholders and in standardizing consultation and commitment-building processes. Accordingly, greater emphasis should be placed on expanding collaborative networks and strengthening connective leadership competencies in order to maximize the mobilization of human resources both within and beyond schools, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of change initiatives.

To further clarify the stage of sustaining and consolidating change, **Table 4** presents participants' capacity in communication, commitment-building, and change reinforcement, providing a scientific basis for proposing measures to enhance management effectiveness and organizational development in the context of educational innovation.

Table 4. Communication, Commitment Building, and Change Consolidation Capabilities.

Serial	Content	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	DTB	DLC
1	I effectively manage teacher and staff expectations when implementing change.	1.0	13.4	44.4	41.2	3.26	0.721
2	I promptly recognize and reward individuals and teams who perform well in innovation activities.	1.0	8.2	43.8	47.1	3.37	0.676
3	I help the teaching staff understand the benefits for themselves and learners when implementing change.	1.6	9.8	42.8	45.8	3.33	0.718
4	I share relevant information about innovation with teachers and staff in a timely manner.	2.0	6.5	41.5	50.0	3.40	0.699
5	I handle objections to change in a timely, fair, and constructive way.	2.3	9.2	42.8	45.8	3.32	0.735
Average GPA						3.33	0.709

The survey results indicate that the participants' capacity for communication, commitment-building, and change reinforcement reaches a moderate level, with an overall mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.709. All indicators record mean values above 3.2, suggesting that communication and change maintenance processes in schools have received attention and have been implemented in a relatively coordinated manner. The limited dispersion of responses further reflects a certain degree of consistency in both perception and practice.

A closer examination of individual indicators shows that Item 4 (timely sharing of information related to innovation) achieves the highest mean score of 3.40, with 91.5% of responses rated at levels 3 and 4. This finding indicates that communication activities during the change process are carried out in a proactive manner, helping to reduce information gaps and mitigate feelings of uncertainty among teachers and staff. Item 2 (timely recognition and rewards for individuals and groups performing well in innovation activities) records a mean score of 3.37 with a relatively low standard deviation (0.676), reflecting strong consensus regarding the role of motivational mechanisms in reinforcing commitment and sustaining momentum for change. Nevertheless, a small proportion of respondents still rate this item at a moderate level, suggesting that reward and recognition practices have not yet been fully standardized or consistently implemented across all institutions.

Item 3 (helping staff clearly understand the benefits of change for themselves and for learners) yields a mean score of 3.33, indicating efforts to link innovation goals with both personal interests and student outcomes. While this contributes to greater acceptance of change, it also suggests that communication about the core values underpinning innovation needs to be further deepened in order to move from awareness toward long-term commitment. Item 1 (managing teachers' and staff's expectations) records a comparatively lower mean score of 3.26. This result reflects the reality that expectation-setting, clarification of implementation pathways, and articulation of the limits of change have not been addressed consistently, increasing the risk of gaps between expectations and actual capacity during implementation. Item 5 (handling opposing views in a timely, fair, and constructive manner) achieves a mean score of 3.32, indicating that resistance is increasingly approached as an element to be managed rather than avoided. However, the persistence of responses at level 2 (9.2%) suggests uneven capacity in dialogue and conflict resolution during periods of change.

Overall, the findings presented in **Table 4** indicate that the participants' capacity for communication and change reinforcement is relatively strong, particularly in terms of information provision and the use of motivational measures to sustain reform efforts. This capacity forms an important foundation for ensuring that change does not remain confined to the initial implementation stage, but is maintained and diffused throughout the organization.

Nevertheless, expectation management and the handling of negative feedback remain areas requiring further improvement. If insufficiently addressed, these factors may weaken staff commitment during the consolidation and sustainability phases of change. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen strategic communication capacity by integrating transparency, two-way dialogue, and appropriate incentive mechanisms to ensure that change is reinforced in a sustainable and effective manner within the current context of educational reform.

To further clarify the consolidation and sustainability phase of change, **Table 5** presents findings on participants' capacity for evaluation, adjustment, and maintenance of change, providing a scientific basis for proposing measures to enhance management capacity and support sustainable organizational development.

Table 5. Ability to assess, adjust to, and sustain change.

Serial	Content	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	DTB	DL C
1	I effectively utilize and apply advancements in information technology in management and teaching.	0.0	6.2	41.8	52.0	3.46	0.611
2	I anticipate negative reactions and take appropriate measures to address them.	2.3	12.7	42.8	42.2	3.25	0.762
3	I use specific criteria and evidence to evaluate the results of innovation.	2.0	10.8	49.7	37.6	3.23	0.715
4	I regularly review and adjust assumptions in the innovation plan.	1.6	13.4	46.1	38.9	3.22	0.735
5	I ensure that teachers and staff are trained to adapt to change.	1.0	10.8	46.7	41.5	3.29	0.694
6	I regularly self-assess to adjust my leadership behavior.	1.3	6.2	42.2	50.3	3.42	0.668
Average GPA						3.31	0.697

The survey results indicate that the participants' capacity for evaluating, adjusting, and sustaining change reaches a moderate level, with an overall mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.697. All indicators record mean values above 3.2, suggesting that monitoring, adjustment, and maintenance of change have received relatively consistent attention. The limited dispersion of responses also reflects a certain degree of alignment in both perception and practice.

A closer examination of specific indicators shows that Item 1 (effective use and application of information technology in management and teaching) achieves the highest mean score of 3.46, with 94.8% of responses at levels 3 and 4, and the lowest standard deviation (0.611). This finding highlights the increasingly central role of information technology in sustaining and optimizing innovation activities, particularly in enhancing management efficiency, monitoring, and evaluation within the context of educational digital transformation. Item 6 (regular self-evaluation to adjust leadership behavior) records a mean score of 3.42, reflecting a relatively strong capacity for self-reflection and leadership adjustment among the participants. This competency plays a

key role in enabling leaders to respond flexibly to emerging challenges during change processes, while also reinforcing trust and organizational stability.

Items 2, 3, and 4 (anticipating less positive reactions; using criteria and evidence for evaluation; reviewing and adjusting assumptions in change plans) yield mean scores ranging from 3.22 to 3.25. These results suggest that evaluation and adjustment activities are being implemented, yet tend to be more reactive than proactive, particularly with respect to risk anticipation and the systematic use of evidence to refine change strategies. Item 5 (ensuring professional development for teachers and staff to adapt to change) records a mean score of 3.29, indicating a clear recognition of the role of staff capacity development in sustaining change. However, the persistence of responses at level 2 (10.8%) suggests that professional development activities are not always continuous and are not consistently aligned with the specific needs emerging during the change process.

Overall, the findings presented in **Table 5** indicate that the participants' capacity for evaluating, adjusting, and sustaining change is moderate and relatively stable, with particular strengths in the application of information technology and leaders' self-regulation of behavior. These factors are essential for preventing disruption and enabling adaptation in a changing environment. Nevertheless, capacities related to risk anticipation, evidence-based evaluation, and the reassessment of strategic assumptions remain less pronounced. This suggests that change sustainability in educational institutions has not yet fully operated as a continuous improvement cycle, but continues to rely to a considerable extent on individual experience and situational responses.

Therefore, there is a need to strengthen data-informed evaluation capacity, enhance reflective practice, and establish mechanisms for organizational learning in order to ensure that change is sustained in a more effective and long-term manner.

4. Discussion

The analysis of the five data tables provides a relatively comprehensive picture of change management capacity in educational institutions, comprising interconnected competency domains ranging from awareness and planning to human mobilization, communication and commitment-building, as well as evaluation, adjustment, and sustainability. Overall, the competencies reach a moderate level, with mean scores ranging from 3.17 to 3.33, indicating a clear presence of innovative thinking and a general readiness for change among the participants. However, a deeper analysis reveals notable imbalances across different stages of the change management process, particularly between strategic thinking and the capacity to operate change as a sustainable, cyclical process.

First, the results from **Table 1** indicate that awareness and motivation for change have been established to a certain extent, yet remain insufficiently predictive and strategically driven. While aligning innovation with learners' needs receives relatively high ratings, proactive orientation and foresight for change are comparatively weaker. This suggests that change initiatives in schools are still largely driven by external demands, such as policies, curricula, and administrative directives, rather than by internally generated, long-term strategic visions held by school leaders. This

constitutes a fundamental limitation, as strategic awareness forms the foundation for the effectiveness of subsequent stages in the change management process.

The findings highlight the important role of self-efficacy in shaping administrators' responses to organizational change. Consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, individuals who possess stronger beliefs in their capabilities tend to demonstrate greater readiness and confidence when engaging with reform initiatives. In educational management contexts, higher levels of self-efficacy may enable administrators to navigate uncertainty, implement reforms more effectively, and maintain commitment to change processes.

Second, **Table 2** highlights a common paradox in educational management: planning capacity is rated higher than the ability to implement change through a continuous cycle. Indicators related to long-term planning, clarity, and feasibility score relatively well, whereas more dynamic elements—such as generating short-term wins, piloting innovations, and preparing for subsequent cycles of change—receive lower ratings. This pattern suggests that change management remains heavily influenced by an administrative and planning-oriented mindset, rather than a contemporary approach grounded in experimentation, feedback, and continuous adjustment.

These findings also align with learning organization theory, particularly Argyris and Schön's concept of double-loop learning and Senge's systems thinking perspective, which emphasize the importance of continuous reflection, feedback, and systemic understanding in organizational improvement.

The role of relational trust and supportive organizational conditions also emerges as an important factor in facilitating change management. These findings are consistent with the framework proposed by Bryk et al., which emphasizes the importance of organizational capacity for sustained improvement. Relational trust among stakeholders fosters collaboration, reduces uncertainty, and creates a supportive environment for implementing reforms. At the same time, favorable organizational conditions, such as leadership support, institutional culture, and structural resources, provide the foundation for effective change implementation.

Third, the findings from **Table 3** stand out as a notable strength across the competency framework. High ratings for listening, encouraging open sharing, fostering psychological safety, and mobilizing core change agents reflect a positive shift from command-and-control management toward participatory and transformational leadership. Nevertheless, the capacity to engage parents, communities, and external educational stakeholders remains limited, indicating that human mobilization efforts are still largely confined within the school. This constraint reduces both the social reach and long-term sustainability of change initiatives.

Fourth, **Table 4** shows that communication and change reinforcement are implemented with relative effectiveness, particularly in terms of information sharing and recognition of positive efforts. However, managing expectations and addressing negative feedback are less prominent. This implies that communication during change processes tends to emphasize information transmission rather than strategic dialogue, even though expectation management and resistance handling are critical for transforming superficial acceptance into genuine commitment.

Finally, **Table 5** indicates that evaluation, adjustment, and sustainability of change have received increasing attention, especially through the application of

information technology and leaders' capacity for self-reflection. Nonetheless, indicators related to risk anticipation, evidence-based evaluation, and the reassessment of strategic assumptions remain at a moderate level. This suggests that change processes in schools have not yet fully operated as continuous improvement cycles, but continue to rely heavily on individual experience and situational responses.

Synthesizing the five competency domains, it can be concluded that change management in educational institutions is supported by a relatively solid foundation of awareness and innovative spirit, particularly in relation to people-centered leadership and communication. However, limitations in strategic depth, foresight, cyclical management, and data-informed sustainability remain critical bottlenecks. As a result, change initiatives risk remaining at the level of compliance with policy requirements rather than evolving into core organizational capacities and embedded cultural practices.

These findings suggest that, to enhance the effectiveness of change management in the current context of educational reform, attention should shift from implementing isolated innovation activities toward systematically developing change management capacity. This includes an emphasis on strategic thinking, transformational leadership, evidence-based management, and mechanisms for organizational learning. Such insights provide an important scientific foundation for proposing targeted interventions and capacity-building measures in the subsequent phase of the study.

5. Conclusion

Despite efforts to ensure representativeness, the study relies on convenience sampling within selected provinces in the Mekong Delta. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings to other regions of Vietnam.

This study provides a comprehensive overview of change management capacity in educational institutions through five core competency domains: (1) awareness and motivation for change, (2) planning, design, and implementation, (3) mobilizing and leading people, (4) communication, commitment-building, and change reinforcement, and (5) evaluation, adjustment, and sustainability of change. The findings indicate that these competencies generally reach a moderate level, reflecting a relatively clear presence of innovative thinking and a willingness to adapt to ongoing educational reforms.

Among the assessed competency domains, the capacity to mobilize and lead people, together with communication and change reinforcement capacity, emerges as a notable strength. Educational managers demonstrate an open leadership style characterized by active listening, encouragement of participation, and the creation of a psychologically safe environment for teachers and staff during the change process. These qualities constitute a critical foundation for reducing resistance and enhancing acceptance of change within schools.

Conversely, the results also reveal systemic limitations, particularly in strategic foresight, cyclical change management, and evidence-based sustainability of innovation. Although planning capacity is rated relatively high, competencies related to generating short-term wins, conducting pilot initiatives, anticipating risks, and revisiting strategic assumptions remain less prominent. This suggests that change

processes in many educational institutions continue to be driven primarily by external requirements and administrative directives, rather than being fully internalized as endogenous capacities and embedded organizational culture.

Based on the research findings, it can be affirmed that enhancing change management capacity is not merely a matter of technical management skills, but a comprehensive developmental process encompassing strategic thinking, leadership capability, data-informed decision-making, and organizational learning. The development of these competencies requires a systematic and continuous approach that is closely aligned with the operational realities of schools. These conclusions not only contribute empirical evidence to the body of research on change management in education but also provide an important scientific foundation for proposing solutions and recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness and sustainability of educational reform initiatives in the coming period.

Although this study focuses on educational institutions in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta, its findings contribute to the broader international literature on educational change management. The results demonstrate the applicability of established theoretical frameworks, such as self-efficacy theory, innovation diffusion theory, and organizational capacity models, in understanding change processes within developing country contexts.

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