# STRATEGIC CHANGE PROCESS IN PRACTICE: FOUR CASE STUDIES IN KOSOVO

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**Abstract:** *This paper explores the process of organizational strategic change in four financial institutions in Kosovo. The study uses a 'strategy as practice' approach focusing on strategic change implementation processes and practices. It uses grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) to examine the process of strategic change and to provide insights of change management from the practice perspective in Kosovo context. The study proposes 5 stages of change: experiencing crisis, diagnosing the organization, shaping change strategy, communicating change strategy, and implementing and stabilizing change. These phases are grounded in data and offer discussion on strategic change processes and insights on implementation process from management perspective.*

**Keywords:** *strategy as practice, financial institutions Kosovo, strategic change, processes and practices, organizational context.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, studies of strategy have shifted focus in the direction of the practice and micro perspective approach. Unlike the traditional business strategy approach, where strategy is considered as something organizations possess, the evolving field of strategy as practice (s-as-p) views strategy as something organizations and its members actually do. The strategy process entails individuals conducting various activities such as making plans, framing, implementing and executing strategies (Whittington, 2004; Johnson et.al, 2014; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007). In this context, strategy is not only considered a written document or plan for organizations' future path but also as something that an organization and its members take part in throughout various processes, practices and activities. According to Whittington (1996) strategy-as-practice is concentrated on "how the practitioners of strategy act and interact" (p.731). Pettigrew et al. (1999), on the other hand, argues that organizational performance difference may be understood only when practitioners are able "to manage the process of organizational change and to customize it to fit local conditions" (p.6). Thus, strategic change is of crucial importance for the strategy process and also inherent to the strategy as practice approach.

In this study, we identify five phases of the strategic change process applicable in four financial companies which went through transformation. These are: experiencing crisis, diagnosing the organization, shaping change strategy, communicating change strategy, and implementing and stabilizing change. Although, many theories/models of strategic change exist, in practice, models must be tailored depending on the organizational context, the nature of problems that need to change, the scope and urgency of change and readiness and commitment to change.

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## 2. METHODOLOGY

To examine the change processes in local context in these four Kosovar companies, we use a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2003). Research on SAP mainly uses qualitative methods where case study research is prevalent (Hughes & McDonagh, 2017). Qualitative research allows contextualization of micro action and understanding of how the change was enacted and is usually appropriate to answer how and why questions about processes. According to Burgelman, et al. (2018) the recent developments towards a "strong process ontology" allow for opportunities to combine units and levels of analysis practiced by the SAP research community to a more holistic approach labeled as "Strategy as Process and Practice (SAPP). The study intended to approach the strategic change process without any specific model in mind, through asking an open research question: What are the main processes of change as experienced by managers in four financial institutions?

Selected companies for this study are a mixture of local and international companies offering financial services and products ranging from 10 to 17 years of operation in Kosovo.

Table 1: Company Profiles

| *Company Code* | *Ownership* | *Number of Employees* | *Years of Operation* | *Profit Ranking* | *Type of change* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 001 | Local and International | 484 | 10 | Among top 5 | Culture,Processes, Structure, Systems |
| 002 | International | 800 | 15 | Among top 5 | Culture |
| 003 | Local | 330 | 16 | Among top 5 | Culture,Processes, Structure |
| 004 | Local and International | 280 | 17 | Among top 10 | Structure |

Data were collected through unstructured interviews with 2 participants in four financial institutions in Kosovo undergoing changes in the last 10 years. In total 8 interviews were conducted with one senior manager and one middle manager in each institution.

Table 2: Participant Profiles

| *Participant Code* | *Company Code* | *Gender* | *Age* | *Years of Experience* | **Position** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 001 | M | 50-60 | 37 | CEO |
| 2 | 001 | M | 50-60 | 30 | HR MNG |
| 3 | 002 | M | 40-50 | 18 | COO |
| 4 | 002 | M | 30-40 | 15 | HR MNG |
| 5 | 003 | F | 40-50 | 18 | CEO |
| 6 | 003 | M | 30-40 | 15 | HR MNG |
| 7 | 004 | F | 30-40 | 18 | HR MNG & Boar Member |
| 8 | 004 | M | 40-50 | 20 | REG MNG |

The study used a grounded theory approach to develop theory inductively from participant data. In line with the SAP approach we consider participants' experience as lived experiences of individuals interacting in the "human world" consisting of individual, institutional and interactional level (Jenkins, 2008, p. 39). As such participants experience is interpreted as actors' lived experiences over time in the institutions. Participants as "individuals and collectives have a past, present and future" which interact in continuum in a particular context (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 32). Wenger uses the term "community of practices" (Wenger, 1999, p.86) to refer to practices formed in interaction of the individual and society over time. He maintains:

*"Practices evolve as shared histories of learning. History in this sense is neither merely a personal or collective experience nor just a set of enduring artefacts and institutions, but a combination of participation and reification intertwined over time" (Wenger, 1999, p. 87).*

If we consider the interaction of specific community (individual companies) with other professional communities of practice in a local and global level (financial community), we can suggest that practices are shaped through many influences at micro and macro level especially in financial sector where processes are highly regulated and standardized.

The research used purposeful sampling technique to include actors that have experienced the process of change in the institution. Selection criteria included more than two years of working experience during the strategic change implementation.

Given that the institutions are well known in Kosovo, the researchers had context information about the companies, and therefore participants agreed for interview provided that the company is not identified. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim whereas, the company profile and respondent profile are coded selectively. Although researchers had access to other company data, attributes were carefully assigned and used to avoid identification. The interview was conducted in unstructured way by using the guiding open-ended question:

NVIVO Professional software (version. 11) was used to facilitate data analysis. Interview data were imported into NVIVO as resources and were automatically coded into Participant CASES with assigned attributes. Data was analysed into five phases: 1) Open Coding; 2) Categorizing; 3) Axial Coding; 4) Validation and 5) Interpretation.

Open Coding included free coding where the code/or node, a term used in NVIVO, represents a „word or short phrases that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). Nodes could be emotions, feelings, hierarchical aspects, processes and events such as cultural confusion, merger or crisis. Initial nodes were coded by two researchers separately and then compared. We coded 411 free codes at this stage.

The categorizing phase involved the process of grouping codes into meaningful parent and child nodes. The category represents processes/phases during the change experience through constant comparison of data and interpretation by the researchers. Other company data were included in the analysis at this stage.

The third phase, axial coding, involves an analytical process of the concept using questions (what, where, when, why, how, and consequences). Thus, the analysis of data is grounded in context and meanings emerge from participant interpretation of the process of changes in terms of the 'interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process) and consequences' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 9-10).

Table 3: Axial Coding Experiencing Crisis

| Experiencing Crisis | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Category** | **What is [the category]?** | **When does [the category] occur?** | **Where does [the category] occur?** | **Why does [the category] occur?** | **How does [the category] occur?** | **With what Consequence does [the category] occur or is [the category] understood?** |
| **Related to Organisational Culture** | Nepotistic Culture | During the company set up<br>During decision making<br>During recrutiment<br>During loan approval | C001,C003,C004 | board lacking necessary skills misunderstanding of board and CEO roles and responsibilities trying to employ family members ( high unemployment rates in Kosovo) | By refusing to change the way of doing things<br>by hiring based on favouritisim<br>by granting loans based on favouritisim ,<br>by discriminatng workers during employment, promotion and staff development opportunities | Need to understand the need for change |
| | Cultural Misfit/Confusion | Cultural misfit<br>Cultural differences<br>Frequent change of CEOs<br>Seeking for cultural compatibility between two entitities during merger | C001,C002 | Culture incompatibility<br>Frequent change of CEOs | CEO cultural influence | Need to separate from past |
| | | | | | The international company culture trying to dominate over the local culture | Need to buy in |
| **Related to management malpractices** | Poor governance practices | Long term problems with portofolio management,<br>Unfit management expertise,<br>Change of traditional company concept | C001,C004 | Board of directors lacking industry know-how,<br>Stockholder decision-making interference board change/management change<br>Lack of internal control, | By risiking financial stability,<br>By maintaining internal crisis,<br>Lack of the needed capital<br>By loosing trust<br>By experiencing uncertainity because | the company failed to merge with another one,<br>failed to advance its status<br>lack of capacity to join a new group,<br>**Urgent Need to change** |
| | | Unclear Strategy<br>Power issues | C002 | Staff unaware of company vision and mission | By creating staff divisions<br>By refusing to cooperate | |
| | | Middle managers faced with change challenges | C001,C003 | Because the change was not properly understood | By feeling they were overused and overpassed | |
| | Corruption | CEO money laundering issues | C004 | For personal gain | By reporting false numbers, by giving tenders to its own companies, by using cliques trying to win staff | |
| | | Lack of Board cooperation | C001,C004,C003 | Denial of reality, Fear of their fraud involvement, Lack of financial transparency, Role and function misconception | By refusing to understand that the company was bankrupting, by insisting that no change is needed, by taking company money for their own gain | **Urgent Need to change** |
| **Regulatory Intervention** | Administration | institution place under temporary administration | C004 | Because managemend was let go | By temporiraly assigning an administrator | |
| | | reporting corruption | C004 | Because CEO was corrupted | Regulatory intervention | |
| | | Growth strategy frozen due to legal framework restrictions | C004 | | | |
| | Information | facing regulatory restrictions Halted expansion, merger and acquisition, acitivites not in line with the regulatory framework | C004,C001, C003 | Halted expansion, merger and acquisition, acitivites not in line with the regulatory framework | By sending alerts that the company is not doing well | |
| | | Loan issuance procedures not in line with the regulatorytrying to regain | C003 | Loan issuance procedures not in line with the regulatory | By making loan and other payment services too byrochratic | |

This analysis was followed by validation which involves checking coding according to cases (company, participant) and their attribute (company size, ownership, profit). Matrix tables for each category were retrieved from NVIVO to check appropriateness of categories and subcategories.

Table 4: Matrix Coding Experiencing Crisis

| | A : Company | B : 001 | C : 002 | D : 003 | E : 004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 : CULTURE | 31 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 : MANAGEMENT | 199 | 40 | 45 | 32 | 53 |
| 3 : REGULATORY AND EXTEI | 56 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 18 |

Table 5: Change Models Comparison

| **Lekaj and Qirezi (2019)** | **Kotter (1995)** | **Mento et al (2002)** | **Jick 1990** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Experiencing crisis**<br>**Diagnosing the organisation** | Establishing sense of urgency | The idea and its context<br>Define the change initiative<br>Evaluate the climate for change | Analyze organization and its need for change |
| **Shaping change strategy** | Build a guiding coalition | Develop a change plan | Create a share vision and common direction |
| | Creating a vision | | Separate from the past |
| **Communicating change strategy** | Communicate the vision<br>Empowering others to act on the vision. | Find and cultivate a sponsor<br>Prepare your target audience, the recipients of change | Create a sense of urgency<br>Communicate,<br>Support a strong leader role |
| **Implementing and stabilizing change** | Planning for and creating short-term wins | Create the cultural fit, making the change last | Line up Political sponsorship |
| | Consolidating improvements-<br>Producing change<br>Institutionalizing new approaches | Develop and choose a change leader team<br>Create small wins for motivation<br>Constantly and strategically communicate the change | Craft an implementation plan<br>Develop enabling structures<br>Communicate, involve people and be honest |
| | | Measure progress of the change effort<br>Integrate lessons learned | Reinforce and institutionalize change |

Interpretation involves synthesizing and comparing findings with other change management theories. Table 5 shows comparison analysis.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results are organized in five categories which represent common processes /phases these companies undergo in the process of strategic change implementation. While companies differ in some aspects in each of the phase, our study although offers similar model as that of Kotter, (1995), Jicks (1991), and Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, (2002), it offers insights into simplified phases which may be adaptable depending on company change needs and change architecture that the companies develop to enrich the prospect of change implementation.

The five proposed phases are presented below by depicting similarities and differences for each company.

Phase 1: Experiencing Crisis,
Phase 2. Diagnosing the organization,
Phase 3. Shaping Change Strategy,
Phase 4: Communicating Change Strategy,
Phase 5: Implementing and Stabilizing Change.

## Phase 1. Experiencing Crisis

An organizational crisis can be referred to any situation in which an organization's wellbeing is harmed or damaged. According to Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (1998), an organizational crisis is "specific, unexpected, and non-routine events or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to an organization's high priority goals" (p.233). Our findings identified three types of crisis that threatened the future of these company goals: organizational culture crisis, management malpractices and regulatory intervention.

Table 6: Phase1. Experiencing crisis

| **Phase1. Experiencing Crisis** | **001** | **002** | **003** | **004** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizational Culture | Nepotistic Culture<br><br>Organizational Culture Misfit/Confusion during the merger | Culture misfit/Confusion | Organizational Culture misfit/Confusion | Nepotistic Culture |
| Managerial Malpractices | Poor Corporate Governance Practices<br><br>Corruption | Power Issues<br><br>Development of Cliques | Poor Corporate Governance Practices | Poor Corporate Governance Practices Corruption<br><br>Financial Instability<br><br>Money laundering |
| Regulatory intervention | Informative<br><br>Financial instability<br><br>Governance practices | None | Informative<br><br>Loan Procedures | Under Administration Loss of profit<br><br>Decline of Loan Portfolio<br><br>Corruption |

Crisis is found in all four companies. Change initiatives at each institution were not initiated due to the innovation needs or intentions to boost quality but because all four of them experienced crisis which forced them to change or simply fail. Similar to Kotter's step one (establishing a sense of urgency), this phase involved evidencing concrete challenges and discussing potential crisis systematically.

In his model, Kotter (1995) claims that 75% of a company management should be convinced that change must occur. This demonstrated to be an important but also challenging activity in all four but more in two cases in this study. Even though Jick's (1990) model (step four) assumes that when an organization faces crisis such as bankruptcy, convincing its members on the need to change will not be difficult. Yet, it was one of the most difficult tasks for change initiators at Company 001 and 004.

As stated by Mento et al, (2002) in his model (step one, the idea and its context) leaders must first face and embrace the situational reality. They must know the truth of the present reality and become aware of consequences if changes do not happen. Usually, it is expected that management and especially top management are on board with change initiatives. Conversely, our study of Company 001 and 004 revealed that in fact, the most powerful resistance about the idea of change came from top management structures It was personnel who evidenced situational reality nevertheless, change was not initiated until the top management structures recognized and accepted the need for change- just as Kotter (1995) suggests.

**Phase 2: Diagnosing the organization**

Organizational diagnosis is a method to detect and understand organization problems at all levels (Brown, 2011). There is no one set method, standard or procedure for performing organizational diagnosis. Companies may utilize different diagnostic methods based on the crisis and the problems they have. For change to be effective, the diagnosing approach will depend based on the organizational context where the change occurs (Johnson et al, 2013). Companies under this study also used methods that matched their change needs and were pertinent to the situation perceived to be problematic.

Organizations used external and internal experts and various methods such as: performance evaluation (staff and institutional), role analysis, staff satisfaction survey, skill testing, and standards compatibility testing.

Table 7: Phase 2 Diagnosing the organization

| **Phase 2: Diagnosing the Organization** | **001** | **002** | **003** | **004** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Performance evaluation (staff and institutional), | Skill testing (internal) Financial Challenges (external) department Performance Analysis Outsourcing analysis | Role analysis, change results scenarios (external) change consultants | Skill testing department Performance Analysis | |
| | Standards compatibility testing | EU Standards | Staff assessment method | Regulatory Standards |
| Satisfaction | | Staff Satisfaction Survey (external) Back to back method (internal) Employee voice | | Client Satisfaction Survey (external) |

Various methods for collecting information and analyzing data were used to determine gaps among the company structure and systems against desired performance and design change strategy. At least two companies involved external evaluators. The evaluator’s role was to collect data and analyze information along with company management to properly identify root causes of problems at all levels. Once this was done, then external evaluators provided improvement recommendations built on their findings and tailored to the organizational change needs context. Using external evaluators also served as a stamp of approval to finally convince top managers to approve strategic change initiatives in companies (001 and 002). This step is similar to Mento et al (2002), step three (evaluate the climate for change) and Jick’s step one (analyze organization and its need for change) but involves more elaboration on the process of diagnosis and methods utilized as per company change needs and organizational structure. For instance, when comparing with other companies, company 002 utilized more diverse tools/methods to identify and analyze problematic areas and also to research potential reaction to change. This is because changing culture is a very challenging effort and “tremendous energy is required to effect real cultural change” (Pettigrew, Ferlie & McKee, 1992, p.29). Proper diagnostic tools are important to design a nonthreatening and engaging implementation process.

Different diagnostic methods may be used for diagnosing organizational issues during the change process. Many models assume that all processes and practices within an organization are interconnected and a change in one will affect all of them (Lewin, 1951; Hickman, 2010). Lewin recommends the force field analysis as useful "in providing a view of forces at work in an organization that act to prevent or facilitate change", (Johnson et al, 2014, p.475). Yet, our study revealed that for change to be effective, the most appropriate diagnostic model depends on the organizational context and change urgency. Thus, there is no one set and unique diagnostic model that can be used for all organizations rather, methods must be adapted depending on the scope of the issue and urgency of change.

**Phase 3: Shaping Change Strategy**

Shaping change strategy refers to the process of mapping the terrain for change to take place. This was conducted by initiating activities that helped organizational members separate from the past: dealing with staff trauma, managing resistance and restructuring.

Table 8: Phase 3. Shaping Change Strategy

| **Phase 3: Shaping Strategic Change** | **001** | **002** | **003** | **004** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Separating from the past | Merge cultures<br>Change work processes | Change ambassadors<br>Past process and structure isolation | | Past process and structure isolation (leadership restructure) |
| Managing Resistance and dealing with trauma | Reeducating shareholders<br><br>Educate staff (one-to-one talks, trainings, workshops)<br>Staff participation the implementation process | Educate staff (one-to-one talks, trainings, workshops)<br>Staff participation the implementation process | Reeducating shareholders<br><br>Educate staff (one-to-one talks, trainings, workshops) | Creating part-time positions |
| Restructure | Outsourcing | Work delegation | Division restructure | Work delegation |

Shaping Change Strategy included various tactics ensuring that all organizational members understood desired outcomes with more concrete activities. Here change leaders start mapping and preparing the terrain for change to take place by ensuring that past experiences are isolated. They start instituting a strategic architecture that aligns with new strategic vision by managing resistance and building new structures. Although this step is similar to Kotter's (1995) three steps (building coalitions, creating vision and empowering others to act on the vision), separating from the past and restructuring was key to shaping change strategy. Separating from the past was key message to change nepotistic culture and malpractices, whereas restructuring was necessary to institutionalize strategic change. In this study, change leaders have put significant effort to gain top management support and build buy in from other levels of organization about the new strategic direction. At this stage, companies 001 and 002 involved all members of organization in the change process making them a part of it. This proved to be important as it gave employees voice to the new processes. Consequently, company 002 assigned change ambassadors who were responsible to win support from all members of the organization and to identify potential obstacles. While at Company 003, changes started happening only after the board of directors showed support towards the new strategic vision. At company 004, the entire management was changed an action very well received by employees. Restructuring working positions and creating part-time jobs served as an excellent tool to empower employees to support and accept company's new direction.

**Phase 4: Communicating change strategy**

As Kotter (2008) argues, one of the main reasons why change initiatives fail is because change vision and strategy is under communicated. Effective communication is crucial to successfully initiate or sustain a change effort. Change leader should use "all existing communication channels to broadcast the new vision", Kotter, 2008, p. 6). Some of the communication modalities used to communicate change in companies in this study are: Meetings, change ambassadors, email communication, external consultants, brochures, newsletters and individual meetings.

Table 9: Phase 4. Communicating change strategy

| **Phase 4: Communicating change strategy** | **001** | **002** | **003** | **004** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communication modalities | Meetings with owners and board<br><br>Staff information-group and one-to-one meeting | Value promotion campaign by providing brochures, e-mails, newsletters. | Weekly executive meetings and monthly middle management meetings<br><br>E-mails and individual staff meetings | E-mail communication and staff meetings |
| | External report and recommendations | External Consultant Group | | |
| | Change ambassadors | promoting and advocating the planned change (internal staff) | | |

Communicating change stage corresponds with Kotter's (1995) step four (communicate the vision) to use all means of communication for continuously broadcasting the change vision and remove obstacles. This phase is also comparable to Jick's (1990) step nine (communicate, involve and be honest) to openly communicate and look for all staff participation and trust within the organization. Jick (1990) notes that effective communication is crucial from the start of the change process. Communication modalities varied in each case, depending on local context. All four companies have put extra effort to convince non joiners that planed change means a better and more exciting future for the company and for them. Proper communication tools helped both companies avoid change uncertainties, win trust throughout organization and gradually gain acceptance. In all four cases, proper communication proved to be an important activity that later assisted change implementation.

**Phase 5: Implementing and Stabilizing change**

Stabilizing crisis according to Johnson et.al, (2014) is putting in control and recuperating from the declining position of the organization. Implementation refers to "processes needed for designing and organizing the process of change to be effective" (Carnall, 2003, p.5). Companies under this study assumed various activities during the change implementation process which lasted approximately two years at each institution.

This phase is comparable to two of the Kotter's change model steps: Step five (empowering others to act on vision) through removing obstacles to change and changing the structures and systems that challenge organizations' new vision. Step six (planning for and creating short-term wins) goes through planning but also creating visible improvements through increased internal control. It is also similar to Jick's (1990) step ten (reinforce and institutionalize change) by demonstrating commitment to the change process and incorporating new behaviors into daily routines of operation.

The process of implementation lasted approximately two years at each organization. Implementation started by removing obstacles which was key to increase internal control. Company 001 removed recruitment and hiring process from stockholders and initiated adaption to the new work processes and systems compatible with standards at the acquiring company. Eliminating obstacles at company 002 was applied by terminating strong opponents of change and aligning organization values with strategic vision. Company 003 on the other hand, centralized work processes, simplified loan procedures to increase clientele and improve market position. Part time positions, bonus schemes and staff tuition assistance programs were introduced for employee empowerment. Moreover, Key Performance Indicators were used to monitor and measure the effects of change strategies for achieving desired objectives. The results showed that there were satisfying improvements in all four cases which proves that internal control and key performance indicators were key to implement and stabilize change.

Table 10: Phase 5. Implementing and Stabilizing Change

| Process | 001 | 002 | 003 | 004 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase 5: Implementing and stabilizing change** | | | | |
| *Eliminating obstacles* | *eliminating bad practices*<br>*Changing the hiring process*<br>*Reeducation shareholders*<br>*Advanced training* | *Terminating conflicting employees* | *Centralizing procedures*<br>*Simplifying work process* | *Management Replacement* |
| *Bonus Schemes* | | *Staff tuition assistance* | *Excellent performance and professional development* | |
| *Internal Control and Key Performance Indicators* | | *Monitored from the HQ office* | | *Increased internal control* |
| | *Social life improvement*<br>*Increased results*<br>*Increasing profits* | *Social life improvement*<br>*Increased results* | *Social life improvement*<br>*Increased results*<br>*Client number and service increase* | *Social life improvement*<br>*Increased results*<br>*Improved reputation (internal)* |

## 4. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Most of change management literature suggests that in practice, organizational change is a very complicated process (Burke, 2011). This complexity poses great difficulties to recognize, understand, communicate and manage change for managers of any organization. According to Van de Ven & Pool (1995, p.510) "the processes or sequences of events that unfold in these changes, have been very difficult to explain let alone manage". Accordingly, change management processes have been considered as "elusive concepts," which are extremely hard to measure (Kanter, 1983, p.279). Consequently, a number of scholars argue that majority of change initiatives fail (Jansson, 2013; Kotter & Schlessinger, 2008; Mento et al, 2002). To avoid making mistakes that lead to failure, few management models to guide practitioners through the execution of the planned change have been presented (Kotter, 1995, Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002, Jick, 1991).

All these models aim to provide detailed guidance for managers who are leading change. One such model is Kotter's (1995) model also considered as a vision guiding the change process (Mento et al, 2002) through a series of change phases. The model calls for specific attention to some of the key phases since a mistake during any of these phases may negatively impact the drive of the change process. Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002 base their model on the reality of change process and suggest that the recommended steps "are not to be used only sequentially, but also as an integrated, iterative process to enable change" (p.58). Change management process is complex and presents great difficulties to identify, understand, communicate and manage change for those leading change efforts.

An examination of the four local companies in Kosovo revealed that leading and managing change is a challenge for organizations and there is no one size fits all model that may be used for all companies. In practice, models must be tailored depending on the organizational context, the nature of problems that need to change, the scope and urgency of change and readiness and commitment to change.

This paper contributes to strategy as practice discussion and practice perspective understanding of the enactment strategic change processes. Although similar to existing change management models, our model proposes simplified phases of change process for use to adapt depending on the context. For change practitioners, we recommend that there is no one change management model that fits all organizations. Models should be adapted based on the context of change and other organizational contents such as type of organization, industry, type of crisis, organizational culture and other factors aligning with the need of change. Moreover, this paper illustrates how management unethical behavior can lead organizations to great risks by intentional actions in one case or lack of awareness and industry knowledge in another one. Finally, it also points out that the role of regulatory authorities and its intervention was significant to save these organizations and assist with change initiation.

## 5. LIMITATIONS

Risk of identification led to some decisions regarding use of company data such as ranking, profit, and other company information. Although we had access to the relevant data, the agreement was to only use data that would not reveal company and participant identity. Nevertheless, the fact that participants provide information about sensitive issues such as corruption and nepotism practices, add to the reliability of the study.

The use of four cases in one similar industry limits the ability to generalize our findings. Nevertheless, generalizing was not an intention; rather, our intention was to create transferability of results. The range of change processes presented here are certain to the specific context of the investigated cases. Thus, we can only assume these change processes may apply to other change processes in other organizations depending on the context.

Another limitation may be our decision to not interview employees and clients or board members to take their perspective on change processes. For the purpose of this study, we decided to take the perspectives of CEO who were leading and implementing change in practice. Criteria included years of change implementation, approximately more than two years in strategic change implementation.

Future research could include more comparative cases across the industries to examine if similar change initiatives apply to change processes based on organizational context. Furthermore, an evaluation of how different contents such as type of organization, industry, organization position and performance and leadership approach impact the change process may be interesting for further research. Finally, as an extension to this study, inclusion of employees, board of director and client perspective on change processes may be an interesting avenue for future study and add to the validity of this study.

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