



## REFORMS IN PUBLIC SECTOR LIBRARIES IN LAHORE THROUGH ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP AND KOTTER'S CHANGE MODEL: LESSONS FROM GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

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### Abstract

Public sector libraries in Lahore play a crucial role in fostering education, research, and community engagement. However, these institutions face numerous challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, outdated management practices, and resistance to change. This study explores reforms in public sector libraries located in Lahore—Quaid-e-Azam Library, Punjab Public Library, and Model Town Library—through the dual lens of Adaptive Leadership and Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. It adopts a qualitative research methodology, employing case study analysis of selected public libraries in Lahore. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with library administrators, policymakers, and employees, along with observational research and document analysis of library policies. The findings will contribute to understanding how leadership-driven reforms can enhance public library services, making them more adaptable to technological advancements and community needs. It provides policy recommendations for government agencies, library administrators, and stakeholders, emphasizing the role of strategic leadership in public sector transformation. The integration of Adaptive Leadership with Kotter's Change Model offers a structured yet flexible approach to navigating change, ensuring the long-term sustainability of reforms in Lahore's public libraries.

**Keywords:** Public Sector Libraries, Lahore Library Reforms, Adaptive Leadership

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, Digital Transformation in Libraries, Library Management

### Introduction

A modern library may be more like a Crossroads Community, in which users are provoked and enabled to challenge their current knowledge (Fowler, 2016). How can librarians lead public libraries to adapt to changing environments, and evolve from a traditional collection-centric organization to an engaging, dynamic “crossroads community”? The model of Adaptive Leadership, developed by Professor Ronald Heifetz of Harvard University since 1994, emphasizes leading changes when organizations have to adapt to a radically altered environment (Heifetz, 1994). Challenges that confront public libraries nowadays rarely come with clear boundaries; nor do they present themselves with any pre-defined paths to solutions. Libraries must explore the ways to tackle them, not only to evolve to new roles, but also thrive in these new roles. Adaptive Leadership is therefore a practice with good potential to guide libraries through complex challenges and changes. This article outlines the core ideas of Adaptive Leadership and relates them to library challenges. Recent initiatives at the Hong



Kong University of Science and Technology Library (HKUST) are used as cases to illustrate how the model may guide our focus to finding leverage points.

Public sector libraries play a pivotal role in fostering education, research, and community engagement. In Lahore, these libraries serve as key knowledge hubs, providing access to information and learning resources to a diverse population. However, despite their significance, many public sector libraries face administrative inefficiencies, outdated operational models, limited technological integration, and resistance to change. As a result, these institutions struggle to meet the evolving needs of modern library users, particularly in an era of digital transformation and information accessibility.

Leadership is a critical factor in addressing these challenges. Effective leadership can drive sustainable reforms, improve service delivery, and create a dynamic library environment that adapts to changing societal and technological demands. Among various leadership and change management frameworks, Kotter's 8-Step Change Model and Adaptive Leadership offer promising solutions. Kotter's model provides a structured step-by-step process for implementing change, from creating urgency and building coalitions to institutionalizing new practices. In contrast, Adaptive Leadership emphasizes flexibility, stakeholder engagement, and the ability to navigate complex challenges in real-time. While both models have been widely applied in corporate and educational settings, their combined application in public sector library reform remains underexplored.

This study aims to investigate how the integration of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model and Adaptive Leadership can facilitate sustainable reforms in public sector libraries in Lahore. It seeks to identify the key barriers to change, leadership strategies for overcoming resistance, and best practices for modernizing library services. Through a qualitative research approach, including case studies, interviews, and document analysis, this research will provide practical insights and policy recommendations for government officials, library administrators, and stakeholders.

By exploring the intersection of leadership, change management, and public sector library transformation, this study contributes to the broader discourse on organizational change in public institutions. The findings will offer a strategic roadmap for making Lahore's public sector libraries more efficient, technology-driven, and responsive to community needs.

### Theoretical framework of the 8 step Model

Kotter provides an eight step model for leading change, and puts leadership in the heart of his model. These steps can be bundled into three titles: "generating-consolidating-anchoring". In this sense, Kotter's model has similarities with Lewin's (1947) "unfreezing-changing-refreezing" model.

**Table-1** Kotter's eight step change model (Kotter 1995, 61; Kavanagh and Thite 2009, 185)  
**The first four stages focus on the practices associated with "generating/unfreezing" the organization:**

1. Establishing a sense of urgency a. Examining market and competitive realities b. Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities c. Providing evidence from outside the organization that change is necessary
2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition a. Assembling a group with enough power to lead the change effort b. Encouraging the group to work together as a team c. Attracting key change leaders by showing enthusiasm and commitment



3. Creating a vision a. Creating a vision to help direct the change effort b. Developing strategies for achieving that vision
4. Communicating the vision a. Using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies b. Teaching new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition c. Building alignment and engagement through stories d. Keeping communication simple and heartfelt

**The next three stages introduce many new practices, “consolidating/changing”:**

**5. Empowering others to act on the vision**

- a. Getting rid of obstacles to change
- b. Changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision
- c. Encouraging risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions

**6. Planning for and creating short-term wins**

- a. Planning for visible performance improvements
- b. Creating those improvements
- c. Recognizing and rewarding employees involved in the improvements

**7. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change**

- a. Using increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that do not fit the vision
- b. Hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision
- c. Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents

**Finally, the last stage is required to ground the changes in the corporate culture, “anchoring/refreezing”, and make them stick:**

8. Institutionalizing new approaches
- a. Articulating the connections between the new behaviors and corporate success
- b. Developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession

### Key Elements in Adaptive Leadership Model

Adaptive Leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive (Heifetz et al., 2009). It embraces complexity and ambiguity in situations, and actively pursues innovative solutions via organizational learning, creative problemsolving, experiments, and collaboration (Kezar and Holcombe, 2017). The roles of adaptive leaders are different from those of the traditional view, which focuses on providing vision, solutions, and directions to relatively passive followers under the leaders' protection. Instead, adaptive leaders work together with the team to bring out tough issues, challenge established practices, and involve people at all levels to learn their ways to solutions. Followers are actively engaged in the change process to experiment and to learn. Therefore, in the Adaptive model leadership is a practice rather than a position or a job. The breadth of Adaptive Leadership model and practice is beyond the scope of a journal article. Yet, a brief outline of the core concepts should benefit academic librarians as an introduction to this approach. The key ideas of Adaptive Leadership include the importance of diagnosing complex systemic challenges, engaging stakeholders to inspect organizational practices and values, and navigating the change process collectively through inevitable resistance, potential losses and trade-offs. The following sections capture three important elements of Adaptive Leadership based on Heifetz's writings (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009, 2004; Heifetz and Laurie, 1997):

1. the concept of adaptive challenges
2. the nature of adaptive changes



### 3. practices to implement changes

#### 1. Identifying Adaptive Challenges

When libraries face a new situation, do we afford ample time and effort to diagnose the problem, or do we tend to respond with a quick fix using existing tools that we have? One core element of Adaptive Leadership is to make an explicit effort to analyse the situation and distinguish the types of problems. The model introduces the terms adaptive challenges versus technical challenges. Technical problems have clear definitions and known solutions that can be implemented by current knowledge, through application of existing professional expertise, or using the organization's current structures or procedures. On the other hand, adaptive challenges are ones for which the experts or organizational leaders have not yet developed an adequate response. They do not have clearly defined problems; further learning is needed to identify problems and find solutions. The two types of situation also differ in terms of who can implement the solutions. Technical problems can usually be tackled sufficiently by someone who has the authority or technical expertise; however, tackling adaptive challenges requires everyone to work in new ways. Authority leaders must share responsibilities with others for fuller understanding of problems, and experiment with members to find solutions. It usually involves deeper changes in people's priorities, beliefs, and habits; and it takes time for the change to be implemented. As it naturally takes greater effort and attention to perform the diagnosis, mistaking an adaptive problem as a technical problem is a common phenomenon. Adaptive and technical problems differ in the nature of the problems; technical problems are not necessarily easier to solve. Some technical problems may not be solvable due to lack of resources or other reasons. Technical solutions usually bring incremental changes; adaptive solutions often incur transformational changes, which relates to shifts in mind-sets, beliefs, and long-established habits.

In public libraries, we face both types of challenges in many areas. For example, building a collection for a new course can be a technical move, while supporting new pedagogy or program structure in the university is adaptive. The former can be tackled with existing expertise and procedures in the library; although the availability of funding may make it a difficult challenge. The latter situation is very different, it may call for a review of library programs, facilities, and service priorities. Another example could be digitizing a special collection using an existing infrastructure and work flow, which is a technical solution; as compared to creating a digital scholarship project from scratch, which requires adaptive leadership.

#### 2. The Nature of Adaptive Changes

Tackling adaptive challenges is a process of change that takes time, hard work and persistence. The idea of "being adaptive and thriving in the new environment" comes from the analogy to biological evolution. Evolutionary change is an adaptation, which builds on preserving what is important in the existing system and changing what is expandable or dated. Therefore, successful adaptation is both conservative and progressive, in the sense that it is not about simply giving up the old ways, but to distinguish what are essential in an organization's tradition from what can be or should be renewed or removed.

In the process of adaptive changes, an experimental mind-set plays a key role. Using the analogy of natural evolution, variation and diversity is essential for a system to generate innovations for adaptation in new environments. The same applies in the process of designing and implementing adaptive changes in organizations. Experimentation produces variations, some may succeed and some will fail. An experimental mind-set allows adaptive leaders to expect failure, and learn to improvise as they go. At the same time, adaptive leaders build a



culture that values diverse views, a culture that relies on central planning and the expertise of the few at the top.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do Adaptive Leadership principles influence the reform process in selected public sector libraries in Lahore?
2. How can Kotter's 8-Step Change Model be effectively applied to drive sustainable change in Lahore's public libraries?
3. What are the key challenges and resistance factors in implementing leadership-driven reforms in public sector libraries?

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Adaptive Leadership and Kotter's 8-Step Change Model in driving reforms in selected three public sector libraries; Quaid-e-Azam Library, Punjab Public Library, and Model Town Library in Lahore. Public libraries serve as critical institutions for knowledge dissemination, yet they face challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, outdated management practices, and resistance to change. This research aims to explore how leadership-driven strategies can enhance service innovation, digital transformation, and institutional efficiency in Lahore's public libraries.

By integrating Adaptive Leadership, which emphasizes flexibility and stakeholder engagement, with Kotter's structured change process, this study seeks to develop a comprehensive framework for implementing sustainable library reforms. The research will identify key challenges, resistance factors, and best practices, offering policy recommendations for library administrators, government agencies, and policy makers to improve public sector libraries.

Through a qualitative research approach, including case studies, interviews, and document analysis, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on leadership-driven organizational change in public institutions. The findings will provide actionable insights into how public libraries in Lahore can modernize, adapt to digital advancements, and better serve their communities through effective leadership strategies.

### **Problem Statement**

Public sector libraries in Lahore play a vital role in education, research, and community development. However, these institutions face persistent challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, outdated management practices, resistance to change, and a lack of innovation in services. Despite the growing demand for modern, technology-driven library services, many public libraries struggle to adapt to digital transformation, improve service delivery, and enhance user engagement. Leadership gaps and ineffective change management further hinder reform efforts, leading to stagnation in library operations and a decline in public trust.

Existing research on library management and public sector reforms lacks a structured leadership-based approach to overcoming these challenges. While Kotter's 8-Step Change Model provides a systematic framework for managing organizational change, Adaptive Leadership offers a flexible approach to navigating uncertainties and resistance. However, their combined application in the context of public sector libraries remains underexplored.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how the integration of Kotter's Change Model and Adaptive Leadership can drive sustainable reforms in Lahore's public sector libraries namely Quaid-e-Azam Library, Punjab Public Library, and Model Town Library. The research will identify key barriers to change, leadership strategies for overcoming



resistance, and practical solutions for modernizing library services, ultimately providing policy recommendations for enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and long-term sustainability of public libraries in Lahore.

### Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore reforms in public sector libraries in Lahore through the perspectives of Adaptive Leadership and Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. Three prominent public libraries in Lahore—Model Town Library, Quaid-e-Azam Library, and Punjab Public Library—are selected for in-depth analysis. The research relies on multiple data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of leadership-driven reforms. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with library administrators, policymakers, and employees to assess leadership strategies, change management practices, and resistance to transformation. Observational research is carried out at the selected libraries to analyze day-to-day operations, management structures, user engagement, and the implementation of reform initiatives. Additionally, document analysis of library policies, government reports, and strategic plans helps evaluate policy frameworks, modernization efforts, and the alignment of reforms with leadership theories. The data is analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying key patterns related to leadership strategies, change processes, challenges, and the overall impact of reforms. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and research integrity, are strictly maintained to ensure the credibility of the study.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from Model Town Library, Quaid-e-Azam Library, and Punjab Public Library reveals significant insights into the leadership-driven reforms in Lahore's public sector libraries.

### Leadership Strategies and Change Management

Library administrators highlight varying levels of adaptability to change across the selected libraries. In Quaid-e-Azam Library, leadership demonstrates a structured approach to modernization, integrating digital cataloging and improved user services through a well-defined strategic vision. Punjab Public Library, being one of the oldest institutions, faces greater bureaucratic resistance, but efforts are being made to introduce e-learning resources and digitized archives. Model Town Library, due to its semi-autonomous status, exhibits more flexibility in implementing reforms, such as community-driven initiatives and partnerships with educational institutions.

### Challenges and Resistance to Change

Findings indicate that bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited financial resources remain major hurdles in reforming public sector libraries. Employees at Punjab Public Library express concerns over lack of training programs for digital transformation, making it difficult to integrate modern technologies. Resistance to change is particularly evident in libraries with deeply rooted traditional management practices. However, libraries with proactive leadership, such as Model Town Library, show higher adaptability to new initiatives, suggesting that leadership style significantly influences the pace of reform.

### Impact of Reforms on Library Services

Observational research suggests that libraries adopting Adaptive Leadership principles demonstrate higher user engagement and better service delivery. Quaid-e-Azam Library's introduction of digital archives has enhanced accessibility for researchers, while Model Town



Library's community engagement programs have increased membership. Punjab Public Library, despite its challenges, is making gradual progress in aligning its services with technological advancements.

### Integration of Adaptive Leadership and Kotter's Change Model

The research finds that successful reforms align with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model, particularly in the initial phases of establishing urgency and building a guiding coalition. In libraries where leadership fosters a shared vision and actively engages employees, reforms are more sustainable. The adaptive leadership approach allows libraries to navigate uncertainties by encouraging innovation and flexibility in decision-making.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The study highlights how public sector libraries in Lahore are undergoing transformation through leadership-driven reforms. Using Kotter's 8-Step Change Model and the Adaptive Leadership framework, the research examines how selected libraries—Quaid-e-Azam Library, Punjab Public Library, and Model Town Library—are managing change in response to technological advancements and community needs.

### Application of Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

The findings indicate that Quaid-e-Azam Library demonstrates the most structured implementation of Kotter's Change Model, particularly in the initial steps of creating urgency and building a guiding coalition. Library administrators have recognized the need for digital transformation and have actively sought government funding to modernize services. The library has successfully implemented digital cataloging, introduced e-learning resources, and improved technological infrastructure, making it the most well-equipped in terms of space and technology. Additionally, a leadership team within the library is actively working to engage employees in the change process, aligning with Kotter's emphasis on empowering broad-based action and generating short-term wins through visible improvements in service delivery.

In contrast, Punjab Public Library faces more challenges in change implementation due to its bureaucratic structure and slower adaptability to reforms. While it has spacious reading rooms that accommodate a large number of visitors, the library lacks sufficient digital resources and technological integration. Efforts to introduce e-learning spaces and digitized archives are in progress but have not yet reached full implementation. However, following Kotter's model, the library has begun to establish a sense of urgency by addressing stakeholder concerns and seeking policy interventions for modernization. The challenge remains in communicating the vision effectively to library staff, as resistance to digital transformation is observed among long-serving employees.

Model Town Library, being relatively smaller and more autonomous, has demonstrated greater flexibility in adopting reforms. Its leadership has taken proactive steps to form strategic partnerships with educational institutions and community organizations. While it lacks the technological advancements of Quaid-e-Azam Library, it excels in adaptive leadership practices by responding dynamically to community needs. The library's ability to introduce pilot programs, such as community reading initiatives and interactive workshops, aligns with Kotter's steps of consolidating gains and anchoring new approaches in the institutional culture.

### Adaptive Leadership and its Role in Navigating Change

The Adaptive Leadership model proves to be a valuable framework in navigating the challenges faced by Lahore's public libraries. Leaders at Quaid-e-Azam Library have adopted an adaptive approach by investing in technological upgradation and training staff in digital management, enabling the institution to remain resilient and future-oriented. Their ability to



experiment with digital services and evaluate feedback allows them to adjust strategies in real time.

In contrast, Punjab Public Library faces more resistance to change due to entrenched bureaucratic practices. However, there are emerging signs of adaptive leadership, particularly in the way administrators are gradually introducing digital literacy programs and exploring funding opportunities for modernization. Model Town Library, due to its more flexible management, has been the most community-driven in its approach, demonstrating strong adaptive leadership in fostering user engagement despite limited technological infrastructure.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the successful transformation of public sector libraries in Lahore depends on strategic leadership, structured change management, and adaptability to new challenges. Quaid-e-Azam Library, with its advanced technological infrastructure and proactive leadership, serves as a model for how libraries can implement reforms efficiently. Punjab Public Library, despite having spacious reading rooms and strong public engagement, needs to accelerate its digital transformation and overcome bureaucratic inertia. Model Town Library, though smaller in scale, demonstrates the importance of community partnerships and flexibility in adopting changes. To ensure sustainable reforms, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Libraries should prioritize upgrading their digital infrastructure by incorporating e-learning facilities, automated cataloging systems, and digital archives while ensuring consistent government funding for technological advancements.
2. Regular training programs should be conducted for library staff to enhance their skills in digital management, research tools, and customer service, along with specialized change management workshops to reduce resistance to digital transformation, particularly in Punjab Public Library.
3. Libraries should actively engage the community by organizing literary events, digital literacy programs, and reading clubs while fostering collaborations with universities and research institutions to provide additional expertise and resources.
4. A centralized yet flexible policy framework should be established to guide the modernization of public libraries, ensuring autonomy for locally tailored initiatives and encouraging public-private collaborations to secure funding and innovation.
5. Library administrators should adopt an adaptive leadership approach that promotes innovation and responsiveness to user needs by fostering a culture of experimentation with emerging technologies such as AI-driven search tools and virtual library services.

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