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Exploring the Influence of Organisational Culture on Employee Adaptation to Change in Educational Institutions

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Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in shaping how employees perceive, respond to, and adapt to change within educational institutions. This study explored the influence of organisational culture on employee adaptation to reforms in selected secondary schools and Gulu University in Northern Uganda. Guided by Schein's Organisational Culture Model and Kotter's Change Management Theory, the research adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach, utilising semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document reviews. Findings reveal that collaborative, student-centred, and values-driven cultures facilitate positive perceptions, engagement, and successful adaptation to reforms such as the Competency-Based Curriculum and ICT integration. Conversely, rigid hierarchies, limited resources, and insufficient socialisation hinder change adoption. Leadership modelling, mentorship programs, and structured professional development emerged as critical mechanisms mediating adaptation. The study contributes context-specific insights into the interplay between culture, leadership, and change, offering practical recommendations for policymakers, administrators, and educators to enhance reform implementation and institutional effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are dynamic environments constantly shaped by policy reforms, technological advancements, and evolving pedagogical needs, with the success of these changes heavily influenced by organisational culture, which frames how employees perceive, accept, and implement new initiatives (Schein, 2017; Fullan, 2016; Schein & Schein, 2018). In Uganda, ongoing reforms such as the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), decentralisation of administrative structures, and ICT integration require staff to adjust practices and adopt new professional expectations, yet entrenched cultural norms, hierarchical structures, and resource limitations often hinder adaptation (Mugisha, 2023). Organisational culture also serves as a mechanism for socialisation and professional identity formation, as new staff learn institutional norms through observation, mentoring, and orientation programs, which can either facilitate or impede responsiveness to change (Fullan, 2016). Understanding how culture shapes employee engagement, resistance, and adaptation is therefore critical for ensuring that reforms are actively embraced rather than superficially implemented, making this study's exploration of the relationship between organisational culture and change in Ugandan educational institutions both theoretically and practically significant.

Background of the Study

Historically, organisational culture has been recognised as a key determinant of institutional performance and staff behaviour (Schein, 2017). In educational contexts, culture manifests through leadership styles, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and everyday routines. Schools and universities that emphasise collaboration, shared vision, and trust tend to

experience higher staff morale, innovation, and openness to change (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

In Uganda, educational reforms have been ongoing and multifaceted. The introduction of the CBC, integration of ICT, and performance-based management systems have reshaped the roles of teachers and administrators. Despite significant policy efforts, implementation often encounters resistance due to cultural misalignment, lack of resources, and inadequate professional support (Ngugi & Karanja, 2024).

This study is grounded in Schein's (2017) Organisational Culture Model, which conceptualises culture at three levels: artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Culture is viewed as a determinant of employee behaviour and perception, shaping responses to organisational change. Complementing Schein, Kotter's (2012) Change Management Model highlights the critical role of leadership, communication, and cultural alignment in implementing reforms. Together, these frameworks provide a robust theoretical lens for understanding how organisational culture influences staff adaptation to change in educational institutions. From a theoretical perspective, understanding culture as a lens through which employees interpret change provides insight into why identical reforms produce different outcomes across institutions. Culture not only influences behaviour but also shapes perceptions, motivation, and coping mechanisms in response to organisational change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015).

Contextually, the educational environment in Northern Uganda presents unique challenges and opportunities. Schools in urban and rural settings face varying levels of resource availability, professional development opportunities, and community engagement. These factors interact with institutional culture to influence the degree

to which staff successfully adapt to reforms (Mugisha, 2023).

Moreover, prior research in Uganda and similar developing contexts has often emphasised structural and policy aspects of reforms, with limited attention to the human and cultural dimensions of change. This gap underscores the importance of empirically exploring how culture affects employees' experiences and responses to organisational change.

The study builds upon existing knowledge by integrating theoretical insights with contextual realities, aiming to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and educators seeking to improve reform adoption and sustainability.

Statement of the Problem

Despite ongoing reforms in Uganda's education sector, many institutions struggle to achieve the intended outcomes of policy changes. Resistance to change among staff is a common challenge, often rooted not in lack of competence or resources, but in organisational culture and leadership practices that fail to support adaptation (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Fullan, 2007). Existing literature predominantly focuses on Western educational contexts or corporate environments, leaving a gap in understanding how organisational culture shapes employee experiences in Ugandan institutions. The frequent introduction of reforms such as CBC, ICT integration, and performance-based management often conflicts with prevailing cultural norms, creating implementation gaps and reduced institutional effectiveness (Ngware et al., 2020). The persistence of hierarchical structures, limited participatory decision-making, and inadequate professional socialisation exacerbates resistance, negatively affecting both staff morale and student outcomes. This reality calls for empirical research that explores the mechanisms through which culture influences employees' adaptation to change in the Ugandan educational context. Without such understanding, reforms risk being

superficial or unsustainable, as employees may comply in form but resist in practice. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by examining the interplay between organisational culture, leadership, and employee adaptation to change, offering insights to improve policy implementation and institutional development.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore how organisational culture influences employees' experiences and adaptation to change in educational institutions in Uganda. Specifically, it aims to identify cultural mechanisms that promote or hinder engagement, understand challenges faced by staff during reforms, and propose strategies to enhance adaptive capacity within existing cultural frameworks.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective:

To examine the influence of organisational culture on employee adaptation to change in educational institutions in Uganda.

Specific Objectives:

- To examine the prevailing organisational culture within educational institutions.
- To analyse how organisational culture affects employees' experiences and reactions to change.
- To identify challenges faced by employees and leaders during organisational change processes.
- To explore strategies that enhance employee adaptation to change within existing cultural frameworks.
- To propose ways of aligning organisational culture with future change initiatives.

Research Questions

- How do employees and leaders describe the dominant organisational culture in their institution?

- In what ways does organisational culture shape employees' perceptions and experiences of change?
- What challenges arise when implementing change within the prevailing organisational culture?
- How do employees demonstrate support or resistance to change in their institutions?
- What strategies can enhance employees' adaptation to change within educational institutions?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of organisational culture and change management in educational contexts, particularly in developing countries. It provides empirical evidence of how culture interacts with reform initiatives and influences employee adaptation. Practically, the findings offer insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational leaders to design strategies that foster positive cultures supportive of reform. Recommendations from the study can inform professional development programs, mentorship schemes, and leadership strategies that align institutional culture with change objectives (Fullan, 2016). Furthermore, the study provides guidance for teacher educators and professional development coordinators on cultivating adaptive, collaborative, and innovative cultures in schools and universities. By linking culture with change outcomes, the study supports evidence-based interventions for sustainable reform implementation.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on organisational culture and its influence on employee adaptation to change, including leadership style, communication patterns, teamwork, values, and professional socialisation. The research was conducted in selected educational institutions in Northern Uganda, including both urban and rural secondary schools and Gulu University. The study examined

reforms and employee experiences between 2020 and 2025, a period marked by major initiatives such as CBC implementation and ICT integration. Understanding cultural influences during this specific timeframe provides relevant insights into ongoing reforms, facilitating strategies to enhance institutional effectiveness and staff adaptation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study draws primarily on Schein's (2017) Organisational Culture Model, which posits three levels of culture: artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Artefacts include observable elements such as rituals, routines, dress codes, and organisational symbols. Espoused values are formal statements about mission, vision, and principles, while underlying assumptions are unconscious beliefs shaping behaviour.

Schein emphasises that culture influences organisational processes, decision-making, and responses to change. In educational settings, leaders may espouse student-centred values, yet if underlying assumptions favour hierarchical control, reforms may face resistance. This aligns with findings that discrepancies between espoused and enacted culture affect employee engagement and adaptability (Bush, 2020).

Kotter's (2012) Change Management Theory complements Schein's framework by outlining steps for successful organisational change, including establishing urgency, forming a guiding coalition, developing a vision, communicating effectively, empowering employees, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains, and anchoring new approaches in culture. The theory underscores that leadership and cultural alignment are critical for reform success.

Additionally, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2015) highlight the role of culture in sense-making, arguing that employees interpret reforms based on shared assumptions and social norms. This

conceptualisation explains why identical policies may produce different outcomes in schools with varying cultures.

The theoretical perspective also incorporates socialisation theory, which posits that employees learn and internalise institutional values through structured induction, mentorship, and observation (Fullan, 2016). Socialisation is particularly relevant in educational institutions where professional identity and adherence to norms influence change adoption.

Finally, the integration of these frameworks provides a lens to examine the research problem: how organisational culture shapes employees' perception, support, or resistance to change, and how leadership, communication, and socialisation strategies mediate this relationship.

Review of Related Literature

How Employees and Leaders Describe Organisational Culture

Organisational culture in schools and universities is often perceived differently by leaders and employees. Leaders tend to describe culture in aspirational terms, emphasising collaboration, innovation, and student-centeredness (Bautista, 2024). Employees, on the other hand, may emphasise practical realities such as compliance with hierarchical structures, routine procedures, and survival within bureaucratic systems (Bush, 2020).

Several studies highlight the existence of hybrid cultures, where collaborative ideals coexist with hierarchical enforcement (Cardona et al., 2023). This duality can create tension between leaders' expectations and employees' lived experiences, which affects how change initiatives are received.

Research also indicates the presence of subcultures across administrative, academic, and support staff. Subcultural differences often result in conflicting priorities and resistance to reforms introduced at the institutional level (Schein,

2017). For instance, administrative units may prioritise procedural compliance, whereas academic staff focus on pedagogical autonomy.

Recent comparative studies in European and African contexts suggest that cultural perceptions are influenced by societal norms, including power distance, collectivism, and community orientation (Janković et al., 2023; Mugisha, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of context-specific studies in Uganda to capture local realities.

Phenomenological studies show that staff often describe culture through observable practices, such as joint lesson planning, mentorship, and participatory meetings, which reflect collaborative values (Akakandelwa & Makondo, 2025). These practical indicators of culture provide a more nuanced understanding than mere self-reports.

Finally, discrepancies between leaders' and employees' descriptions highlight the importance of triangulating perspectives to achieve a holistic understanding of institutional culture, which is critical for designing effective change strategies.

How Organisational Culture Shapes Employees' Perceptions and Experiences of Change

Culture acts as a sense-making framework that shapes whether employees perceive change positively or negatively (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2015). Schools with trust-based and collaborative cultures are more likely to experience high readiness for change, while hierarchical, rigid, or poorly socialised institutions often encounter resistance.

Empirical studies demonstrate that trust, communication, and shared values mitigate stress associated with change and foster engagement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2022). Employees in learning-oriented institutions perceive reforms as opportunities to improve practice, whereas those in rigid cultures interpret change as an external imposition.

Cultural memory also influences perception. Staff who have experienced repeated failed reforms may develop “change fatigue,” exhibiting scepticism or disengagement (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Understanding this phenomenon is critical in designing supportive interventions that rebuild trust and motivation.

Research shows that professional development, mentoring, and leadership modelling are key cultural mechanisms that influence perceptions of change (Oreg et al., 2018). Employees who feel supported and valued demonstrate greater willingness to adopt new practices.

In post-pandemic educational contexts, adaptive cultures helped teachers manage rapid digital transitions, highlighting the interplay between culture, resilience, and technology integration (Chowdhury, 2022). These findings suggest that cultural orientation not only affects perception but also practical adaptation to reforms.

Finally, the literature underscores that culture is dynamic, evolving with experience, leadership, and structural changes. Effective reform requires deliberate cultural cultivation alongside technical and procedural support (Senge, 2010).

Challenges Arising When Implementing Change Within Prevailing Culture

Cultural inertia is a major barrier to change, particularly in institutions with entrenched hierarchies and rigid routines (Schein & Schein, 2018). Schools with long-standing traditions often resist reforms, regardless of perceived benefits.

Subcultural conflicts between administrators, teachers, and support staff can further impede implementation. These conflicts arise when units prioritise competing values or operational norms, resulting in stalled reforms or inconsistent practices (Tierney, 2018).

Resource limitations exacerbate cultural resistance. Lack of ICT infrastructure, limited professional development, and staffing shortages

reduce employees’ capacity to adapt, making cultural alignment alone insufficient (Ngugi & Karanja, 2024).

Communication gaps are also critical. Top-down messaging without participatory channels often leads to misinterpretation of reform objectives and employee disengagement (Kotter, 2012). Institutional studies highlight the need for consistent, transparent, and interactive communication strategies.

Leadership plays a central role in overcoming cultural challenges. Transformational leadership can facilitate adaptation, but its effectiveness depends on alignment with local cultural norms, power distance, and professional values (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Finally, emotional and psychological factors contribute to resistance. Teachers may resist changes perceived as threatening their professional identity, highlighting the importance of integrating psychological safety into change strategies (Argyris, 1999).

Strategies to Enhance Employees’ Adaptation to Change

Professional learning communities (PLCs) have been widely recognised as effective in fostering collaborative norms, knowledge sharing, and mutual accountability (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). PLCs promote reflection and experimentation, which enhance staff adaptability.

Distributed leadership facilitates change by empowering employees to participate in decision-making, promoting ownership, and reducing resistance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Contextual adaptation of leadership styles is crucial in high power-distance cultures.

Continuous professional development and mentorship programs provide employees with the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to implement reforms effectively. Evidence shows

that structured support reduces anxiety and encourages proactive engagement (Fullan, 2016).

Recognition and reward systems aligned with innovative behaviours reinforce desired change practices. Combining intrinsic motivation, professional identity alignment, and cultural reinforcement is critical for sustaining adaptation (Kotter, 2012).

Effective communication strategies, including open forums, participatory planning, and feedback loops, facilitate employee buy-in and ensure that reform objectives are clearly understood (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Finally, embedding a learning-oriented culture that values experimentation, reflection, and resilience ensures that adaptation is sustainable. Institutions that integrate these strategies are better positioned to navigate complex reform environments (Schein & Schein, 2018).

Summary

The literature demonstrates that organisational culture is a critical determinant of employees' adaptation to change. Collaborative, trust-based, and learning-oriented cultures facilitate engagement, while hierarchical, rigid, and poorly socialised cultures impede reform. Gaps exist in understanding employee perspectives beyond leadership, longitudinal effects of cultural change, and empirical studies in Ugandan contexts. These gaps justify the need for this study, which seeks to provide context-specific evidence linking culture, leadership, and adaptation in educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology adopted to explore the influence of organisational culture on employee adaptation to change in educational institutions in Uganda. The chapter outlines the research philosophy, approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, ethical

considerations, and limitations and delimitations. Emphasis is placed on ensuring rigour, credibility, and relevance to the study objectives.

The methodology was carefully selected to capture the complex social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of organisational culture and change. Given that the research focused on employees' lived experiences, perceptions, and responses, a qualitative, interpretive approach was deemed most appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019).

Research Philosophy

The study was grounded in an interpretivist research philosophy, which views reality as socially constructed and context-dependent. Interpretivism posits that individuals' perceptions, experiences, and social interactions shape their understanding of organisational phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). Organisational culture and employee responses to change are complex, dynamic, and influenced by institutional norms, leadership practices, and social interactions. Therefore, adopting an interpretivist lens enabled the study to examine how staff members interpret reforms, cope with challenges, and negotiate cultural expectations within their institutions.

Interpretivism also allowed for the inclusion of diverse perspectives across hierarchical levels, facilitating a rich, nuanced understanding of how culture influences adaptation to change (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This philosophy emphasises subjective meaning-making, making it well-suited for exploring the interplay between culture, leadership, and employee behaviour in educational contexts.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was employed to investigate the phenomena under study. This approach was appropriate because employee adaptation to change is influenced by perceptions,

attitudes, emotions, and interactions, which are best captured through qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015). Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to explore the subjective experiences of participants, uncover patterns in behaviour, and understand the contextual factors shaping responses to organisational change. This approach facilitated in-depth exploration of both individual and collective experiences, enabling the identification of core themes that inform theory and practice. The qualitative approach also provided flexibility to adapt data collection methods based on emerging insights, ensuring that the study captured the full complexity of cultural influences on change adoption.

Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design, focusing on the lived experiences of employees and leaders regarding organisational culture and adaptation to change (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is ideal for uncovering the essence of experiences, emphasising how participants interpret, understand, and respond to phenomena within their institutional context. This design enabled the researcher to identify patterns, similarities, and differences across participants' narratives, revealing how organisational culture shapes responses to reform initiatives. Phenomenology also allowed for the exploration of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions of change, capturing the interplay between personal attitudes, social dynamics, and institutional norms. By emphasizing participants' perspectives, the design provided a deep understanding of the factors facilitating or hindering adaptation, offering context-specific insights for theory and practice.

Population of the Study

The population consisted of employees and leaders from selected educational institutions in Northern Uganda, including secondary schools and Gulu University. Participants included:

Teachers responsible for classroom instruction and curriculum implementation, administrative staff involved in operational management and policy enforcement, support staff engaged in institutional services and logistics, and institutional leaders such as principals, department heads, and deans. Including participants across multiple roles ensured a diverse representation of experiences, acknowledging that responses to change vary based on hierarchical position, professional responsibilities, and exposure to reforms (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants with direct experience of organisational change, ensuring the inclusion of information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Maximum variation sampling was applied to capture diversity in institutional types, roles, and professional backgrounds, facilitating triangulation of perspectives (Guest et al., 2020).

The final sample consisted of twenty-five participants for one-on-one semi-structured interviews, representing teachers, administrative staff, support staff, and institutional leaders. The sample size was sufficient to reach thematic saturation, the point at which no new information emerged from additional data collection (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Multiple data collection techniques were used to enhance validity and triangulate findings:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions of organisational culture, experiences with institutional change, and coping strategies. Open-ended questions allowed for in-depth exploration while covering key research objectives (Kallio et al., 2016).

Non-Participant Observation

The researcher conducted non-participant observations to record behaviours, interactions, and routines reflecting culture and adaptation to change. An observation checklist guided systematic documentation of communication patterns, leadership practices, teamwork, and responses to reforms (Angrosino, 2007).

Document Review

Institutional documents, including policy manuals, meeting minutes, organisational charts, and training logs, were reviewed to contextualise findings from interviews and observations. A structured review template facilitated systematic extraction of relevant information, providing triangulation for enhanced credibility (Bowen, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data from interviews, observations, and document reviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included:

Familiarization: Reading and re-reading transcripts, observation notes, and documents, initial Coding: Highlighting significant statements and behaviours relevant to research questions, theme Development: Grouping codes into overarching themes representing patterns in culture, change experiences, and adaptation, reviewing Themes: Refining themes for coherence, depth, and relevance an iintegration: Combining themes across data sources to develop a comprehensive narrative. NVivo software was used for data management, coding, and organisation, enabling systematic analysis and traceability of results.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured by addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

Credibility: Achieved through member checking, prolonged engagement, and triangulation of data sources. Transferability: Ensured through detailed descriptions of institutional context and participant characteristics. Dependability: Maintained through a comprehensive audit trail documenting methodological decisions. Confirmability: Achieved through reflexive journaling and triangulation to minimise researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were strictly followed:

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing personal identifiers, participants retained the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, data were securely stored, sensitive topics were approached with care, and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection.

Limitations and Delimitations

Findings were context-specific, reflecting participants' interpretations. Resource constraints limited the number of institutions and participants, and data reflected a snapshot in time and may not capture long-term changes. However, the study focused on employees and leaders, excluding students and external stakeholders. Only three data collection techniques were used: interviews, observations, and document reviews, and the research examined experiences between 2020–2025, aligned with major reforms in the Ugandan education sector.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents, analyses, and interprets data collected from employees and leaders in selected educational institutions in Northern Uganda, including secondary schools and Gulu University. Data were collected using one-on-one semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document reviews, aiming to

explore the influence of organisational culture on employee adaptation to change. The section is organised thematically, reflecting the study's objectives. Key themes include the description of organisational culture, employees' perceptions and experiences of change, challenges faced during change implementation, strategies for adaptation, and manifestations of support and resistance. Triangulation of interviews, observations, and document evidence ensures credibility and contextual richness in interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Roles and Responsibilities of Respondents

The study identified that head teachers (HTs) and institutional leaders were primarily responsible for administrative oversight, resource allocation, supervision, staff development, and policy enforcement. HT1 stated, *"My role is to guide the school, supervise staff, and ensure that policies are implemented effectively"* (Interview, 13th October 2025). Observations confirmed that HTs actively monitored classroom instruction, conducted performance reviews, and coordinated professional development sessions. Document reviews of institutional policies, organisational charts, and supervision logs corroborated these leadership roles.

Teachers (TRs) were responsible for curriculum delivery, lesson planning, student assessment, mentorship, and classroom management. TR3 explained, *"I handle students directly by instructing, teaching, and assessing them. I shape how they learn and behave"* (Interview, 16th October 2025). Observational data showed teachers engaged in collaborative teaching, mentoring junior colleagues, and integrating ICT in lessons. Lesson plans, teaching schedules, and assessment records confirmed their central role in implementing institutional reforms.

Support staff managed administrative and operational tasks essential for institutional functioning. Their duties included maintaining records, assisting in classroom technology, and

supporting logistical needs. Observations revealed that support staff were pivotal in operationalising changes such as digital reporting and classroom ICT integration.

These findings demonstrate that organisational culture influences how responsibilities are enacted, with collaborative and structured practices fostering shared accountability and engagement in reform initiatives (Fullan, 2020; Schein, 2017).

Organizational Culture

General Culture and Atmosphere

Respondents consistently described their institutions as collaborative, student-centred, disciplined, and respectful. HT2 noted, *"We encourage joint lesson planning and team-based problem-solving to ensure that everyone contributes to school success"* (Interview, 20th October 2025). TR1 added, *"Working together on curriculum matters makes our tasks easier and more effective"* (Interview, 14th October 2025).

Non-participant observations confirmed these descriptions, showing regular team-teaching sessions, collaborative curriculum planning, and mentorship programs. Document reviews, including staff meeting minutes and school policies, further validated structured approaches to collaboration and shared accountability. These findings illustrate that a positive organisational culture facilitates employee engagement and receptivity to change, consistent with literature suggesting that collaborative and student-centred cultures reduce resistance and enhance reform adoption (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2022).

Values and Traditions

Core values such as integrity, discipline, teamwork, and Christian morals were deeply embedded in institutional practice. Daily assemblies, weekly devotions, and leader modelling reinforced these values. HT1

emphasised, *“I always try to model the values I expect from others, showing integrity, transparency, and teamwork”* (Interview, 13th October 2025). Observations confirmed leaders consistently modelled punctuality, ethical conduct, and transparency, while documents such as school codes of conduct formalised these expectations.

Teachers reported that these values guided decision-making, interpersonal interactions, and approaches to change. TR2 noted, *“Our weekly devotions remind us to uphold Christian morals and discipline in all our activities”* (Interview, 23rd October 2025). The integration of values into daily practice reflects that organisational culture is actively enacted through rituals, traditions, and institutional norms (Schein & Schein, 2018).

Socialisation into Culture

Structured processes were used to socialise new staff into the institutional culture through orientation sessions, mentorship, shadowing senior colleagues, and participation in routine activities. HT2 described, *“We ensure new teachers learn our school culture by observing senior staff and participating in everyday school activities”* (Interview, 24th October 2025). Observations of induction sessions showed new staff engaging in collaborative planning, classroom observations, and adherence to school routines.

Document reviews, including orientation manuals and mentorship guidelines, confirmed formal strategies for transmitting culture. These practices ensured continuity of values and norms, preparing staff to engage effectively with institutional reforms and fostering adaptability, reducing resistance, and embedding new behaviours aligned with organisational goals (Fullan, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Organizational Change

Recent Changes

Two major reforms were identified: implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) and integration of ICT in teaching and administration. HT2 explained, *“The transition to CBC required rethinking lesson delivery, focusing on student participation and practical skills”* (Interview, 23rd October 2025). Teachers redesigned lessons to emphasise participatory learning, critical thinking, and skill acquisition. Observations confirmed active ICT use for lesson delivery, assessment tracking, and administrative reporting. Institutional documents, including curriculum guides and ICT policies, validated alignment with these reforms.

Staff Reactions and Coping

Staff reactions varied. Some embraced reforms, attending professional development sessions, experimenting with innovative teaching methods, and collaborating with colleagues. TR4 shared, *“I attended all the training sessions and tried new teaching approaches to make lessons more interactive”* (Interview, 17th October 2025). Others experienced anxiety and stress due to limited ICT proficiency and increased workload. Observational notes recorded varying engagement levels, while professional development logs documented targeted interventions to support adaptation.

These findings show that employee experiences of change are mediated by institutional culture, leadership, and professional development, consistent with Armenakis & Bedeian (2020) & Kotter (2012).

Role of Culture in Facilitating Change

Organisational culture significantly influenced reform adoption. Collaborative practices, leadership modelling, and recognition of innovation encouraged staff to embrace change. TR2 noted, *“Leadership encouraged collaboration, so we felt supported rather than*

pressured" (Interview, 23rd October 2025). Observations of joint curriculum planning, problem-solving sessions, and mentorship programs highlighted mechanisms through which culture facilitated adaptation. Document review of training schedules and performance tracking confirmed structured support for staff engagement.

Challenges and Mitigation

Challenges included limited ICT infrastructure, inadequate resources, and initial resistance from staff. TR3 admitted, *"At first, some colleagues were hesitant to use new systems, and there weren't enough computers"* (Interview, 14th October 2025). Observations revealed difficulties accessing digital tools, while documents highlighted mitigation strategies such as mentorship programs, workshops, and resource allocation. Interviews confirmed that consistent support gradually reduced resistance and increased engagement, aligning with Fullan (2016) on the interplay between cultural support and practical interventions.

Support and Resistance to Change

Employees demonstrated support through training, experimentation, and collaborative planning. TR1 explained, *"When leaders acknowledged our efforts, we felt motivated to adopt new methods"* (Interview, 14th October 2025). Resistance manifested as delays, reluctance, and negative opinions, particularly from staff less comfortable with ICT. HT3 noted, *"A few staff members were initially reluctant, which slowed the implementation process"* (Interview, 15th October 2025).

Observations and document reviews confirmed gradual behavioural adaptation. Supportive leadership, recognition, structured mentoring, and participatory communication mitigated resistance. Trust in leadership, participatory decision-making, and alignment of reforms with institutional values emerged as key determinants of support, corroborating Bryk & Schneider's

(2002) concept of relational trust as a driver of positive employee behaviour during change.

This presented, analysed, and interpreted data regarding organisational culture and employee adaptation to change in selected educational institutions. Triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents revealed that collaborative, student-centred, and values-driven cultures facilitate adaptation, while limited resources, rigid hierarchies, and insufficient socialisation contribute to resistance.

The findings highlight the critical role of leadership modelling, mentorship, and structured professional development in mediating employee experiences of change. These insights address gaps in the literature regarding context-specific mechanisms of cultural influence on change adoption in educational settings in developing countries (Fullan, 2020; Schein, 2017).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the study's findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. It highlights contributions to theory, implications for practice, conclusions drawn from the research objectives, and actionable recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and future research. The discussion emphasises context-specific insights on organisational culture and employee adaptation to change in Ugandan educational institutions.

Description of Organisational Culture

The study found that institutions maintain collaborative, student-centred, disciplined, and respectful cultures, operationalised through joint lesson planning, mentorship programs, staff meetings, and structured routines. For example, HT1 noted:

"We engage all staff in collaborative scheming and lesson planning so that everyone contributes to the school's success."

TR3 added,

"Team teaching and peer mentoring make classroom activities more effective and reduce individual workload."

Observations confirmed these practices, showing joint curriculum planning, mentorship sessions, and structured classroom supervision, while document reviews of staff meeting minutes and supervision logs corroborated these collaborative processes.

These findings agree with Schein (2017), Bryk & Schneider (2002), and Hargreaves & Fullan (2022), who highlight collaborative and values-driven cultures as key to engagement and change adoption. However, a nuanced disagreement arises: while Western studies emphasise formal policies and top-down directives as the primary vehicle for embedding culture, this study shows that informal relational practices, mentorship, peer collaboration, and modelling by leaders are equally or more critical in the Ugandan context. Thus, there is agreement in outcome (effective cultural influence) but disagreement in mechanism.

Similarly, recent African studies (Turyahikayo et al., 2023; Akullo et al., 2023) report that collaborative cultures foster engagement. Yet, unlike this study, which emphasises structured socialisation for new staff, some prior studies do not explore the depth of institutional induction practices, suggesting partial disagreement in the *process* of cultural transmission.

Employee Perceptions and Experiences of Change

Supportive and collaborative cultures enhanced positive perceptions of reforms, whereas rigid hierarchies and poorly socialised staff experienced anxiety and reluctance. TR2 shared:

"I was anxious about using ICT for the first time, but mentorship and peer support made it easier."

TR4 added,

"Professional development sessions helped me redesign lessons for participatory learning and skill acquisition."

Observations revealed active engagement in workshops, peer support, and collaborative problem-solving sessions. Professional development logs confirmed structured support for adaptation.

These findings align with Armenakis & Bedeian (2020), showing that organisational readiness and cultural alignment are crucial. However, disagreement emerges in context: while Armenakis & Bedeian (2020) focus on corporate settings emphasising formal readiness assessments, this study shows that in Ugandan schools, relational mechanisms like mentorship and peer support play an equally significant role, which may not be captured in prior corporate-focused models.

Similarly, Ngware et al. (2022) report that mentorship improves teacher adaptation, agreeing with the current findings. Yet, unlike the current study, they understate the combined effect of collaborative culture, leadership modelling, and structured orientation, indicating partial agreement and partial divergence.

Challenges in Implementing Change

Challenges included limited ICT infrastructure, inadequate resources, increased workload, and initial staff resistance. TR1 remarked:

"Learning to use ICT while redesigning lessons for CBC was very challenging at first."

Observations confirmed difficulties accessing digital tools, and ICT inventory logs revealed inadequate resources.

These findings agree with Fullan (2016) and Turyahikayo et al. (2023), who emphasise the

interplay between structural support and cultural facilitation. However, there is a nuanced disagreement: some Western studies (Springer, 2024) suggest that sufficient infrastructure alone ensures successful reform. In contrast, this study demonstrates that even with adequate resources, the absence of relational support, mentorship, and cultural alignment could reduce adaptation, highlighting that structural support alone is insufficient in this context.

Support and Resistance to Change

Support was observed through active engagement in training, experimentation, and collaboration, while resistance manifested in delays, reluctance, and negative attitudes. TR2 explained:

"We shared ideas, tried new approaches, and encouraged each other during lesson redesign."

Observations recorded gradual behavioural adaptation, and document reviews of training attendance and performance reports confirmed measurable engagement.

These findings align with Oreg et al. (2018), showing that trust, communication, and cultural alignment mediate employees' behavioural responses. Yet, there is a nuanced disagreement with AlQadheeb et al. (2022), who suggested that top-down enforcement was sufficient to reduce resistance. Here, the contextual emphasis on participatory decision-making, mentorship, and shared accountability illustrates that effective change management in Ugandan schools relies more on relational culture than formal enforcement mechanisms.

Strategies to Enhance Adaptation

Adaptation was facilitated through professional development – Workshops improved technical and pedagogical skills, mentorship, and peer support – Shadowing senior colleagues reinforced confidence, leadership modelling – Leaders demonstrated collaborative and ethical practices

and recognition of innovation – Achievements were acknowledged to foster motivation.

TR4 noted:

"Mentorship and support from leaders made the change process manageable and motivated us to innovate."

These findings agree with Kotter (2012) and Senge (2010), emphasising leadership and learning as central to change. Recent Ugandan studies (Ngware et al., 2022; Akullo et al., 2023) similarly highlight mentorship and professional development as critical. Yet, partial disagreement arises with corporate-based studies (Baakeel, 2021), which overemphasise formal reward structures and underplay relational and cultural mechanisms, suggesting that cultural nuances and context-specific strategies are key in educational settings.

Influence of Organisational Culture on Change Management

The study confirms that collaborative, values-driven, and student-centred cultures facilitate adaptation, while rigid hierarchies impede reform adoption. Observations and document reviews confirmed inclusive practices, shared accountability, and participatory decision-making.

These findings agree with Akullo et al. (2023) and Turyahikayo et al. (2023), emphasising relational culture's role in adaptation. However, there is a nuanced disagreement with some Western literature (Springer, 2024), which prioritises structural mechanisms. Here, culture itself, not only structure, was pivotal, demonstrating contextual variability in the mechanisms through which adaptation occurs.

Summary

Overall, this study demonstrates that organisational culture, leadership modelling, mentorship, and professional development

strongly mediate employee adaptation, reduce resistance, and enhance engagement. Findings agree with Schein (2017), Bryk & Schneider (2002), Armenakis & Bedeian (2020), and recent Ugandan studies (Turyahikayo et al., 2023; Akullo et al., 2023), while nuanced disagreements arise with studies emphasising hierarchical, top-down, or purely structural approaches (AlQadheeb et al., 2022; Springer, 2024; Baakeel, 2021). The study highlights that contextual, relational, and culturally aligned strategies are critical for successful educational change.

Contributions of the Study

Extension of Organisational Culture Theory: Demonstrates how collaborative, values-driven, and student-centred practices operationalise Schein's (2017) assumptions, providing mechanisms for facilitating change in educational institutions. **Empirical Support for Change Management Models:** Validates Armenakis & Bedeian (2020) & Kotter (2012) by showing that leadership modelling, mentorship, and professional development are critical in overcoming resistance. **Triangulated Evidence in Education:** Integrates interviews, observations, and document reviews to provide a holistic understanding of culture and change adaptation. **Context-Specific Insights:** Offers empirical knowledge on CBC implementation and ICT integration in Ugandan schools, highlighting challenges, coping strategies, and mechanisms for successful adoption. **Role of Institutional Socialisation:** Shows how structured mentorship and orientation programs embed culture and prepare staff for change, addressing gaps in empirical literature (Fullan, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that organisational culture in the selected Ugandan educational institutions, characterised by collaboration, student-centeredness, discipline, and respect, significantly influences employee adaptation to change. Leadership, mentorship, and structured professional development emerged as critical

mechanisms enabling staff to navigate reforms, while clear communication, joint curriculum planning, and participatory decision-making fostered engagement and reduced resistance. Employees' experiences of change varied, with some embracing reforms enthusiastically and others initially experiencing anxiety, largely shaped by existing cultural norms and prior exposure to ICT and new teaching approaches. Challenges such as limited resources, increased workload, and initial reluctance were mitigated through mentorship, training, and the provision of necessary infrastructure, highlighting the interplay between cultural support and practical interventions. Overall, the findings indicate that a positive, values-driven culture, combined with proactive leadership and structured adaptation strategies, facilitates the successful implementation of organisational changes, including the Competency-Based Curriculum and ICT integration.

Recommendations

Policy makers should invest in robust ICT infrastructure, adequate teaching resources, and professional development programs to support educational reforms, ensuring that institutional values and culture are considered when designing policies. Policy implementers, including school leaders and administrators, should foster collaborative practices, mentorship, and participatory decision-making to align staff behaviour with organisational goals, model desired behaviours, and provide continuous support during change processes. For future researchers, longitudinal and mixed-method studies are recommended to examine the long-term impact of organisational culture on change adoption, explore diverse educational contexts, and validate the relationships between leadership, culture, and employee adaptation to reforms, thereby generating context-specific evidence to inform both theory and practice.

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