

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**EXPLORING THE CHANGE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE
POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD AT THE SELECTED VOCATIONAL
COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

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April 2025



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COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Master of Management Sciences

Specialising in

Human Resource Management

in the

Faculty of Management Sciences
at the Durban University of Technology

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APRIL 2025

APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

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ate: 02/04/2024

ABSTRACT

Practising organisational culture is indispensable in boosting the sustainable development of various organisations. However, lately it has been shrouded with confusion especially in the post-COVID-19 crisis which prompted this study to investigate its current stature. The gradual disappearance of the pandemic era gave birth to a new complex and challenging space for human resource management professionals in South African higher education institutions in both public and private sectors, who are compelled to find ingenious solutions around bringing sound and competitive organisational culture. Although there are vast studies that uncover different issues related to COVID-19 pandemic, few previous studies to date have been conducted regarding the change of organisational culture at the workplace in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. It is against this backdrop that the current study sought to explore the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at Vocational Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal.

The study's target population equated to 137 employees and a sample size of 20 respondents comprised of academic staff and professional (Administration) staff was considered appropriate. However, the data were successfully gathered through semi-structured interviews from 18 respondents. The remaining two participants declined to take part in the interview due to their busy schedules. Thematic analysis was utilised to analyse the collected data. The findings of the study indicated that teamwork enables employees to navigate and cope with changes in the post-pandemic period. Leadership was also cited as captain of change who bear the responsibility of breaking the old culture and embracing the new organisational culture. The findings further emphasised that offering an organisational climate that enhances innovation, and creativity enables employees to come up with new ideas, values and norms. The results further revealed that employees lack adequate training to cope with the change, and there was inadequacy in team building to ensure that the team was bonding and sharing the same values as well as norms. The

findings and suggestions of the study could be valuable in evaluating how training and development programs contribute to fostering a culture of resilience, innovation and adaptability in response to future disruptions. The study has made significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge and provides valuable insights for educational institutions.

Keywords: Organisational Culture; Change; COVID-19; Crisis; Higher Education; South Africa

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation submitted for the degree in Management Sciences: Human Resources Management in the Department of Human Resources Management is my own original work and has not been previously submitted to any other higher education institution. I further declare that all sources quoted or cited are indicated and acknowledged in the comprehensive references.

25 October 2024

Hazel Lizzy Ndelu

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my supervisor, Dr. R. Utete, for his generous support, encouragement, and making my educational dream a reality. I also dedicate this study to my loving friend and kids; you have been my rock and have meant everything to me throughout graduate school. Thank you for helping me at every step of the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank the Lord Almighty for the strength and wisdom to complete this study.

My sincerest appreciation is extended to my supervisor, Dr Reward Utete, for his guidance, expertise and meticulous checking of this study.

I would also like to thank the Faculty of Management Science: Human Resources Management for the opportunity to do my studies. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. P. Silwimba (Data analysts) and Mrs M. Mathews (Language Editor) for the dedication and assistance they gave me in the completion of this study.

A sincere appreciation to the Managers of Coastal Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET), Mr S. Zondi and Mr L. Gwala for the opportunity they gave me to conduct the research.

My sincere gratitude is accorded to my family, kids and friend: Mum, Bheki, Thabiso, Neo and Amahle.

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LIST OF ACRONOMYS

OC	Organisational Culture
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
SA	South Africa
HEI	Higher Education Institution
WHO	World Health Organisation
HRM	Human Resources Management
LMS	Learning Management System
AKDAR	Awareness Desire Knowledge Ability and Reinforcement
DUT	Durban university of technology
IREC	Institutional Research Ethics Committee
HOD	Head of Department

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Organisational culture (OC) in the higher education sector holds significant importance in shaping the beliefs, values, norms and behaviour of individuals within academic institutions (Nanayakkara and Wilkinson, 2021:134). Organisational culture encompasses shared attitudes, practices and customs that define the identity and character of an organisation. The post-COVID-19 pandemic period has brought about significant changes and challenges to the higher education sector, requiring institutions to adapt and evolve their organisational cultures to meet the new realities of a rapidly changing world (Chandler, Heidrich and Kasa, 2017:284). The pandemic has pressured higher education institutions to adopt remote learning and flexible work arrangements, as well as implement digital technologies at an unprecedented pace, which has become the new normal in the post pandemic period (Ingelsson, Backstrom and Snyder, 2018:277). These changes have not only altered the manner in which education is delivered but have also impacted the way faculty, staff and students interact and collaborate within the academic environment. As a result, Nanayakkara and Wilkinson (2021:134) state that organisational cultures in higher education are undergoing transformation to incorporate elements such as virtual communication, technology integration, and a greater emphasis on resilience and adaptability.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the field of Human Resources, particularly in the South African higher education sector (Yang, Kim and Hong, 2023:52). A growing number of institutions are re-thinking traditional structures and practices to foster collaboration, creativity and continuous learning amongst their employees (Lee, Shiue and Chen, 2016:462). In light of the new working methods, such as remote and hybrid working, employees are expected to be digitally proficient, maintain open

communication, and quickly adapt to change. As a result, cultural change within organisations is an essential aspect of ensuring that employees are effective in their roles (Yang, Kim and Hong, 2023:52). To achieve this, Haningsih and Rohmi (2022:244) emphasise that new values, norms, beliefs, processes and communication practices must be implemented. Although cultural change occurs naturally over time, management can actively engineer it through long-term organisational development, employee training and short-term transformational changes (Lee, Shiue and Chen, 2016:462). This study aims to provide valuable insights into tackling the challenges of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 period at selected Vocational Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal.

A technical and vocational education and training institute is an institution of study that focuses on imparting the expertise and abilities needed for professions or sectors of the economy (TVET Coastal KZN website, 2023:1). Moreover, the courses provided frequently include practical instructions and hands-on experience that are intended to prepare students for a variety of occupations requiring technical skills. Several colleges merged in 2002 with approximately 15 000 students and 800 staff members to become Coastal KZN TVET in the KwaZulu-Natal province, offering a wide range of educational and training programmes to a diverse society. The institution is renowned for serving a wide range of students, including adult learners, young people not attending formal school, the unemployed, those hired by local businesses and project-linked apprentices. Through innovation and the provision of community-responsive programmes, the college is positioning itself to be able to take the lead in addressing the socio-economic needs of the larger community.

1.2 Background to the study

Researchers find it fascinating to discuss the importance of regulating corporate culture, as has been proven by many studies on organisational culture, such as those conducted by Bakhri, Udin, Daryono and Suharnomo

(2018:175); Tsai (2011:1), Acar (2012:219); Yesil and Kaya (2013:428); Iljins, Skycarciany and Gaile-Sarkane (2015:945) and Lee, Shiue and Chen (2016:462). Haningsih and Rohmi (2022:244) state that it is clear from recent academic research and professional dialogue that the COVID-19 pandemic has left an indelible mark on the world of work, resulting in a "post-COVID workplace" that will undoubtedly be significantly different from the one that existed prior to the pandemic. The post-COVID-19 pandemic era has brought significant changes and challenges to the higher education sector, requiring institutions to adapt and evolve their organisational cultures to meet the new realities of a rapidly changing world (Yang, Kim and Hong, 2023:52). South Africa's higher education sector is known for its diversity, with a mix of public and private institutions catering to a wide range of students from various socio-economic backgrounds. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented disruptions to the traditional modes of teaching and learning, prompting higher education institutions in South Africa to rapidly adapt to remote and hybrid learning models which influenced the change in organisational culture (Guppy, Verpoorten, Boud, Lin, Tai and Bartolic, 2022:1750). Yang, Kim and Hong (2023:52) emphasise that the removal of restrictions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic caused numerous institutions to consider hybrid work, which is an integration of traditional and remote working methods assimilated into the organisation. However, some employees face difficulties in adjusting to the current setup and changes in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, which requires agility in adaptability. Hence, Haningsih and Rohmi (2022:244) state that there is pressure on employees to adopt the skills and knowledge and embrace the new culture stemming from the COVID-19 changes.

According to Yang, Kim and Hong (2023:52), affordability, accessibility, flexibility, lifelong work and dynamic regulations have become recognised as issues concerning a contemporary culture and hybrid work setting. Through the emerging attitude, various workplaces have reported unequal treatment, disparities and prejudice, which is due to the fact that many occupations need

a staff member to be physically present at the office, whereas other employment might permit an employee to operate either physically or remotely (Haningsih and Rohmi, 2022:244). Nevertheless, virtual learning is now more popular in South Africa. However, it is hindered by load-shedding which constantly interrupts internet connections. Additionally, many educational institutions are forced to consistently use traditional ways of work instead of distance learning since many learners, particularly beginners, need access to modern gadgets.

However, there are a few concerns about the prospects of the state of education in SA because of several issues related to a warped culture. There is very little time for change management when using the freeze and unfreeze method (Guppy, et al., 2022:1750). Makombe (2020:3) affirms that the socio-economic backdrop that is presumed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to generate restrictions for colleges and universities that are still expanding. In South Africa, still-growing academic institutions are the most affected by these drastic transitions (Guppy, et al., 2022:1750). However, minimal research has previously been conducted in those still growing academic institutions, in this case vocational colleges. Hence, the study explores the change in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 period in Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.3 Problem Statement

When the COVID-19 pandemic dissipated, the leadership found themselves immersed in a novel way of life that both academic and non-academic employees perceived to have an unanticipated knock-on effect from the prior work standards of the traditional work setup to the move to total remote working or hybrid working (Penprase, 2018:207). Paschal, Pacho and Adewoyin (2022:28) mention that when transformations become more frequent and uncertain, growing Higher Education Institutions encounter resistance to transformation, comparable to those in well-established institutions. It thus became a difficult task for the staff as they had to shift to

virtual work throughout the epidemic, and then to hybrid working in the aftermath of the pandemic.

The new culture of hybrid work in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is giving rise to a number of extraordinarily unlawful and immoral problems, which encompasses inequity, nepotism and prejudice in a variety of roles, whether contract workers or permanent staff members hold them (Paschal, Pacho and Adewoyin, 2022:28). Even when the pandemic ended and many issues disappeared, the pandemic aftermath brings transformation that requires adaptability and flexibility from staff members. Unfortunately, certain employees need a greater ability to adjust to the current requirements as quickly as the organisations anticipates (Kort and Chipunza, 2022:7). Additionally, South African HEIs face a number of opportunistic challenges that became significant in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although certain universities embraced an emerging organisational culture centred around hybrid work, others returned to fully-fledged in-person employment. However, employees need assistance with the new culture of hybrid working. The new culture leads to substantial absenteeism and high work absconsion rates. A worse scenario is when-several employees leave their existing employer in favour of companies that still support remote work cultures (Paschal, Pacho and Adewoyin, 2022:28). At HEIs, learners who preferred virtual education over in-person instruction exacerbate and sustain resistance to cultural transformation, making them the biggest threat to transformation initiatives (Timmis, de Wet, Naidoo, Trahar, Lucas, Mqgwashu, Muhuro and Wisker, 2022:10).

In KwaZulu Natal, higher education institution leadership was compelled to accept in-person business because of the province's ongoing load-shedding challenge which interferes with internet networks (Nene, 2019:1). Furthermore, most first-year students lack the electronic devices to utilise for distance learning since impoverishment increased due to the destruction brought by the COVID-19 pandemic (Adams, Chuah, Sumintono and Mohamed, 2022:325).

Therefore, employees, especially academics, are required to provide in-person sessions and cannot always work remotely. Even emerging higher education institutions, such as vocational colleges struggle since they encounter these issues more frequently than well-established ones. Executives and human resources professionals are concerned about the stability of the workplace atmosphere, even if their organisations are still adjusting to significant transformations in how they operate (Kort and Chipunza, 2022:1). In addition, the majority of institutions have concerns that if they do not pay sufficient consideration, their organisational culture will become uncertain, and they do not know how to uphold ideals and principles if employees do not maintain a stable work culture.

1.4 Research Aim

The aim of the study is to explore the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at a selected Vocational College in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the key factors influencing the change of organisational culture at the selected Vocational College in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period in KwaZulu-Natal,
- To ascertain the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the selected Vocational College and
- To make recommendations to the management of the selected Vocational College on how to deal with changes in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period.

1.6 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the key factors influencing the change of organisational culture at the selected Vocational College in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period?
- What are the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the selected Vocational College in KwaZulu-Natal?
- What recommendations can be proposed to the management of the selected Vocational College on how to deal with changes in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period?

1.7 Rationale for the study

The rationale for undertaking research on the subject of organisational culture change and its challenges in South African higher education institutions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is rooted in the acknowledgement of the paramount importance of comprehending the response of these institutions to unprecedented disruptions. The pandemic has expedited the need for agility, innovation and adaptability in higher education settings, making it indispensable to investigate how organisational cultures have evolved in this novel landscape (Khan, 2018:7). In the previous years, there has been an increasing interest amongst academicians to investigate the concept of organisational culture in higher education institutions to manage the transformation taking place globally and across various sectors. However, organisational culture remains a contentious subject amongst researchers.

To date, only a few studies have been conducted focusing on organisational culture change in academia with reference to the post-COVID-19 pandemic era (Khan, Ismail, Hussain and Alghazali, 2020:1). In addition, it is often observed that employees dominate organisational life and usually make their efforts in a synchronised way to achieve definite outputs (Kim and Jung, 2022:2). Against this backdrop, the current study aims to explore the change in organisational culture in the post-pandemic period. Moreover, by examining the cultural shifts, leadership strategies and resilience mechanisms adopted by South African higher education institutions in the post-COVID-19 era, the

study aspires not only to unearth invaluable insights for enhancing institutional effectiveness, but also to contribute to broader discussions on best-practices for navigating crises, managing organisational cultural changes and fostering sustainable growth amidst adversity. Furthermore, the motivation underlying this study is to support the ongoing development and transformation of higher education institutions in South Africa in the post-COVID-19 period, ensuring their continued relevance and impact in an ever-changing world.

1.8 Scope of the study

The study is confined to the Coastal KZN TVET College based in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The institution has eight college campuses in different areas, but the study will focus on two selected colleges due to the limited timeframe of the study and resources.

1.9 Preliminary Literature Review

The pandemic, caused by the novel Coronavirus, forced millions of employees to work from home, significantly impacting family and work culture (Singh, Singh and Kumar, 2020:3176). Gianicolo, Riccetti, Blettner and Karch (2020:336) define COVID-19 as an infection linked to SARSCoV-2 that significantly affected the private and professional lives of many individuals. The term "organisational culture" describes the assumptions, attitudes and ways of working that an organisation has (Odour, 2018:23). According to Odour (2018:23), an organisation is a social unit that is actively coordinated, has distinctly defined boundaries and operates consistently towards a shared objective or set of goals. The term "change" refers to a framework of continuous transformation that takes place in one or more organisational areas (Sofat, Kiran, and Kaushik, 2015). The preliminary review of literature for this study covers various previous studies on changes in organisational culture in HEIs prior and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This section reviews the literature relating to the main changes in OC in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, organisational culture, dimensions of OC, change, as well as the challenges associated with the change of OC in the aftermath

of the pandemic. It also discusses the theoretical framework that underpins the investigation.

1.9.1 Brief explanation of the COVID-19 pandemic era

According to Vieira, Francoa, Restrepob and Abela (2020:39), the preliminary announcement of COVID-19 was made in December 2019 in Wuhan, China's Hubei region. Thereafter, the virus spread to several countries. The cause of COVID-19 is a new virus, labelled SARS-CoV-2 (Santesmasses, Castro, Zenin, Shindyapina, Gerashchenko, Zhang, Kerepesi, Yim, Fedichev and Gladyshev, 2020:1). Coughing and fever are the main symptoms of the virus. SARS-CoV-2 is a ribonucleic acid (RNA) virus that is a member of the Nido-viral group. According to Cespedes and Souza (2020:116), COVID-19 was first identified in the 1093s when a number of coronaviruses inflicted neurological, gastrointestinal, hepatic and respiratory disorders in chickens. Cardoso, Sousa, Rocha, Menezes and Santos (2021:214) affirm that the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global public health crisis in late January 2020 after it was discovered in China in December 2019 and later categorised it as a pandemic in March.

Furthermore, on March 5, 2020, COVID-19 was announced as the first confirmed case in South Africa. On March 15, 2020, the South African government declared a national state of emergency. On March 27, 2020, a national lockdown was implemented to prevent the first wave of cases from overfilling the health system (Giandhari, Pillay, Wilkinson, Tegally, Sinayskiy, Schuld, Lourenco, Chimukangara, Lessells, Moosa, Gazy, Fish, Singh, Khanyile, Fonseca, Giovanetti, Alcantara, Petruccione, and de Oliveira, 2020:4). Additionally, SARS-CoV-2 is the most dangerous coronavirus to infect humans, having killed over a million people (Cespedes and Souza (2020:116). Although many academics have lately studied COVID-19, few studies have been done linked to organisational culture. As a result, this study adds to the body of knowledge on COVID-19 by introducing a new antecedent for this construct.

1.9.2 Brief explanation of organisational culture

According to Davis and Dolson (2018:47), OC is defined as a set of underlying principles that a group develops to address challenges related to internal integration and external adaptation. Taye, Guoyuan and Muthanna (2019:78) highlight that culture has been a well-known issue of discussion in everyday debates and has evolved into an academic priority within institutions. Moreover, inside group cultural norms establish what is accepted, rejected, discouraged and encouraged. Nonetheless, the two (2) essential aspects that hold true independence of an organisation's size, kind, industry or location are how people interact with one another and how the organisation responds to change (Groysberg, Lee, Price and Cheng 2018:4). Additionally, Groysberg et al. (2018:5) emphasize that these two elements must be identified in order to comprehend where organisational culture fits in. An organisation's attitude towards the co-ordination and interaction of its members can be characterised as either very independent or highly interdependent. Response to change is defined as a culture that emphasises stability, flexibility and control.

Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier (2023:2) state that the usual traits of an organisation, consisting of a foundational set of assumptions that the organisation has accepted due to its historical success, indicate its organisational culture. These are upheld by ongoing employee interaction, which takes the form of attitudes and behaviours (Martins and Terblanche, 2003). Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier (2023:2) emphasise that Schein contributed to an entire generation of scholars with his theory of organisational culture, which is divided into three levels: artefacts, values and norms, and fundamental beliefs.

1.9.3 Brief explanation of organisational change

Lewis (2019:1) defines organisational change as something that organisations and the society sometimes seek, resist and often have trust upon it. Culture is widespread, with changes and questions about how, when and in what ways change ought to occur (Kim, Toh and Baik, 2022:1506). Furthermore, Lewis

(2019:1) states that change is required to correct past mistakes, improve learning and provide opportunities for growth, development and resource expansion, as well as seizing a moment that, if missed, may have negative consequences. Yuksel (2019:165) suggests that any planned change effort must interact with the organisation's culture, regardless of its purpose. Yuksel (2019:165) further states that the organisation's desired intention is only to change the procedure, practices and strategies without addressing the cultural features and goals. Based on these assumptions, changing the organisational culture is claimed to be a key factor in successful change efforts. The lack of scholarship on this concept of organisational change is astonishing considering that inevitable changes are constantly happening in different workplaces due to unforeseen upheavals.

1.9.4 Change in organisational culture in the post-covid-19 period

With the void of empirical information on how Covid-19 changed OC in HEIs, this section reviews literature concerning the change of OC in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic. According to Weston (2018:1), change has become a mainstay in today's organisations, but the effort overwhelmingly portrays unsuccessful and stressful events for both management and employees. Moreover, other literature on organisational change modifies culture as an outcome of change. Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015:234) state that despite the effort put into organisational change interventions, they are still unsuccessful, with an estimated failure rate of up to 70%. Bakhri, Udin, Daryono and Suharnomo (2018:173) argue that whenever transformation is handled well, it creates enormous potential for an organisation.

Furthermore, in an organisational context, several important characteristics of human beings that influence the values, opportunities and perceptions of people have been described as uniformity. In addition, Handayani, Udin, Suharnomo, Yuniawan, Wahyudi and Wikaningrum (2017:399) suggest that knowledge is necessary for transformation management and focuses on the organisation to fulfil its obligations and reap actual advantages. However, the

disarray caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in HEIs implies that academics and professionals have experienced much trial and error ever since the pandemic took over. COVID-19 forcefully took over and there was no way to resist change when faced with an uncontrollable situation. Spicer (2020:1738) affirms that COVID-19 has brought shock with its large-scale social and economic disruption and has profoundly transformed organisational culture. In many organisations, the underlying values and assumptions seem to have shifted from exploration to creativity with regard to safety (Kniffin, Naranayanan, Anseel, Antonakis, Ashford, Bakker, Bambergerm Bapuji, Bhave, Choi, Creary, Demerouti, Flynn, Gelfand, Greer, Johns, Kesebir, Klein, Lee and Vugt, 2020:63). Without doubt, the global coronavirus pandemic has given employees more flexibility in terms of where, when and how they work. Hybrid is deeply engrained in the model of the general world of work, as well as possible opportunities for South Africans with abilities while seeking employment (Kort and Chipunza, 2022:3).

1.9.5 Challenges associated with the change in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period

In many developing countries, still growing academic institutions have been encountering the challenge of remote working as it requires devices. According to Benner, Grant and O’Kane (2020:10), abrupt alterations to government policies and hasty adjustments in resource allocation have greatly impeded responsibility assigning and organisational adaptability in many forms. Moreover, the emergence of the pandemic era led to an environment that is complex and challenging for Human Resources Management practitioners (HRM) and management, who had to find ingenious solutions with immediate effect to sustain organisations or institutions and help their employees to cope with these unprecedented challenges (Hamouche, 2021:2). The introduction of remote working, teaching and meetings was implemented and had to be accepted globally. Goncalves and Silva (2021:2) emphasise that institutions with insufficient resources to commence remote working advised their employees to stay home till further notice, while waiting for government

resource provision. Stack (2021:128) highlights that these institutions educate employees from different fields in the workforce, most of whom are decision-makers.

Institutional managers in different sectors employ institutional rankings to assess the accomplishments and failures of HEIs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhou, Huang, Xiao Huang and Fan, 2020b). However, these rankings fail to address the issue of how institutions can strengthen policies, practices and structures which form a part of a desirable culture and are critical in addressing the challenges faced in the aftermath of the pandemic period. Only a few studies have been conducted on the impact of COVID-19 on academic employees, professionals (support staff) and human resources management and the challenges, as well as providing relevant information on how to cope with this crisis effectively and efficiently to sustain institutions after this period. From the theoretical perspective, the present study is crucial since it integrates the change in organisational culture in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in higher or tertiary institutions for the first time, which consequently gives new insights into these critical topical issues.

Hybrid work is only feasible for some functions and could harm initiatives promoting diversity, inclusion and equity. The most difficult challenge that businesses would then be facing in the new way of operation in the workplace is providing equal and equitable performance to workers, irrespective of their location. Organisations that refuse to treat remote workers fairly will risk reputational damage to their brand as well as bottom-line, and their recruiting process (Reed, 2022:6)

1.10 Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by two models that complement each other in an endeavour to inform this study. However, more details about the models are provided in Chapter 2.

1.10.1 Edgar Schein's organisational culture model

Edgar Schein's Organisational Culture Model presents a valuable perspective for comprehending how organisational culture evolves in response to external disturbances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Schein categorises organisational culture into three tiers, namely artifacts and behaviours, espoused values, and fundamental underlying assumptions (Guasti, 2020:47). Amidst the pandemic, organisations have experienced considerable cultural transformation across all three tiers of Schein's model. To navigate the impact of the pandemic on artifacts, espoused values and fundamental assumptions, organisations can proactively manage cultural change; encourage employee engagement; and cultivate a resilient organisational culture that can thrive in the uncertain and fluctuating conditions depicted in the post-pandemic period (Endrejat and Burnes, 2022:933).

1.10.2 Kurt Lewin's model

According to Cummings, Bridgman and Brown (2016:33), Lewin's model is conceptualised as 3-phase of change model (unfreezing, changing and re-freezing). Grange (2007:47) identifies the three phases as disconfirmation, cognitive restructuring and freezing. Endrejat and Burnes (2022:933) clarify that the unfreezing phase implies that people on target should unlearn or learn something. Cognitive restructuring proposes that when the organisation emerged in the unfrozen stage, transformation processes may move forward to the refreeze process, and contemporary behaviour is strengthened. Within that context, this study presents the drastic change of organisational culture in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era in higher education institutions that have identified change as a basic value within a re-freezing phase.

1.11 Research Methodology and Design

Nayak and Singh (2021:2) define research methodology as an underlying theory and analysis often influenced by discipline in how research should proceed. The research methodology mainly focuses on the following: research design, research approach, target population, sampling method, selection of

sample, data collection method, measuring instruments, pilot study, trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical consideration.

1.11.1 Primary data

Semi-structured interview questions were used to gather primary data. Schuurman (2020:1015) defines primary data as data gathered by the researcher for an important purpose. The primary data for this study was collected using interviews at Costal College.

1.11.2 Secondary data

In this study, secondary data was used to develop the literature review. Secondary data are easy to obtain in comparison to primary data as they are found in published texts, literature reviews, internet, accredited journals and case studies (Khotari, 2020:90).

1.11.3 Target population

The target population for this study included 137 employees in the two selected Vocational colleges/ higher education institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. The colleges were considered because they are located in close proximity to the researcher. The target population was obtained from the Human Resources Departments in both Vocational colleges at the district office. The intended target population for this study consists of academic and professional (administrative) employees in both colleges. The inclusion and exclusion criteria of the target population are as follows:

1.11.3.1 Inclusion criteria

This study included all the academics and administrative employees who have been employed by the organisation before the pandemic. These employees witnessed the culture shift before, during and after the pandemic. Therefore, they provided valuable insights that assist in achieving the aim of the study, hence their inclusion.

1.11.3.2 Exclusion criteria

This study excluded all employees who were employed after the pandemic as they did not have solid insights and witnessed the culture of the organisation prior to the pandemic. Therefore, they were excluded as they have not experienced the culture of the organisation before the pandemic.

1.12 Sampling method and selection

This study used a non-probability sampling method. Non-probability sampling is defined by Etikan and Bala (2017:1) as a method of selecting research participants based on non-random criteria. Sampling has two methods: probability and non-probability sampling methods. Non-probability sampling has been chosen for the study because it allows the researcher to acquire data that is relevant to the study (Etikan and Bala 2017:1). Quota, accidental, judgemental, purposive, expert, snowball and modal instant samplings are all non-probability sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was used because it allowed the researcher to choose participants who are knowledgeable about the subject, as well as on the basis of the researcher's evaluation in providing the evidence to accomplish the study's purpose (Etikan and Bala 2017:1). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), in a qualitative research study, a sample between 10 and 50 participants may be considered. The target population of 137 was obtained from the two selected colleges and the sample size of 20 participants was selected from the target population. The researcher was unable to include two participants in the interview due to their busy schedules.

1.12.1 Measuring instrument

Semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect data for this study, with the purpose of developing a guide to the entire process. The respondents were asked their perception on the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era (Schuurman, 2020:1016). Semi-structured questions were utilised by the researcher to answer the objectives of the research, looking into questions relevant to the subject. The semi-structured

interviews were restricted interviews geared towards the researcher's interests (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017:86).

1.12.2 Trustworthiness of the qualitative study

Trustworthiness is achieved in qualitative research by participating in thorough and in-depth interpretations and thoughts attributed by respondents in their respective ways of responding. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:3), the degree to which the research provides information, as well as the manner in which the results were obtained, determine the trustworthiness of the study process. Pathmanathan and Gray (2018:106) emphasizes that there are four components of assessing the trustworthiness of this research's qualitative component, namely: transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability were reinforced.

1.12.3 Limitation of the study

The research study area had limited previous research studies. However, the available of prior research studies were helpful in creating a platform from which to better understand the research problem and lay a concrete foundation for the literature review.

1.13 Structure of the Thesis

The dissertation is organised into five (5) chapters. A brief overview of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1- Background and overview of the study

The background and the summary of the research address the problems, aims, objective significance of the study, a brief review of the related literature and the methodological approach to the study is covered.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter discusses the literature underpinning the present framework of the study. The chapter presents a review of literature relating to the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at Higher Education institutions.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design

Chapter Three describes the research methodology and design. The chapter includes a detailed discussion on data collection of the primary and secondary data, sample selection and development.

Chapter 4: Analysis of data and discussion of results

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the results and discussion of the findings from the study.

Chapter 5: Summary and conclusion

This chapter covers the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study based on the findings of the research.

1.14 Chapter Summary

The study explores the change of organisational culture at Vocational College's in Higher Education institutions in the post COVID-19 pandemic period. organisations have a tendency towards organisational inertia to resist change and maintain the status quo. COVID-19 presented inevitable changes, such as hybrid working and the infusion of technology in the way work is conducted in various industries, including the higher education sector. The upliftment of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions caused many institutions to forcefully change their culture, which is different from both before and during COVID-19. Hence, this study intends to explore the change of organisational culture in the post-Covid-19 pandemic period at higher education institutions. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, and a purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The sample size comprises the minimum of 20 employees at the selected Vocational colleges in Higher

Education institutions in KwaZulu-Natal. The data was collected using interviews. The next chapter will be based on the literature surrounding the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a sudden, transformative disruption across various global workspaces, leading to immediate cultural and behavioural changes. Public and corporate institutions, caught unprepared by the virus's rapid escalation from late 2019 to a global pandemic in early 2020, faced challenges adapting workplace practices (Azman and Abdullah, 2021:70). This resulted in extended business closures and significant impacts on employees across industries, compounded by sustainability challenges spreading internationally in an interconnected world (The World Bank, 2020:1). In higher education, the pandemic catalysed a shift to remote and hybrid learning, especially for postgraduate students, creating a new learning culture (Pathak, 2016:315). Despite this, institutions continue to grapple with embedding best practices to foster academic excellence and maintain competitiveness. To adapt, institutions are prioritising globalisation, diversity, inclusion and strategic professional development that balances pedagogical, technological and financial needs. Furthermore, the modern workplace has evolved significantly, influenced by internalisation, technological advancements and Industry 4.0 (Kort and Chipunza, 2022:1). A hybrid working culture, marked by increased virtual interaction and digitalisation has emerged, blurring traditional work boundaries (Arkenberg, Lee and Evans, 2022:5). This chapter explores these shifts, analysing challenges and key factors shaping organisational and educational culture in the post-pandemic era.

2.2 COVID-19 Pandemic

Olson, Huynh, Fine, Baumgartner, Castro, Chan, Daskalakis, Devinney, Guerra, Harper and Kennedy (2020:1) cite the December 2019 report from Wuhan, China's Hubei province, as the first instance of COVID-19. Thereafter, COVID-19 spread to several nations. Santesmasses, et al. (2020:1) state that

the novel virus known as SARS-CoV-2 was the cause of COVID-19. Fever and cough were the symptoms of the infection. SARS-CoV-2 is a member of the Nido-virales order and family Coronaviridae (Santesmasses, et al 2020:1). According to Cespedes and Souza (2020:116), SARS-CoV-2 was the most dangerous coronavirus to affect humans, having killed over a million people. It was the sixth coronavirus to infect humans. In South Africa, tests were carried out and it was discovered that Covid-19 increased in May 2020 by more than 600 000. As COVID-19 exacerbated globally, its transmission and outbreak were investigated consistently using whole-genome sequencing (WGS) and genomics epidemiology (Giandhari, Pillay, Wilkinson, Tegally, Sinayskiy, Schuld, Lourenço, Chimukangara, Lessells, Moosa, and Gazy, 2021:238). The global implications, repercussions and connotations will still be prognosticated with some degree of certainty and anticipation. The pandemic had globally far-reaching effects on all spheres of social, economic and cultural life (Sa and Serpa, 2020:5). During the challenging times, measures that aimed to alleviate the spread of COVID-19 were implemented in most countries with immediate effect (Persad, Peek and Emanuel, 2020:1601). In South Africa, the pandemic was treated as a national disaster and the government acted swiftly to implement measures that ensured that the spread of the virus was minimised. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 depict the steps and actions taken by the government in response to the pandemic.

Table 2.1: The National state of disaster

NATIONAL STATE OF DISASTER
The National State of Disaster was lifted as from the 5th of April 2022, with new health regulations implemented on the 4th of May 2022

Adjusted alert level 5	Adjusted alert level 4	Adjusted alert level 3	Adjusted alert level 2	Adjusted alert level 1
Took place from (Midnight) 27 March - 31 April 2020	Firstly, took effect from 1-31 May 2020 AND 2nd phase 28 June - 25 July 2021	Firstly, took effect on 1 June - 17 August 2020 2 nd phase 29 December - 28 February 2021 3 rd phase 16-27 June 2021 AND 4 th phase 26 July - 12 September 2021	Firstly, took place on 18 August - 20 September 2020 2 nd phase 31 May - 15 June 2021 AND 3 rd phase 13 - 30 September 2021	Firstly, took effect on the 21 September - 28 December 2020 2 nd phase 1 March - 30 May 2021 3 rd phase 1 October 2021 - 4 April 2022

OBJECTIVES

Urgent actions were required to halt the virus's spread and maintain the people's safety. A high COVID-19 spread with low readiness in the health system was detected	This stage indicates that there is a moderate to high COVID-19 spread with a low to moderate readiness in the health system	This stage indicates that there is a moderate COVID-19 spread with moderate readiness in the health system	This stage indicates that there is a moderate COVID-19 spread with high readiness in the health system	This level indicates that there was a low spread of COVID-19 with a high readiness in the health system
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Source: SA Government Regulations and Guidelines Portal (2023)

Table 2.2: South Africa's Country lockdown and adjustments alert
COUNTRY LOCKDOWN ALERT AND ADJUSTMENTS

Level 5 Alert	Level 4 Alert	Level 3 Alert	Level 2 Alert	Level 1 Alert
From (midnight) 27 March – 31 April 2020	From 1 – 31 May 2020 Adjusted from 28 June – 25 July 2021	From 1 June – 17 August 2020 2 nd phase 29 December 2020 – 28 February 2021 3 rd phase 16-27 June 2021 4 th phase 26 July – 12 September 2021	From 00h01 on 18 August 2020 2 nd phase 31 May – 15 June 2021 3 rd phase 13 September 2021	From 21 September – 28 December 2020 2 nd phase 1 October 2021

OBJECTIVES				
The country had to take urgent and drastic measures to halt the spread of the COVID-19 virus and save people's lives.	Extra caution was exercised in order to limit the spread and outbreaks of the virus whilst permitting certain activities to resume.	Many activities were restricted, including social settings and in the workplace to address the significant danger of the spread of the virus	Distance and limitations on social and leisure activities were implemented in order to avoid an outbreak of the virus.	The majority of regular activities were resumed, with health guidelines and measures to strictly adhere to at all times.

Source: SA Government Regulations and Guidelines Portal (2023)

Government entities had to devise a strategy to deal with the minimisation of the escalation of the virus, and some measures were implemented. Furthermore, approximately 100 organisations operating in sectors, including HEIs, were identified as compulsory to sustaining the life of the public (von Gaudecker, Holler, Janys, Siflinger and Zimpelmann, 2020:4). Similar specific instructions related to specific work had been included in the COVID-19 measures in other countries. Globally, governments developed processes and essential work lists. Workers designated as ‘essential workers’ to keep the society in existence were urged to work (Guasti, 2020:47). Those workers not regarded as essential workers were asked to stay indoors, and others were made to work from home. Furthermore, while the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact was unknown, it caused a quandary in relation to health problems, for which existing healthcare resources or frameworks were insufficient. Despite the precautions taken, attempting to limit the escalation of COVID-19 was unsuccessful (Shi, Han, Jiang, Cao, Alwalid, Gu and Zheng (2020:426).

Nevertheless, COVID-19 treatment in the world primarily concentrated on infection control, which was vaccination (Ahorsu, Lin, Imani, Saffari, Griffiths and Pakpour, 2020:4). The escalation of COVID-19 rapidly caused the collapse of institutions, mostly in higher education, due to their absorptive capacity. Whilst the virus' infection propensity spiralled exponentially, it frequently caused panic and instilled unavoidable fear in higher education, communities, and societies at large. Such a similar human reaction was not

entirely unjustified. It must be reviewed in the context of the similar fear-mongering talk about the COVID-19 pandemic being a 'black swan' virus for humanity (Blumenstyk, 2020:3; Manderson and Levin, 2020:367; Ventriglio, Watson and Bhugra, 2020:733; and Wind, Rijkeboer, Andersson and Riper, 2020:1).

Researchers like Carnevale & Hatak (2020:183); Olivia and Gibson (2020:143), Kramer and Kramer (2020:1); Holmes, Connor, Perry, Tracey, Wessely, Arseneault, Ballard Christensen, Silver, Everall and Ford (2020:547), state that the COVID-19 caused a significant effect on higher education institution including other societal aspects. The pandemic intensely demonstrated the institutions that are reliant on so-called online work (Guasti, 2020:47). Online work grew during COVID-19 in higher education institutions as it was the only way to do their work and to communicate with students and colleagues (Benhamou and Piedra, 2020:2).

2.3 Higher Education in South Africa

According to Ferguson, McKenzie, Dalton and Lyner-Cleophas (2019:2), after many years of race, colour and class inequalities, inclusive education first appeared in South African education policy after apartheid. Schools were divided based on race, disability and financial resources. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (SA Department of Education, 2001) introduced a new inclusive educational system that recognised that learning needs could arise from negative attitudes, stereotyping, inaccessible environments, insufficient policies and support services. The higher education landscape in South Africa encompasses a diverse array of institutions that cater to various academic interests and career goals (Ferguson, 2019:33). This sector comprises public universities, universities of technology and private colleges, each offering a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in numerous fields of study.

Qualifications span from diplomas and certificates to bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, providing students with diverse opportunities to pursue their academic aspirations. The characteristics of South Africa's higher and tertiary education system include diversity, quality assurance, inclusivity, transformation, research, innovation and international collaboration, offering a comprehensive selection of disciplines and qualifications that cater to the diverse needs of its student population (Du Plessis, et al., 2022:2). Dube (2020:140) states that public universities, which are the traditional providers of higher education in South Africa, are known for their robust research focus and academic rigor. These institutions provide a wide range of fields, including humanities, sciences, engineering, business and health sciences, amongst others, and attract a diverse student body from various social and cultural backgrounds.

In contrast, Landa, Zhou and Marongwe (2021:171) posit that universities of technology emphasize practical skills and hands-on training in disciplines such as engineering, information technology and design, preparing students for professional careers in industry and technology-driven sectors. Private colleges in South Africa significantly contribute to expanding access to higher education by offering vocational and career-focused programs in areas like hospitality, tourism, marketing and entrepreneurship. These institutions provide flexible learning options, such as part-time, online and distance learning courses, addressing the needs of working professionals and individuals seeking to improve their skillsets for career advancement (Pholotho and Mtsweni, 2016:3).

2.4 Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges in South Africa

The TVET sector is critical in developing a skilled and knowledgeable society capable of successfully enhancing a country's quality of life and economic development (National Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013: 3). Boateng (2012:108) defines vocational-technical education as the

processes involving the study of technology and associated science, as well as the acquiring of practical abilities and expertise to identify and prepare individuals for employment in different areas of both social and economic life. TVET colleges are an integral part of the National Department of Higher Education and Training, providing tertiary education and training to students with the goal of preparing them for successful careers. These institutions specialize in vocational and occupational education and training, aiming to produce skilled workers in a variety of trades (Aina and Ogegbo, 2022:131). The courses offered at TVET colleges are fully accredited and subject to ongoing quality monitoring, with International Standard of Organisation (International Organisation for Standardisation) certification ensuring that international educational standards are met.

The TVET colleges operate under the governance of the Continuing Education Act, while universities are governed by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, which distinguishes their respective educational mandates. There is a total of fifty TVET colleges in South Africa, with the province of KwaZulu-Natal boasting nine institutions, including Coastal TVET College, Elangeni TVET College, Esayidi TVET College, Majuba TVET College, Mnambithi TVET College, Mthashana TVET College, Thekwini TVET College, Umfolozi TVET College and Umgungundlovu TVET College. According to Ramorola (2013:655), TVET institutions are crucial for South Africa's economic growth since they equip students with marketable skills that align with current industry trends. These institutions provide post-school vocational and technical courses, serving as an alternative for students who cannot access tertiary education or prefer practical learning methods ((Mbanga and Mtembu, 2020:158). Based on Mohd-Ishar, Wan-Derahman and Kamin (2020:47), through collaborating with industries and employers, TVET colleges ensure that their programs remain current and fulfil labour market demands, thereby making a positive contribution to the country's economy.

2.5 Impact of COVID-19 in higher and tertiary education

Job insecurity and the possible virus transmission caused by the pandemic eruption significantly affected higher education employees (Campion, Javed, Sartorius and Marmot, 2020:658). Several factors, increased distress and exacerbated mental health (Holmes et al., 2020:548). Academic and support staff's lives were in jeopardy as their liberties were restricted, teachings and face-to-face work were cancelled and the general economy entered a downward spiral (Le Grange, 2020:2). According to the Minister of Higher Education Blade Nzimande (2023:1), higher education institutions lost 89 members as a result of the virus. From the statistics, 53 deaths were from the universities, while 36 deaths were from TVET colleges. The universities lost 44 staff, TVET colleges lost 25 staff, and there were 20 deaths from students. Increased cases and deaths caused a threat to the public.

The unprecedented public virus resulted in significant loss and suffering in human lives since the start of the coronavirus (Schleicher, 2020:7). The rapid increase of infected people, combined with the pronounced effects of deceased severe cases, submerged academics and professionals in the institutions and created notable tension in the sector. The lockdown was applied to non-essential organisations immediately, including all higher education institutions and schools. The South African president declared to further extend the lockdown by 14 days on 9 April 2020. Hedding, Greve, Breetzke, Nel and van Vuuren (2020:2) affirm that COVID-19 affected every social and economic sector across higher education institutions in South Africa. Higher education staff members were affected in varying degrees and the effect of COVID-19 after the shock experienced will linger for a long time to come (McCorkle, 2020:4 and Kassim, Ayu, Kamu, Pang, Ho, Algristian, Sahri, Hambali and Omar, 2020:125).

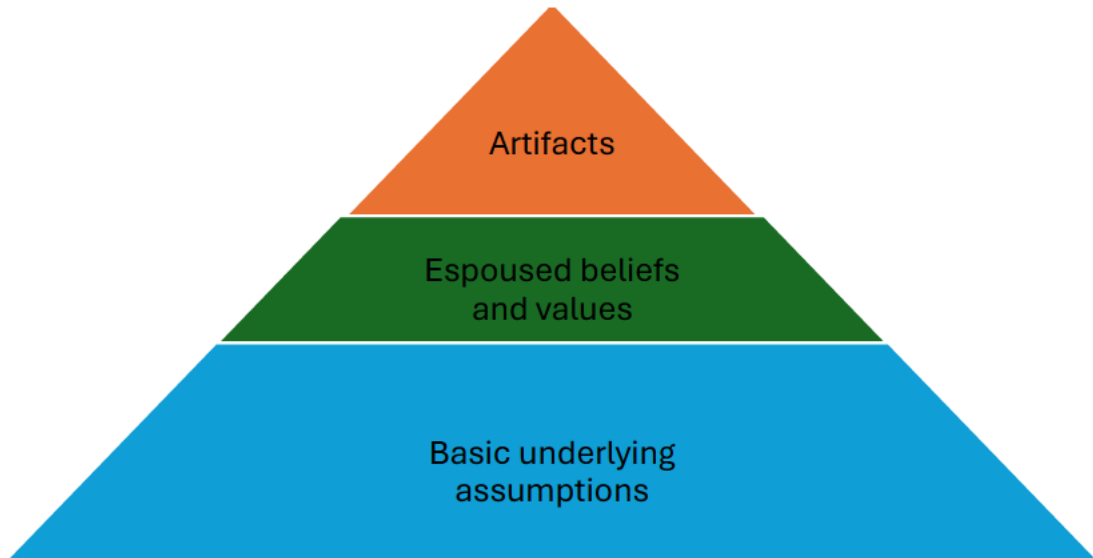
As a matter of course, institutions had to develop flexible and innovative ways to provide practical and theoretical elements to students in a bid to ensure continued education and learning. Higher education institutions implemented

online learning, which required educators to perform their duties remotely and learners to receive content through live streaming and other online means, such as emails (Muhuro and Kang'ethe, 2021:427). The post-COVID-19 era encouraged and fostered e-learning, as the management had the responsibility to communicate with their employees through technology or online, regardless of not being in the same office and required to build a solid relationship between employees, either academic or administration staff (McCorkle, 2020:4). This era has resulted in a challenging environment for human resources management which faces many unanticipated changes in the way work was performed, and ultimately changes in organisational culture.

2.6 Organisational culture as a concept

Yuksel (2019:164) states that culture is the result of the gradual emerging of communication structures, values, reports, regulations, laws, traditions, customs, and favoured behaviours and procedures. Response to change is a culture that emphasises stability and flexibility. Based on the reviewed literature, little emphasis has been accorded to OC, especially amongst the higher education industries. Thus, this research adds to change management literature. An organisation's culture is central to who they are, what they do, and how they do it. OC provides stability and commitment for employees and establishes output standards. Basically, it is critical to the company's operations as well as its success (Davis and Dolson, 2018:45). Artifacts, Espoused Beliefs and Values and Basic Underlying Assumptions are the three levels of culture, according to Taye et al. (2019:78). Each provides a valuable piece of what the members' shared values include. The three levels, according to Schein (2010:24), a leading author in the field of organisational culture, can be summarised as follows:

Figure 2.1: Three levels of organisational culture



Source: Schein (2010:24) Adapted

2.6.1 Demonstrating the three levels of organisational culture

Artifacts are the most visible structures and tangible aspect or observed behaviour of the organisation, which is entrenched in its language, dress code, rituals, myths and symbols (Asatiani, Hamalainen, Penttinen and Rossi, 2021:44). Any person who enters the company's physical environment can observe and identify artifacts (Figure 2.1). This level of culture is frequently overlooked as a component of culture, but it speaks volumes for itself. The physical structure of an office, for example, can reveal information about how the organisation functions and facilitates. Taye et al. (2019:79) emphasize that espoused beliefs and values are ideals, goals, aspirations, ideologies and rationalisations. Espoused beliefs and values indicate how the organization envisions itself as desirable (Figure 2.1). Values are a collection of stated norms and beliefs that explain why people act as they do. According to Schein (2010), values are visible because they are frequently formalised within an organisation and employees are acutely aware of them (Asatiani et al., 2021:44).

Furthermore, values are relatively simple to understand because they are demonstrated to communicate the core elements of the appropriate organisational culture formally. These have allowed organisational culture scholars to conduct extensive research on values. Although the significant conceptual framework predominates in organisational culture research, it has detractors. Furthermore, many researchers have wondered whether people genuinely share an organisation's declared values (Taye et al. 2019:79) and whether a meaningful monoculture is even desirable or possible within an organisation (Asatiani et al., 2021:45). The value-based approach to organisational culture seems to frequently ignore the possible conflicts between personal and organisation values (Davis and Dolson, 2018:45). Furthermore, the usefulness of proclaimed values as a determinant of personal behaviour has been questioned (Asatiani et al., 2021:44).

Finally, the degree of underlying assumptions has been inhabited by implicit, tacit organisational culture elements that guide employees' behaviour in an organisation (Asatiani et al., 2021:44). Basic underlying assumptions are unconscious values and beliefs that are taken for granted. However, according to Schein (2010), these assumptions populate a gap in the knowledge of the organisational culture that artifacts and proclaimed values cannot fill. In addition, underlying assumptions are the most difficult to study because they necessitate deep, prolonged immersion in an organisation. While Schein (2010) still focuses on underlying assumptions to clarify the disparity between proclaimed values and actual behaviour, the enigmatic essence of all those assumptions limits their explanatory power.

2.6.2 Mini-cultures in an organisation

Mini-cultures are cultures within the larger organisational culture that often develop within silos, divisions and departments (Taye et al. 2019:79). These cultures are micro-cultures, sub-cultures and macro-cultures that could also exist within the organisation. They emerge due to the various focuses and

priorities that each group has within their daily functions, and they can in instances result in a withdrawal or a lack of communication flow from outside communities. (Taye et al. 2019:79) further emphasise that to truly understand the various factors that keep the organisation rolling, leaders must distinguish between organisational culture and the culture of a sub-group. The group's climate can be identified as a result of the overall culture and current events. Significant organisational changes frequently have a direct impact on this. Culture determines what is acceptable regarding an organisation's external adaptation and internal integration problems (Schein, 2010:25).

Although many organisations today recognise and acknowledge the value of culture, most do not recognise the importance of creating an environment that fully complement of all employees while remaining functional. When used correctly, an organisation's culture can influence effectiveness. Getting help from specialists in the field would allow leaders to utilise a range of information about what appears to work and what might stymie efficiency. Taye et al. (2019:78) state that organisational culture has become a significant concern in the business sector for the last thirteen years. Therefore, there is an increase in the number of studies on organisational culture. Moreover, additional research is always required because humans are dynamic, and their beliefs and experiences change regularly. Often, organisational culture is the essential component that propels the organisation forward. It fosters an organisation's mission within which each employee endeavours to accomplish the company's objectives Taye et al. (2019:78).

Even though organisational culture is a commonly used term, evaluating its efficacy on the changing factors within an organisation appears to be ambiguous. To truly comprehend the term "culture", people must first comprehend the beliefs of those organisations' associates. Cultural sensitivity is critical for employees, stakeholders and the organisation. According to Davis and Dolson (2018:46), culture shapes what organisations consider to be a correct decision, what employees perceive as appropriate behaviour, and how

individuals engage with one another and the behaviour of the outside stakeholders towards the organisation. Furthermore, understanding organisational culture requires familiarity with all its components. Researchers have no consensus on what factors should be considered when studying organisational culture (Wambugu, 2014). To be clear, various researchers have employed and identified potential conceptual frameworks for studying organisational culture. Davis and Dolson (2018:46) further stated that researchers must consider which cultural concepts to employ when studying at a university or college. Tierney and Lanford (2018:4) consider the environment, mission, leadership, information, strategy and socialisation as critical concepts of higher education culture (Figure 2.2).

2.6.2.1 Cultural concepts in higher education institutions

Figure 2.2: Researcher's Construction-Critical concept of organisational culture



Source: Tierney and Lanford (2018:3)

Tierney and Lanford (2018:4) contend that the constructs mentioned above are utilised to define culture in an organisational context. However, how they occur, the facets they take, and their significance vary greatly. Maassen

(1996:153), on the other hand, criticised Tierney and Lanford for failing to actualise each cultural concept despite providing screening concerns to analyse each dimension of culture.

2.6.2.2 Environment

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2020) categorised the campus environment as psychosocial and physical. According to the WHO, a friendly, supportive and warm environment is vital in improving the psychosocial environment. Ventilation, furniture, protective equipment, lighting and many other items comprise the physical environment (Chandrasekar, 2011:32). The psychosocial work environment has resulted from a collaboration between the workplace and the employee. It is determined by an interaction between the workplace employees (Karlsson, Björklund and Jensen, 2012:3). Samson, Waiganjo and Koima (2015:76) affirm that psychosocial elements had been a cardinal factor in improving employee performance compared to the physical environment. As a result, the employee's performance impacts the organisation's success.

However, traditionally, one might consider the relationship between both the college campus and its surroundings first (Tierney and Lanford, 2018:2). The extent to which the institution's enrolment represents the demographics of the town's citizenry could provide crucial data about the institution's effect on and relationship with the society (Lanford and Tierney, 2016:158). The condition of the school's campuses could also shed light on its history. Some institutions have carefully located statues and inscriptions honouring August statistics, which may have set a positive light on the institution as esteemed alumnus or given back to their organisation through cash contributions and extended tenure. Lanford and Tierney 2016:158) further state that an institution that is deemed to be transgressive and innovative in contrast may purposefully avoid Gothic-style architecture in favour of modern structures that proudly display new technological investments or imitate the type of work environment that graduates will eventually occupy one day. Organisational environment refers

to the psychosocial environment (Tierney and Lanford, 2018:2). A geographic radius no longer defines the environment. However, the institution must still incorporate its members into its culture (Tierney and Lanford, 2018:2). Presently, intranational and international employee, student and faculty flow shape the institutional environment, just as much as campus location.

2.6.2.3 Mission

Tierney and Lanford (2018:3) state that vision and mission statements have long been recognised as fundamental to planned and strategic leadership for all types of organisations. Likewise, the mission statement's ability to direct behaviour in an institution acts as a strategic instrument. Tierney and Lanford (2018:3) further state that vision and mission statements impact strategy and most elements of an organisation's performance. The study has illustrated these institutional statements' positive and negative impact on the organisational culture (Fayad, 2011:3). Trudel (2019:3), on the other hand, acknowledges organisational mission as a dimension to understanding organisational culture. Tierney proposes a set of assessment questions to evaluate organisational purpose as a facet of culture, namely: How is the mission defined? How is it expressed? Is it employed to make decisions? How often do missions and practices happen? Such questions are vital when researching vision and mission statements. Tierney and Lanford (2018:3) state that mission statements are significant for colleges and universities so that they can verify how resources will be distributed; and which areas of the organisation should be given priority. The mission statement may only be effective if it is frequently articulated or is uncertain, and institutional preferences may well be disputed by different actors.

2.6.2.4 Leadership

Although it may appear that leadership is the most evident component of institutional culture, leadership is actually a very complex idea, particularly in relation to higher education. A university's chancellor or vice chancellor may be cited by all as examples of personal "leaders" (Tierney and Lanford,

2018:5). However, directors or department chairs who benefit from increased credibility as instructors in the departments they oversee may be the leaders who on occasion have the most noticeable influence on institutional procedures. Institutions can have varied expectations for different levels of leadership. In addition, every institution has "informal" leaders who do not occupy a formal leadership role but are nonetheless regarded as trustworthy persons who speak for others in critical positions (Tierney and Lanford, 2016:24). In order to contextualise the strategic decisions that affect higher education institutions, a detailed investigation of institutional culture investigates the expectations that people have of leadership, the multidimensional nature of leadership, and the acknowledged "formal" and "informal" leaders.

2.6.2.5 Information

Tierney and Lanford (2018:4) propose three diagnostic questions to test knowledge as a dimension of organisational culture, namely: Who has it? how is it spread? and What is information? A few scholars refer to this dimension specifically as information culture (Brown, 1990; Choo, Bergeron, Detlor and Heaton, 2008:792). Choo (2013:776) defines information culture as the assumptions, values and norms that people have about creating, sharing and using information as a dimension of organisational culture. He observes that it will have an impact on organisational behaviour and efficiency. However, the concept of information culture is open to various interpretations. Tierney and Lanford (2018:4) provide a way of information dissemination, as well as the ones that have information at the university sample case in this study. Even though information is introduced as a simple concept, it is subject to the same complex set of factors as the various ones described in words.

Similar to socialisation, three approaches can advise comprehending information throughout the organisational framework. An excellent place to start is to inquire about what constitutes information within an institution. In this day and age of email, Twitter feeds and many social media outlets, individuals

are frequently bombarded with "pressing" messages and at times questionable information. Consequently, the process by which people evaluate who has valuable information becomes a preliminary topic of inquiry. The effectiveness of distributed data can be evaluated by establishing what vital information is and who has it. College public representatives regularly provide information about their institutions through formal documents and speeches. However, as higher education institutions embrace neo-liberal viewpoints and company culture practices (Kirp 2003:1; Slaughter, 1997:7), communications and marketing agencies have increasingly become introductory creators and disseminators of information that can advise an assessment of institutional culture (Olssen and Peters, 2005:313).

Therefore, such departments are excellent in defining and disseminating organisational identities. Higher education has traditionally been regarded as a sector of flexible institutions that are not just inward-looking but also resistant to change (Stensaker 2015:103). Amidst state governments demanding greater accountability and efficiency from higher education, many institutions have been forced to take control of their public personae, implement reforms and publicly disclose identified strengths whilst competing for limited resources. However, another active area of institutional culture research is branding efforts, which represents a deliberate attempt to influence public perceptions, and which regularly elicits resistance within the institution (Tierney and Lanford 2018:5).

2.6.2.6 Strategy

Groysberg, Lee, Price and Cheng (2018:44) emphasise that strategy clarifies and focuses on collective action and decision-making. It mobilises employees through plans and sets of choices frequently enforced by concrete rewards for achieving goals, and consequences for failing to do so. Furthermore, it should also include adaptive components that would inspect and evaluate the external environment and detect when changes are needed to ensure consistency and expansion. Groysberg et al. (2018:44) further state that leadership and

strategy formation go hand in hand and most leaders understand the principles. On the other hand, culture is more difficult to manipulate because a significant portion of it is based on mindset, social patterns and unstated behaviours. Taye et al. (2019:81) define strategy as a plan that discusses what an organisation suggests doing to achieve a stated mission.

Taye et al. (2019:81) further point to the significance of an efficient strategy formulation process in allowing an organisation to accumulate strategies and solutions to support its strategic position. Skøien (2014:3) contends that most organisational strategies focus on strategy formulation processes, but not much on how employees perceive the strategy and strategy formulation processes. People's perceptions of reality, however, have a more significant influence on their behaviour than reality itself (Phasinsaksith, 2014:4). This thus indicates that employees' perspectives on the strategy and its methodology procedures significantly influence the actions of the actors. To that end, Lucian and Remes (2018:77) suggest adopting a cultural perspective on strategy to comprehend organisational strategy and consider strategy as a cultural manifestation. Several organisational culture scholars, like Trudel (2019:3), view strategy as a dimension of organisational culture and advise researchers to look into the public's views on how decisions are made, which approach is used, and who makes the decisions.

According to Tierney and Lanford (2018:5), when combined, the six concepts (mission, environment, socialisation, information, strategy and leadership) that have been thoroughly discussed herein create a clear and possibly helpful framework for comprehending institutional culture. As one might expect, there is a gradual change in the way a term is used. For example, the definition of the environment in the twenty-first century differs greatly from that of the 1980s, as already mentioned. Social media is used in a way that was unheard of a generation previously to help students become accustomed to the organisation's values. However, the terms themselves continue to be

fundamentally important. Moreover, this framework's usefulness requires that higher education institutions be understood as social constructs.

2.6.2.7 Socialisation

Organisations possess their methods of operation, which must be introduced to new arrivals. Arnett (2015:86) defines social behaviour as assisting employees in becoming representatives of a socio-cultural group to become familiar with how things work within that social group and contribute to the group's success. Organisational socialisation is a strategy for new workers to gain organisational skills and knowledge, as well as a process for new employees to learn about the norms and responsibilities required to work within an organisation or a group (Njegovan & Kostic, 2014:35). Socialisation in the workplace creates a never-ending procedure of attributing observations and behaviour, in which knowledge is generated through the transformation of experiences. This procedure unfolds through the pre-entry, confrontation and transformation stages in which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills required to assume an organisational role. Therefore, organisational socialisation assists new arrivals in adjusting to their work teams, new projects and organisations. Organisational researchers are placing greater emphasis on organisational socialisation.

Gruman and Saks (2018:112) assert that a renewed interest in organisational learning has resulted in more published studies than in the past. Trudel (2019:3) contends that socialisation must therefore be studied as one dimension of organisational culture and suggests following questions: how do new employees become networked? How is socialising articulated? Moreover, what is required to understand and sustain within the organisation? The six terms described in greater detail here, namely mission, environment, socialisation, information, strategy and leadership, are combined to form a comprehensible and potentially helpful framework to understand the organisation's culture, as one might expect how a term used evolves. As previously stated, the environment of the twenty-first century is defined in a

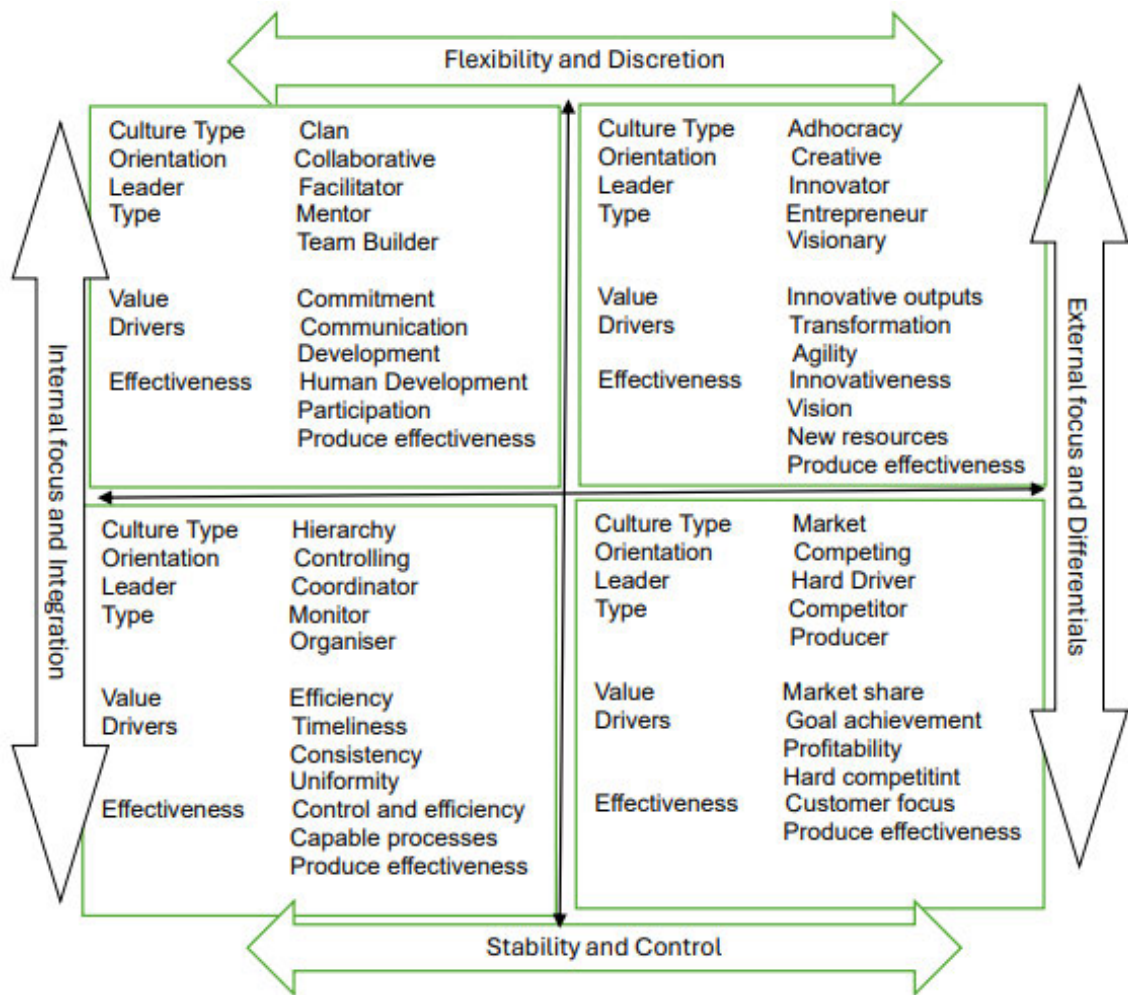
very different way than that of the 1980s. How academics are socially conditioned to the organisation's social norms involves social media in ways that were not available a generation ago. Nonetheless, the terms collectively continue to be crucial. However, the framework's applicability is contingent on a perspective of higher education institutions as institutionalised.

2.6.3 Dimensions of culture

A distinguishing quality of an organisation consists of a foundational set of assumptions that have been accepted by the company due to its historical success and are indicative of its organisational culture. These are upheld by ongoing human interaction, which takes the form of attitudes and behaviours (Martins and Terblanche, 2003:65). These behaviours and attitudes are all a component of the corporate culture, as are beliefs, values and emotions (Hellriegel and Ward, 1998:179). Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier (2023:2) emphasise that Schein contributed to an entire generation of scholars with his theory that OC is a phenomenon divided into three levels: artefacts, values and norms, and basic beliefs. These models are the most used and cited. Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier (2023:2) further highlight that OC has many dimensions that are used by researchers. In addition to the model's critical dimensions are internal vs external focus, and flexibility vs control. The terms clan culture, hierarchy culture, adhocracy culture and market culture refer to more forms of culture that the authors have identified (Figure 2.3).

2.6.3.1 Four forms of culture

Figure 2.3: Forms of Culture



Source: Cameron and Quinn (2006:35)

The attribute of a clan culture includes co-operative thinking, a welcoming work atmosphere and shared values and objectives (Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier, 2023:2). It is not as much a corporate entity as an extended family. There is a solid dedication to the organisation (Figure 2.3). The advantages of personal growth and clients are viewed as collaborators. In the organisation, cooperation, consensus-building and teamwork are valued highly. According to Haffar, Al-Karaghoul, Djebarni, Al-Hyari, Gbadamosi, Oster, Alaya and Ahmed (2023:3), members of organisations believe that they gain much by actively participating in the change process in institutions where group culture

is dominant. Similarly, Snape and Redman (2010:163) believe that training is one of the most critical human resources (HR) activities that workers respect since it shows that the company intends to make long-term investments in them. Accordingly, this study suggests that workers in companies with a group culture are likelier to exhibit high levels of preparedness for change. According to Neubert and Cady (2001:34), these companies provide their workers with increased job autonomy and opportunities for decision-making in a collaborative setting. In addition, employees in these kinds of organisations are urged to express their viewpoints and thoughts to reach pertinent consensus (Shum, Bove and Auh 2008:1346).

Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier (2023:2) The adhocracy culture has a vibrant, creative and entrepreneurial atmosphere. Individuals are risk-takers and managers are creative and imaginative visionaries. The organisation comes together via experimentation and innovative approaches. Moreover, being a leader in the industry and creating innovative products are prioritised. Profitability is viewed whereby innovation and the capacity to adjust in a changing environment and the organisation's performance is assessed in this regard. The primary responsibility of managers is to foster personal initiative and inventiveness. An adhocracy culture in organisations fosters individual creativity, which increases the effectiveness of the company (Dextras-Gauthier and March 2016:156 and Hartnell, OU and Kinicki. 2011:677). Likewise, companies with an adhocracy culture are thought of as being varied innovative work environments that embrace adaptability and change. All employees are encouraged to take the lead on change-related issues, and constructive criticism is welcomed along with mistakes (Olafsen, Nilsen, Smedsrud and Kamaric, 2021:180).

A results-driven organisation's competitive and goal-focused environment is reflected in its market culture (Mikušová, Klabusayová and Meier, 2023:2). Gaining market share defines success and a win-orientation unites the organisation. Competition receives long-term attention and intense

competition is prevalent. According to authors like Cameron and Quinn (1999:32) and Zammuto and O'Connor (1992:701), organisations with a market culture prioritise meeting deadlines and increasing profits over the welfare and morale of their workforce. As a result, workers at these kinds of establishments typically show less willingness to adapt. Any attempt at change or transformation should have the ability to benefit companies and their employees, according to the notion of organisational fairness (Luo, Cheng and Zhang, 2016:649). In most cases, this is different in businesses where the attitude is results oriented. According to studies, workers in these kinds of organisations are likely to view any changes as beneficial to the management of their respective companies.

A hierarchical culture has formal rules that are the uniting factor which emphasises procedures and regulations in an organised and formalised work environment. The organisation's seamless operation is paramount. Efficiency and stability are the desired outcomes. Reliability in delivery, timely completion of tasks and economical expenses characterise success. Ensuring employee security is the primary goal of employee management. According to Haffar et al. (2023:3), personnel at HEIs with a hierarchical culture are not encouraged to be innovative or creative. Furthermore, stability and strict regulations are prioritised in these establishments. Therefore, employees in these companies are more prone to shy away from taking chances and show a lack of commitment to and readiness for change.

2.7 Factors influencing a change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about various changes in the world, including the way in which organisations function (Landa, Zhou and Marongwe, 2021:169). The post-COVID-19 era presents organizations with a unique opportunity to redefine and strengthen their cultures in response to the various factors that have been affected by the pandemic, including work patterns, employee needs, technological advancements and market dynamics

(Haffar, et al., 2023:113). The recognition of and adapting to these influencing factors means that organizations can cultivate cultures that are resilient, agile and sustainable in the post-pandemic period.

2.7.1 New working models

In the aftermath of the pandemic, several factors have influenced the culture of organisations, one of which is the shift towards remote and hybrid work models (Zhu and Liu, 2020:697). This has led to a need for organisations to re-evaluate their norms and values to accommodate a more dispersed workforce (Dube 2020:138). Before the pandemic, the traditional working model was being used more than any other working model in South African organisations, including those in the higher and tertiary educational sector. The measures by governments to curb the spread of the virus, such as national lockdowns which coerced many businesses to close their business, influenced the switch towards remote and hybrid working models. To achieve this, Zhu, Wei and Niu (2020:3) posits that organisations promoted digital collaboration tools; fostered a culture of trust and accountability; and redefined performance expectations to align with remote work realities. Organisations had to change their traditional cultural norms and embrace the new norms required to effectively work in the digital world. In addition, Dube (2020:138) explains that in so doing, organisations ensure that their cultures remain strong despite the change in the work environment. Studies confirmed that the pandemic intensified the adoption of alternative working arrangements in higher education, which is still in the headlines in the post-pandemic period (Kabir, Islam and Deena, 2020:88; Shams, Niazi, Gul, Mei and Khan, 2022:783; and Dube, 2020: 138).

2.7.2 Employee wellbeing and mental health

Another factor that has influenced organisational culture change in the post-pandemic era is employee well-being and mental health (Jandric, Knox, Besley, Ryberg, Suoranta and Hayes, 2018:893). The pandemic has brought to light the importance of supporting employees in all aspects of their well-

being, including physical, mental and emotional health. The pandemic extremely impacted academic staff emotionally and mentally, considering the pressure and strains brought by the sudden change of life. There has been an unparalleled amount of anxiety and stress due to uncertainty of the future demands related to remote working and time management challenges (Budiharso and Tarman 2020:99). Therefore, organisations can prioritise initiatives that promote work-life balance, address burnout and enhance resilience in order to create a culture that values employee well-being, which can lead to higher morale, productivity and engagement amongst employees (Grant, 2021:6). In addition, there is a blurring of boundaries between work and personal life in the new working models, such as remote and hybrid settings. Consequently, some organisations had to implement policies and practices that support a healthy work-life balance. This focus on employee well-being has led to a more empathetic and supportive organisational culture, where leaders are more attuned to the needs of their employees, teams and departments (Jandric, et al., 2018:893).

2.7.3 Digital transformation

The accelerated pace of digital transformation during the pandemic has also played a significant role in driving organisational culture change (Kort and Chipunza, 2020:1). There was sudden technological implementation as organisations attempted to eliminate or significantly restrict social contact to slow the coronavirus's spread. The global epidemic obligated employers to adopt many digital and automated answers quickly. Since the rate of technological progression is faster than ever before, the need to train and re-skill employees has become a subject of either success or failure. In the wave to digitalise, some parts of the traditional culture are being replaced by new digitally enhanced parts, such as boardroom meetings being replaced by Zoom meetings, and more frequent use of online means of communication. Organisations that have undergone rapid technological advancements or digitalisation may need to foster a culture that embraces innovation, agility and continuous learning, as asserted by Grant (2021:6). Hence, organisations

must promote a growth mindset, encouraging experimentation and risk-taking, and empowering employees to adapt to evolving technologies and digital tools (Wang, Liu, Qian and Parker, 2020:3).

2.7.4 Availability of resources

Landa, Zhou and Marongwe (2021:169) emphasise that resource availability was amongst the factors that facilitated organisational culture change in the wake of the pandemic in higher education institutions. The pandemic was the main actor that coerced the laggards to finally adopt learning technology in the education sector, such as the Learning Management Systems (LMS), Blackboard and Moodle, amongst others. Therefore, institutions with resources easily provided their staff with the computers and software that they required to communicate with their teams and perform their duties. However, poor institutions are still vulnerable in such emergencies and access to technology for purposes other than basic survival and obtaining essential information is a luxury (Wang, et al.,2020:3).

2.7.5 Agility and adaptation

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the significance of agility and adaptability in the face of unpredictability. Organisations that were capable of swiftly adjusting and responding to fluctuating market conditions were better equipped to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic (Haffar, et al., 2023:113). This emphasis on agility has permeated organisational cultures, resulting in a greater inclination to experiment, take calculated risks and innovate. One essential aspect of agility is the willingness to experiment and take risks. Organisations that encourage a culture of innovation empower employees to explore new ideas and approaches, fostering a spirit of creativity and entrepreneurship. Agile organisations prioritize continuous learning and development by investing in upskilling and re-skilling their workforce to ensure that employees possess the necessary skills and competencies to navigate evolving business landscapes (Azman and Abdullah, 2021:77). This emphasis on learning not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to

the overall agility and adaptability of the organisation. Another critical element of agility is the capacity to collaborate and communicate effectively across various teams and functions. Cross-functional collaboration enables organisations to break down silos, streamline processes, and make faster decisions. Through fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration, companies can leverage the diverse perspectives and expertise of their workforce to drive innovation and problem-solving (Suorsa and Eskilsson, 2014:94).

2.7.6 Leadership communication

Effective communication is crucial for cultural transformation within organisations, especially in the post-COVID landscape. Transparency builds trust and credibility, while empathy fosters understanding and inclusivity (Gurukkal, 2020:2). In the post-pandemic period, clarity and consistency in communication in organisations promote collaboration and engagement through two-way communication. A clear vision and purpose can inspire employees and align their efforts with the desired change, which aligns with the organisational mission. Leaders must also demonstrate adaptability and resilience, adjusting their communication approach to changing circumstances and instilling confidence in the organization. During the pandemic, leaders had to communicate by modelling desired behaviours, celebrating successes and learning from failures. Thus, leaders can shape a positive culture that embraces change, fosters employee engagement, and drives continuous improvement (Roddy, Amiet, Chung, Holt, Shaw, McKenzie, Garivaldis, Lodge and Mundy, 2017:59).

2.8 Challenges associated with the change of organisational culture in the post-pandemic Period

Covid-19 brought inevitable changes for many organisations, including those in higher and tertiary education. These changes were not planned or expected by most organisations, which caused many challenges in their operational procedures and systems (Kort and Chipunza, 2020:4).

2.8.1 Managing remote and hybrid working models

During the pandemic, most organisations had no option than to adopt the usage of virtual, remote and hybrid working models to adhere to the safety standards on social distancing in order to curb the spread of the pandemic and to keep operating (Kort and Chipunza, 2020:4). Nyberg, Shaw and Zhu (2021:1967) state that managing a virtual and remote employee is very challenging in tracking the employees, the tasks at hand, challenges being faced and assistance they require. In addition, Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021:189) concur that remote and hybrid working models require less direct supervision and most employees had been failing to cope with this. According to Davis (2021:2), remote workers may need more long-term vision and motivation. However, being in the office presence and surrounded by the career-driven power of passionate and ambitious peers rubs away and may encourage co-workers to be far more motivated and productive. On the other hand, working from home depletes this energy and certain employees might need to be more motivated, active and productive.

2.8.2 Digital skills and competencies

The pandemic was the catalyst that enhanced the fourth industrial revolution amongst various organisations around the globe (Nyberg, Cragun and Schepker, 2020:174). The COVID-19 pandemic contributed significantly to the adoption of technological means of doing work in organisations, especially in higher education with the introduction of Zoom classrooms, Microsoft Teams classrooms and many other systems which demanded digital savviness and skills from employees. Bennett, Campion, Keeler and Keener (2021:330) state that numerous employees in organisations did not have the technological abilities they needed to work effectively from the old systems to the new systems that introduced and kept being used in post pandemic. Due to this this lack of digital skills, most organisations faced difficulties in transitioning from the old cultures and ways of doing things to embrace the new culture of having virtual meetings, delivering files online and having shared working projects

online. In addition, the digitalisation and upgrade of the systems to meet the new digital era in the post-pandemic period with limited digital skills and competencies from employees poses cyber-attacks and threats to organisations (Lindner, Winkler and Keil, 2021:1).

2.8.3 Communication and collaboration

Communication and collaboration amongst employees in different groups, teams and department in the organisation is very important for effectiveness and efficiency (Shepherd, Ployhart and Kautz, 2020:1328). The adoption of virtual, remote and hybrid working arrangements has proven to pose a challenge regarding this aspect. Effective communication is essential for driving culture change, but the remote work environment can create barriers to clear and timely communication, which leads to misunderstandings, information gaps and feelings of isolation that can hinder efforts to align employees around new cultural norms and values (Collings, McMackin, Nyberg and Wright, 2021:1378). Communication is crucial, and clear communication becomes even more complicated when employees work remotely. In addition, when starting in a virtual environment, staff members might experience more significant challenges in adjusting to the organisation and developing the abilities and getting used to the procedures specific to the organisation (Gilson, Maynard, Jones Young, Vartiainen and Hakonene, 2015:134). The transition from old to new systems, procedures and systems required and still need communication to solidify the new culture in employees. Furthermore, in the highly digitalised and virtualised working environment, organisations face challenges in communicating and instilling organisational culture in new arrivals (Verburg, Erb, Mertz and Espindola, 2013:433). In addition, in the post-pandemic period, there is a thin boundary between work and private life, hence work-related communication can cause work-life conflict on employees (Collings, et al., 2021:1378).

2.8.4 Infrastructure, systems and equipment

Organisational culture transition needs to be supported by the necessary resources, such as systems in place, equipment and the infrastructure to accommodate the change (Azman and Abdullah, 2021:79). The pandemic caught the world and organisations by surprise, without any notification, and organisations had to act with few and less resources at their disposal. The adoption of so-called digital virtual working spaces demanded new skills, suitable home offices, equipment and reliable internet from employees, which most did not have (Landa, Zhou and Marongwe, 2021:169). In addition, organisations struggle to assess and maintain cultural fit as they adapt to new ways of working and respond to changing market conditions. Ensuring that employees continue to embody and uphold the desired values, beliefs and behaviours of the organizational culture can be a significant challenge (Dube, 2020:138).

2.8.5 Resistance to change

Khatter, Bhatia and Rathore (2019:235) state that one challenge that organisations face when implementing change is resistance from the employees, who must be the agents and enablers of change. During and after the pandemic, employees were subjected to remote and virtual work, which have a thin line between work and private life, leading to resistance to old ways (Brooks, 2022:1). Academic staff preferring the delivery of content through traditional in-class presentation because they believed that it is the best method and lack digital skills made an online approach very difficult for them. In addition, employees who were used to socialisation during tea and lunch breaks before the pandemic find it very challenging to keep on working in isolation with limited physical interaction with their colleagues (Nzuva, and Kimanzi, 2022:42). Several studies confirm that resistance to change is the biggest barrier that organisation faces when transitioning from old to new desired cultures (Nzuva, and Kimanzi, 2022:42; Khatter, Bhatia and Rathore, 2019:235; and Brooks, 2022:1).

2.8.6 Challenges of remote and hybrid working setups

According to Kort and Chipunza (2020:5), the hazy distinction between professional and private lives is a challenge because there is no geographical separation between working and private space. Ideally, the place should be where employees feel relaxed, safe and secure. Employees working online may need to remember their tasks and meet work deadlines. Janza (2021:1) states that some employees who work remotely have stated that they are never off the clock. Therefore, they constantly check emails or complete 'just one more thing'. In contrast, some remote workers may find it difficult to switch off and relax, whereas others may continue to work. Distractions are another challenge identified by Nyberg, Shaw and Zhu (2021:1967). Employees may have a plan or a place to work, but staying productive throughout the workday can be difficult due to unforeseen or unintentional interruptions. Interruptions in the home can include watching television, reading favourite books, washing dishes, doing laundry, childcare obligations, and much more. Background noise discontinuing headphones can aid in avoiding auditory distractions and thus should be considered.

Employees must establish and sustain a solid boundary between their professional and personal lives. Working from home, time should be respected in the same way that it is respected at the office. Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021:189) identify reduced direction and supervision as challenging for some remote employees. Many workers at the workplace express frustration about their managers' supervision and direction. Managers direct employees on what should be done, including deadlines, tasks and everyday job duties. Managers must provide effective feedback to employees on their progress and job execution through direction and supervision. Employees who work from home need more direction and supervision, impacting their job performance. According to Parker, Knight and Keller (2020:3), 29% of executives question whether their staff members have the expertise needed to perform their duties from home. In comparison, 27% believe that their staff members need more essential skills to perform their tasks from home effectively. Male managers

also turned out to be more anxious than female managers. Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021:189) assert that social seclusion is a problem that needs to be addressed. People are social creatures who require interaction with others.

On the other hand, working from home eliminates the social elements of the day of work, which may lead to psychological frustrations or loneliness. Remote work can be made more interactive with technology such as Zoom. However, it cannot replace meetings in person. Working in pyjamas is an inconvenience that many remote employees overlook. Working in pyjamas is convenient for many staff members because it eliminates the need to get up promptly and dress for work. According to Davis (2021:2), remote workers may need more long-term vision and motivation. However, being in the office presence and surrounded by the career-driven power of passionate and ambitious peers rubs off and may encourage co-workers to be far more motivated and productive. On the other hand, working from home depletes this energy and certain employees might need to be more motivated, active and productive.

2.9 Theoretical framework

This study was underpinned by Edgar Schein's Organisational Culture Model, Kurt Lewin's Model and the ADKAR Model, which provided comprehension on the culture change induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The theories complement each other in accomplishing the research objectives.

2.9.1 Edgar Schein's organisational culture model

Edgar Schein's Model of Organisational Culture offers a valuable perspective for comprehending how organisational culture evolves in response to external disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Schein identifies three tiers of organisational culture, namely artefacts and behaviours, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions (Shi, et al., 2020:426).

Artefacts and Behaviours: This level signifies the perceptible expressions of culture, which include the physical environment, dress code, rituals and

communication styles within an organisation. Ahorsu (2020:4) posits that with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations were constrained to shift operations to remote work, adopt virtual communication tools and execute safety protocols to safeguard employees' health. These changes in artefacts and behaviours represent the prompt adaptations undertaken by organisations to address the crisis.

Espoused Values: The following level of culture entails the expressed beliefs, objectives and philosophies that inform decision-making and behaviour within the organisation. During the pandemic, Njegovan and Kostic (2014:35) state that numerous organisations prioritized values such as employee well-being, agility and innovation in response to the exceptional challenges posed by COVID-19. Leaders propagated these values to the workforce to inspire resilience, co-operation and adaptability in navigating the crisis.

Basic Underlying Assumptions: At the core, organisational culture is formed by unconscious beliefs, practices and expectations that govern the way things are carried out within the organisation (Shi, et al., 2020:426). The COVID-19 pandemic has put to the test many fundamental assumptions concerning work, leadership and organisational resilience. In the aftermath of the pandemic, organisations must re-evaluate and potentially transform their basic assumptions to align with the new realities of a post-pandemic world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated significant cultural adjustments across all three levels of Schein's model for organisations. Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on artefacts, espoused values and underlying assumptions, organisations can proactively manage cultural change; encourage employee engagement; and build a resilient organisational culture capable of prospering in times of uncertainty and change (Gruman and Saks, 2018:112).

2.9.2 Kurt Lewin's model

Kurt Lewin's model of organisational change provides a valuable framework for understanding and implementing culture change in the post-COVID-19 period. The model consists of three key stages: unfreezing, change and refreezing. In the context of post-pandemic organisational culture change, these stages can be applied to effectively navigate the complexities and challenges associated with adapting to the new normal (Hussain, Lei, Akram, Haider, Hussain and Ali, 2018:124).

The unfreezing stage involves preparing employees and the organisation for change by creating awareness of the need for cultural transformation (Bachynsky, 2020:60). In the post-COVID-19 period, organisations need to initiate discussions, communicate openly and engage stakeholders in understanding how the pandemic has impacted the existing culture (Hussain, 2018:123). This could involve acknowledging the challenges faced, reflecting on lessons learned, and highlighting the benefits of adapting the culture to align with the post-pandemic environment through creating a sense of urgency and readiness for change, which can lay the foundation for successful cultural transformation.

Yong, Yusliza, Ramayah, Chiappetta Jabbour, Sehnem and Mani (2020:212) state that the change stage focuses on implementing new behaviours, values and norms that reflect the desired cultural shift. In the post-COVID-19 period, organisations may need to redefine their cultural practices to support remote work, well-being initiatives, digital transformation, and customer-centric strategies. This could involve introducing new policies, processes and initiatives that promote collaboration, empathy, adaptability and innovation. In addition, Hussain, et al. (2018:128) posit that the involvement of employees in co-creating the new culture, providing training and support and demonstrating leadership commitment to change enables an organisation to facilitate a smooth transition towards a culture that is aligned with the evolving post-pandemic landscape.

The refreezing stage involves reinforcing and institutionalising the new cultural norms and behaviours to sustain the change over time (Sapta, Muafi and Setini, 2021:495). In the post-COVID-19 period, organisations need to embed the new cultural elements into everyday practices, systems and structures to ensure long-term adoption and impact. This could involve aligning performance management, rewards, recognition and communication mechanisms with the desired cultural traits. In addition, Sapta et al. (2021:495) state that through continuously monitoring progress, soliciting feedback and celebrating successes, organisations can solidify cultural change and create a lasting impact on employee engagement, performance and organisational outcomes. Kurt Lewin's model offers a systematic approach to managing organisational culture change in the post-COVID-19 period. Through the application of the principles of unfreezing, change and refreezing, organisations can navigate the complexities of cultural transformation, engage employees in the process and create a culture that is resilient, adaptive and aligned with the demands of the new normal. Through effective leadership, communication and support, organisations can leverage Lewin's model to drive positive cultural change and achieve sustainable success in the post-pandemic period.

2.9.3 Awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement (ADKAR) model

The model for behavioural change in response to organisational culture in the post-pandemic era can be comprehended through the lens of change management and organisational psychology. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated organisations to adapt and evolve to survive and succeed in the new normal. This has resulted in a significant shift in employee behaviour and organisational culture (Olson, et al., 2020:1). ADKAR is a goal-oriented change management model that enables change management teams to concentrate their efforts on specific business outcomes. Initially, the model was employed as a tool to determine whether change management activities

were producing the desired results during organisational change. The goals or outcomes defined by ADKAR are sequential and cumulative, meaning that an individual must obtain each element in sequence for a change to be implemented and sustained. The five key goals that form the basis of the ADKAR model are shown in Figure 2.4 below. These goals include awareness of the need to change; desire to participate and support the change; knowledge of how to change; ability to implement the change on a day-to-day basis; and reinforcement to keep the change in place. In the context of organisational culture, this model can be applied to discern how employees are adjusting to the changes brought about by the pandemic (Al-Qahtani, 2010:136). Al-Qahtani (2010:3) reiterates that eliminating undesired or unsafe behaviour requires managing five key phases that form the basis of the ADKAR model:

Figure 2.4: The ADKAR Model



Source: Al-Qahtani (2010:3)

Awareness: The initial step in behavioural shift is ensuring that employees are cognisant of the need for change (Figure 2.4). This involves imparting knowledge about the impact of the pandemic on the organisation and the importance of adapting to the new reality. Awareness also includes information about the internal and external drivers that created the need for such behavioural change (Al-Qahtani, 2010:3).

Desire: Once employees are aware of the need for change, they must possess the desire to change. This could involve instilling a sense of urgency and motivation amongst employees to embrace the new ways of working.

Knowledge: Employees require the knowledge and skills to adapt to the changes brought about by the pandemic. This could involve providing training and resources to aid employees in developing the necessary skills.

Ability: Even with the knowledge and skills, employees must possess the ability to implement the changes. This involve providing the necessary tools and support to help employees successfully transition to the new ways of working.

Reinforcement: Finally, it is crucial to reinforce the new behaviours and values that are aligned with the post-pandemic organisational culture. This involve recognising and rewarding employees who exhibit the desired behaviours and values.

This model provides organisations with effective steps that can enable them to effectively navigate the shifts brought about by the pandemic and cultivate a resilient and adaptable culture that can confront future challenges.

2.10 Empirical review on organisational culture change in the post-COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has affected many organisations, industries and sectors in different countries and regions making change in culture, policies, and operations an inevitable quest for many. Fayed and Cummings (2021:978) confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the acceptance of change and challenges in the businesses and educational institutions. The changes in the environment compelled organisations to change and adjust their organisational culture to ensure coherence with the pandemic induced change. Therefore, several studies have been conducted on the impact of

COVID-19 on various organisational dimensions including culture and its legacy in the post pandemic phase. One such study is of Pinzaru, Zbucea and Anghel (2020:721) who determined the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on business and found that COVID-19 has enhanced the need for organisations to emphasise agile resistance, redesigns of work processes, and the acceleration of the adoption of digitalisation in the workplace. In support a study by Rasli, Tee, Lai, Tiu and Soon (2022:992) on post COVID-19 strategies for higher education dealing with unknown and uncertainties concurs that resilience, digitalisation, adoption online learning, curriculum change, flexibility, and sustainability are major dimensions that are now incorporated in the organisational culture in the post pandemic period.

In the same context, another study acknowledged that COVID-19 has disrupted the working culture in the higher education institutions and accelerated the embracement of digital transformation through digital organisational culture which requires cross functional digital leadership, digital data management, digitalisation, flexibility and continuous digital skills learning (Teguh, Noermijati, and Moko, 2022:38; Chiramba and Maringe, 2022:39). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Ndelu and Utete (2023:34) on organisational culture of South African higher education in the post pandemic period and found that hybrid working is the new culture adopted by most higher and tertiary education institutions in post COVID-19 pandemic period although physical working is dominant in this combination. The study by Nyamunda (2022:198) confirms that majority of the organisations has changed their working policies and process, and new norms are coming with the newly adopted changes. The study by Muller, et al., (2023:113) echoed the same sentiments that COVID-19 caused changes in the routines and culture with flexible working hours emerging as long-term working models which have been embedded in organisational culture. Trigan, Mannan, Uddin (2022:1) further find that flexible working arrangements which requires strong communication and collaboration are the future of organisational design in the post pandemic

period and individuals need to embrace the change in the organisational culture.

2.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has delved into how COVID-19 has abruptly shaken the Higher Education Institution sector globally, including South Africa. The inevitable changes in operations and ways of doing business in various sectors and industries causes some of the components of organisational culture to change overnight. This sudden change brought challenges into the sector whereby traditional face-to-face work had to change into online work. Presently, a hybrid strategy took over. Adopting a new culture in the post-COVID-19 has brought about a deep concern regarding accessibility and availability of resources mainly in disadvantaged institutions like TVET colleges. Some academics and professional staff in higher education institutions still find it difficult to revert to the traditional face-to-face structure. In the post-COVID-19 period, hybrid working has been adopted, which changes the whole practices of the academic and professional staff in terms of how they carry out their duties. The chapter discussed the factors and challenges that influence organisational culture in the post-pandemic period. The next chapter discusses the research methodology that was used to collect the primary data of the research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

In research, the methodology refers to the systematic plan or set of principles guiding how a study is conducted. It explains the rationale behind the chosen methods and techniques, providing a clear framework to achieve the research objectives (Khan, Menon and Ramayah, 2018:734). The design, on the other hand, is the strategic blueprint that integrates methodology, outlining the structure, approach, and procedural details of the research (Pandey and Pandey, 2021:7). This chapter outlined the research methodology that was used to collect and analyse the primary data on the perceptions of participants on the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational College in KwaZulu-Natal. The primary data includes the research methods, research design, research approach, the population studied, the methods and data collection tools, and trustworthiness in qualitative research.

3.2 Research philosophy

The interpretivism research philosophy was used in this study. According to Tamminen and Poucher (2020:536), a research philosophy encompasses the values and beliefs that direct and guide the development of knowledge within the field of research. GHR and Aithal (2022:43) states that research philosophies provide a framework for comprehending the nature of reality, knowledge, and the means through which knowledge is obtained. Madden (2022:1634) is of the view that the research philosophy is very important in research as it influences the choice of research methods, data collection methods and the interpretation of findings. Muchanga (2020:1) emphasises that research philosophies are crucial in moulding the researchers' perceptions on the world and their approach in investigating the research questions. The two main research philosophies are positivism and interpretivism (Tamminen

and Poucher, 2020:536). The research philosophy selected for a study is contingent upon the objectives, questions, and the context of the study (GHR and Aithal, 2022:43).

3.2.1 Positivism research philosophy

The positivism research philosophy assumes that reality exists independently of human perception; and it can encompass studies using objective empirical methods (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020:690). In addition, the positivism philosophy purports that the only valid knowledge is that which can be verified through empirical observation and measurement; and it rejects knowledge that is based on subjective experiences or beliefs (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020:40). Positivist researchers aim to uncover general laws governing natural and social phenomena. Junjie and Yingxin (2022:12) states that the positivism research philosophy emphasises the use of quantitative data and deductive reasoning to test hypotheses and make predictions.

3.2.2 Interpretivism research philosophy

This study used the interpretivism research philosophy which is based on understanding the subjective meanings and interpretations of social phenomenon (Madden, 2022:1634). The most significant aspect of adopting the interpretivism research philosophy is the value it places on the comprehension of the subject being investigated, the denotation and individual experiences. Therefore, this philosophy was deemed appropriate to explore the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. Tamminen and Poucher (2020:536) postulate that researchers who engage the interpretivism research philosophy focus on exploring the complexity of social interactions, individual perspectives, and the construction of reality. GHR and Aithal (2022:43) states that interpretivism research philosophy is associated with the qualitative research approach and methods such as interviews, observations and the analysis of visual and textual data to gain insights into the experiences of people and communities.

3.2.3 Rationale for adopting interpretivism philosophy

The interpretivism research philosophy was used because it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings and experiences of the employees at the selected vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the interpretivism research is more concerned with accurately determining the meaning of certain actions in the context of societal culture (GHR and Aithal, 2022:43). More so, interpretivism is based on the collection and analysis of qualitative primary data. The philosophy is based on collecting important information through language, relationships and is suitable for analysing complex data (Madden, 2022:1634).

3.3 Research design

According to Kothari (2020:14), a research design is a grand plan or conceptual structure of investigation that encompasses the research that would be conducted. Wilson (2014:67) explains that a research design is very important as it guides the researcher on how the research will be carried out in a way that will answer all the research questions. Creswell (2014: 250) states that the primary role of the research design is to allow the researcher to develop a viable research plan that enhances the validity of the study's findings. Seyfried and Reith, (2019:111) mention that there are numerous types of research designs, namely descriptive, correlational, explanatory, ethnographic and exploratory. The exploratory research design was used in this study.

3.3.1 Descriptive research design

The descriptive research design focuses on describing the characteristics of a population and phenomenon (Siedlecki, 2020:9). In addition, descriptive research shows the status of the phenomenon in the areas or population being investigated. This type of research design provides a detailed snapshot of the current situation, attitudes, behaviours, or characteristics within a specific context. Descriptive research methods include observational studies, surveys, and case studies. In descriptive research design, researchers collect data

through observations, interviews, questionnaires, or secondary sources and analyses the information to generate insights into the topic under study (Siedlecki, 2020:9). Descriptive research is valuable for generating hypotheses, identifying trends, and understanding the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. Wilson (2014:67) states that descriptive research design is often the first step in the research process and helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of a research area before moving on to more complex designs.

3.3.2 Correlational research design

According to Lune and Berg (2017:27), the correlational research design is used to examine the relationships between variables. In this design, researchers measure variables of interest and analyse the degree and direction of the association between them. The correlation coefficients, such as Pearson's are commonly used to quantify the strength and direction of relationships between variables. The correlational research allows researchers to explore patterns, trends and associations among variables in a natural setting. Creswell (2014: 250) postulate that while correlational studies can reveal valuable insights and patterns, they do not establish causal relationships. Instead, they help identify potential connections that may guide further research or hypothesis development. Correlational research is particularly useful when experimental manipulation is not feasible or ethical or when researchers aim to explore naturally occurring relationships between variables. The correlational research design does not manipulate or alter any of the variables, but they simply observe the relationship between the variables (Turale, 2020:289).

3.3.3 Explanatory research design

An explanatory research design is also regarded as casual research and is used to determine the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Explanatory research extends beyond the realm of simply describing and correlating variables; instead, it seeks to investigate causal relationships

between them (Cronje, 2020:15). Researchers employing an explanatory design strive to comprehend the underlying reasons for various phenomena, the ways in which variables impact each other and the mechanisms that drive observed relationships. This design frequently entails experimental research in which researchers manipulate independent variables to observe their effects on dependent variables while simultaneously controlling for extraneous factors (Lune and Berg, 2017:26).

3.3.4. Exploratory research design

Lune and Berg (2017:26) describes the exploratory research design as a design employed to obtain a profound comprehension of a topic before conducting more in-depth research. Exploratory research design refers to a flexible and adaptable approach that is utilized to investigate novel, unstudied topics, or phenomena with limited existing knowledge. The primary objective of this design is to generate insights, concepts, and hypotheses by thoroughly exploring the research area without preconceived notions or specific research inquiries. According to Kothari (2020:14), the researchers employing this design often utilize qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, or literature reviews to gather comprehensive, detailed information and gain a deeper comprehension of the subject. The exploratory design allows researchers to uncover hidden patterns, discover new viewpoints, and identify potential associations between variables.

3.3.5 Rationale for adopting exploratory research design

This study used an exploratory research design. Kothari (2020:14) states that the exploratory research design's` main goal is to generate new hypotheses and provide a better understanding of a phenomenon or problem. Lune and Berg (2017:26) expound that the exploratory research design is used because it develops a profound sense that pronounces occurrences and attempt to elucidate why the behaviour is the way it is. In addition, the exploratory research design permits the researcher to comprehend the nature of what the study was primarily investigating. Furthermore, the exploratory research

design presents the final and precise responses to the qualitative research questions, as well as an in-depth exploration of the research theme (Kothari, 2020:14). The study used two Vocational Colleges as the case study applying the exploratory research design.

3.4 Research approach

A research approach is the overall strategy used to conduct a research study. There are three main research approaches, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research (Creswell, 2015:44). The choice of research method depends on the nature of the research question, objectives and context with the researchers selecting the most suitable approach based on the depth of understanding needed and available resources for data collection and analysis.

3.4.1 Quantitative research approach

Quantitative research is a systematic approach to investigating a phenomenon using mathematical and statistical tools to collect and analyse data (Bougie, 2019:95). Quantitative research emphasizes the collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and identify patterns or relationships between variables. In addition, quantitative research focuses on testing hypotheses and drawing conclusions that can be generalised to the population (Babbie 2015:05). Quantitative research approach utilises statistical analysis to draw conclusions and generalize findings to larger populations, with the aim of measuring and quantifying phenomena precisely.

3.4.2 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach aims to achieve a deeper understanding of a phenomenon through an exploration of the perspectives and experiences of the individuals involved (Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault, 2016:2). Qualitative research represents a distinct approach to the study of complex social phenomena focusing on the meanings, experiences and perspectives of individuals. Qualitative research collects non-numerical data and uses

qualitative techniques such as thematic processes to analyse it (Creswell, 2015:44). This type of research typically incorporates in-depth interviews, observations, focus groups and textual or visual analysis to generate insights and theories. As an interpretive and subjective process, qualitative research aims to uncover underlying patterns, themes and relationships between variables being studied.

3.4.3. Mixed method research

The mixed methods research approach uses the combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Taylor, et al., 2016:2). Mixed methods research integrates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study, combining the strengths of each methodology to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Babbie (2015:05) states that through triangulating data sources, validating findings and enhancing research outcomes, mixed methods research allows researchers to address complex research questions from multiple perspectives using diverse data collection techniques and analytical strategies.

3.4.4 Rationale for adopting qualitative research approach

This study adopted and employed a qualitative research approach for the numerous merits that it offers. The qualitative research is individually credited with giving researchers processes for collecting data that is narrative in nature and story based (Talyor, 2016:2). Qualitative research explores the lived experiences of individuals which can be invaluable for understanding changes in organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the qualitative research approach was suitable because it incorporated a high degree of openness and flexibility (Maboe, 2022:57). Furthermore, during the data-collecting phase, open-ended questions allowed the researcher to use the participants words to describe the circumstances rather than imposing a predetermined response

pattern. This provided the researcher with valid and meaningful answers and information beyond the researcher's expectations.

3.5 Research strategy

The research aims and questions inform the research strategy which is a subset of the research design and comprises components of data collecting and interpretation. A research strategy often consists of several steps. First, the key ideas of the subject are analysed. The second step define pertinent keywords and their synonyms. Thirdly, looking through relevant information sources (such as databases) and fourthly, evaluating the amount and calibre (meaning applicability) of the data discovered. The ontological presumptions, beginning points, logical steps for applying concepts and theory, explanation and comprehension styles and product statuses of these techniques vary. Every tactic has ties to specific theoretical and philosophical traditions, or research paradigms (Blaikie 2007). The research strategies used to carry out the research activity have been taken into consideration when analysing the paper. They offer a ladder that makes conducting the research easier.

3.5.1 Case study

This method entails "an intensive study of a specific instance or a few carefully selected cases" (Maboe, 2022:61). An exceedingly uncommon or significantly restricted topic or area should be the focus of a case study. (Maboe, 2022:61) states that "A case study is characterised by an extremely versatile and ambiguous method of gathering information and analysis." Because the case study approach is predicated on the idea that the case under investigation is exceptional compared to other examples, a single case can shed light on the circumstances and occurrences in the group from which the case was selected. According to Burns (1997: 365), the case in all its unique complexity is the centre of interest in a case study not the entire population of instances.

3.5.2 Ethnography

The field of social and cultural anthropology is where an ethnographer spends a considerable amount of time in the field and where the ethnographic research originates (Malhotra, 2017:179). Immersing themselves in the lives of those they examine ethnographers aim to contextualise the phenomena they investigate within the social and cultural framework (Lewis 1985:380). Ethnography has now been used more frequently in the study of information systems in organisations, from the study of information system development (Hughes, Randall and Shapiro, 1992, Orlikowski and Gash, 1991 and Preston, 1991) to the study of aspects of information technology management (Davis, 1991, Davis and Nielsen, 1992), thanks to early groundbreaking work by Wynn (1979), Suchman (1987) and Zuboff (1988). Additionally, ethnography has been mentioned as a technique via which many viewpoints. Ethnography has been explored as a broad approach to the wide range of possible studies relevant to the research of information systems (Pettigrew, 1985) and as a way to include various views into systems design (Holtzblatt and Beyer, 1993).

3.5.3 Grounded theory

According to Malhotra (2017:179), the goal of grounded theory research is to create a theory that is supported by methodically collected and examined facts. Grounded theory as defined by Martin and Turner (1986:141), is "an inductive theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to simultaneously ground the account in empirical observations or data and develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic." Grounded theory differs significantly from other approaches in that it takes a particular approach to theory creation, arguing that data gathering, and analysis should be continuously intertwined. Because grounded theory approaches are so effective at creating context-based, process-oriented descriptions and explanations of phenomena, they are becoming more and more prevalent in the research literature.

3.5.4 Action research

By working together within a mutually acceptable ethical framework, action research seeks to address the practical problems of individuals in a challenging situation as well as the objectives of social science (Rapoport, 1970:499). This concept highlights the collaborative nature of action research as well as any moral conundrums that may occur from its application (Malhotra, 2017:179). As Clark (1972:713) highlights, it also makes it apparent that the goal of action research is to increase the body of knowledge within the social scientific community. Action research differs from applied social science in that it aims to use social scientific knowledge rather than contribute to the corpus of knowledge.

3.5.5 Phenomenology

The two most popular types of phenomenological research are interpretative hermeneutic (Heideggerian) and descriptive (Husserlian) phenomenology (Ataro, 2020:20). In regions where there is little to no prior research evidence, descriptive phenomenology is a valuable approach (Amaro, Rodriguez and King, 2015:20), which reinforces our decision to conduct the investigation. Because the researcher uses a technique known as bracketing that involves putting aside prejudices, it is said to have scientific rigour. Colaizzi's term for descriptive phenomenology comprises seven analytical processes. However, prior to Colaizzi's discovery of the seven phases, Giorgi had proposed a step-by-step analysis approach for descriptive phenomenology. After identifying a phenomenon or set of occurrences, theories based on the hypothesis that a generative mechanism exists are developed and put to the test empirically; this mechanism then serves as the explanation for the phenomenon in question.

3.5.6 Rationale for using phenomenology strategy

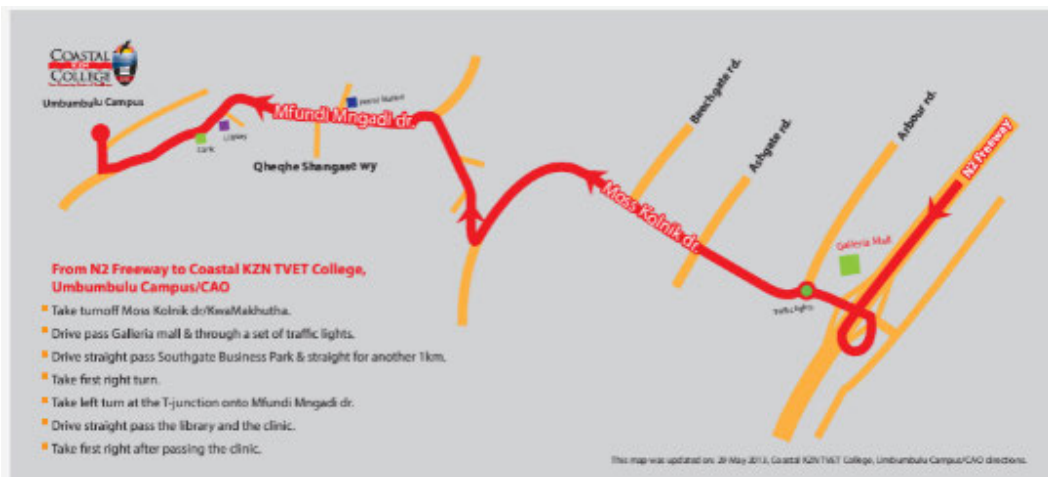
Based on the research question and the phenomena the researcher intended to analyse, comprehend and develop knowledge as this study employed a phenomenology strategy. We looked into how employees felt about the

experience and difficulties of changing organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 period. The phenomenological technique is appropriate for the current study subject. Understanding social phenomena' essence from the viewpoint of those who experienced them is the goal of phenomenological study (Ataro, 2020:20). As a result, this method helps us comprehend the character and significance of post-COVID-19 employees' experiences and perceived difficulties. Analysis approach, subsequently questioned the need to send research findings back to participants for additional validation at step four (Giorgi, 2006:305)

3.6 Site description

The colleges that were selected for the study are the part of Coastal KZN TVET College, which is the largest college in KwaZulu-Natal. These campuses offer a range of vocational and technical education programs aimed at equipping students with practical skills for the workforce. Known for its scenic surroundings, these campuses provide a variety of educational programs and are dedicated to fostering a supportive learning environment. Both campuses are integral parts of Coastal KZN TVET College, which was formed through the merger of several technical colleges and colleges of education.

Figure 3.1 Coastal KZN Maps





Both colleges were selected because the study aimed to find challenges the schools faced in the township and rural areas when the COVID-19 strike. TVET colleges were not exposed to digital technology teachings and employees had to work from home with insufficient resources. Even though employees use desktops in offices they cannot take them home. Due to innovations and the fourth industrial in the post-COVID-19 era technology usage and online teachings are most recommended yet TVET colleges are still struggling.

3.7 Target population

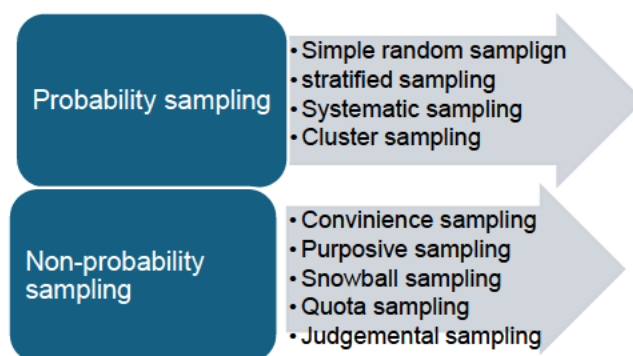
The target population in research means the people or objects that researchers want to learn about and make inferences on (Casteel and Bridier, 2021:1). The target population may be as broad as every person residing in each nation or as tiny as a particular group of people residing in each area. A description of the population in which the researcher is interested, from which the sample and the target population are selected, must be included in the research methodology of any postgraduate study (Colnet, Josse, Varoquaux and Scornet, 2022:373). Therefore, the target population of this study constituted a total 137 employees at both Umbumbulu College (81 employees) and Appelsbosch College (56 employees) in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, the target population included the academics and support staff within the two

colleges. Information about the target population was obtained from the Human Resources departments of both colleges.

3.8 Sampling strategy

Cooper and Schindler (2014:450) state that sampling is a crucial part of the research process; and it refers to the selection of a group of participants to represent the larger population of interest. Maboe (2022:58) posits that the main goal of sampling in research is to ensure that the selected sample is representative of the population and the findings of the study can be generalised to the population as whole. Karuna Bhardwaj (2019:17) states that there are two main categories of sampling namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling with each type having several sampling techniques as indicated in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2 Types of sampling



Source: Bhardwaj (2019:157). Adapted.

3.8.1 Probability sampling

Probability sampling is described by Bhardwaj (2019:157) as a selective method wherein every person or element of a population has an equal chance of being selected. Probability sampling includes procedures in which all the potential participants have the possibility of being randomly picked and included in the sample (Noor, Tajik and Golzar, 2022:79). The main merit of using probability sampling is having samples that are more representative of the larger population, allowing for more accurate generalisations and inferences. In addition, probability sampling is more associated with

quantitative studies which use statistics (Cooper and Schindler, 2014:450). There are four main techniques of probability sampling which include simple random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling and cluster sampling as shown in Figure 3.2 above.

Simple random sampling is a procedure in which the participants are randomly selected to be included in the study (Bhardwaj, 2019:157). Simple random sampling is known for its fairness in giving each member an equal opportunity of being involved in the study (Etikan and Bala, 2017:1). Cooper and Schindler (2014:450) state that in systematic sampling, every *n*th member of the population is selected for the sample through choosing participants at regular intervals from the larger population. Stratified sampling divides the population into subgroups and then a simple random sample is selected from each group (Etikan and Bala 2017:1). In addition, cluster sampling selects clusters or group samples from the population and then all the members of the selected clusters are included in the sample (Mujere, 2016:108).

3.8.2 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling was used in this study. Non-probability sampling, according to Cooper and Schindler (2014:450) is a process through which members or components of a population do not all have an equal chance of being selected, and such selection is based on the researcher's discretion. According to Mujere (2016:108), non-probability sampling does not permit the calculation of probability of a particular member being involved in the study. Non-probability sampling methods are quicker, cost-effective, are more suitable for studies with limited resources and time constraints (Suri, 2011:66). Non-probability sampling includes convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and judgemental sampling (Bhardwaj, 2019:157).

Convenience sampling is the sampling technique that selects participants based on their availability or accessibility as highlighted by Suri (2011:66).

Maboe (2022:58) states that purposive sampling selects participants based on their relevance or knowledge of the research topic. Snowball sampling is where the participants are requested to recruit other participants who meet the criteria for the study (Aaker 2015: 37). In addition, quota sampling is grounded on the representativeness of the population based on characteristics such as age, race and gender amongst others with the aim of ensuring diversity and a reflection of the characteristics of the population (Bryman and Bell, 2015: 179). Purposive sampling or judgemental sampling is where the researcher selects participants based on their own judgement or expertise (Aaker, 2015:359). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to concentrate on individuals who are more likely to have information or insights about the topic (Aaker, 2015:37).

3.8.3 Motivation for using purposive sampling technique

This study adopted a purposive sampling technique which is a non-probability sampling method to select the participants. Purposive sampling technique was adopted because of its ability to target a specific participant who had knowledge about the organisational culture that was being investigated making it cost effective and efficient.

3.9 Sample criteria and size

Mujere (2016:108) states that the sample size is the sum of the participants that are involved in the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), under the qualitative research study a sample between 10 and 50 participants may be considered. The target population of 137 was obtained from the two selected colleges and the sample size of 20 participants (10 from each vocational college) was selected from the target population. The selection of the participants for this study was done using purposive sampling because the technique allowed the researcher to select the participants who were conversant about the subject and was also based on the researcher's assessment of who could provide the best data to accomplish the study's objectives, as highlighted by Maboe (2022:59). In addition, purposive

sampling was used because it was efficient and cost saving as it allowed the researcher to focus more on the most relevant participants.

3.10 Data collection instrument

According to Blair and Czjar (2014:177), a data collection instrument is a tool that will be used to collect data for a research study. Maboe (2022:61) states that numerous data collection instruments can be used to collect data in research including interviews, questionnaires, focal groups and observations. The choice of a data collection instrument varies with the nature of the study, research questions and the nature of the data being sought (Moyo, 2017:285). Interviews as a data collection instrument was adopted and employed in this study. Thomas, Oenning and Goulart (2018:658) state that interviews are a widely used data collection instrument that allows researchers to gather in-depth information and insights directly from participants. A semi-structured interview schedule was used in line with open-ended and probing questions, through which the interviewer allowed the interviewee to freely speak about their experiences and opinions on the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. In line with the sample of the study, the research approached 20 respondents comprised of academic and support staff (Administration). However, the data were successfully gathered from 18 respondents. The remaining two participants declined to take part in the interview due to their busy schedules.

In addition, the interview was adopted as a data collection instrument because of its ability to create rapport with respondents; the opportunity to probe for deeper understanding; and the potential for rich, detailed responses as highlighted by Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021:1358). Knott, Rao, Summers and Teeger (2022:73) further elucidates that through engaging in dialogue, researchers can clarify ambiguous answers, explore unexpected responses and capture nuanced perspectives that may not emerge through other data collection methods. However, interviews come with a disadvantage

in terms of data analysis and interpretation, as the qualitative data collected from interviews can be extensive and require careful coding and thematic analysis (Knott, et al., 2022:73).

3.11 Data collection method

According to Alam (2021:2), data collection procedures are the steps followed in the process of collecting data in research. Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar and Khan (2021:6) posit that data collection is obligatory in research; and it is the responsibility of the researcher to outline a data collection procedure and adhere to it. Ali (2023:121) emphasizes the significance of following the data collection procedures carefully to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the collected data. The initial step was to make appointments with the selected two Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal at their convenience to ensure that their work was not disrupted. In addition, a circular was published through their management on the staff noticeboards notifying the participants about the dates, times and venues in which the interviews were conducted.

Data was collected using the personal method which is defined by Kothari (2020:67) as a face-to-face method of data collection from respondents. Therefore, the data was collected using physical, face-to-face interviews. During the interviews, the respondents were notified about the objectives of the study, process of the interviews, their rights as far as the process was concerned and the participants were asked to sign the informed consent form to acknowledge being furnished with the details about the study. The researcher ensured that there was a positive atmosphere in the room, adequate lighting, and ventilation in the interview venue. The researcher conducted the interviews while using an audio tape recorder to record the whole interview. The interview schedule comprised of Section A and B. While Section A covered the biographical information, Section B specifically focused on questions that directly answered the research objectives. The study had three objectives, while two objectives were achieved through questions, the third objectives accomplished through the recommendations. The first

objective had 6 questions, and the second objective had 5 questions. Thus, each respondent had to answer 11 questions in total. In addition, the researcher jotted down important notes during the interviews. The interview took approximately 20-30 minutes per interviewee and 10 working days were spent per college.

3.12 Development of research schedule

The investigator appoints the enumerator to gather the information. She speaks with the respondents and obtains their responses to the questions, but she completes the questionnaire on her own. Four different kinds of timetables exist: The themes on the observation schedule are explicit, and the observer must address the type of information that has to be documented. The opinion or attitude is measured using a rating schedule. Data from written documents such as diaries, autobiographies or official records kept by the government are recorded using a document schedule. The schedule utilised for interviews in this study is known as the interview schedule. It includes the usual questions that should be asked of the interviewee in the prescribed order.

3.13 Data analysis

Sattineni (2015:491) defines data analysis as the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modelling data to uncover meaningful patterns, insights and conclusions. The data analysis process involves examining raw data using various analytical techniques depending on the type of data being analysed. Quantitative data require statistical analyses and qualitative data require qualitative techniques to analyse it (Mabuza, 2019:68). Creswell (2015:43) explains that data analysis is a crucial aspect of research as it enables the interpretation of the data to derive valuable findings and drive evidence-based recommendations and decisions. Once the primary data was collected, the researcher transcribed the data and reviewed all the interview notes, and the thematic technique was used to analyse the data manually. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:2) define thematic data analysis as a method used to identify, analyse and report themes and patterns within

qualitative data. Digout, Salloum and Senechal (2019:161) explains that thematic analysis aims to systematically organise and interpret textual data such as from interviews, through determining recurring patterns, concepts and themes that are relevant to the research question or objectives.

According to Sattineni (2015:491), the process of analysing data a using thematic process involves key stages, which were followed in this study. The initial stage was familiarisation with the data through reading and re-reading transcripts to gain a solid comprehension of the data. Honorene (2017:91) states that once the researcher has acquainted herself with the data, the second step is to generate codes that capture key ideas, concepts, and themes. The third step was to arrange and organise the generated codes into potential themes and sub-themes. In addition, the researcher critically examined and refined the identified themes to represent the underlying data and offer meaningful sights. The themes were named, and the findings were discussed and reported.

3.14 Pilot study

Pilot testing is the standard practice of testing a research instrument on a few participants to ensure that it is understood and performs as required (Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson and Gayet-Ageron, 2015: 147). The purpose of conducting pilot testing is to guarantee that the research instrument meets the study's objectives regarding the data that will be collected (Maboee, 2022:62). In addition, a pilot study assists the researcher in observing whether the questions are easily understood, clear and contained unambiguous language for participants as acknowledged by Maboee (2022:62). Mabuza (2019:69) emphasises that it is very important to conduct a preliminary pilot study before the actual main data collection is conducted. Therefore, before the final data collection was conducted, a pilot study was carried out using (4) four participants who were part of the target population but were not part of the final study sample. The researcher conducted the pilot interviews with the aim of verifying whether the questions on the interview guide were well understood

by the participants and generating the information being required for the study. In addition, the pilot study provided insights that were used to refine the questions in the interview guide to perfection.

3.15 Trustworthiness in qualitative research

According to Korstjens and Moser (2017:274), trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research findings. Nowell, et al. (2017:3) state that it is crucial to develop trustworthiness in qualitative research to ensure the thoroughness and validity of the research especially when dealing with subjective, complex, and contextually rich data. Trustworthiness of the processes of the study is determined by the extent to which the study provides information and the way the results have been obtained (Korsjens and Moser, 2017:274).

3.15.1 Credibility

Nowell, et al. (2017:3) explain that credibility concerns the extent to which the results and findings of a study precisely signify the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Credibility in this study was enhanced through employing qualitative research methods that had been used in previous studies. In-depth open-ended questions were used to collect vital primary data from the participants' perspectives on the change of organizational culture in higher education institutions. Furthermore, the participants were invited to participate in the study voluntarily to ensure that the data collected comes from people who were willing to give information and participate in the study.

3.15.2 Transferability

Adler (2022:598) states that transferability is qualitative research refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied or generalised to other contexts or settings. Nowell, et al. (2017:3) assert that transferability is enhanced through the provision of a rich and detailed research context, the characteristics of the participants and data collection procedure to ensure that

the readers assess the applicability of the findings in their own settings. In this study, transferability was enhanced through a detailed discussion of the research context, research procedure and data collection procedure that was used. In addition, the researcher used a theoretical framework as guidance when developing the open-ended questions, which in turn informed the objectives of the research underpinning this study.

3.15.3 Dependability

Stahl and King (2020:27) state that dependability in a qualitative study means the stability and consistency of the research findings over time and under different conditions. In addition, Adler (2022:598) states that establishing dependability includes keeping an audit trail which documents the research process, decision-making and any changes made during the study. Therefore, to ensure dependability the design of the open-ended research questions was done in such a way that if future studies were to conduct the same study in the same setting, the same or similar results would be produced.

3.15.4 Confirmability

Confirmability in research entails the objectivity and neutrality of the research findings, ensuring that they are not unduly influenced by the researchers' biases or perceptions (Lemon and Hayes, 2020:604). According to Cloutier and Ravasi (2021:116), confirmability is achieved through researchers engaging in reflexivity, acknowledging, and critically examining their own perspectives, assumptions, and potential biases throughout the research process. Therefore, to assure confirmability in this study, the researcher thoroughly checked and assessed the data to ensure that the interpretation and findings which emerge from the interviews are not biased but are a true reflection of the views of the participants.

3.16 Delimitation and limitation

Delimitations and limitations are two crucial concepts in research development (Ploy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout (2014:7). Gossel (2022:134) defines

delimitations as the explicit boundaries or parameters that are established by the researcher to outline the scope of the study. Ploy-Cilliers, et al., (2014:7) state that delimitations assist to narrow and focus the research as well as providing clarity on what to include and exclude. Hence, this study focused on exploring the change of organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal.

On the other hand, the limitations of the study are the study's weaknesses due to theoretical or practical restrictions that the researcher must work within (Ploy-Cilliers, et al., 2014:7). These variables include participants, equipment, data, financing, and time. While limitations restrict the conclusions that may be drawn from a study, they also lay the groundwork for further research. As a limitation, this study was conducted in only two vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition, another limitation was that some of the personnel could not provide detailed information with regard to the questions due to time constraints. More in-depth responses would have provided more explicit data, thus detailing specific findings. A follow-up study interrogating certain emerging themes is most helpful in providing precise recommendations.

3.17 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research are the principles, values and morals that govern research activities and processes (Adams and Lawrence 2014: 5). According to Fleming and Zegwaard (2018:206), ethical considerations are the set of principles that guides the research and practices. Gray (2014:85) states that there are several ethical issues that needs to be taken into consideration when conducting a research design and practices. Kothari (2020:145) asserts that researchers need to observe the ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, permission to conduct the study, data storage, voluntary participation, and respect for participants.

3.17.1 Institutional research ethics approval

This research adhered to the Durban University of Technology (DUT) ethical guidelines. Therefore, the researcher attended an online introduction to ethics course to be familiar with research ethics (Annexure, C). In addition, the DUT Institution and Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) provided the researcher with Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 138/23 for this research study

3.17.2 Permission to conduct the study

Initially, the proposal to conduct the study was reviewed and given a green light by the Department of Human Resources Management and the Faculty of Management Sciences, as well as the ethical committee of the institution. In addition, the permission and the gatekeeper's letter to conduct the study was requested and was provide by the management in both vocational colleges.

3.17.3 Informed consent

Gray (2014:85) states that informed consent is the process of ensuring that the participants understand the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study. Participants were informed about this study, its aim, objectives, questions and data collection process, and provided their written consent for inclusion into the study. Participants were informed that participation in the study was not obligatory but voluntary.

3.17.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

Pandey and Pandey (2020:61) state that anonymity and confidentiality are important ethical principles in research, especially when dealing with sensitive information or data that can directly or indirectly identify participants. Kothari (2020:14) defines anonymity as the process of collecting the data in a manner that the participants remain unknown and unidentifiable. In the context of this study, during the interview processes, the researcher did not collect any personal identification details or information that link the participants to the data. Mabuza (2019:70) elucidates that confidentiality involves the protection of participants' personal information and data. Therefore, the data of this study

was kept secure and is accessible only to authorized individuals involved in the research.

3.17.5 Respect of participants

Fleming and Zegwaard (2018:210) posit that researchers need to treat their participants with the utmost respect. Participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time deemed necessary, without any ramifications.

3.17.6 Data storage

The data is stored in a password-protected computer which will be put in a safety-locked cabinet for a period of five years. After five years, all the recordings and electronic data will be permanently deleted.

3.18 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology, research design, population size, and sampling techniques used in this study. This chapter was followed by a description of the research philosophy, design, approaches, target population in sampling, measuring instruments, data collection technique, data analysis methods, anonymity and confidentiality, ethical considerations, trustworthy, delimitations and limitations of the study. Chapter Four provides tenets, and a description of the data collected for this study and the findings qualitatively investigated in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methodology that was followed to obtain the primary data for the study. This chapter provides an analysis of the primary data to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. In addition, this chapter presents the findings and discussion of the data, derived from the qualitative method adopted in this study. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative data encompasses descriptive data gathered through approaches such as interviews, observations, focus groups or open-ended survey questions, rather than numerical data. In this study, interviews were used to explore the challenges linked with the transformation of organisational culture within Vocational Colleges. Through the semi-structured questions posed to respondents, responses were collected and subsequently subjected to thematic data analysis methods and procedures. In line with the sample of the study, the research approached 20 respondents comprised of academic and support staff (Administration). However, the data were successfully gathered from 18 respondents. The remaining two respondents declined to take part in the interview due to their busy schedules. Hence, the response rate was 90%.

4.2 Method used for the data analysis

The thematic analysis method was in line with an inductive analysis approach outlined by Boru (2018:140). The data was interpreted manually through inductive analysis approach which adhered to the steps presented as follows:

Step 1- Data Familiarisation- the initial step is for the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data. In this study, the researcher listened to audios, read notes and a general glimpse of the data to familiarise with it. In addition, the audios were transcribed into text.

Step 2- Initial code generation- Initially, the collected data were meticulously categorized into broad sections, which could encompass words, sentences, paragraphs, or pages conveying conceptual understanding. Each segment of data was encoded with descriptive labels to facilitate organisation and analysis.

Step 3- Searching for themes-subsequently, the coded data were systematically examined to identify recurring patterns and themes. Each category of code bundles was scrutinised, and themes were derived from these bundles, with each theme focusing on a general case or concept emerging from the data

Step 4- Reviewing themes- The various categories of generated themes and codes were organised and presented in a coherent manner. This involved describing the themes and their respective codes in a manner that was understandable and reflective of the data.

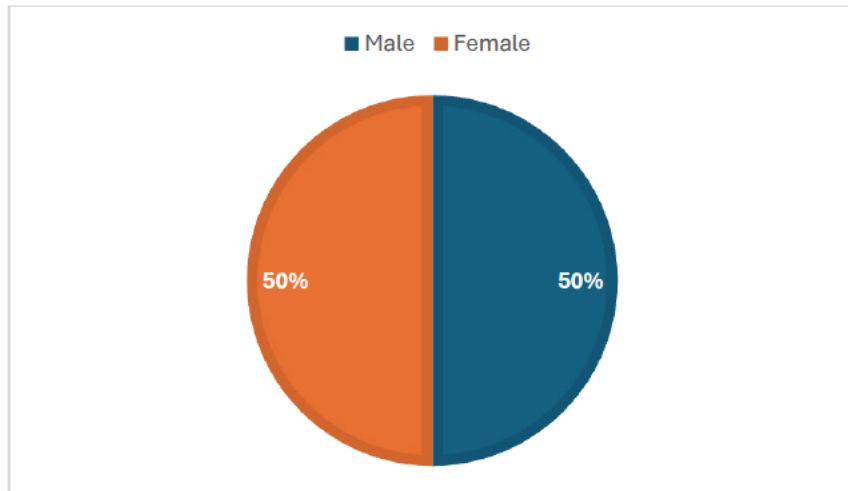
Step 5- Defining and naming themes- each theme was given a name. In addition, in this step, the researcher derived subthemes from the main themes

Step 6- Reporting the analysis-Finally, the identified themes and codes were subject to interpretation and discussion by the researcher. This phase involved delving into the significance of the themes, exploring their implications, and drawing conclusions based on the interpreted findings.

4.3 Biographical data of the respondents

4.3.1 Gender distribution of the respondents

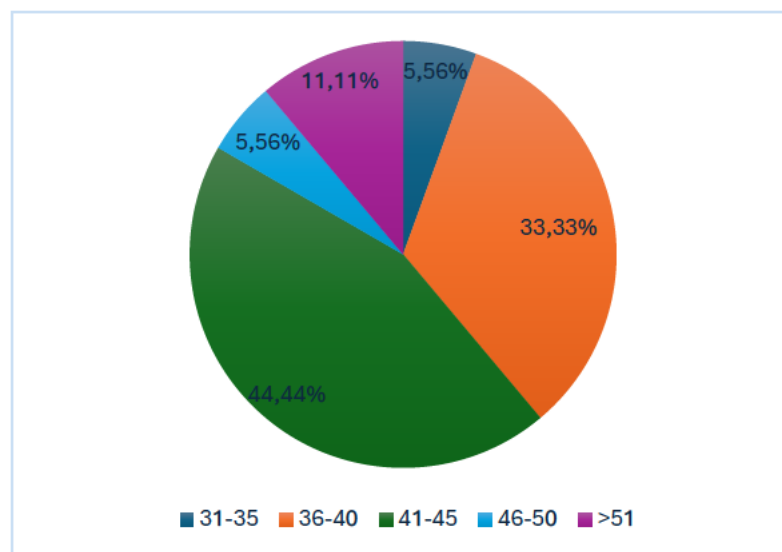
Figure 4.1 Gender distribution



As shown in Figure 4.1 above, the gender distribution of the respondents comprised of 50% male and 50% female.

4.3.2 Age group of the respondents

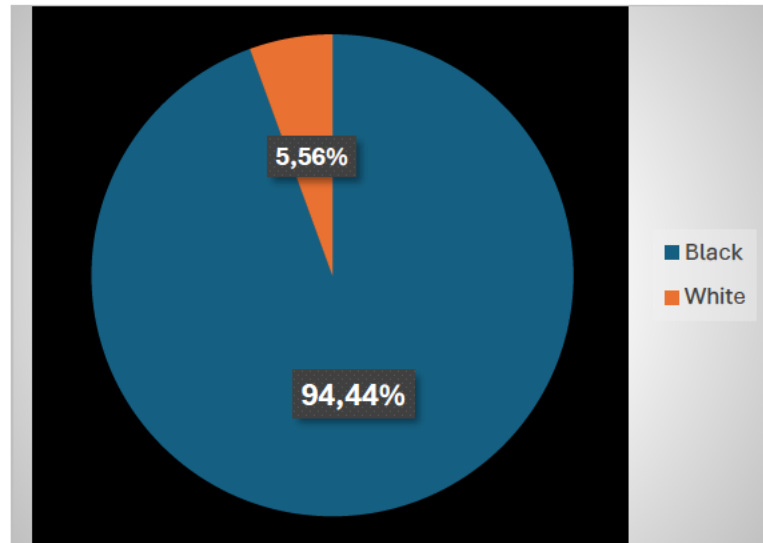
Figure 4.2 Age group of the respondents



As indicated in Figure 4.2 above, the sample that was used consisted of 5,56% of the respondents were in the age group between 31-35 years old, 33,33% was made by the age group between 36-40 years old, 44,44% was made by the age group between 41-45 years, another 5,56% was made by the age group between 46-50 years and the 11,11% was made by the age group >51 years old.

4.3.3 Racial composition of the sample

Figure 4.3 Race



As shown in Figure 4.3 above, the racial group of respondents 94,44% were made of African origin and 5,56% was white

4.3.4 Tenure of the respondents

Figure 4.4 Tenure of the respondents in their organisations

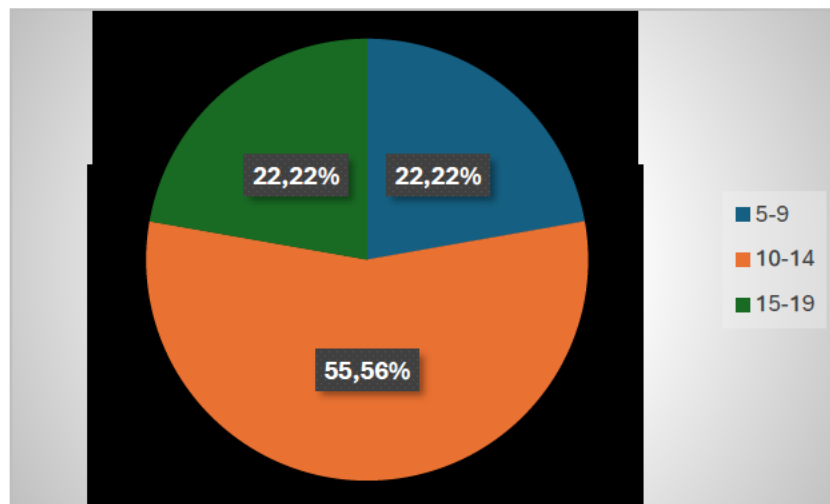
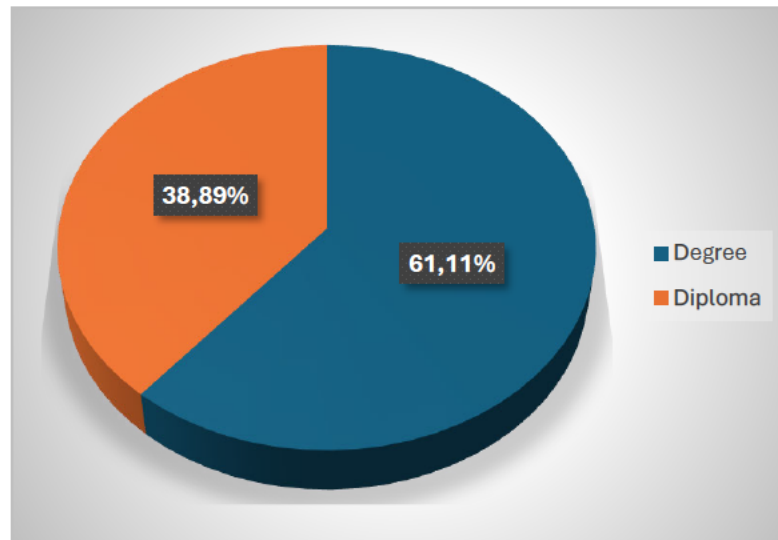


Figure 4.4 above indicate the years the respondents has worked in an organisation. The results shows that 22,22% of the respondents had worked for their organisation between 5-9 years, 55,56% was made by those who had

worked between 10-14 years for their organisations and the final 22,22% was made by the respondents who had between 15-19 years in an organisation.

4.3.5 Academic qualifications of the respondents

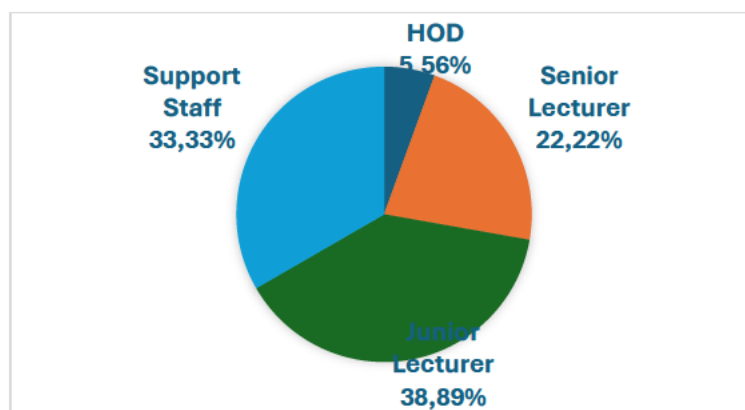
Figure 4.5 Academic qualifications of the respondents



In relation to the academic qualifications of the respondents, Figure 4.5 above indicate the academic qualifications of the respondents indicating 61,11% hold a degree and 38,89% hold Diploma.

4.3.6 Position held by the respondents in their organisation

Figure 4.6 Occupational post held by the respondents



As shown in Figure 4.6 above, the sample comprised individuals who held different positions in their organisations with 5,56% made by HOD's, 22,22%

made by Senior lecturers, 38,89% made by Junior lecturers and the final 33,33% was made by Support staff.

4.4 Themes Identified

The main themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis in line with the objectives of the study are the challenges and factors that influence the change in organisational culture at the vocational colleges.

4.4.1 Challenges associated with the change in organisational culture at the vocational colleges

As vocational colleges strive to adjust to evolving environments marked by technological advancements and unforeseen disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, they encounter multifaceted obstacles in re-shaping their cultural frameworks. To gain insights into these challenges, this study explored the sub-themes that have emerged from the qualitative research, presenting the perspectives of participants.

Main-theme 1: Challenges associated with the change in organisational culture

Table 4.1: Challenges associated with the change in organisational culture

Themes	Sub- themes	Frequency of responses
Challenges associated with the change in organisational culture	Adjustment to the Evolving Environment	10
	Management Strategic Planning	12
	Identifying Gaps and Weaknesses in Socialisation	6
	Expression of Organisational Mission	10
	Leadership response to Challenges	14
	Information Dissemination During Crisis	10

Sub-theme 1 - Adjustment to the Evolving Environment

As pointed out in Table 4.1, most respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about many changes in the manner in which people in organisations work and communicate. Many COVID-induced changes such as the intensive use of digital communication devices in work settings, and the use of technology to enhance the ease of teaching and flexibility in terms of working hours was carried into the post-pandemic period. The following statement was quoted verbatim (P10),

“The more frequent use of digital communication tools such as zoom, Microsoft teams and other online learning tools in the post COVID-19 is a major challenge for some of us who are not tech savvy, as we were only able to communicate via WhatsApp and through emails during Covid-19. It was and still a struggle for us to learn as well as adjusting to have meetings and even perform our duties using these technologies”.

In addition, the respondents also acknowledged persistent challenges despite efforts to adapt. The following quotes (P1, P2, P7 and P8) emphasised:

“The need for the increase of resources in the education sector. While the other respondent highlighted the profound impact of COVID-19 on the adjustment process. Conversely respondents like 7 and 8 expressed a sense of successful adjustment and recovery, indicating the progress in overcoming challenges leading to environmental adjustments. Adjustment to the dynamic environment induces a shift in organisational culture within vocational colleges. It could also be noted that this adaptation fosters traits such as flexibility and innovation to effectively respond to challenges and pull opportunities presented by the evolving educational environment towards success. However, obstacles such as technological limitations, as noted by P6, shows ongoing hurdles in the adaptation process.”

Furthermore, culture transitioning from COVID-19 to the post-COVID-19 period faced challenges with employees working on an individual basis like they were used to during the pandemic, rather than putting their heads together and working as a team towards organisational goals. Although changes in the way organisations operated and jobs performed were inevitable during the pandemic, some changes will remain and be used to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the post-pandemic period.

Sub theme 2: *Management's strategic planning*

Another significant theme that emerged was management's strategic planning. As indicated in Table 4.1 above, a considerable number of respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P16, P15, P17) provided perspectives on the actions taken by management to address the challenges posed by the crisis. While some respondents acknowledge the implementation of strategic planning and adaptations in teaching and learning methodologies. Some acknowledges that managing limited resources was one of the challenges that impacts the change in culture in the post-pandemic period. Transitioning to the post-pandemic period required resources such as computers and software, and staff had to ensure that they can have internet access as well as time. The extract below from P17 depicts some sentiments and perceptions from the respondents regarding resources:

“During the post-pandemic, the institution management had to seek financial resources to ensure that all educators had fast computers and software to ensure that we were all on the same page. In addition, in the post pandemic period some of us can now perform their duties even at home but they must have a fast and reliable internet at home which most of us do not have.”

P10 highlights the proactive stance of management through the recruitment of new staff to bolster health and safety measures. Such an effort made by the management has the potential to reshape the organisational culture at vocational colleges by cultivating collaboration and proactive mindset. This

enables the institution to effectively navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities in the evolving educational environment.

Sub theme 3: *Identifying gaps and weaknesses in socialisation*

Table 4.1 above shows the theme "Identified gaps and weaknesses in socialisation" highlighting the broader societal ramifications of the crisis at the college. These gaps include variations in social support systems and access to technology. The respondents shed light on disparities in social support systems. Notably, P1 draws attention to the stark division between affluent and disadvantaged individuals emphasised by the pandemic, while P6 stresses the digital divide in technology access. Additionally, P8 raises concerns about the challenges associated with identifying affected individuals. Despite endeavours to bolster teaching and learning initiatives (P9), there's a recognised imperative for a comprehensive approach to bridging socialisation gaps, as advocated by P10. This emphasises the need for a comprehensive educational approach tailored to meet the diverse needs of employees. There is a need for evolution in organisational culture entailing efforts to foster inclusivity, diminish socioeconomic disparities, improve technological resources and create a nurturing learning environment capable of accommodating the diverse circumstances and obstacles faced by employees. Find the details in the extract below.

P1: "It showed that we are not united. It even exposed the fact that there are rich and poor people. P9: "The support was provided for teaching and learning but lacks emphasis on other socialisation aspects." P10: "I think our college needs more comprehensive methods of operation for all staff beyond emergencies."

The post-pandemic period requires people to embrace change and accept that COVID-19 altered many things in all spheres of life. However, the employees at the Vocational colleges unanimously agree that they were sceptical and

gaps and weaknesses in socialisation during the initial days and after COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted by one of the respondents (P12):

“When we get back to normality after the pandemic, a lot has changed in terms of how we work, the tools and approaches to work has been changed and most of us wanted to get back to the way things were before the pandemic. In addition, we were not ready for technological related culture changes and mixing our work and personal life”.

The responses imply that the culture transition from the pandemic to the post-pandemic period was faced with some form of resistance to change, which impeded a smooth adaption and transition.

Sub-theme 4: *Expression of organisational mission*

Moreover, Table 4.1 under the theme of "Expression of organisational mission," respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10) offer varied perspectives. While some recognise the organisation's dedication to employee welfare and its ability to adjust to the pandemic (P1, P6, P7), others voice uncertainty or doubt regarding any observable shifts (P3, P5). When the mission prioritises employee's well-being and adaptation to challenges such as the pandemic, it fosters a culture characterised by resilience and an employee-centred approach. This shift may result in an increased emphasis on excellence and responsiveness to the changing needs of employees and stakeholders. Nonetheless, there remains an overall agreement on the significance of maintaining the organisational mission in the face of challenges. This sentiment is echoed by responses emphasising an ongoing commitment to excellence (P8) and the provision of support for teaching and learning initiatives (P9). This evidence shows that organisational mission has the potential to transform organisational culture within Vocational Colleges by guiding behaviours, decisions and attitudes.

P10: *“One of the challenges that I think really affected the transition from Covid-19 pandemic to post-pandemic was lack of adequate team building activities by the colleges to ensure an atmosphere of teamwork, cooperation, coordination and mutual effort towards the organisational values. Teambuilding ensures that we bond together, share the same values and norms. On the other hand, training provides us with the knowledge and skills that supports the new way of doing things such as the use of online learning platforms amongst other things”.*

In addition, most of the interviewees highlighted that sometimes a discrepancy exists between what principals and heads of departments believe the mission and culture to be, rather than what it is in reality: P5 was quoted verbatim:

“At times you find that those in managerial role, what they believe to be the mission and culture of the organisation is totally different than what is on the ground, and it is mainly caused by lack of initiatives such as training and teambuilding which are designed to ensure that we all subscribe to the same mission and those mission are reinforced through team building activities”.

The new methods, tools and procedures that had an impact on the organisational culture required employees to be trained so that they can effectively incorporate them into their duties.

Sub theme 5: Leadership response to Challenges

Table 4.1 above shows that majority of the respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P12, P13, P15, P16, P17, P18) expressed that they did not feel motivated to change their behaviours, values and beliefs to align with the post-pandemic culture that was inevitably adopted by their organisations. P1 was quoted verbatim:

“Despite management`s focus ensuring quality teaching, there was not enough effective leadership responses and initiatives to promote innovation,

collaborative problem-solving and a willingness to embrace change among faculty, staff and students”.

In addition, engagement was highlighted as a cornerstone for a smooth culture transition in organisations. P10 was quoted verbatim:

“The leadership did not foster engagement through involvement and inclusiveness of ideas from us as employees on how we can transition smoothly in post-pandemic period. In addition, lack of engagement created sort of resistance to change and made it difficult to implement the new methods, values and procedures”.

These respondents` perceptions indicate that leadership support was amongst the challenges which impede a smooth culture transition from the pandemic to post-pandemic period.

Sub theme 6: Information Dissemination During Crisis

From Table 4.1 'Information dissemination during crisis' emerged as the last theme. Under this theme respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10) to name the few indicated the communication methods employed for information dissemination within Vocational Colleges amidst the crisis. Notably, social networks like WhatsApp emerge as prominent channels (P1 & P2) with P2 exemplifying the distribution of laptops to facilitate connectivity. This is complemented by the acknowledgement of both formal and informal communication avenues, as seen in P3's reference to emails and WhatsApp. Also, traditional methods such as posters and signs coexist with digital platforms like social media and email (P6, P7 and P8). Meanwhile, respondents, including P5, express confidence in the efficacy of these communication efforts, showing the importance of a multifaceted approach. The recognition of WhatsApp and email channels' significance during the pandemic, shows their vital role in maintaining connectivity and disseminating critical information during challenging times (P9 & P10). Prioritising clear and

timely communication, colleges promote an atmosphere of openness and trust among faculty, staff and students. This emphasis on transparent communication encourages greater engagement and collaboration, empowering individuals to contribute ideas and solutions collectively.

P1: "Social networks e.g. WhatsApp." P2: "Social networks, WhatsApp groups. P3: "In the post-COVID-19 we were given devices (laptops)." P4: "It was spread in many ways, formal and informal e.g. Emails and WhatsApp." P5: "Our marketing was always there to provide the information. That is one area that I believe did well." P6: "Posters, signs and email communication. P7: "They created WhatsApp groups and email for communication." P8: "Through social media platforms." P9: "We were communicating through WhatsApp and email due to the pandemic." P10: "We were communicating via WhatsApp and email channels."

In conclusion, the feedback from respondents provided a window into the progress made and the challenges still looming in how organisations responded during the crisis. Their insights highlighted just how complex it is to navigate through uncharted territory and stressed the crucial need for ongoing adaptation and improvement in our response strategies. These data reminded us that the education environment is ever evolving, demanding a continuous process of learning and growth to ensure that Vocational Colleges remain agile, resilient and truly responsive to the needs of everyone involved.

4.4.2 Factors influencing changes in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period

Theme two explored the variables shaping the shift in organisational culture within these institutions after the pandemic. Each sub-theme represents a unique facet contributing to the broader evolution of organisational culture within Vocational Colleges. Analysing the responses associated with these sub-themes provides valuable insights into the complex nature of change

occurring in these institutions post pandemic, guiding efforts to cultivate a more adaptable, resilient and student-centric organisational culture.

Main-theme 2: Factors influencing changes in organisational culture

Table 4.2: Factors influencing changes in organisational culture

Themes	Sub- themes	Frequency of responses
Factors influencing changes in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period	Digital Technology Accessibility	7
	Communication	5
	Financial Struggles Impacting Resources Provision	7
	Efforts and Challenges in Policy Implementation	8
	Supportive leadership	8
	Teamwork	5
	Creativity, Lifelong Planning and organisational climate	4
Incorporation of Flexible Methods of Content Delivery	6	

Sub theme 1: *Digital technologies accessibility*

Figure 4.2 indicates that the respondents (P4, P7, P8, P12, P13, P15, P17) revealed that the pandemic inevitably catalysed the use of digital technologies in communication and performing jobs by employees in colleges, which was widely adopted in the post-pandemic period: P7 was quoted verbatim:

“The wave of digital technology has shaped the way in which work is conducted around the globe, particularly in the education sector where we now have to deliver our classes using Microsoft teams, assignments are being submitted via Moodle, and meetings are done virtually. Covid-19 was just a catalyst that speed up the adoption technology and digitalisation in most academic institutions”. P13 echoed the same sentiments: *“The continued use of digital technologies in the post-pandemic period have changed and shaped the culture of my organisation in relation to the way communication is done, how*

we conduct our duties, and it has brought flexibility which limits interactions among employees as they spend most of their times in offices or working remotely". The above perception from the respondents shows that digital technologies have a great influence on organisational culture in the post-pandemic period.

Sub theme 1.1: Communication

As indicated in Table 4.2 above, participants (P3, P5, P9, P14 and P15) expressed that communication is an important variable for any changes to be smooth and effective in an organisation: P9 was quoted verbatim:

"In huge shifts such as transitioning from a very tough situation such as COVID-19 pandemic, management definitely need strong and timely communications regarding all changes to working procedures, methods, tools, equipment and values to ensure that everyone is on the same page".

In addition, most respondents state that communication cultivates an environment that builds relationships through information and knowledge sharing as well as feedback: P15 was quoted verbatim:

"Effective communication allows the sharing of ideas, values and providing clarity on ambiguous scenarios in the organisation, hence it is important part ingredient to any changes including that of culture". Respondents had the perception that open communication channels create a supportive environment which encourages change. P5 was quoted verbatim

"Organisational culture does not just happen on its own, you have to initiate it through conversations in forms of physical meetings, virtual meetings and it must be conducive for everyone to share their ideas and thoughts without fear. In addition, feedback and clarity must be part of an open communication channel".

Sub theme 2: Resource availability

Table 4.2 above shows that the respondents (P1, P3, P7, P9, P16, P17, and P18) highlight a significant sub-theme influencing culture change within Vocational Colleges which is having resources. Although change is inevitable, when it comes, resources should be made available to ensure the successful transition from old to new required change. P1 was quoted verbatim:

“The colleges were not prepared for the culture change which require investments in resources such computers, software and availability of financial resources to migrate to digital infused culture. The economic downturn exacerbates existing constraints, making it difficult for colleges to allocate funds for crucial resources like technology and infrastructure”. This showed that having adequate resources was a contributing factor towards the change of culture in the colleges in the post-pandemic period.

Sub theme 3: Challenges in Policy implementation

Challenges in policy implementation were indicated in Table 4.1 as another sub theme on challenges affecting organisational culture change in the post pandemic period (P3, P5, P6, P8, P9, P12, P16, and P17). The Challenges in policy implementation can lead to confusion, frustration and a divergence from organisational goals, which can negatively impact the overall culture. This sub theme captures a diverse perspective amongst respondents. Whilst some respondents' express confidence in the existence and efficacy of organisational change policies, others raise concerns about their adequacy or implementation. Respondents acknowledge the presence of policies, particularly regarding resource access and health and safety, suggesting a foundational framework within the institution: P17 was quoted verbatim:

“There are policies in the organisation about the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and resources. However, some workmates and campuses does not have adequate resources such as computers and internet connectivity”.

However, some participants suggest potential deficiencies in policies or limited information about them, highlighting challenges in policy formulation or communication. P5 was quoted verbatim:

“I acknowledge the availability of policies, but the challenge is on communicating them for employees' awareness and understanding of them. Therefore, employee awareness and understanding of policies is crucial and can be ensured though an emphasize on the necessity of robust communication and training strategies in the organisation”.

This variance indicates the significance of proficient policy communication and implementation approaches to guarantee organisational adherence and coherence with objectives. In addition, some respondents indicate the importance of bridging the gap between policy development and execution. This indicates that Vocational Colleges do have established policies governing their activities. Effective policy implementation can foster a culture of clarity, consistency, and trust within the organisation, thereby enhancing morale and productivity. The extract below offers details. P8 was quoted verbatim:

“There are various policies in the organisation which are all crucial in their contexts, however the challenge lies in the lack of consistency in implementation and application.”

Sub theme 3.1: Supportive leadership

Table 4.2 shows that a considerable number of respondents (P4, P5, P7, P11, P13, P15, P17, P18) revealed that effective leadership supportive is a factor that influences the organisational culture of colleges in the post-pandemic period. Most respondents agree that for any initiative, such as change in values and ultimately organisational culture, to be successful leadership support is vital. P7 was quoted verbatim:

“There has to be buy-in from the top-level management and they must support the culture transition. Change begins at the top and Leadership in an organisation must have a sharp vision and skills to inspire people to see the need to embrace change, value it and make it happen. Our leaders must orchestrate an environment that enables employees to have a zeal for continuous innovation, improvement and change through giving them time, space and resources that they require. In addition, leadership is responsible for developing an effective plan, values and tone which ensures that the operation in an organisation runs effectively and efficiently”.

All the strategies, including change management, fall under the responsibilities of leaders. P13 was quoted verbatim: *“Breaking the old and embracing the new rests on the shoulders of leadership. Therefore, leadership are responsible for working culture, workflows and the way everyday activities in the colleges are conducted”.*

Sub theme 3.2 Teamwork

Table 4.2 above indicate that the respondents (P1, P8, P14, P17, and P18) acknowledge that teamwork is a factor which influenced organisational culture change in the post pandemic period in the selected vocational colleges. Teamwork emerged as another finding from both colleges, P1 was quoted verbatim:

“It is very important to create a community where employees are all pulling together towards adopting and embracing the change in culture. Teamwork allowed us to assist each other to cope with changes, assist others in their shortfalls and collectively deal with the challenges presented by situations, especially the digital migration. In addition, teamwork allowed us to put all of our experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic together and come up with best solutions on how we can handle change in a positive way”.

Teamwork is crucial as the logic is that when engaging in a group effort towards adapting to change, P14 was quoted verbatim:

“Teamwork instils more responsibility on employees, providing them with a greater choice, autonomy allows more expertise to be drawn on the change areas as opposed to approaching it from an isolated perspective”.

Sub theme 4: Creativity, lifelong planning and organisational climate

Table 4.2 above shows that participants (P6, P13, P15 and P17) revealed that creativity was a factor that influences organisational culture change in vocational colleges by the respondents. P15 was quoted verbatim:

“We need an organisation that will encourage creativity so that the employees in an organisation can be able to come up with solutions on how to deal with the problems, challenges and difficulties in an effective and efficient manner. In the post pandemic period, an innovative and creativity culture is required so that we constantly improve the way we work and provide solutions to the new demands imposed by redesign of work and a lifelong planning for the fourth industrial revolution.” Creativity is crucial in change as it allows employees to come out with a variety of ideas both right and wrong, using their strengths, experiences and not to be afraid of any failure or airing one`s idea.

The respondents revealed that a good organisational climate is important for culture change in the post- COVID-19 pandemic period. P6 was quoted verbatim: *“Some of us are afraid of change, we feel there is no open-door policy, no adequate support and afraid to speak our ideas that we think can work well in the post-pandemic period.”* Therefore, having a conducive organisational climate culture is ideal for employees to support the new norms, values and changes as they come along. Addressing these concerns and allowing employees` natural creativity to flourish is crucial. What ignites creativity in an organisation is finding an interesting cause, problem or

challenge and a climate which influences employees to contest the status quo and think outside the box to come out with new solutions, methods and values.

Sub theme 5: *Flexible methods of content delivery*

As indicated in Table 4.2 above, the respondents (P2, P10, P12, P16, P17, P18) expressed that flexible methods of content delivery are another factor which influences organisational culture change. Under this sub-theme, respondent insights provide valuable perspectives on how flexible methods of content delivery had the potential to drive a profound transformation in organisational culture within Vocational Colleges. P10 was quoted verbatim:

“Flexible methods of content delivery are now being used; however, I think we lack the skills and knowledge on how to effectively use these methods. The blended method of learning allows us to deliver our content using both traditional classroom methods and through online platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams and Google meet among other learning management systems”. The flexible content delivery methods allow me to deliver content outside the campus which limits the office interactions with colleagues and calls for greater collaboration and communication. In addition, this changes the norms of being at the workplace all the time as I can deliver my duties anywhere”.

This indicates an acknowledgement of the significance of flexible content delivery in ensuring uninterrupted educational continuity during disruptions. However, concerns regarding the efficacy of current content delivery approaches are palpable in the responses from respondents. P18 was quoted verbatim *“There is a lack of awareness and training among staff regarding accessing and use of flexible content delivery methods. The change in technology, social life and demands from the industries is having an influence on vocational efforts to adapt and improve content delivery methods”.* In the same vein, some respondents highlight the necessity for a cultural shift towards embracing innovation and flexibility in educational practices within

Vocational Colleges. P16 was quoted verbatim *“Ultimately, the integration of flexible content delivery methods is indispensable for enhancing accessibility, accommodating diverse learning styles and fortifying the resilience of educational systems against unforeseen disruptions. Achieving this requires a collaborative effort from educational institutions to invest in technological infrastructure, deliver robust training and support to educators; and cultivate a culture that values innovation and adaptability to meet the evolving needs of students and the broader community”*.

4.5 Discussion of the findings

In the subsequent section, the results of the study will be discussed, emphasising their impact on organisational culture. Two primary themes will be explored based on the emerging findings. The first theme centres on the challenges encountered with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges, while the second theme focuses on factors influencing the change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period.

4.5.1 Discussion of findings on challenges associated with organisational culture change

COVID-19 presented an inevitable culture change in many organisations in different sectors around the globe. One of the objectives of this study was to identify the challenges associated with organisational culture change in the post pandemic period. Kukunda-Onyait (2019:25) states that adapting to a changing environment and culture in an organisation is essential for fostering workforce agility but is faced with numerous challenges. The findings of this study identified difficulties in adapting to change, inadequacy of resources, lack of leadership support, policy implementation, and lack of training and team building initiatives as the main challenges associated with organisational culture change at the case colleges in KwaZulu-Natal in the post COVID-19 period. The results revealed the significant shift of culture in organisations due to an infusion of digital technologies, flexibility and considering the lack of

empirical studies that seek to explore how these environments are shaped in a post COVID-19 world. Therefore, these findings make a valuable contribution to organisational culture insights.

The findings presented indicate that resource shortage is a bottleneck which compromised the core values of the organisation, leading to a culture that inhibits rather than facilitates change. The findings are in line with Van den Heuvel, Voskamp, Daamen and Hoogendoorn (2014:98) findings, which outline that resources play a pivotal role in enabling organisations to adjust to and navigate through periods of change effectively. This perspective shows the essential contribution of resources in facilitating organisational adaptation and resilience amidst shifting environments. In addition, the findings presented by Mncayi and Singh (2021:442) and Van Biljon and Mentz (2015:27) underline the profound impact of resource allocation on organisational culture, particularly within the context of Technical Colleges in South Africa. This phenomenon becomes even more pronounced during periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where technological infrastructure deficiencies worsened existing systemic barriers, thus hindering cultural evolution. The core value is one of the components of organisational culture serving as guiding principles shaping behaviours, decisions and interactions amongst members. However, in their study Appio, Frattini, Petruzzeli and Neirotti (2021:4) found that when resources are scarce or improperly allocated, these core values can become compromised, leading to a culture of stagnation rather than innovation.

In addition, the findings revealed that resistance to change was a challenge that hindered organisational culture change in the post pandemic period in the selected vocational colleges. The resistance to change that emerges perpetuated a status quo mentality, inhibiting the cultivation of a proactive and innovative ethos amongst faculty and stakeholders. The findings concur with Gumbo and Mhlanga (2017:221) who concluded that resistance to change stifles innovation and obstructed the implementation of new ideas and

practices, ultimately constraining the institution's ability to adapt to evolving educational landscapes. In addition, Srivastava and Agrawal's (2020:1431) study on organisational change also concluded that change is inevitable and crucial for organisations to survive, but resistance to change from the workforce impedes and slows down change.

Difficulties in adapting to change were also identified by the respondents as one of the challenges that impedes culture change in technical colleges in the post COVID-19 period. In the post COVID-19 period, the use of digital technologies in facilitating flexibility, collaboration and innovation, facilitating connections amongst educators from diverse geographical locations, has increased and is expected to continue growing. However, the findings of Mavimbela and Mncube (2018:112) concur that those who did not have a technological background and older generations found it very difficult and challenging to adapt to the use of computers and digital technologies in performing their duties. On the contrary, the findings Reshi (2021:2) in the study on the challenges to organisational change concur that failure to adapt and cope with changes hinders the process of change. The study recommended that instead of seeing adaptability as a new trait to be cultivated, organisations need to tap into existing resources and mechanisms to navigate challenging circumstances. Thus, their view emphasizes a more optimistic stance, suggesting that adaptability is not something to be instilled but rather something to be recognised and nurtured within organisational cultures.

In addition, the findings highlight that a lack of leadership support was one of the challenges that hindered organisational change. The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to the way in which organisations operate and how jobs are designed. Flexible work arrangements such as remote working, teleworking and hybrid working have increased their adoption and usage. However, it is the responsibility of leaders in the organisation to support change and steer the organisation towards its vision. Thus, the findings of Mutula and Brakel (2017:37) acknowledge that leadership support is positively

correlated with organisational change. In support, the findings of Mhlanga, Mjoli and Chamisa (2019:2) concur that leadership support is the cornerstone for any change initiatives in organisations. In the view of Kruse and Calderone, (2020:3), leadership's ability to address challenges, especially during pandemics, is crucial for overcoming obstacles and shaping the attitudes, core values and convictions that underpin organisational culture.

Moreover, the findings of the study indicate that there was no adequate training and team building to support the change in culture. Mncayi and Singh (2021:62) found that change is managed through providing employees with the necessary skills and knowledge so that they can understand the processes, their role and why such change is necessary. Ndhlovu and Letseka (2016:85) found that in order for change to happen, it requires the collective effort of all the stakeholders to be steered towards one direction, implying that teamwork is very important in organisational culture change.

In the post-pandemic period, effective communication and information dissemination within Vocational Colleges can encounter significant challenges, as highlighted in the findings. This finding resonates with Wong, Ho, Olusanya, Antonini and Lyness (2021:255), shedding light on the dynamics of communication within Vocational Colleges during crises and in the post pandemic period. The reliance on informal channels, particularly social media platforms, underlines the significance of rapid communication in crisis situations. However, Martínez-López, Villar, Castro and Tinajero (2021:24) sound a warning on the inherent risks associated with online platforms, such as the potential spread of misinformation or incomplete details, which can sow confusion amongst stakeholders. This reliance on informal communication can significantly impact organisational culture, particularly in terms of attitudes towards information sharing and core values regarding accuracy and reliability (Wong et al., 2021:256).

On the contrary, Webster and White (2010:691) opine that formal channels such as emails and official announcements offer a structured approach to communication. The perspective offered by Driskill (2018:6) challenges the notion that formal channels of communication are immune to challenges. Driskill (2018:6) opines that an over-reliance on traditional methods might signify a conservative organisational culture, prioritizing established modes of communication despite potential limitations. This perspective suggests that while formal channels offer structure, they are not immune to issues such as limited accessibility and stakeholder attention. This re-framing underscores the importance of critically evaluating communication strategies within Vocational Colleges, emphasizing the need for adaptability and openness to innovative approaches in addressing crisis communication challenges.

4.5.2 Discussion of findings on factors influencing organisational culture change

The findings of the study indicated that the accessibility of resources such as digital technology presents significant variables that influence organisational culture. This finding confirms the finding of Oosthuizen and Bodibe (2015:1), showing a disparity in access to digital technology at TVET colleges in South Africa. The inability to provide adequate digital resources to all faculty and students reflects a discrepancy in the college's commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for learning and advancement. This shows a fundamental factor that directly affects the core values of equity and inclusivity, which shapes the culture within these institutions. A similar finding was arrived at by Olatokun and Hassan (2019:101), indicating digital technology accessibility amongst academic staff in the TVET colleges in South Africa as a major factor of organisational culture change.

Creativity has been identified as a factor that influences organisational culture in the post pandemic period by the respondents. Spicer (2020:1737) found that the fundamental values and assumptions of various organisations give the impression of having shifted from exploration and creativity towards safety and

resilience. The post-pandemic period requires employees in organisation to be creative and innovative in embracing the digital landscape that has been fuelled by the pandemic. Climate encompasses the tangible elements that contribute to culture, such as policies, practices, procedures and routines, which in turn shape employee beliefs and values (Mbele, 2020:303).

However, it is crucial to note that modifications in procedures and the way things are done in an organisation are short-lived unless accompanied by fundamental changes in values, ways of thinking and problem-solving approaches. This is because resisting forces will simply renew their efforts to restore the old status quo (Beitler, 2005:160). To achieve sustainable organisational culture change, all the significant stakeholders must fully commit to the change process, incorporating variations in norms, values, policies and procedures to accommodate the new paradigm shift because all members of the organisational setup must become change agents, actively contributing to the spread of the new culture and engaging in constructive dialogue with their colleagues (Schneider, Brief and Guzzo, 1996:7). Therefore, it can be asserted that for effective organisational change to occur, creativity and organisational climate must be created, and must be monitored to ensure a dynamic and flexible culture that can easily adapt to changes.

The findings also identified supportive and effective leadership as an essential element that plays a pivotal role in the process of change, and to some extent facilitates cultural shifts. This is because management is accountable for the culture within the organisation, as well as the practices and values it promotes to establish the climate and culture (Ramakuela, 2018:234). Studies on organisational culture change suggest that certain leadership traits, such as the level of involvement of subordinates in decision-making, have a positive influence on the acceptance of culture change (Masilela and Mncube, 2017:54; Meyiwa and Khan, 2020:687). On the other hand, the failure by management to engage all stakeholders and involve the inputs in the implementation of culture change will result in resistance to change, as indicated in the findings

of Gumbo and Mhlanga (2017:25). To successfully lead change, management must not only align their respective parts of the organisation with the change but also be the role-models of the new organisational culture, in addition to communicating the new norms to the employees.

In addition, the findings revealed that incorporating flexible methods of content delivery can significantly shape the organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. The findings of Meyiwa and Khan (2020:6) concur that persistent challenges with technological equipment and work resources hinder institutions' adaptation to new modes of content delivery, thus impacting organisational culture. These hurdles signify a cultural struggle to embrace technological advancements and innovation, potentially fostering a sense of frustration and resistance amongst staff. Moreover, the inability to overcome these challenges may lead to a culture of stagnation and inefficiency, hindering the organisation's ability to meet evolving educational demands and maintain competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment, as highlighted by Mavimbela and Mncube (2018:1).

Despite these factors, efforts by the organisation to cater to the teaching and learning needs of employees demonstrate a commitment to addressing the evolving educational system. However, divergent views on the effectiveness of adapting and improving content delivery methods suggest a need for clearer communication and training to ensure staff awareness, commitment and engagement with change, which is in line with the findings of other studies (Ndhlovu and Letseka, 2016:186; Van Staden and Masinga, 2020:1). Conflicting perspectives on flexible content delivery methods can create communication gaps within the institution. While some acknowledge proactive measures, others perceive a lack of staff awareness. This discord may impact organisational culture by fostering uncertainty and highlighting the need for improved communication strategies to align staff expectations with institutional goals. Gumbo and Mhlanga (2017:25) indicate the importance of robust training programs and transparent communication strategies to facilitate the

successful implementation of flexible delivery approaches and foster a culture of adaptability. Mncayi and Singh (2021:62) indicate that a stagnant content delivery environment and resistance to change underscore the necessity for proactive measures to foster innovation and agility within Vocational Colleges. This highlights a cultural need for adaptability and responsiveness to meet evolving educational demands and maintain competitiveness in the modern environment.

4.6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. To achieve the objectives of the study, a qualitative method was adapted. The collected data were analysed thematically following the inductive analysis approach. The biographical information of the respondents was discussed in this chapter. In addition, the chapter presented the analyses on the challenges and factors that influence organisational culture change in the post-pandemic period at the selected vocational colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. The following chapter presents the main findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the empirical analysis.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the change in organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at two selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal. The previous chapters provided the overview of the study; discussed and evaluated the literature relevant for the study; discussed the research methodology that was used to gather the primary data of the study; and provided an analysis and discussion of the results of the study. Therefore, this chapter provides summary of the key findings emanating from the empirical analysis of the results, provides an overall conclusion of the study, proffers key recommendations based on the findings of the study and suggests guidelines for future studies.

5.2 Summary of the key findings based on the objectives of the study

The following are the key findings based on the objectives of the study:

5.2.1 To examine the key factors influencing the change in organisational culture at the selected vocational colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

In relation to the factors that influenced organisational culture change in the post- pandemic period, respondents emphasised that digital technologies, which were swiftly adopted during the pandemic and continue being used in the post-pandemic period, changed the way in which work is being done and communication occurs in organisations. In addition, the availability of resources was crucial in shaping the culture in the post-pandemic period, although respondents mentioned that their colleges were not prepared for the culture change which required investments in resources such as computers,

software and the availability of financial resources to migrate to a digital-infused culture. Communication in the post-pandemic period ensured that the employees were on the same page in relation to new working procedures, methods, tools and values. Furthermore, the findings indicate that teamwork enables employees to navigate and cope with changes in the post-pandemic period. Leadership was also cited as captains of change who bear the responsibilities of breaking the old culture and embracing the new organisational culture. Moreover, the findings emphasise that offering an organisational climate which enhances innovation and creativity enabled employees to come up with new ideas, values and norms.

5.2.2 To establish the challenges associated with the change in organisational culture at the selected vocational colleges

The respondents cited several challenges that were associated with the change in organisational culture at the selected colleges. Resistance to change was one of the challenges as employees preferred the norms of the pre-pandemic era. In addition, difficulties with change were highlighted as employees lack digital skills and knowledge to be productive in a digital-infused culture. The findings further reveal that employee lacked adequate training to cope with the change, and there was inadequacy in team building to ensure that the team was bonding and sharing the same values as well as norms. Furthermore, the respondents revealed that there was a challenge in policy implementation as employees were not aware of some of the policies and there was no consistency in policy implementation. Furthermore, respondents indicated that the leadership did not foster engagement through involvement and inclusiveness of ideas from employees on how to flow and transition smoothly in the post-pandemic period.

5.3 Conclusion

In a nutshell, the aim and objectives of the study were achieved. The aim of the study was to explore the change in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-

Natal. The post-COVID-19 period is characterised by organisational culture change in the education system due to digitalisation and the impact of the pandemic. Several studies confirm that the post-pandemic period is characterised by changes in the design of work as one knows it and increased digitalisation, especially in the education sector (Dhlamini, 2020:248; Foss, 2021:270; Mikusova, Vrdoljak-Raguz, Krestova and Klabusayova, 2023:2277). Change is inevitable. However, organisational culture change in the post-pandemic period at the selected colleges faced challenges concerning employee training, team-building, lack of leadership support, policy implementation and resistance to change. In addition, the study further explored the factors that influenced organisational culture change in the post-pandemic period and found that digital technologies, leadership support, communication, resources availability, teamwork, competencies, creativity, lifelong learning and climate, as well as methods of flexible content delivery, were amongst the factors that influenced culture change at the colleges.

5.4 Recommendations of the study

The study proffers the following recommendations based on the findings:

5.4.1 Employee training

The vocational colleges should provide training to their employees. Employee training equips employees with the necessary skills and knowledge that enables them to handle and cope with the change effectively. The findings indicated that the training provided was not adequate. Therefore, well-designed and comprehensive training should be provided for employees to be able to use digital technologies, which are more prevalent in content delivery and communication in the educational sector.

5.4.2 Provide team-building activities

Management at vocational colleges should provide more robust team-building initiatives and activities to their employees, teams and departments. The findings revealed that there was inadequate team building. Team-building

activities are crucial in ensuring that all employees are subscribing to the same values and norms, which is critical in organisational culture change. In addition, team-building activities reinforce the core values, norms and vision essential for the organisation.

5.4.3 Improve communication

Management at vocational colleges should enhance their communication in both directions, up and down the chain of command. Organisation culture change is supported by open communication from both ends through various platforms such as meetings, memos and informal discussions. In addition, an atmosphere where employees feel free to air their views, ideas and receive feedback is an essential part of communication in relation to organisational culture change.

5.4.4 Providing adequate resources

Management at vocational colleges should provide adequate resources in terms of finance, technology and other resources that support the culture change in the organisation. The post-COVID-19 era is characterised by digitalisation and the re-design of work, which requires employees to have tablets and laptops to enable them to be able to work in flexible locations, deliver their content online and communicate with students. In addition, applications and tools that are now used in the educational sector, such as learning management systems, should be provided to employees so that they can practically embrace the change.

5.4.5 Supportive leadership

Leadership at the vocational colleges should be supportive and be at the forefront of driving the change train. Leadership should lead by example through practising the desired values and norms, be clear in their communication, lend a helping hand and provide resources and guidance through the culture change processes and phases.

5.4.6 Enhancing policies awareness in the organisation

Management at vocational colleges should enhance the awareness of various policies amongst the employees. The findings revealed that policies existed, but some employees were not aware of them. Therefore, policy awareness and education campaigns for employees should be initiated and employees should be given copies of the policies available in the organisation. Understanding of policies instils a culture of clarity, consistency and trust within the organisation, thereby enhancing morale and productivity. In addition, employees operate using the same standards, procedures and systems as prescribed in the policies, thereby instilling similar values and norms.

5.4.7 Managing resistance to change

Management in vocational colleges should manage and deal with resistance to change through fostering open communication, transparency and active engagement with all stakeholders involved. In addition, management should clearly articulate the reasons for change, addressing concerns and involving employees in the decision-making process in order to create a sense of ownership and empowerment that helps to mitigate resistance.

5.4.8 Fostering a positive climate in the organisation

Management should create a positive climate in the organisation that influences employees to contest the status quo and think outside the box to come up with new solutions, methods and values.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study lie in its scope and research approach. The study was conducted covering only Umbumbulu and Appelsbosch Coastal Colleges which are in KwaZulu-Natal. This was due to the available resources and timeframe allocated for the study. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of the broader population or applicable to other colleges in other provinces, highlighting the importance of caution in interpreting and applying the results of the study. In addition, the study used a qualitative research

approach to gather data from 20 participants out of 137 through using interviews. The adoption and use of a mixed method approach could have provided more perceptions on the challenges and factors influencing culture change in the post-COVID-19 period. However, the identified limitations did not compromise the quality of the results.

5.6 Suggestions for future studies

Future studies can focus on assessing the role of training and development programs in promoting a culture of resilience, innovation and adaptability in the face of future disruptions, which is a crucial area of focus for enhancing organisational performance and sustainability in vocational colleges in the post-COVID-19 period. In addition, researchers may investigate the long-term impact of technology adoption and digitalisation on organisational culture in the vocational colleges.

5.7 Contribution of the study

A study investigating the change in organisational culture in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period at selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal has made significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge and provides valuable insights for educational institutions. The study enhanced the academic literature corpus by offering a comprehensive analysis of how the pandemic has influenced organisational culture and providing an understanding of the factors and challenges faced by institutions in adapting to the new circumstances. Furthermore, the findings of the study provided practical recommendations for colleges in KwaZulu-Natal, assisting them in navigating the post-pandemic landscape, enhancing change acceptance and embracement, strengthening leadership capabilities and promoting innovation and collaboration within their organisations.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Instructions

1. This interview comprises of two sections.
2. The researcher will complete the form during the interview.
3. Please mark (X) to the relevant precoded response in section A.
4. Please mark (X) for one response only.
5. Please do not leave any statement blank.

Section A: Biographical information

1. Please indicate your gender.

1.1	Male	1
1.2	Female	2
1.3	Prefer not to mention	3

2. Please indicate your age group

2.1	21-25 years	1
2.2	26-30 years	2
2.3	31-35 years	3
2.4	36-40 years	4
2.5	41-45 years	5
2.6	46- 50 years	6
2.7	> 51 years	7

3. Please indicate your racial group.

3.1	African Black	1
3.2	White	2
3.3	Colored	3
3.4	Indian	4
3.5	Other	5

4. Please indicate how long you have been with the organization.

4.1	0-4 years	1
4.2	5-9 years	2
4.3	10-14 years	3
4.4	15-19 years	4
4.5	20-24 years	5
4.6	>25 years	6

5. Please indicate your qualification.

5.1	Doctorate	1
5.2	Masters	2
5.3	Degree	3
5.4	Diploma	4
5.5	Certificate	5
5.6	Secondary	6

6. Please indicate your positional level in the organogram.

6.1	Principal	1
6.2	Deputy Principal	2
6.3	HOD	3
6.4	Senior Lecturer	4
6.5	Junior Lecturer	5
6.6	Professional Staff	6

SECTION B

7. To establish the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges

	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
7.1	According to your point of view, do you think have now adjusted to the changing environment and adapted to the challenges faced in the new era	
7.2	Did the management come with the strategic plan on how to optimise and ensure the efficient implementation of change in organisational culture post COVID-19? Please elaborate	
7.3	With regards to socialisation, what do you think are the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addresses within an organisation that were exposed by COVID-19	
7.4	How is the mission of the organisation being expressed in post COVID-19 period	
7.5	Do you think organisation leadership is doing everything possible to address challenges experienced during the pandemic era? Please elaborate	
7.6	How was the information spread among employees during the crisis's era?	

8. To examine the key factors influencing change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

	QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
8.1	Do you think the organisation have adequate accessibility to digital technology? Please elaborate	
8.2	What is the plan of the organisation in provision of affordable resources to employees from disadvantaged group	
8.3	Do you think that policies are in place to ensure accessibility and affordability for employees within the organisation? Please elaborate	
8.4	Does the organisation have a lifelong plan for employees post COVID-19? Please elaborate	
8.5	Do you believe that the organisation incorporated more flexible methods of delivering contents that increase accessibility to employees?	

APPENDIX B

Appendix B



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Exploring the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 period at Vocational Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Hazel Lizzy Ndelu, BCom Honors Human Resources Management

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Dr R. Utete (Doctorate in Industrial Relations and Doctorate in Human Resources Management)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

The study explores the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 period at higher education institutions. Organisations have a tendency of organisational inertia to resist change and maintain a status quo. Organisations that are subject to inertia become obstinate and find it difficult to adapt to internal environmental change demands. COVID-19 impressively shook all institutions with a forcefully shutdown and culture change implementation. The advent of COVID-19 pandemic caused institutions to remain temporarily closed. Academics and support staff had to make necessary arrangements to work remotely. Remote working took over. Hence, this study intends to explore the change of organisational culture on employees in the post COVID-19 period at higher education institutions. The study will adopt a qualitative approach. A sample size comprises of 30 employees at the selected vocational colleges in higher education institution in KwaZulu-Natal. Selected employees will be interviewed face-to-face according to their availability.

Greeting: Good day

Introduce yourself to the participant: I am a first-year master's student at DUT doing research for my Master's Degree in Human Resources Management.

Invitation to the potential participant: I would like to invite you to participate in the research study.

Outline of the Procedures: After receiving an approval letter from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) at DUT, I will approach the Rector to meet with employees (respondents). Participants who would like to participate in this study will be given an informed consent form to sign and they will be given the interview questions. The target population is vocational colleges comprising 137 employees. A sample size of 30

was considered as appropriate. Purposive sampling technique will be used based, and I will assess who will provide the best data to accomplish the study's objectives. Unstructured interview questions (Annexure B) will be used to collect data. I will hand deliver the interview questions to the managers of the institutions with the covering letter (Annexure A). An appointment will be made in order to interview participants at their convenient time. The interview will take approximately 30-50 minutes to complete. A copy of the findings would be given to the manager of the institution of each college.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: You will not experience any risks or discomforts when participating in this study.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can at any time, without coercion, withdraw participation and consent in the study and research will be terminated with immediate effect, if such circumstance arises.

Benefits: The findings of this study will help Human Resource personnel of each college by providing recommendations on how they can manage change of organisational culture.

Remuneration: You will not be remunerated for participating in this study.

Costs of the Study: You will not be expected to make any payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: For ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, no identifiable information about you that will be required during collection and dissemination of the data.

Results: A summary of the key findings will be disseminated to you and your management.

Research-related Injury: You will not experience any injury during your participation in this study as this study is not associated with injuries.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings: The data will be retained on a safety-locked cabinet and electronic copies will be stored on a password-protected computer for a period of five years. After five years all hard copies will be shredded, and electronic copies will be permanently deleted.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: (Supervisor:) Please contact the researcher (060 754 6860 / 21642540@dut4life.ac.za), my supervisor (uteter@gmail.com) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support, Dr V Govender – researchdirector@dut.ac.za

APPENDIX C

Appendix C



CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Exploring the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 period at Coastal Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal

Names of Researcher/s: Hazel Ndelu

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Hazel Ndelu about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____.
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature / Right

I, _____ (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

GATE KEEPER PERMISSION

06 July 2022

Umbumbulu Campus
50051 Mfundi Mngadi Dr
KwaMakhutha
PO Box 1795
4126

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Mr S Zondi

My name is Hazel Ndelu, a Master's student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves Exploring the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 period at Coastal Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal

I am hereby seeking your consent to do a research study in your institution.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me / email: 21642540@dut4life.ac.za. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

H Ndelu
Durban University of Technology

GATE KEEPER PERMISSION

06 July 2022

Appelsbosch Campus
1621 Appelsbosch Hospital Road
Private Bag x202
Ozwatini
3242

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Mr L Gwala

My name is Hazel Ndelu, a Master's student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves Exploring the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 period at Coastal Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges in Kwazulu-Natal

I am hereby seeking your consent to do a research study at your institution.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me / email: 21642540@dut4life.ac.za. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

H Ndelu
Durban University of Technology

APPENDIX E

Appendix E

EDITING LETTER

696 Clare Road

Clare Estate

Durban

4091

8 October 2024

To: Whom it may concern

Editing of Thesis: HL Ndelu (21642540)

Exploring the change of Organisational Culture in the post Covid-19 pandemic period at selected Vocational Colleges in Kwa-Zulu Natal

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned thesis has been language edited. The requisite grammatical conventions have been met/recommended. Suggestions have been made to the candidate where necessary.

Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.

Regards

MP MATHEWS

Lecturer and Language Editor

Mercimathews4@gmail.com

083 676 4778

APPENDIX F



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

UMBUMBULU CAMPUS

50051 Mfundu Mngadi Drive, KwaMakhutha . P O Box 1795, Amanzimtoti, 4126
Tel: (031) 905 7200 . Fax: (031) 905 1472 . Email: umbumbulu.ckzbul@feta.gov.za
www.coastalkzn.co.za



To : Prof JK Adam

From: Z.S . Zondi

Date: 06 October 2023

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir/Madam

This is to certify that Ms H. Ndelu has been granted access to Umbumbulu Campus of Coastal KZN TVET College. To conduct her research.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to call 0825994492 or e-mail zondis.ckzbul@kzn.edu.za

Thank You

Zondi Z.S





higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

APPELSBOSCH CAMPUS

1621 Appelsbosch Hospital Road, Ozwatini - Private Bag x202, Ozwatini, 3242
Tel: (032) 294 8400 - Fax: (032) 294 8410 - Email: lgwalag@yahoo.com
www.coastalkzn.co.za



To : Prof JK Adam
From: Mr M Dunywa
Date: 16 October 2023

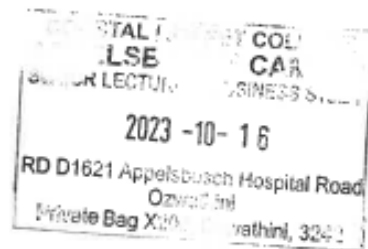
APPROVAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

Dear sir/madam

This is to certify that Ms H Ndelu has been granted access to conduct her research at Appelsbosch TVET College.

For any further enquiries, please contact Mr Dunywa to 0685969042 or email nkosidunywa@gmail.com

Regards
Mr M Dunywa



APPENDIX G

Section A: Biographical information

	1. Gender	2. Age group	3. Racial group	4. Years in an Organisation	5. Qualification	6. Position
Participant 1	1	3	1	2	4	6
Participant 2	2	5	1	3	3	5
Participant 3	1	4	1	2	3	5
Participant 4	1	7	1	4	3	3
Participant 5	1	5	1	4	3	4
Participant 6	1	6	1	3	4	4
Participant 7	2	7	2	3	3	4
Participant 8	2	5	1	3	4	6
Participant 9	1	4	1	2	3	4
Participant 10	2	4	1	4	4	6
Participant 11	2	4	1	4	4	6
Participant 12	1	4	1	3	3	5
Participant 13	2	5	1	3	3	5
Participant 14	2	5	1	3	3	5

Participant 15	1	4	1	3	3	5
Participant 16	2	5	1	3	3	5
Participant 17	2	5	1	2	4	6
Participant 18	1	5	1	3	4	6

SECTION B

7. To establish the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
7.1	According to your point of view, do you think you have now adjusted to the changing environment and adapted to the challenges faced in the new era?	<i>No, there are still challenges. The education environment needs a lot of resources. And we have not reached that stage</i>	<i>I can say we have not yet adjusted because covid affected us a lot. Ever since the Covid-19 we have not been able to come back completely</i>	<i>We are still behind. We still must work hard; we need resources in terms of data etc.</i>	<i>Not absolutely, between 60-70%.</i>	<i>I guess so, I think we have tried by all means to adjust, in terms of how we teach, communicate. On the second level of being a manager, we have tried using our days technology. We are really trying but the challenges are vast, but we must survive</i>
7.2	Did the management come up with the strategic plan on how to optimise and ensure the efficient implementation of change in organisational culture in the post COVID-19? Please elaborate	<i>No, have not. I think the reason behind because the COVID-19 was something new. So, for them to come up with strategies they need financial support, so that if they are making plans, it would be supported</i>	<i>Yes, to us they did come with a strategic plan whereby we were given over time, so that we can try and finish the work that we were not able to finish during the cause of covid-19. They sometimes give us long hours to work. So, they did try</i>	<i>In this case, during covid there were plan in term of being able to communicate with our students. But post we went back to normal so far nothing has changed. Even if covid strike back will face challenges again</i>	<i>Yes, we are implementing visual / online teachings (hybrid) of which we trained staff to use our meetings. Like zoom meetings, even though we are not that deep in it. All staff especially academics do have laptops now.</i>	<i>Even though I am new in management and at lower level. In term of strategies the management of the college have tried because previously some of the resources were not available, in enabling the staff to conduct those meetings virtually. In a sense of not having router, even if you have laptops but network coverage was problematic. The management tried, they came up with strategies to keep the college moving</i>

						and ensuring that teaching and learning is going on.
7.3	With regards to socialisation, what do you think are the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addresses within an organisation that were exposed by COVID-19	<i>I think the gaps in term of covid-19 it showed that we are not united. It even exposed the fact that there are rich and poor people. Those are the gaps being exposed by COVID-19</i>	<i>Our environment I am not sure it's because our institution is small. We were able to support each other, so there were no gaps</i>	<i>In our case the congestion with the places (accommodation). Lockdown did help because numbers had to be reduced. In both sides students and the staff</i>	<i>It's just to learn to accept each other and support one another especially those who were victims of COVID-19 including our community</i>	<i>In terms of how we socialised previously we were not paying attention to anything, it was all about interactions, meeting friends and getting together with everyone without taking any precautions. With COVID-19 and restrictions we were in a way as society, we learned a lot and we established that there are somethings that are important to us regardless of it might cause some dangers to our lives and our loved ones. So, there were lot of lessons taken from what COVID-19 came up with. So, in the level of organisation now, currently things have change in the way of cleanliness in the college, having to sanitise, even ourselves as lecturers as much as we love getting groups with student. But with COVID-19 we have learned that we need to pay attention to a lot of things. Maybe I am not being specific, but it</i>

						<p><i>opened eyes to us as an organisation.</i></p> <p><i>We used to have a culture of meetings personal but during covid-19 we were exposed, in a sense that we did not have necessary resources to have plan B when we have to meet. So that caused challenge a little bit. Now I think the college management even when they are doing budget, they need to budget on such things (to provide resources) for coming unforeseen future</i></p>
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7.4	<p>How is the mission of the organisation being expressed in post COVID-19 period</p>	<p><i>The organisation puts students first in term of performance and in their studies. On employees' side, they try to ensure that there is a better relationship between students and academics as well as support staff</i></p>	<p><i>They did a lot, they even tried to get more staff members. Since some of our staff have chronic deceases since they were not allowed to come. They did try to close that gap. Including our students getting tutors to cover the work from behind</i></p>	<p><i>I rely don't know. I didn't see any change. Things are still as the same as previously</i></p>	<p><i>We know now how to protect each other. There are now aligned with the pandemic. We continue to follow covid protocols. We still maintain those precautions</i></p>	<p><i>Covid-19 posed a huge challenge. We are calling ourselves a pioneering centre of excellence. One of our values is to ensure that we become an asset in terms of assisting the community. But with COVID-19 it has posed the challenge first that now we have to minimise the numbers to allow spaces for social distancing. The part of the mission is to enable the students into having the skills that we are providing. Yet, COVID-19 is there saying you cannot take these students now. Meaning if our goal was to meet let say 2500 in the next two years, now COVID-19 have forced us to settle for less. So, COVID-19 exposed our mission to less situation</i></p>
7.5	<p>Do you think organisation leadership is doing everything possible to address challenges experienced during the pandemic era?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>Yes, I believe they have educational program where they try to teach students cleanliness and take care of themselves. And also, for students to be few in each class for social distance</i></p>	<p><i>I don't think they did everything possible because even the management themselves they were affected by the situation. Sometimes they would come with the solutions to the problems and end up not being implemented. Reason</i></p>	<p><i>There is nothing. Some of the staff were provided with laptops but with no Wi-Fi connectivity. So, challenges are still there</i></p>	<p><i>Not 100% of those challenges but other we did try</i></p>	<p><i>Honestly, no. I don't think we are doing everything possible. One of the reasons is that I don't know whether it's the tendency or expecting amnesia. Now we seem to have forgotten that COVID-19 is still there and does exist. Some of the activities that were</i></p>

			<i>being some of staff members being tasked to do certain thing would no longer come because they themselves have been affected by the virus and had to be in doors. Even if they wanted to resolve some issues it was beyond their control.</i>			<i>rightfully there, that were assisting get rid of COVID-19 it seems like there are not being enforced anymore. So, maybe that is why I am saying its either the management that is slacking and taking for granted but during the time we were doing everything possible but now I am not sure whether we are waiting for it to strike again, and I am not happy about it.</i>
7.6	How was the information spread among employees during the crisis's era?	<i>Social networks e.g. WhatsApp</i>	<i>We have staff WhatsApp groups, then the management would escalate the messages to the group. And us lecturers send messages to students through the groups</i>	<i>Social networks, WhatsApp groups. Post we were given devices (laptops)</i>	<i>It was spread in many ways, formal and informal e.g. Emails and WhatsApp.</i>	<i>That is one area that I believe did well. Our marketing was always there to provide the information. Statistics updates during that time, our emails were working. Even though we cannot run away from the fact that covid-19 took our colleagues and our beloved ones, but we were well informed with such information.</i>

8. To examine the key factors influencing change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
8.1	<p>Do you think the organisation have adequate accessibility to digital technology?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>No, I still believe we are behind. We still need computers in terms of technology. Upgrades to go hand in hand with the now adays systems</i></p>	<p><i>They are trying I can say, they are getting there because previously we didn't have IT staff in our campuses, we used to help each other as colleagues. But now we do have IT guys so that when we encounter any problems, they are there to assist for the things to be much easier.</i></p>	<p><i>No, maybe even our campus is based in a place with loadshedding, with poor network. Limitations also are there. These issues are not even properly addressed, yet communication is the key, more especially in these times of crises</i></p>	<p><i>No, we are still in shortage of resources due to financial constraints. But I believe that if they communicate with us regarding these things. Things might have been even better, since communication is the key factor.</i></p>	<p><i>Out of 10 say 60%. I am not sure I would say they are trying. The management have tried. But as the college personnel they cannot be 100% place, but they have tried. But at the moment I feel that we are at 60% because even the lectures not all of them have not laptop. They don't have routers even if they have there is no data provisions. But maybe that comes with the challenges in our institution which is financial constrains</i></p>
8.2	<p>What is the plan of the organisation in provision of affordable resources to employees from disadvantaged group?</p>	<p><i>I am not sure. The college is still struggling / bad financial state, so I don't believe they are plans</i></p>	<p><i>As a staff they used to get sponsors and now we have laptops as the staff. Support staff is also included in sponsorship.</i></p>	<p><i>I don't know. It hard were once given laptops but right now I am not sure if there are working. Because there is no information to download in terms of e-books etc</i></p>	<p><i>We are planning to continue learning to train staff members through workshops. Even teachings to be more integrative. By using COVID-19 as graphs, maths, research projects etc to integrate our teachings</i></p>	<p><i>The college itself from where I am standing has an umbrella approach when they are looking at the staff. I don't think they have such a thing as for people coming from disadvantaged group hence having to get different preference. But in terms of providing</i></p>

						<p>resources, we are all having an equal opportunity, even if it is a first come first serve. But the opportunity would have been open to everyone whether you are coming from advantaged or disadvantaged group.</p> <p>It cannot be enough. We are also encouraged to share</p>
8.3	<p>Do you think that policies are in place to ensure accessibility and affordability for employees within the organisation?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p>Yes, I do believe so. I believe they do have policies which are able to support in terms of how we have access to resources and to afford other usable things needed within the organisation. During these times teamwork is required and explain certain things, as no one can be able to work as an individual, with a lot of stress and challenges</p>	<p>They are trying, they are doing their best</p>	<p>We are still behind, and it's impossible.</p>	<p>Yes, we have policies. Health and safety policies</p>	<p>Yes, policies are available the only challenge could be that they are not ready for employees. The problem is maybe that the employees only seek the challenge when they have a challenge and seek clarity. To see what the policy is saying. Maybe that might be a challenge. It is there.</p>
8.4	<p>Does the organisation have a lifelong plan for employees post COVID-19?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p>No, I don't think they do. I believe they do not give employees opportunities that they require to continue to work for long</p>	<p>They do because ever since they we have trainings. People are encouraged to further their education</p>	<p>No, I am not sure it has not been communicated</p>	<p>Not lifelong. It's a contingency plan but all this is caused by financial constraints</p>	<p>I don't know I am just hoping that they do. They do have a plan for those who were victims during covid-19. Yes, there are offices where you can get support counselling</p>

8.5	Do you believe that the organisation incorporated more flexible methods of delivering contents that increase accessibility to employees?	<i>No, except we are still struggling in terms of technological equipment and work resources</i>	<i>Yes, I do believe, they are doing their best to ensure that we do not complain. They do try to provide us with teaching and learning needs</i>	<i>I see no change everything is still the same as previously</i>	<i>Yes, since we are trying our best</i>	<i>No, I don't think so. Even though there are policies ready for staff to access them, but employees are not encouraged and or not trained that the policies are not for the management but also for the staff as a whole. The staff do not have enough knowledge on how to access policies. We only look at it when you did something. They do not bother to read them.</i>
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SECTION B

7. To establish the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
7.1	According to your point of view, do you think you have now adjusted to the changing environment and adapted to the challenges faced in the new era?	<i>No, not 100% but we are there. Its just that in term of the stage, maybe its because the technology is not available in the college.</i>	<i>Yes, we have. We are adjusting, we have recovered from post trauma.</i>	<i>Yes, we were able to overcome the challenges.</i>	<i>No, I don't think we have adapted in the new era. I think COVID-19 have exposed us in many thinks in terms of technology and or the system that we are using. It is outdated and the COVID-19 is one of the things that we can use in terms of checking whether we are up to date with the teaching system. On how the teaching and learning work. We were very exposed since we were not even able to teach. We were not even able to use online system. So even after that we were not able to improve by learning from the previous mistakes. We are not even ready as to when the COVID-19 strike again how will we cope. Reason I say so is because in private schools there were not much affected, they were able to quickly move to online and students continued to learn. Yet in our institutions we are at a higher</i>	<i>Yes, we have adapted and adjusted. Some of the employee and the management were working from home. Supervision was limited, yet more communication channels was required.</i>

					<i>level, yet we couldn't even teach our students because of the facilities. Our system is out-date. We are using the old system.</i>	
7.2	<p>Did the management come up with the strategic plan on how to optimise and ensure the efficient implementation of change in organisational culture in the post COVID-19?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<i>Yes, well they did provide some with laptops that we are working with. The internet,</i>	<i>Yes, they did. Because before COVID-19 nobody saw it to consider as important that one we need each other. There are a number of resources that we need as an organisation. But COVID-19 brought that to the management's attention that we need to provide more resources, so it was a challenge</i>	<i>Yes, they did try. They implemented changes. They did put in place like we now have separated offices, unlike before whereby we were squashed together</i>	<i>Not that much. During covid they tried to minimise the teaching methods. Because we were limited in terms of teaching methods and facilitation system due to the pandemic. So, this challenge was not only for our management but National. After the pandemic we were back to normal and able to accommodate maybe about 100 students in one class. During the pandemic we had as little as maybe 20 students in one class and were able pay more attention to each and evert student. Nothing much has changed except going back to normal</i>	<i>During the period the management employed new staff more especially specialising in screening and sanitising as early as from the main gate</i>
7.3	<p>With regards to socialisation, what do you think are the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addresses within an organisation that were exposed by COVID-19</p>	<i>On my side, the lack technology improvement as such. Here it's kind of non-existence. We are still far trying in the post pandemic.</i>	<i>I will start with the interaction between academics and students because that what matters the most. Which is we being on the lockdown, and everything was going on. At that we were pressed with time. Students had to cover the syllabus. So, what</i>	<i>Not discovering people at the right time that they are affected by the covid</i>	<i>The support that we had was only about the facilities in terms of how to conduct teaching and learning in any situation we encounter, and we also had PPN's, and PPE's.</i>	<i>I think our college needs to emphasize and implement more methods of operating all staff not for emergency only.</i>

			<p><i>we identified as most important is that we were not able to communicate with students. Some had no smart phones where we can maybe teach them virtually. Even when they came back, we were allocated so little time because the organisation is huge, and all programmes had to be accommodated in one day. We could do nothing at the same time with the rules enforcing adjustments. We needed access to the internet, smart phones and or laptops so that at least even if we had that minimal time where we can be with students, then we can also continue virtually. That is the main gap that we have identified. We need some sort of maybe subsidy for students to have data and maybe if students can be afforded with tablets, so that both academics and students could communicate easily outside of emotional time. That is another main gap that</i></p>			
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			<p><i>we have identified. The academics themselves since the college didn't have any Wi-Fi connection where for example, some institutions had connectivity as soon as the COVID-19 strike but, in our case, it's different. We only had to connect only when we are in offices using cable network and is not accessible to everyone and at the time, we didn't even have laptops. Those who had were their personal laptops for their personal use. Another gap identified is distance whereby we were not able to support each other personal but had to contact them to find out if they are ok. This was very frustrating</i></p>			
7.4	<p>How is the mission of the organisation being expressed in post COVID-19 period</p>	<p><i>We are still pioneering for excellence, and we are still managing it</i></p>	<p><i>I would say we are doing almost fine because after the pandemic we were able to resume our normal numbers after were adjusted due to the covid. That benefited the syllabus coverage time frame. We are now able</i></p>	<p><i>We are still striving for excellence which is most important for our college</i></p>	<p><i>The strategy and mission are still the same that is what guide us to achieve excellence. Obviously, we do have the support from the management in every area regardless of the pandemic. Gate support even with the students' requirements and in every area. The main purpose</i></p>	<p><i>The college is still striving for excellence and is implementing more remote methods in assisting the plan of the college in introducing online applications. What seems to be a challenge is a lack of adequate resources and team</i></p>

			<i>to achieve and actualise the organisations goals.</i>		<i>is for teaching and learning to continue.</i>	<i>building activities to encourage teamwork and mutual effort towards organisational mission and values.</i>
7.5	<p>Do you think organisation leadership is doing everything possible to address challenges experienced during the pandemic era?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<i>Yes, they provided whatever to their possibility. Whenever the funds were available, they do what is needed.</i>	<i>Yes, I will say they are. The most problem we have here is water. And the pandemic taught us to bring our tools for us survive. As we always needed water for hand wash. Water tanks were also supplied in case we do not have some there are some means. Solar power so that if we are on load-shedding we can still function</i>	<i>Yes, they are trying</i>	<i>Yes, they are doing everything possible, even though they won't satisfy all the need. Since they are also employees like us and get support system financially from the state/government. So, we were asked to improvise and use what we have. They do try to prioritise the teaching and learning regardless, so that the college will not be affected in term of performance and its vision</i>	<i>I think for the students side the management did everything and they are ready with application methods and study procedures.</i>
7.6	<p>How was the information spread among employees during the crisis's era?</p>	<i>Posters, signs, communication through emails</i>	<i>They created WhatsApp groups and communicated via emails.</i>	<i>Through social media's</i>	<i>We were using the WhatsApp system, email system. This was the only way to communicate since we were not in the college due to the pandemic.</i>	<i>We were communicating through WhatsApp and emails</i>

8. To examine the key factors influencing change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10
8.1	<p>Do you think the organisation have adequate accessibility to digital technology?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>No, as I said we still have insufficient funds. So, there is no implementation as such except that for few they have tried and it's not easy with financial crisis.</i></p>	<p><i>It has improved because now we do have laptops, and we have internet access as much as its not accessible as we require but most of the offices not have internet access.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, some of us do have gadgets hoping the rest will get something in future to function properly</i></p>	<p><i>No, but they are trying because this year 2023 they bought laptops for senior students (not all of them) as well as for the staff members. We are hoping that if there is enough accessibilities we can even be able to everyone at once</i></p>	<p>50%</p>
8.2	<p>What is the plan of the organisation in provision of affordable resources to employees from disadvantaged group?</p>	<p><i>I don't know,</i></p>	<p><i>I wouldn't say its only about employees but it's about even the organisation itself. Because our organisation also comes from disadvantage community. Saying that if you look at where we are located, it's not in rich community. So, installing those solar panels was one of the ensuring that we have access to power supply, to ensure that even when we don't have electricity, but we have solar power. That is one of the plans we have.</i></p>	<p><i>I am not sure</i></p>	<p><i>The college does assist. The college has an agreement with UKZN as well as UNISA. Even for students they don't pay fees but get support from NSFAS.</i></p>	<p><i>Currently implementing Wi-Fi technology to assist to register students and employ staff. Implement solar system to assist with internet with network services so that we won't be affected</i></p>

8.3	<p>Do you think that policies are in place to ensure accessibility and affordability for employees within the organisation?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>Yes, they are ready they are available to the staff. We are normally called to the hall to introduce that new policy that have been implemented</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I will say that they are trying. Even though we still need the management's support in terms of culture transitioning</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I think they are in place. But as employees we need one another and spread information to everyone in order to cope</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I think they are in place</i></p>	<p><i>No comments</i></p>
8.4	<p>Does the organisation have a lifelong plan for employees post COVID-19?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>No, there is no lifelong plan maybe its floating along surviving. We are not told of any plan, yet as employees we are afraid of change. There is no support, leading to us being afraid to speak our minds in the post COVID-19.</i></p>	<p><i>As much as I wouldn't be sure because we are governed by a higher power that is above us. I am not sure what they are planning in the post COVID-19. But I think they have a contingency plan in place because they even maintain the staff since some were employed during the pandemic. They accommodated those people so that they will see continuity put on the table</i></p>	<p><i>I don't know</i></p>	<p><i>When I came to the college, I didn't have the teaching qualification. They provide for all the staff not only the teaching and learning. Every year the staff have to be trained so that there will be up to date about the program they are teaching and if there are any changes</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, college has IQMS which encourages employees to improve their qualifications in order for employees to be employed permanently. They are redeployed to Persal</i></p>
8.5	<p>Do you believe that the organisation incorporated more flexible methods of delivering contents that increase accessibility to employees?</p>	<p><i>Yes, they are trying it's just that the whole thing, looking at the financial state we are at. It's made things difficult, but the management have good intentions for the school</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, they do. We all have college emails. We are now able to receive emails. If they have any information to cascade, they send us emails.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes,</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, we do have internet</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, IT department ensures that they have access to emails during and after office hours and have access to information</i></p>

SECTION B

7. To establish the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 11	Participant 12	Participant 13	Participant 14	Participant 15
7.1	According to your point of view, do you think you have now adjusted to the changing environment and adapted to the challenges faced in the new era?	<i>Yes, we have. Even though we do not have enough resources. We are now able to even hold meetings online, something that we were not able to do before.</i>	<i>Yes, we have. We are now able even to work online, even though some of the thing needs us to be in person. We are unlike other institutions as they can fully work online. It's a bit hard in our side but trying</i>	<i>Yes, because I have been in the system for so long. I have been to many changes. Changes are not always easy, but you have to adapt.</i>	<i>No, because there is lack of resources due to funds</i>	<i>NO</i>
7.2	Did the management come up with the strategic plan on how to optimise and ensure the efficient implementation of change in organisational culture in the post COVID-19? Please elaborate	<i>Things are still the same as before the COVID strike</i>	<i>Things are still the same as before the COVID strike</i>	<i>No, because there were so many people that were on COVID leave. There was a big shortage of academics in the institution. There were groups of students sitting around, without lecturers. And those academics who came were over worked.</i>	<i>Yes, even though it is slow due to resource shortage caused by financial constraints. Academics were provided with laptops, but students were not given laptops. So its not easy to work</i>	<i>No, no developments have been put to place in terms of developing staff to be able to face the new era</i>
7.3	With regards to socialisation, what do you think are the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addresses	<i>We previously used to have large meetings in one room but now things have changed. Now the management hold</i>	<i>We no longer get more information, even announcements after the COVID. It is difficult now, as it is not like</i>	<i>Communication, that people should always understand that everybody is not the same. You can't people</i>	<i>Communication, during the pandemic we were using WhatsApp. but now we could find that they are still using it, and some of us have</i>	<i>None</i>

	within an organisation that were exposed by COVID-19	<i>meetings alone. We no longer get informed on time. Even if they send emails, it's not everyone who get them since only a few have access to emails.</i>	<i>previously when we get information in time</i>	<i>put everybody at the same place.</i>	<i>insufficient data and could not see messages. The problem is we no longer hold meetings that the main problem we have now.</i>	
7.4	How is the mission of the organisation being expressed in post COVID-19 period	<i>They are still striving for excellence, even though they are still teaching about COVID-19</i>	<i>It is the same as previously.</i>	<i>Just the same as before, nothing special.</i>	<i>College came up with strategies that are not yet being implemented due to resources</i>	<i>We dapped to having virtual meetings rather than physical</i>
7.5	Do you think organisation leadership is doing everything possible to address challenges experienced during the pandemic era? Please elaborate	<i>No, like cleaning. No one pays attention to cleanness. It's like it is not important within the organisation</i>	<i>No, it's not easy to answer the questions, because most of the things in our institution is a mess. They are not done properly</i>	<i>No, students were just sitting around without lecturers</i>	<i>No, I don't think so. We have a problem in the institution whereby incompetent people are being appointed. Yes, we were given laptops but were not given routers, so that we can be able to connect. Even students. The misuse of money is also a problem because at the end we are not able to achieve the institutions goals</i>	<i>Yes, we experience a high fail rate, and we were allowed to have overtime to push students</i>
7.6	How was the information spread among employees during the crisis's era?	<i>WhatsApp</i>	<i>WhatsApp</i>	<i>WhatsApp</i>	<i>WhatsApp</i>	<i>Virtual</i>

8. To examine the key factors influencing change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 11	Participant 12	Participant 13	Participant 14	Participant 15
8.1	Do you think the organisation have adequate accessibility to digital technology? Please elaborate	<i>If we can get funds, everything will be fine because currently we are having financial constraints.</i>	<i>If we can get funds, everything will be fine because currently we are having financial constraints, and the school is not able to do most of the things</i>	<i>Yes, every lecturer has got a laptop now</i>	<i>No, I think we are still using outdated system due to lack of resources, and this leads to lack of communication during these times of era</i>	<i>No, we are not supplied with resources or capacitated which makes things even more difficult in terms of communication</i>
8.2	What is the plan of the organisation in provision of affordable resources to employees from disadvantaged group?	<i>There is no plan at the moment, since we have financial problems</i>	<i>There is no plan for now</i>	<i>They gave each one of us laptops. And I am not sure if there is an ongoing plan for future</i>	<i>There is no plan</i>	<i>Not that I know off</i>
8.3	Do you think that policies are in place to ensure accessibility and affordability for employees within the organisation? Please elaborate	<i>We do have policies, but those policies were never implemented</i>	<i>Yes, we do have policies</i>	<i>Yes, they have e.g. we have psychologists available to assist if we have a problem. But we need a supportive leadership that will be responsible in ensuring the everyday workflow activities</i>	<i>I am not sure of that, it's only the office with the information. Transparency and teamwork are the key to achieve the organisational goals</i>	<i>No, I think we need support from the leadership in terms of ensuring that policies are explained mostly in these times of confusion</i>
8.4	Does the organisation have a lifelong plan for	<i>Not that I know off. Since the situation we can not even be sure that it could</i>	<i>Not that, on that side its bad. We are not even being told about it as</i>	<i>No, yet in this 4th industrial revolution we</i>	<i>I don't think so, we have a lot of problem due to finances and</i>	<i>No, nothing has been presented thus far. We need an organisation that</i>

	<p>employees post COVID-19?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>	<p><i>happen. Since there is not enough communication we are in dark. More especially to support staff. Preference for not is being given to academics</i></p>	<p><i>thing mostly change and with a lack of information being spread to all employees properly. Preference for not is being given to academics</i></p>	<p><i>need to be creative to improve the way of work</i></p>	<p><i>misuse of it. Some of the staff contracts are being terminated</i></p>	<p><i>will encourage creativity, so that we can be able to come up with solutions when challenges like COVID-19 comes back again. Innovation is also important as we are leaving in a climate changing environment</i></p>
8.5	<p>Do you believe that the organisation incorporated more flexible methods of delivering contents that increase accessibility to employees?</p>	<p><i>No, more especially from our side</i></p>	<p><i>No, more especially we are talking about our side</i></p>	<p><i>It's the same as before</i></p>	<p><i>No, I don't think so.</i></p>	<p><i>No</i></p>

SECTION B

7. To establish the challenges associated with the change of organisational culture at the Vocational Colleges

		ANSWERS				
QUESTIONS		Participant 16	Participant 17	Participant 18		
7.1	According to your point of view, do you think you have now adjusted to the changing environment and adapted to the challenges faced in the new era?	<i>Yes, the system used in these days makes things easier than before</i>	<i>We have not adjusted because the education system has changed to blended learning some students have no access to internet</i>	<i>I think I have adjusted</i>		
7.2	Did the management come up with the strategic plan on how to optimise and ensure the efficient implementation of change in organisational culture in the post COVID-19? Please elaborate	<i>Yes, the management introduced the programme to teach students remotely</i>	<i>Yes: they have come with a plan to make registration online and providing Wi-Fi network in the institution</i>	<i>No</i>		
7.3	With regards to socialisation, what do you think are the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addresses within an organisation	<i>There is a gap on socialisation because of COVID-19 since there was a scale number of people were supposed</i>	<i>The gaps are that some students are not used to internet as they are from rural areas</i>	<i>Lack of use of technology to make distance learning possible</i>		

	that were exposed by COVID-19	<i>to be gathered during covid</i>				
7.4	How is the mission of the organisation being expressed in post COVID-19 period	<i>Our mission is to raise the pass rate compare the time for covid-19</i>	<i>The mission is still the same but now more communicated by media marketing</i>	<i>Whatever methods are used are not informed by COVID-19 experiences</i>		
7.5	Do you think organisation leadership is doing everything possible to address challenges experienced during the pandemic era? Please elaborate	<i>No, there was no challenges addressed</i>	<i>Yes, they are trying their level best as they install Wi-Fi network in the campus, and everyone must learn computer</i>	<i>No, nothing has been done to address these challenges</i>		
7.6	How was the information spread among employees during the crisis's era?	<i>Social networks</i>	<i>The information was spread using WhatsApp and other social media platforms.</i>	<i>Use was made of cell phones</i>		

8. To examine the key factors influencing change in organisational culture at Vocational Colleges in the post COVID-19 pandemic period

QUESTIONS		ANSWERS				
		Participant 16	Participant 17	Participant 18		
8.1	Do you think the organisation have adequate accessibility to digital technology? Please elaborate	<i>Yes, we were provided with gadgets and Wi-Fi</i>	<i>Not yet but before the end of the year the whole organisation will have access</i>	<i>It does. It has computers and is connected to internet</i>		
8.2	What is the plan of the organisation in provision of affordable resources to employees from disadvantaged group?	<i>There is no funding for not in line with course of work</i>	<i>They have introduced computer studies to all courses to make sure everyone access technology</i>	<i>It has no plan</i>		
8.3	Do you think that policies are in place to ensure accessibility and affordability for employees within the organisation? Please elaborate	<i>Accessible to DHET website</i>	<i>The policies are not in place because there are some institutions without internet access, and they have no idea of what is happening</i>	<i>I doubt because no policies have been discussed. There is a lack of support in terms of explaining these policies to employees</i>		
8.4	Does the organisation have a lifelong plan for	<i>I'm not sure</i>	<i>The institution doesn't have plans as it has terminated some of</i>	<i>No, nothing has been communicated to the employees. Climate</i>		

	<p>employees post COVID-19?</p> <p>Please elaborate</p>		<p><i>employees employed during the pandemic. Employing more staff showed creativity and proper planning from the leadership. Then contracts were terminated.</i></p>	<p><i>change brought more challenges yet were not even aware of it and the planning when difficult times comes</i></p>		
8.5	<p>Do you believe that the organisation incorporated more flexible methods of delivering contents that increase accessibility to employees?</p>	<p><i>No, not to their best</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, they did but not to the utmost best. They can do better as they have the budget</i></p>	<p><i>No, nothing has been done in this regard</i></p>		

APPENDIX H



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
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30 November 2023

Ms H L Ndelu
B254
Illovo Township
Amanzimtoti

Dear Ms Ndelu

Exploring the change of organisational culture in the post COVID-19 pandemic period at the selected Vocational Colleges in KwaZulu-Natal
Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 138/23

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the DUT-IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

EXPLORING THE CHANGE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC PERIOD AT THE SELECTED VOCATIONAL COLLEGES IN KWAZULU-NATAL

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