

NELSON MANDELA

UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of the fast-developing knowledge economy, the higher education sector has been at the centre of major changes impacting the core academic missions of universities. In a context of austerity-driven changes, higher education institutions are increasingly under pressure to maximise performance by overcoming financial and academic challenges, responding to changes in policy, adopting new funding mechanisms, recalibrating leadership and management styles, and staying ahead of competitive research. Even the expectation that universities should operate in a quadruple helix system of knowledge production characterised by dynamic transdisciplinary links between academia, government, industry, and civil society (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012) is fast losing ground. More recently, and as a response to the need for both economic growth and innovation, universities are seeking to contribute socially impactful and responsive knowledge (Goddard and Vallance, 2011).

As Trowler (1998: 150) argued, a precondition for effective change in universities is to understand the multiple, complex, and shifting cultures within universities. Against this background of ubiquitous change, higher education leaders need to embrace a more inclusive view of stakeholder interests as a basis for successful institutional culture change (Devecchi et al, 2018: 2). Graetz and Smith (2010: 136) assert that understanding change as part of a continuing work in progress calls for a much broader canvas that seeks out competing voices, and works with the resulting ambiguities, contradictions, and tensions as prerequisites for institutional growth and survival.

In embracing the legacy of our iconic namesake, Nelson Mandela University encourages students and employees to consistently live the values of respect for diversity, excellence, ubuntu, integrity, social justice and equality, and sustainable stewardship. The purpose of this conceptual framework is to develop a foundation for the design and implementation of fit-for-purpose institutional culture programmatic interventions at the University that promote a sense of belonging and holistic well-being whilst also positioning the institution to fulfil its mandate to be in the service of society.

2. CONCEPTUALISING INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

2.1. Defining institutional culture

Culture is conceptualised in various ways, which tends to polarise the opinions of many scholars (Gaus, Tang & Akil, 2017: 1). Higher education institutions rely on culture to adapt to the dynamic environmental changes that they encounter, especially given that it fulfils an instrumental role in shaping the actions, attitudes, and behaviours of employees (Bergquist, 1992). Culture has also been studied as a tool for improving employee morale, motivation, commitment, loyalty, and productivity (Dill, 1982).

Warter (2019: 173) defines institutional culture as the basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that are communicated through myths and stories to develop a frame of common meaning. Similarly, Wong (2023) conceptualises institutional culture as the set of values, beliefs, attitudes, systems, and rules that influence employee behaviour.

Institutional culture refers broadly to the shared beliefs and values established by leaders and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, ultimately shaping employee perceptions, behaviours, and understanding (SRHM, 2023). The concept of culture points to phenomena that are below the surface, invisible, and to a considerable degree unconscious, but are very powerful in their impact.

Culture guides and constrains the behaviour of members of a group through shared norms (Schein, 2010: 14) and influences institutional identity by determining “how things are done around here” (O’ Donnell & Boyle, 2008: 4). Rita (2022: 22-23) concurs by observing that institutional culture is expressed as specified guiding principles that offer direction for employee’s attitudes and actions through a process of building a collective identity and establishing a sense

of commitment to the purpose of an institution. Institutional culture refers to strongly ingrained ideals which are considered important and shape the uniqueness of each institution.

Martin (2002: 227) describes institutional culture as, *"the glue that holds an institution together through a sharing of patterns of meaning"*, while Pettigrew (1979: 574) argues that it is *"a system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time. This system of terms, forms, categories, and images interpret people's own situation to themselves."*

Smit and Cronje (2004) write that institutional culture embodies a system of shared values, beliefs, and convictions about the world and how it works. Adopting a similar social interaction orientation, Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (2008:37) define culture as the learned, shared ways of doing things in a particular society.

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008: 35) define institutional culture as shared traditions of doing and thinking in particular ways or some form of shared meaning, interpretations, values, and norms. They argue that culture does not refer to behaviour but to mental phenomena such as how individuals within a particular group think about and value reality.

Hofstede et al (1990) assert that institutional culture is a complex phenomenon that cannot be attributed to a single individual. It emerges through traditions and customs and is often difficult to change because people tend to cling to their values, beliefs, and traditions. Furthermore, institutional culture is a socially constructed phenomenon that is shared by various groups and cannot be easily measured or classified since it refers to ways of thinking, values, and ideas rather than the tangible aspects of an institution. Within a higher education context, Steyn (2007: 5) writes that institutional culture is the sum-total effects of the values, attitudes, styles of interaction, and collective memories of a university, known by those who work and study in the university environment through their lived experience.

In addition to the above, Lukasik et al (2016: 204) outline some of the most popular definitions of institutional culture in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The most popular definitions of institutional culture

Author	Definition
E. Schein (2010)	The pattern of shared fundamental assumptions that the specific group has developed solving the problems of adaptation to the environment and internal integration. The pattern can be considered as the one in force. It is instilled into new institution members as the correct way of solving problems.
G. Hofstede (2000)	"Programming of the minds" of the institution members, thus the set of institutional values, standards and rules, efficiently instilled by the group.
R. Likert and J. Likert (1976)	The dominant pattern of values, myths, beliefs, assumptions, standards, their personification in the language, symbols, artefacts, as well as technology, objectives and practices of management, feelings, attitudes, actions and interactions.
G. Morgan (1997)	Institutional culture usually refers to the pattern of development reflected by social systems of knowledge, ideology, values, laws and everyday rituals.

Despite the absence of an overarching definition of institutional culture, one may distinguish several characteristic features that most of them share. Firstly, institutional culture is historically determined and reflects the history of the institution; secondly, it is holistic and more than just a sum of its components; thirdly, it is a social creation, meaning its development is affected by people within the institution; fourthly, it is related to symbols and rituals; and lastly, it is difficult to change (Lukasik, 2018: 83). Table 2 summarises these characteristic features below.

Table 2: Characteristic features of institutional culture

Features characterising institutional culture		
Conscious and subconscious acceptance of specific group cultural patterns (symbols, rituals, standards) by people, and people abiding them.	Multilevel and multidimensional nature (institutional culture is a soft concept of various types).	Feedback between institutional culture and behaviour of people within the institution (institutional culture alignment with the institution management strategy).

2.2. Distinguishing between institutional culture and climate

Institutional culture and climate are two alternative constructs for conceptualising the way people experience and describe their work settings. Institutional climate may be defined as *"...the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected."* (Schneider et al., 2013: 362). The emphasis is on assessing employees' perceptions of observable aspects of the work environment.

Both institutional culture and climate are complementary constructs that have been used to understand psychological phenomena and behaviour in institutions. Both focus on shared meanings, but climate is grounded in an individual's perceptions of aspects of institutional structure and systems that are aggregated by researchers to form a group-level measure. In simple terms, climate is employee engagement, which is the level of involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace (Gallup Incorporated, 2024). It refers to the way employees feel about the culture in an institution. On the other hand, institutional culture is an assessment by individuals of shared norms and behaviours required to be seen as a group member (Schneider et al., 2013: 363).

Since climate focuses on perceptions of situational phenomena such as institutional systems and structures, it is more transitory and easily changed than culture, which is viewed as relatively stable and enduring. Culture differs from climate in several important ways. First, culture does not focus on observable perceptions of the work environment but begins with an emphasis on the norms and values that provide signals to people about how to act and feel. Second, culture is explicitly focused on shared meaning, values, and norms as sources of collective identity and commitment (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016: 204).

Institutional culture has a prescriptive force to it, suggesting what attitudes and behavioural norms are appropriate, whereas climate is more descriptive and does not include an implied normative force. In contrast to culture, climate provides a direct and tangible insight into how specific policies and practices can affect specific institutional outcomes. Culture, on the other hand, provides a more holistic perspective and provides the context within which climate operates (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016: 205).

Institutional culture is influenced by the environment within which an institution is situated, and it is important to explore this concept against the backdrop of the higher education landscape.

3. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE IN A HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Universities are complex social institutions with distinctive institutional cultures, which safeguard values such as academic freedom, critical thinking, and autonomy, while also being influenced by changes in the external environment. Universities vary in terms of size, location, complexity, and mission, each of which can significantly influence their internal dynamics (Warter, 2019: 174- 175).

Unlike profit-driven institutions, universities place a greater emphasis on people-centredness, their techniques are often unclear and non-routine, and decision-making is dominated by experts. Overall integration through institutional culture at a broader level requires special attention given that many universities comprise subunits with loose links and a high degree of specialisation in the disciplines (Sporn, 1996: 43). Gaus et al (2017: 851) concur and observe that deciding which aspect of institutional culture to study within universities is difficult because different disciplines or departments espouse distinctive subcultures informed by distinctive paradigms and theoretical frameworks.

Furthermore, universities possess distinct features regarding their model of governance, which has been conceptualised in terms of several metaphors such as:

- Universities as an organised anarchy whereby decision-making processes are haphazard and reactive due to the changing and unpredictable external environment (Cohen, March & Olsen, 1972: 1).
- Universities as loosely coupled systems constituted by individual faculties and divisions, which perform different functions and responsibilities, yet coalesce to form one identity as members of a scholarly community (Weick, 1976: 3).
- Universities as cybernetic systems, which have self-regulating mechanisms to control their performance through feedback (Birnbaum, 1989).

Within the prevailing turbulent environments, where costs are increasing and resources are becoming scarce, it is challenging for higher education leaders to make informed decisions. In times of declining resources and strain on the academic community, a strong academic culture becomes essential. Failure to nurture institutional culture when the university is thriving can lead to destructive conflicts, loss of morale, and personal alienation (Warter, 2019: 175). Navigating such complexity requires that leaders understand their institutions as cultural entities to ensure that decision-making contributes to a sense of purpose and identity. To implement these decisions, leaders must have a nuanced understanding of their university's culture so that they can articulate decisions in a manner that resonates with various stakeholders and garners their support (Tierney, 1988: 5).

Steyn (2007: 5) further argues that it is important to closely examine the attitudes, values, and beliefs that influence the dominant ways of doing things. This analysis should aim to reveal the assumptions that underpin the inherited "common sense" ideas, which continue to shape our mindsets today. Narsee (2004: 89) summarises this as follows:

"Valuing differences should go beyond seeking to reduce conflict and maintaining harmony. Interactions among diverse understandings, perceptions, histories and discourses must engender opportunities for continuous critical examination of dominant cultures and core values both in the institution and in the curricula."

3.1. Integrative approach to institutional culture

Zsatku and Kováts (2023: 65-66) assert that institutional culture fulfils an integrative role by coalescing the members of the university around a shared commitment to achieving a common goal. Furthermore, institutional culture provides a sense of identity by distinguishing a university from other institutions and providing a common framework of understanding for employees. The integration approach assumes that a university is characterised by a homogenous, unified culture where harmony and consistency are desirable and achievable, even though deviations may temporarily occur. However, other approaches do not view universities as culturally homogeneous but rather as constituting a set of diverse subcultures (differentiation), or even a multiplicity of different countercultures (fragmentation) (Martin, Frost & O'Neill, 2006: 9; 12; 16-17).

3.2. Differentiation approach to institutional culture

Depending on the context, sub- or countercultures may coexist with or generate a new dimension within the dominant institutional culture. Differentiation approaches to institutional culture find that interpretations of manifestations are inconsistent; consensus occurs only within subcultural boundaries; and clarity exists only within subcultures. In this way, subcultures are like islands of clarity in a sea of ambiguity (Martin, Frost, & O'Neill, 2006: 12).

According to Cacciattolo (2014:7), institutional culture is not entirely homogenous, and complex institutions may have subcultures that intersect and even conflict with one another. In higher education institutions, culture is formed through many complex influences from both within the university and as the result of the environment. From within, culture results from a university's unique history, leadership, and critical events. Culture is also shaped by subcultures, including the disciplinary identities of academic staff, and the functional groupings of administrative and professional support staff. In sum, as complex institutions, many forces shape the culture of universities (Smerek, 2010: 382).

Much of what goes on inside an institution that has existed for some time can best be understood as a set of interactions of subcultures operating within the larger context of the institutional culture. These subcultures share many of the assumptions of the overall institution but go beyond these to reflect their functional tasks, occupations, or unique experiences. Shared assumptions that create subcultures are often based on a similarity of educational background in the members, a shared task, and/or a similarity of institutional experience, which are often called “silos”.

Another kind of subculture, less often acknowledged, reflects the common experiences of given levels within a hierarchy. Culture arises through shared experiences of success. In the same way, middle management and higher levels will develop their shared assumptions, and, at each level, those assumptions will be taught to newcomers as they get promoted to that level. One of the critical functions of leadership is to ensure that these subcultures are aligned toward shared institutional goals (Schein, 2010: 55-56).

3.3. Fragmentation approach to institutional culture

By contrast, the fragmentation approach to institutional culture focuses on the lack of consistency, consensus, and clarity. Ambiguity is the hallmark of this approach and includes irony, paradox, and irreconcilable contradictions, as well as multiple meanings. Power is diffused broadly at all levels of the hierarchy and change is constant, rather than intermittent (Martin, Frost, & O’Neill, 2006: 16-17). Institutional countercultures exist and reject the dominant culture in its entirety or its constituent parts by explicitly challenging the power and control structure (Rita, 2022: 24).

Microcultures evolve in small groups that share common tasks and histories. Shared assumptions will arise especially in groups whose task requires cooperation because of a high degree of interdependency (Schein, 2010: 67). These different levels of culture are depicted in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Levels of culture

<i>Culture</i>	<i>Category</i>
Macrocultures	Nations, ethnic and religious groups, occupations that exist globally
Organizational cultures	Private, public, nonprofit, government organizations
Subcultures	Occupational groups within organizations
Microcultures	Microsystems within or outside organizations

Source: Schein, 2010: 2

With a better understanding of the distinction between the integrative, differentiated, and fragmentation approaches described above, it is important to distinguish between different typologies that may be useful in analysing institutional culture within a higher education context.

4. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE TYPOLOGIES

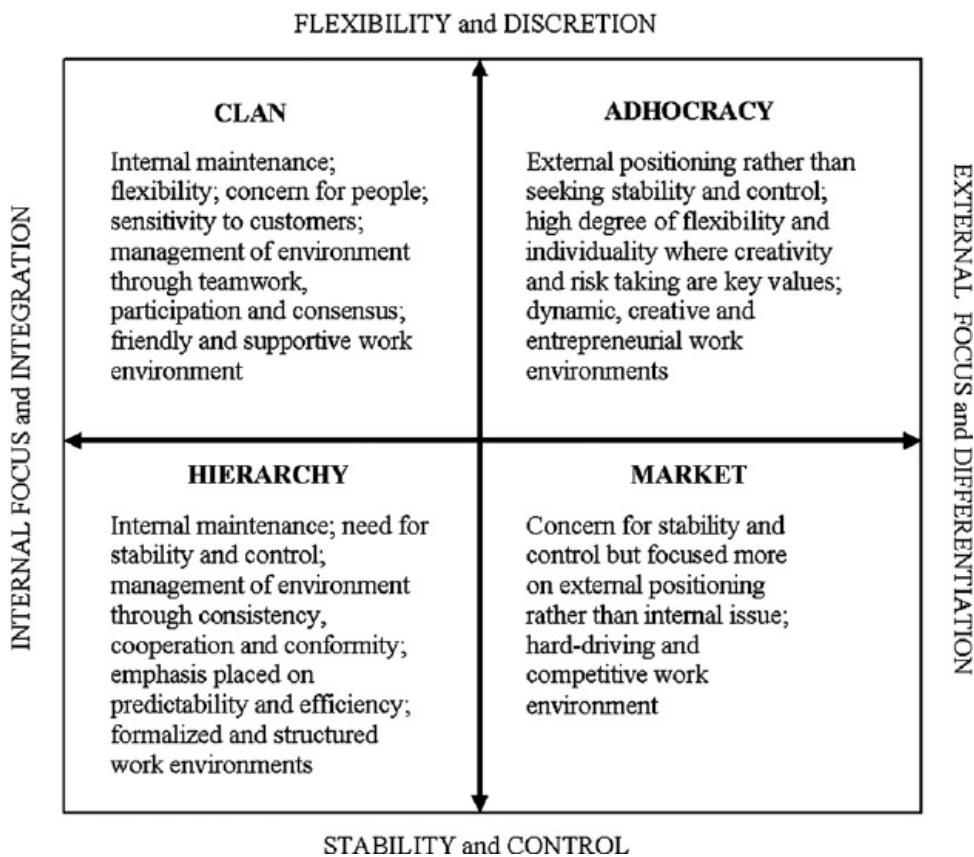
An array of culture typologies has surfaced within the realm of institutional research. Despite higher education making strides towards establishing its typologies, generic typologies or modified versions tailored to higher education, are frequently adopted as a means of analysing the institutional culture of universities. The significance of understanding the various types of cultures in academia is not that the types exist in any pure form, but rather to assist in understanding prevalent cultures (O' Donnell & Boyle, 2008: 9).

4.1. Competing Values Framework (CVF)

The competing values framework (Cameron & Quinn, 2006: 35-36) is one of the most frequently used conceptual models of culture in higher education. This model describes four types of culture based on two dimensions, namely, flexibility vs. stability which reflects on whether the institution puts more emphasis on a standardised system and processes, or rather adapts to employee needs. The other dimension focuses on whether the institution tries to improve the coherence of its internal operations or adapts to its external needs.

This model suggests that institutions can be classified into four types, namely, clan, market, adhocracy, or hierarchy. The clan culture prioritises shared values and goals, participation, and a sense of family. On the other hand, a market culture emphasises competition, environmental interaction, and customer orientation. An adhocracy emphasises entrepreneurship, creativity, and adaptability, while a hierarchy has many rules and regulations, clear lines of authority, and is concerned with efficiency. Figure 1 outlines the major dimensions of the competing values framework.

Figure 1: Competing Values Framework



Source: Cameron and Quinn, 2006

The CVF examines the competing demands within institutions between their internal and external environments on the one hand and between control and flexibility on the other. These conflicting demands constitute the two axes of the competing values model. Institutions with an internal focus emphasise integration, information management and communication, whereas institutions with an external focus emphasise growth, resource acquisition and interaction with the external environment. On the second dimension of conflicting demands, institutions with a focus on control emphasise stability and cohesion while institutions with a focus on flexibility emphasise adaptability and spontaneity (Bradley and Parker, 2001).

Combined, these two dimensions of competing values map out four models of institutional culture, namely:

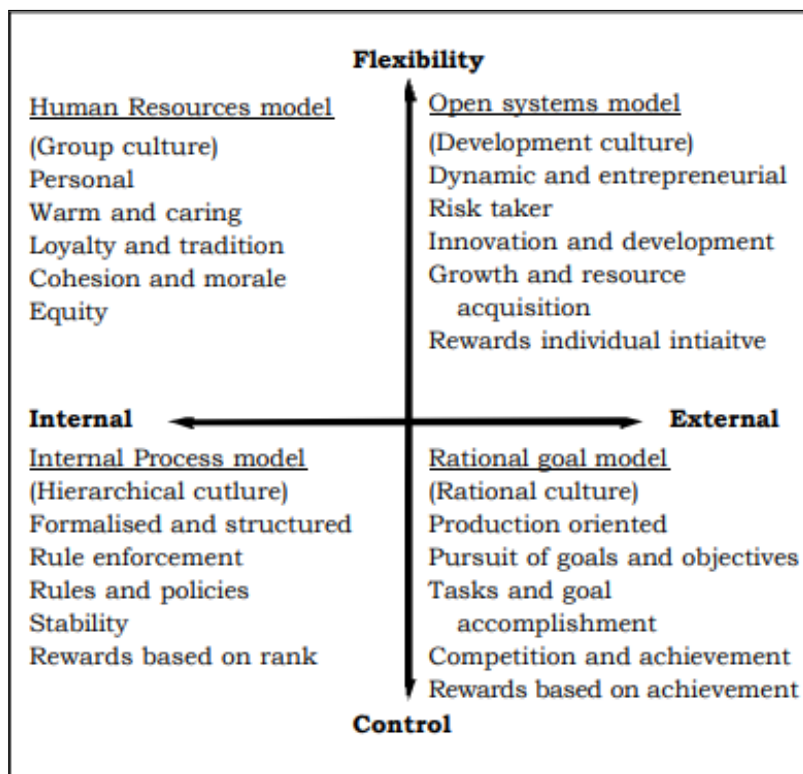
- The internal process model has also been referred to as a 'hierarchical culture' because it involves the internal enforcement of formal rules and procedures as control mechanisms.
- The open systems model enhances readiness and adaptability to the external environment to achieve growth, resource acquisition, and external support. This model has also been

referred to as a 'developmental culture' because it is associated with innovative, visionary leaders who maintain an outward-looking focus.

- The human relations model emphasises the importance of training and human resources development to achieve cohesion and employee morale. This model has also been referred to as 'group culture' because it is associated with trust and participation through teamwork.
- The rational goal model focuses on planning and goal setting to achieve designated goals and objectives, and rewards are linked to outcomes (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008: 8- 9).

These four types of institutional culture are visually depicted in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Competing Values Framework



Source: O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008: 7

4.2. Strong versus weak cultures

In applying the CVF, it is critically important that the culture be 'strong' to achieve maximum effectiveness irrespective of the specific culture type. Strong cultures are those in which there is congruence between espoused beliefs and actual practices (Smerek, 2010: 290).

Sporn (1996) considers the strength (coherence) or weakness (fragmentation) of university culture as an important dimension, with the external or internal focus of the institution being another. Similarly, Kotter and Heskett (1992) differentiate between strong, strategically appropriate, and adaptive cultures, all of which influence institutional performance. A performance-enhancing culture is one where the values of highly motivated employees are goal-aligned and informal control mechanisms exist (=strength). Also, the successful culture must "fit" its context, whether this means the industry condition, a segment, or the institutional strategy (=strategic appropriateness). Moreover, only cultures that can help institutions anticipate and adapt to environmental change will be associated with superior performance over long periods (=adaptability).

University culture gains influence in two ways. First, a strong culture implies the degree of fit between cultural values, structural arrangements, and strategies of a university. Weak cultures are characterised by relatively loosely linked subunits or groups with specific subcultures that can be contradictory to each other (Sporn, 1996: 45). Second, the successful implementation of a strategy is dependent on the extent to which the values, attitudes, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour of university members are externally or internally focused. An inward orientation is probably best suited to a stable environment while externally focused cultures put more emphasis on adaptability in responding to some discontinuity or lack of fit that arises between the university and its environment (Sporn, 1996: 46).

4.3. McNay's Framework

In McNay's (1995) framework, one dimension is the centralisation (or decentralisation) of the decision-making process (policy), while the other is the implementation of decisions. As for a collegium-type culture, the keyword is "academic freedom". In a bureaucratic culture, the rules become important elements, which create consistency and equality of opportunities on the one hand, while they bind behaviour to rules resulting in inflexibility on the other. In an enterprise-type university culture, the focus is on the "customer" with needs who demands "services". A corporate-type culture favours centralised authority and performance. Competition is often used, or even created, to increase pressure and performance, which may result in a lack of trust.

The typologies of McNay (1995), Sporn (1996), and Smart and Hamm (1993) can be compatible with the competing values framework, even though the underlying dimensions are different. This is depicted in Table 3 below.

Table 3: The dimensions of different university culture typologies

Quinn (1988)	Smart and Hamm (1993)	McNay (1995)	Sporn (1996)	Characteristics
Clan	Collegial	Collegium	weak and internal orientation	flexibility, freedom, community Quinn – moral, commitment, concerns, discussion, participation, openness
Hierarchy	Hierarchy	Bureaucracy	strong and internal orientation	efficiency, set of rules Quinn – measurement, documentation, information management, stability, control, continuity
Market	Market orientation	Corporation	strong and external orientation	meeting market requirements, competition, effectiveness Quinn – direction, decisiveness, accomplishment, productivity, profit, impact
Adhocracy	Adhocracy	Enterprise	weak and external orientation	flexibility, creativity Quinn –innovation, adoption, external support, resource acquisition, growth

Source: Zsatku and Kovats, 2023: 67

Institutional culture is multifaceted and encompasses various dimensions that are either observable or more tacit. These are explored in more detail in the section that follows.

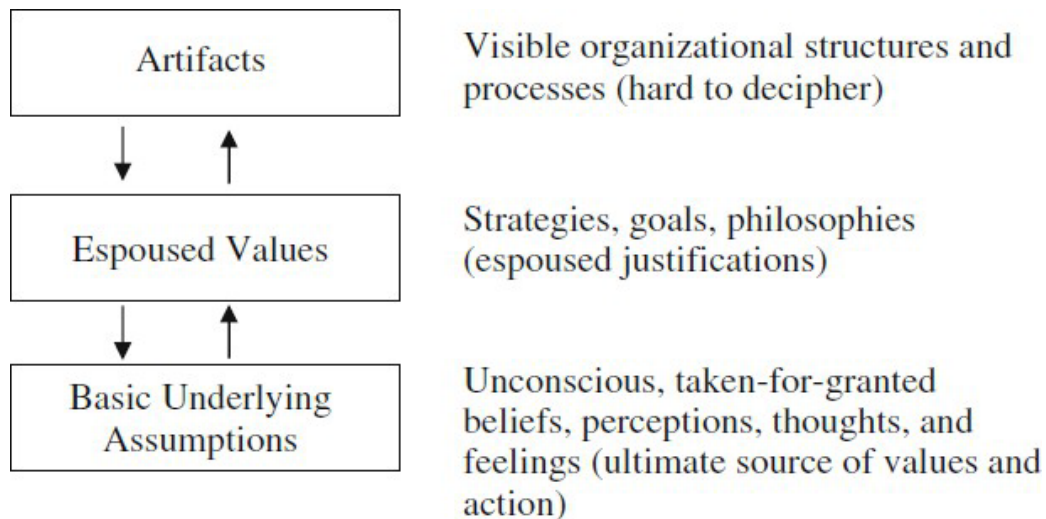
5. DIMENSIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Schein (2004: 8) emphasises that *‘perhaps the most intriguing aspect of culture as a concept is that it points us to phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious’*. Schein uses an analogy that culture is to a group what personality or character is to an individual and *“...just as our personality and character guide and constrain our behaviour, so does culture guide and constrain the behaviour of members of a group through the shared norms that are held in that group.”* (Schein: 2004: 8).

As depicted in Figure 3 below, Schein's (2010) framework of the levels of institutional culture proposes three layers, namely: artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. Artefacts are the most visible but also the most ambiguous. Examples of artefacts are architecture, language, manners of address, a published list of values, myths, and stories told about the institution. They are hard to decipher without understanding the deeper levels of an

institution's culture such as a group's underlying assumptions. Espoused values are reported by management as core to the institution but may not reflect the reality for members. If an espoused value proves to aid the group's functioning and survival it slowly transforms into an underlying assumption. Underlying assumptions are deeply ingrained and guide behaviour by informing group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about problems and issues (Smerek, 2010: 393).

Figure 3: Schein's Three Levels of Culture

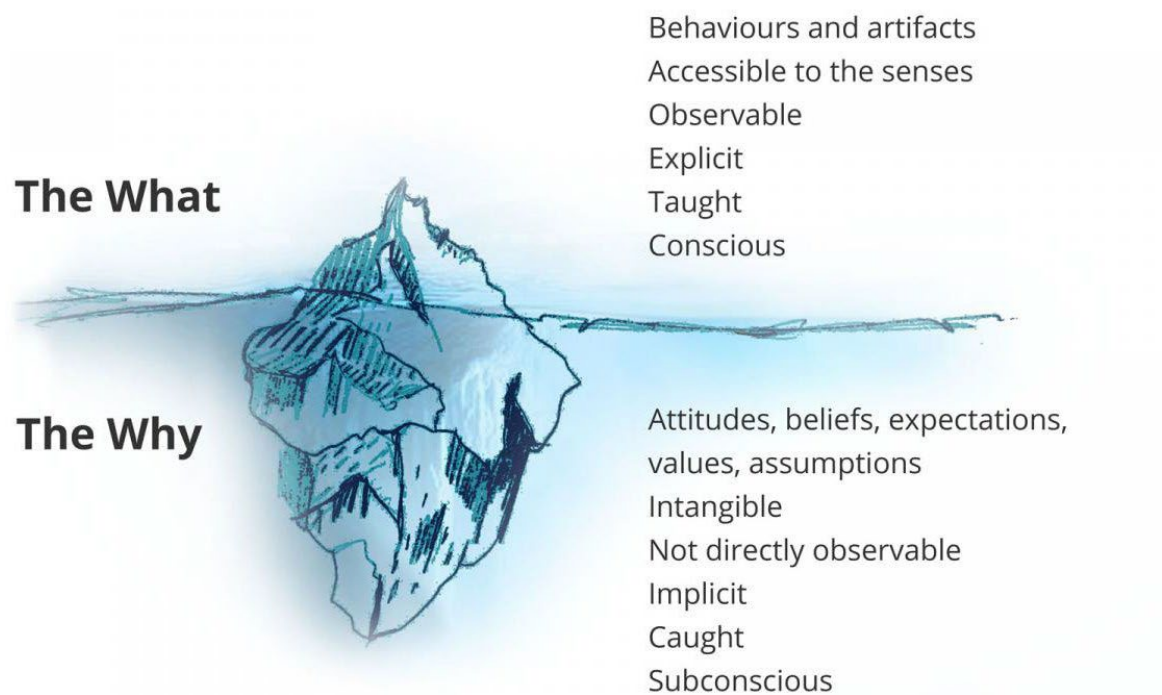


Source: Schein, 2010: 24

Schermerhorn (2011) proposes a simplified version of Schein's framework by distinguishing between two levels of institutional culture, based on their visibility to an observer as a classification criterion. These levels are respectively observable culture and core culture and each of them has special characteristics, comprising the shape of an iceberg as depicted in Figure 4:

- Observable culture – located above the water surface is easily examined and encompasses anything that may be seen and heard in an institution such as dress code, facility layout, the way people communicate and behave with each other, etc.
- Core culture – located under the water level remains hidden and comprises key values, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and basic assumptions, shaping and directing group members' behaviour (O'Donnell & Boyle, 2008: 5).

Figure 4: Culture iceberg



Source: Lazarus, 2018

Of the many possible avenues to investigate, Table 3 below outlines essential concepts to be studied at a university as it relates to institutional culture. Institutional culture is a pervasive and multifaceted construct that can be observed in a variety of institutional settings. However, the manifestation, structure, and relative importance attached to each dimension are subject to significant variation across these settings.

Table 3: Framework of Institutional culture

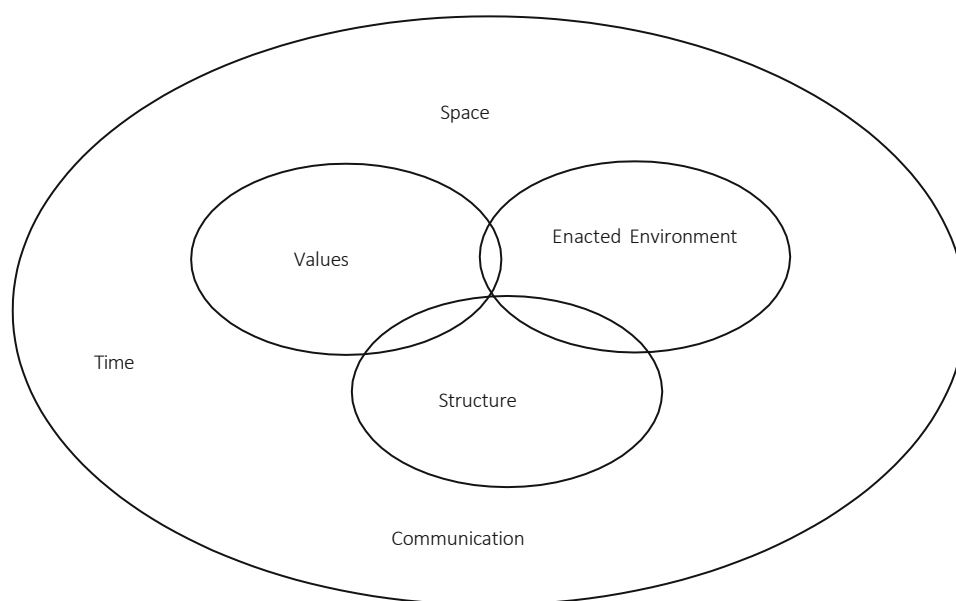
Environment: How does the institution define its environment? What is the attitude toward the environment? (Hostility? Friendship?)
Mission: How is it defined? How is it articulated? Is it used as a basis for decisions? How much agreement is there?
Socialisation: How do new members become socialised? How is it articulated? What do we need to know to survive/excel in this institution?
Information: What constitutes information? Who has it? How is it disseminated?

According to Valimaa (1998: 129), Tierney's cultural framework proposes that the cultural understanding of higher education institutions is based on an anthropological understanding that employs the concepts of space and time, concretised through environment and mission, and communication, concretised through socialisation and information. This framework focuses

attention on cultural processes such as socialisation and decision-making to explain the functions of these social constructs of reality.

To bring the dimensions and dynamics of culture to the consciousness of leaders, Chaffee and Tierney (1988) provide a conceptual model, which includes three dimensions — structure, enacted environment, and values — and three themes — time, space, and communication as depicted in Figure 5. *Structure* refers to how an institution accomplishes its activities. It includes governance mechanisms and the formalised roles of each worker. The *enacted environment* is the context of events, demands, and constraints in which an institution finds itself. *Values* are beliefs, norms, and priorities and the extent to which these are congruent among individuals and subgroups. Among the three themes: *time* refers to the history and tradition of the institution; *space* is the physical layout of the college; and *communication* is the way members perceive and interpret their world.

Figure 5: Chaffee and Tierney's (1988) model of institutional culture



6. IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Zalami (2005: 98) notes that culture can either facilitate or inhibit institutional transformation depending on whether the existing culture is aligned with the goals of the proposed change. Furthermore, culture facilitates innovation and provides a supportive environment for developing leaders (O' Donnell & Boyle, 2008: 10). Culture should receive attention since there is a clear and explicit link between culture change and institutional performance. Culture is particularly important when an institution is undergoing significant transformation which requires different or

new cultural or value traits from those exhibited in the past. Schein (2010: 362) underlines the point that it is necessary to determine the impact of culture on the institution's purpose, strategy, change agenda, and effectiveness.

Wong (2023) observes that institutional culture affects all aspects of an institution including the extent to which employees feel supported and valued. Culture is a key advantage in attracting and retaining talent since it is an important indicator of employee satisfaction. The cultures of high-performing institutions consistently reflect certain qualities such as the following:

- Alignment: Exceptional institutions work to build continuous alignment to their vision, purpose, and goals.
- Appreciation: A culture of appreciation is one in which all team members frequently provide recognition and thanks for the contributions of others.
- Trust is vital to an institution. With a culture of trust, team members can express themselves and rely on others to have their back when they try something new.
- Performance is key, as great companies create a culture that means business. In these companies, talented employees motivate each other to excel, and, as shown above, greater profitability and productivity are the results.
- Resilience is a key quality in highly dynamic environments where change is continuous. A resilient culture will teach leaders to watch for and respond to change with ease.
- Teamwork encompasses collaboration, communication, and respect between team members. When everyone on the team supports each other, employees will get more done and feel happier while doing it.
- Integrity, like trust, is vital to all teams when they rely on each other to make decisions, interpret results, and form partnerships. Honesty and transparency are critical components of this aspect of culture.
- Innovation leads institutions to get the most out of available technologies, resources, and markets. A culture of innovation means that you apply creative thinking to all aspects of your business, even your own cultural initiatives.
- Psychological safety provides employees the support to take risks and provide honest feedback. Remember that psychological safety starts at the team level, not the individual level, so managers need to take the lead in creating a safe environment where everyone feels comfortable contributing. Now that you know what a great culture looks like, let's tackle how to build one in your institution.

7. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE PARADIGMS

Kuhn (1970: 11) defines a paradigm as *"the set of practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time"*, which consists of the fundamental ideas, methods, language, and theories that are accepted by the members of a scientific community. Similarly, Seel (2000:2) writes that a paradigm is a self-consistent set of ideas and beliefs that act as a filter, influencing how we perceive and make sense of things. Lukasik et al (2016: 200) define a paradigm as a system of beliefs that represents the views of a scientific community of professionals on the world and defines its nature based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological grounds.

Sterling (2021: 6) concurs that a paradigm is the underlying set of perceptions, assumptions, values, and concepts that have internal consistency. At individual level, this may be seen as equivalent with a worldview, while at the societal level, with its prevailing cultural belief and value system. The operative shared paradigm – its embedded assumptions, beliefs, and values – shapes, influences, and limits debate and practice. It moulds the culture of debate and practice as regards what is seen as norms, and conversely, what is seen as marginal, unimportant, or irrelevant. The paradigm has added potency where it is unconsciously held or unexamined, which is often the case institutionally, and amongst individual actors within higher education.

The notion of a paradigm acting as a perceptual and behavioural determinant also inherently implies an important association with the concept institutional culture (Weeks, 2010: 48). Meadows (1999) asserts that the paradigm out of which the goals, power structure, rules, and culture system arise is the most powerful lever of change.

7.1. Classification of Paradigms

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979: 22), paradigms can be categorised based on two dimensions of reality, namely, change-regulation and subjectivism-objectivism as depicted in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Classification of paradigms

	Radical change	Regulation
The world is objective, and it can be analysed using abstract theoretical models	Radical structuralism	Functionalism
The world is subjective and only the actor within the specific culture can understand it	Radical humanism	Interpretivism

Functionalist paradigm

This dominant paradigm assumes rational human action and believes that institutional behaviour can be analysed through hypothesis testing.

Interpretive paradigm

This paradigm seeks to explain the stability of behaviour from the individual's viewpoint and the focus is on understanding the subjectively created world "as it is" in terms of ongoing processes.

Radical humanist paradigm

Theorists in this paradigm are mainly concerned with releasing social constraints that limit human potential. They see the current dominant ideologies as separating people from their "true selves". They use this paradigm to justify the desire for revolutionary change.

Radical structuralist paradigm

Based on this paradigm, theorists perceive inherent structural conflicts within society that generate constant, radical change through political and economic crises.

Kuhn's (1962) paradigm theory suggests that normal science processes can cause paradigm shifts through changes in scientists' value systems (Callaghan, 2016: 71).

Cacciattolo (2014: 1) simplifies this by referring to the interpretive and structural approaches as the two main paradigms for analysing institutional culture. The interpretive view implies that culture is shaped and continued through the institutional environment. On the other hand, the structural view focuses more on how positions are structured within institutions. The focus, which comes from a functionalist school of thought, is on how relationships are structured rather than how they are perceived.

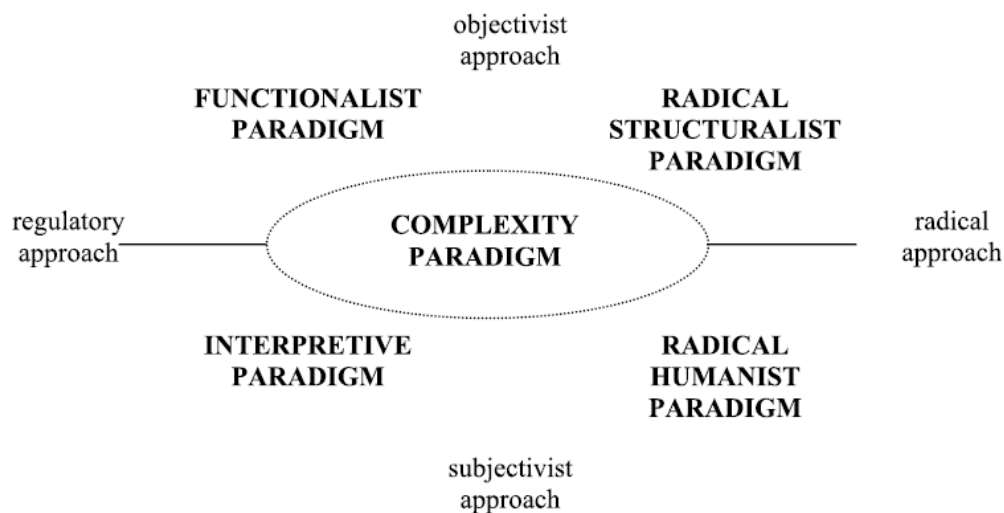
Valimaa (1998: 130) seems to align with the interpretive view and argues that society, including local and national traditions, should be considered in the context of institutional culture analysis.

As open systems, higher education institutions interact with their environment in terms of resource inputs, such as students, employees, and funding, as well as outputs, which may include community engagement services, research outputs, and graduates. Due to this interaction, higher education institutions become an integral part of society and it is important to account for the interplay between the academic world and society in cultural terms.

7.2. Complexity Paradigm

In Figure 6 below, Podjed (2011: 11) presents each of Burrell and Morgan's (1979: 22) paradigms and introduces a fifth, the complexity paradigm, which integrates all the paradigms into a coherent unit.

Figure 6: Complexity Paradigm



Source: Podjed, 2011: 11

The complexity paradigm attempts to embrace a holistic, connectionist, or ecological approach, to establish a new perspective for understanding systems, natural or social, as comprising interconnected, mutually related phenomena. The complexity paradigm functions as the binder for contrasting views, not refuting other paradigms, but explaining them in a more holistic and integrated manner (Podjed, 2011: 18).

A complex adaptive systems (CAS) perspective of institutional culture stands in contrast to a more traditional perspective of engendering a sense of order and stability that is captured in defining the concept as "the way things are done around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982:4). The idea that culture can be managed has resulted in institutions attempting to "roll-out" a new desired culture at significant cost. This would seem to be contradicted by a more contemporary complexity

theory approach, where it is suggested that the culture formation process is a naturally evolving “living system” and the outcome can therefore not be predicted with any degree of certainty (Weeks, 2010: 44).

Two opposing constructs of institutional culture emerge, namely ordered systems where cause and effect can be determined and complex states where, at best, they can be retrospectively determined but are ineffective for predicting the future. Each of these ordered and complex states presents different paradigms of institutional culture, which stand in stark contrast to each other. Namely, the notion that institutional culture can intentionally be managed on a basis of defined cause-and-effect relationships versus institutional culture as an emergent phenomenon.

Hough et al. (2008: 297) describe this approach as one where the institution’s vision provides a clear picture of where the institution is at present and where it would like to be, strategy provides the means to realise the vision and a culture strategy that defines the desired culture to be established for strategy implementation. The purpose of developing an institutional culture strategy is therefore directed at ensuring strategy and culture alignment. Culture can be architecturally designed by creating a set of core institutional values that define expected behaviours, which then serve as a frame of reference for hiring and developing staff (Weeks, 2010: 51).

A complex adaptive approach to culture change may be more appropriate. Complex systems are characterised by Cilliers (1998: 119-122) as consisting of many self-organising elements that interact dynamically in a non-linear manner, under conditions far from equilibrium, all of which would seem to imply a sense of unpredictability. The complex adaptive system view of culture as emerging patterns implies that management would need to identify those patterns deemed to be favourable so that these can be stabilised, while those hindering the process need to be disrupted. Each of these interventions can, however, give rise to new culturally determined emergent behavioural patterns that were not intended, as even small changes in initial conditions can have dramatic consequences due to the non-linear interactions that take place (Cilliers, 1998:4).

Institutional culture paradigms that stem from the industrial era tend to suggest that an institution’s culture can be intentionally managed to ensure a more appropriate strategy–culture alignment. The reality, however, would appear to be rather different if a CAS perspective is adopted in dealing with culture transformation. Culture then is deemed to be an emergent process, one where interventions intentionally implemented to transform the culture of the

institution can give rise to unexpected, unintended, and in some instances devastating consequences. It is suggested that in adopting a CAS approach the accent ought to be on pattern-stimulating initiatives that need to be monitored to detect the emergent patterns and, where relevant, these should be either reinforced or disrupted if not conducive to the culture transformation process (Weeks, 2010: 54).

Higher education institutions are required to adopt radical responses to the significant pressures from reduced government funding, heightened expectations to address labour market needs, growing calls for public accountability, and increasing questions about the relevance of university qualifications. The multitude of changes in the environment requires integrative approaches that provide a framework to understand the role of universities in a rapidly transforming and highly disruptive society (Siemens et al, 2018: 28). This is supported by Turner and Baker (2019: 1) who assert that the implementation of new technological innovations in the workplace and globalisation herald the intensification of complexity in the workplace due to an increasing rate of unpredictable change, information overload, and geopolitical unrest.

Sterling (2021: 6-7) observes that there is a mismatch between the complexity and uncertainty of current global conditions and the conventional, long-accepted educational paradigm, which is characterised by a control-orientation, reductionism, instrumentalism, managerialism, and standardisation based on the root metaphor of mechanism. A paradigm shift is required to ensure that a more holistic, systemic, ecological, and dynamic learning paradigm subsumes the previously unexamined habits of thought and practice characteristic of the mechanistic approach.

Intentionally engaging with complexity as an alternative to reductionist thinking results in effective vision generation, planning, and goal achievement amid turbulence (Siemens et al, 2018: 29). Complex adaptive systems (CAS) involve many simple parts, or agents, that are interconnected and interact with the environment through the exchange of information, energy, and resources in ways that influence the ongoing evolution of the system. As a CAS adapts to the environment, its basic elements have emergent properties and interact in organic, self-organised, and non-linear ways that produce outputs that are not always easy to predict (Turner & Baker, 2019: 5).

Davidoff (2023) provides an overview of key principles underpinning complexity science, namely:

- Networks form the underpinning structure of the system, yet universities are not structured in a manner that easily facilitates integrative approaches. The heavily siloed structures of a university can restrict innovation by impeding the flow of information and

opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas. Leading in a system of constant transparency requires openness and democratic engagement with all stakeholders while still retaining the role of making decisions on emerging innovations that hold the greatest long-term promise (Siemens et al, 2018: 29-30).

- Emergence is the generation of behaviour that lies one “stage above” current actors (Johnson, 2001). The role of emergence is to encourage ideas and concepts to arise organically, driven by those who are closest to the change pressures. This requires leadership to change, redirect, and influence the emergence of desired outputs at a ground-up level toward planned goals or targets in a manner that creates conditions conducive to learning, creativity, and adaptive capacity. In an age of complexity, leadership must enable opportunities for creative and entrepreneurial responses by cultivating the conditions for complexity to thrive and for grassroots innovation to emerge (Siemens et al, 2018: 32).
- Self-institution and social coordination involve the processes whereby individual agents organise and achieve tasks or activities. A complexity approach looks at institutions as human systems and seeks to enable the evolution of the system through the actions of its people. The practical output is a collection of policies and procedures that enable ideas and information to flow, ensuring that innovative solutions are generated. This process allows the university’s priorities to emerge from collective action rather than from a top-down hierarchical implementation. Many individuals, connected around a shared problem and each with specialised knowledge, can produce outputs that seem almost impossible. Unleashing this type of distributed and self-organising intelligence is a vital role of any institutional leadership (Siemens et al, 2018: 34).
- Feedback is the central entity that enables a system to become more efficient, sophisticated, and intelligent. The key is having methods for capturing and sharing the feedback that is generated as agents and systems co-evolve. In academic environments, this requires the intentional development of numerous feedback mechanisms that are grounded in sense-making to provide the clearest insights for culture change. Feedback mechanisms bring to light the often-unanticipated outcomes associated with large-scale change and the managerial processes that determine when feedback is contextually valid and when it is a distraction are central to decision-making (Siemens et al, 2018: 36).
- Agility is a key attribute of a CAS and, for any system to become agile, its structure must be able to absorb unintended consequences without cascading failure. The ability to do so starts with leadership. Leaders of large institutions must engage in plans and models that allow for and encourage adaptation. A mindset of agility can enable leadership to plan and deploy approaches that shape the culture of an institution to embrace

uncertainty, tolerate ambiguity, and treat unpredicted outcomes as a springboard for agile responses. An agile system needs to be constantly assessed, stress-tested, evaluated, and viewed through a range of future scenarios (Siemens et al, 2018: 36).

Turner and Baker (2019: 15) observe that traditional linear approaches have proven inadequate for tackling wicked problems, which are inherently ambiguous, highly contextual, and lack a clear-cut solution. These problems exhibit non-reversible traits and involve variables that are constantly in flux, necessitating the adoption of participatory, collaborative, and transdisciplinary methods characteristic of CAS.

As an example, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a major paradigm shift in workplace cultures with institutions being more receptive and willing to go beyond established norms. Some of the trends observed include increased investments in virtual collaboration tools and platforms, shifts to an outcome orientation, and a sea change in the way employees experience flexibility and accountability. Holistic well-being has become a central feature of the overall employee engagement philosophy, along with the recognition that there is a greater need for innovative ideas and solutions, more frequent and agile goal setting, and a blurring of work-home boundaries (Hasteer, 2020).

8. ROLE OF LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS IN TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Tierney and Lanford (2018: 5-6) posit that while leadership may appear to be a straightforward aspect of institutional culture, it is a complex concept, particularly in university environments. While many may view university Vice-Chancellors as individual leaders, the leaders who wield the most significant impact on institutional practices may be Executive Deans or other academic leaders who possess enhanced legitimacy due to their academic backgrounds within the departments they oversee. Expectations for different levels of leadership can vary widely, depending on the institution.

Additionally, "informal" leaders, who lack specific leadership titles but are recognised as dependable individuals who represent certain critical positions on behalf of others, are present in every institution. A thorough analysis of institutional culture examines the expectations individuals have of leadership, the multifaceted nature of leadership, and the recognised "formal" and "informal" leaders to contextualise strategic decisions that impact higher education institutions.

The attitudes, words, and actions of leadership play a crucial role in shaping institutional culture and workplace norms. The influence of leaders on institutional culture is evident in various aspects, such as their response to institutional incidents or crises, the criteria used for selecting, promoting, and rewarding staff, and employee training methods (Warter, 2019: 174).

Schein (2010: 11) highlights that *'the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture; that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture; and that it is an ultimate act of leadership to destroy culture when it is viewed as dysfunctional'*. Schein's (2010: 236) culture-embedding mechanisms describe what leaders do to articulate their values (primary mechanisms) and reinforce them (secondary mechanisms). It is thus safe to say that everything in an institution rises and falls with leadership.

Primary embedding mechanisms are the major "tools" that leaders have available to them to teach their institutions how to perceive, think, feel, and behave based on their own conscious and unconscious convictions. These mechanisms include what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control regularly; how leaders react to critical incidents and institutional crises; how leaders allocate resources; deliberate role modelling, teaching, and coaching; how leaders allocate rewards and status; and how leaders recruit, select, promote, and excommunicate.

Secondary embedding mechanisms only work if they are consistent with the primary mechanisms and formalise much of what is informally learned at the outset. If they are inconsistent, they will either be ignored or will be a source of internal conflict. All these secondary mechanisms can be thought of as cultural artefacts that are highly visible but may be difficult to interpret without insider knowledge obtained from observing leaders' actual behaviours. Secondary embedding mechanisms refer to institutional design and structure; institutional systems and procedures; rites and rituals; design of physical space, facades, and buildings; stories about important events and people; formal statements of institutional philosophy, creeds, and charters.

Schein (2010: 250-251) argues that these cultural embedding mechanisms have an impact on culture to the extent that they are found to be useful by the institution in coping with the world in which it functions. In other words, what determines whether certain behaviours and values espoused by management ultimately become assumptions is whether these lead to success.

When an institution is in its developmental phase, the primary embedding mechanisms will always be manifested first and most clearly in what the leaders demonstrate through their own behaviour, not in what is written down or inferred from visible designs, procedures, rituals, stories,

and published philosophies. However, as the institution matures and stabilises, the secondary embedding mechanisms will become primary maintenance mechanisms through institutionalisation. The more effective they are in making the institution successful, the more they become the filters or criteria for the selection of new leaders. As a result, the likelihood of new leaders becoming cultural change agents declines as the institution matures. The socialisation process then begins to reflect what has worked in the past, not what may be the primary agenda of the current leadership (Schein, 2010: 257-258).

There are competing views in the literature as to the degree to which it is possible to manage culture. Some argue that culture can be directed and controlled, particularly by influential leaders. Others argue that directive, top-down change is unlikely to be successful in the long term, and that managing culture is either not possible, or only possible if the complexity of reality is understood and change is progressed in a consensual and longer-term manner (O' Donnell & Boyle, 2008: 14). Legge (1995: 207) refers to the metaphor of 'riding a wave' to explain managing culture: *"The best the surf-rider can do is to understand the pattern of currents and winds that shape and direct the waves...to stay afloat and steer in the desired path. But this is not the same as changing the basic rhythms of the ocean."*

O' Donnell & Boyle (2008: 68-71) assert that leadership plays an important role in effectively cultivating a more developmental and performance-oriented culture in institutions. They argue that attention should be devoted to the following six key issues, namely:

- Creating a climate for change: use internal or external drivers to facilitate the desired culture shift.
- Leaders as champions: Strong leadership is a key ingredient in driving the change process and ensuring a culture of change is implemented and sustained.
- Employee engagement and empowerment: initiatives designed to engage and empower employees in the change process are an important element in cultural change.
- Team orientation: fostering cross-functional collaboration and teamwork is a useful means of promoting new cultural traits.
- Tracking cultural change: it is important to continuously assess whether there are issues or challenges which could undermine the desired cultural ethos.
- Training, rewards, and recognition: recognition and reward schemes are an important way of encouraging a winning culture and developing positive cultural values in institutions.

Similarly, Wong (2023) highlights several aspects that serve as a roadmap for leaders in cultivating a culture that will deliver long-term benefits, namely:

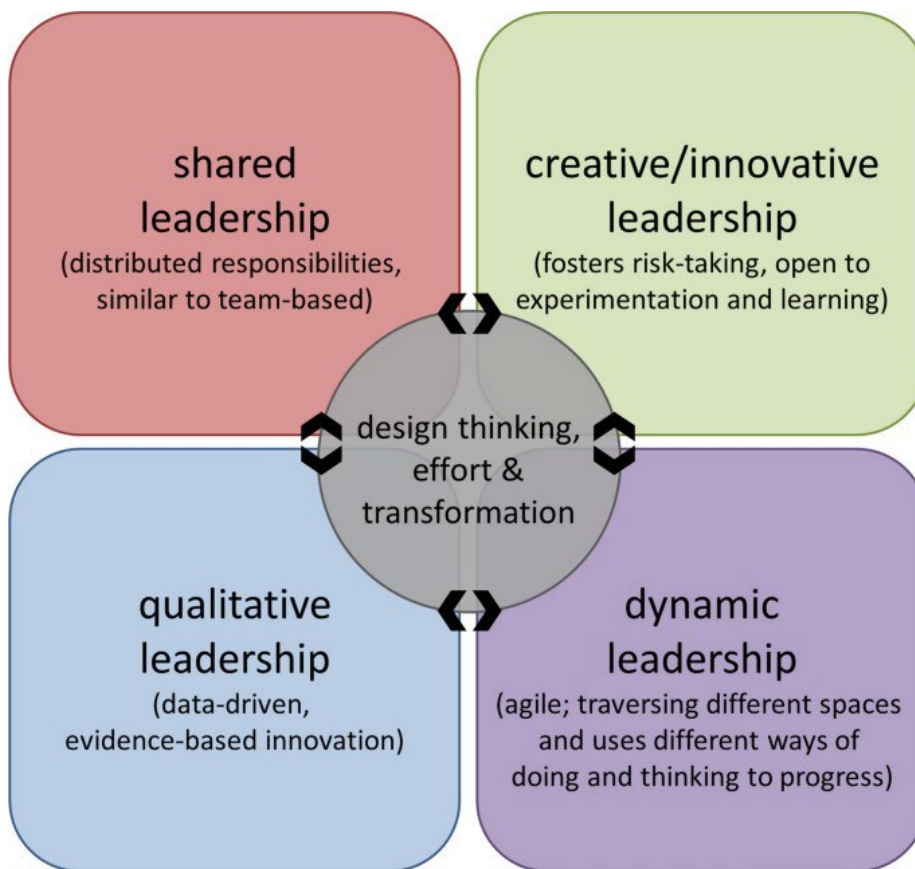
- Excel in recognition: To nurture the desired culture, recognition should be tied to institutional values and supported by leadership. Important metrics like employee engagement and retention improve when an institution promotes a culture of appreciation that incentivises living the values.
- Enable employee voice: Managers should treat all conversations with employees as opportunities to gather and respond to feedback.
- Make your leaders culture advocates: The leadership team contributes to building the desired culture by prioritising it in every aspect of their work lives. Leaders need to display lived behaviours that exemplify institutional values.
- Forge connections between team members: Encouraging collaboration and engaging in team building activities are two effective ways to improve communication and creativity.
- Focus on learning and development: Fostering a culture of continuous learning can be enabled through an investment in training initiatives, coaching, and providing employees with new responsibilities.
- Keep culture in mind: Institutions should focus on cultural fit by reinforcing the values during the recruitment, selection, and onboarding processes and beyond.
- Personalise the employee experience: Focus on ways to assist employees in identifying with institutional culture. Leaders need to take what they learn and tailor their actions to personalise the employee experience.

Whittaker and Montgomery (2022: 4-5) argue that higher education needs to pivot from managerial, quantitative, and individualistic leadership frameworks to transformative paradigms that promote culture change and sustainability. These models are not mutually exclusive and include the following:

- Shared leadership draws on distributed responsibilities across multiple individuals in an ecosystem.
- Creative or innovative leadership fosters risk-taking, experimentation and learning to develop thoughtful responses to major ecosystem disruptions.
- Qualitative leadership draws on institutional data and analytical capabilities paired with innovation or novel experimentation to adapt to a local context and culture.
- Dynamic leadership is based on a journey where an agile leader draws on diverse talents and perspectives, as well as ways of thinking and doing, to cultivate relationships and deepen understanding of context.

These transformative leadership paradigms are depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Transformative leadership paradigms



Source: Whittaker & Montgomery, 2022: 4-5

In ever-changing ecosystems, effective leaders must be able to flexibly adjust their leadership to meet the diverse challenges and demands of the environment. To achieve this, institutions must transform their leadership selection process, reward interdisciplinary contributions, recognise collective talent, and embrace a shared leadership vision. This synergistic leadership framework enables leaders to skilfully navigate complex ecosystems, promote innovation, and foster a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility (Whittaker & Montgomery, 2022: 5).

9. ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Gaus et al (2017: 854) observe that, generally, cultural research in universities has focused on cultural typology or framework as the lens through which to study academic culture. These themes address the strength and type of academic culture in terms of adapting to environmental changes. Here, culture is seen as something an institution has. Thus, culture is considered as a variable that can be manipulated in studying institutional performance and effectiveness. A

quantitative study would address these issues.

From the semiotic or subjectivist approach to studying an institution, culture is perceived as something an institution is. Here, culture is regarded as the underlying concept of an academic culture. Researchers investigate the shared beliefs, values, norms, myths, symbols, rituals, dogmas, and systems manifested in the actions of people (Pettigrew, 1979: 572). A qualitative study would address these issues.

An ethno-methodological or qualitative perspective approach argues that cultures are unique and can only be suitably understood through deep immersion in the institution. This approach has emphasised the first layer in Schein's three-layer classification, namely, underlying assumptions and beliefs. If cultures are characterised by implicit beliefs and unconscious assumptions, then the appropriate way to study them is by a deep, time-intensive immersion by the researcher allowing these implicit or unconscious beliefs to be surfaced. Advocates of this approach argue that understanding the meaning of rituals and symbols requires a qualitative approach to studying culture since quantitative approaches are ill-suited to access unconscious or implicit beliefs and assumptions (Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Martin, 2002; Smircich, 1983).

In contrast, a more functionalist view of culture focuses on Schein's second layer, namely, norms and values. From this perspective, culture is something an institution has, not something an institution is, and cultures can be compared across institutions. Unlike the ethno-methodological approach, which emphasises the uniqueness of each institution, the functionalist perspective focuses on how culture affects both individual and institutional behaviour and how commonalities in culture can be compared across institutions (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016: 205-206).

Due to the close correlation between culture and climate (employee engagement), an assessment of the latter is critical too as it provides invaluable practical insight into how employees feel about the culture in an institution.

10. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMATIC INTERVENTIONS

Complexity can be understood as a *theory of change and adaptation that details how change occurs within systems as well as the principles and mindsets needed to flourish in turbulent environments* (Morrison, 2002: 6). Complex systems involve "*many simple parts [that] are irreducibly entwined*". *These parts, or agents, interact in ways that give rise to "evolutionary processes and often surprising emergent behaviours."* (Adami, 2022: 1085).

The complexity inherent in the University's system relates to *more than* the large number of interacting agents. The actions and interactions that these agents perform are often independent, unpredictable, and require new ways of thinking and doing.

We cannot solve the complexities and challenges confronting higher education by adopting reductionist thinking. Reductionist thinking, often prevalent in higher education, produces numerous unplanned and detrimental consequences (Siemens, Dawson & Eshleman, 2018: 28).

By contrast, the complexification of higher education is an intentional goal of engaging with complexity rather than attempting to reduce it to its constituent parts. Effective vision generation, planning, and goal achievement in the modern uncertain economic social-technical environment, benefits from embracing complexity and the utilisation of strategies and actions that reflect Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS).

With the above in mind, unfortunately, researchers in complexity science have largely focused on understanding complexity as a phenomenon rather than as an approach to fostering institutional change. Unremitting and unpredictable change continue to make it difficult for Nelson Mandela University and its employee base to stay current, accurately forecast the future, and maintain constancy of direction, sustainability, and viability.

It is well known and researched that the reason given for failure across any institution including institutions in the higher education sector, is a neglect of institutional culture. Culture is the underlying glue that binds an institution together (Schein, 2010; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). There is no doubt that a positive relationship and correlation exists between dimensions of institutional culture and effectiveness (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

10.1. An approach to driving institutional culture

Recall an institutional change that you have personally experienced and considered important to implement and ask the following questions:

- How did you come to see this change as desired and viable?
- How did people undertake meaningful and collaborative effort?
- How was energy generated to keep going?

Questions such as these direct our attention towards the “*how*” of change: actions and interactions comprising change processes that, whilst small and sometimes barely visible, are essential to the successful creation of generative change. Research suggests that the *process* of changing institutions is equally important as *what* is changed. Furthermore, *how* we change institutions significantly shapes the pathway for desired change and the extent to which collective energy, direction, and enthusiasm can be cultivated to create and sustain real and meaningful change (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014).

We are advocating an approach that will have several benefits for Nelson Mandela University by providing both quantitative and qualitative methods to diagnose and change its culture, collaboratively and inclusively. These benefits include the following characteristics of the proposed Signature Programmes, namely, they are:

- Practical: They capture key dimensions of culture that have been found to make a difference in an institution’s success.
- Efficient: The process of diagnosing and creating a strategy for change can be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time.
- Inclusive: The steps in the process can include every member of the University, but they especially involve all who have a responsibility to establish direction, reinforce values and guide fundamental change.
- Quantitative and qualitative: The process relies on quantitative measurement of key cultural and employee engagement dimensions, as well as qualitative methods including stories, incidents, and symbols that represent the immeasurable ambience of the institution.
- Manageable: The process of diagnosis and change can be undertaken and implemented by natural teams within the university.
- Valid: The framework on which the process is built not only makes sense to people as they consider Nelson Mandela University, but it is also supported by extensive literature and underlying dimensions that have a verified scholarly foundation as indicated in the conceptual framework.

We do not claim that this is the single best approach, but it is considered as a critically important strategy in Nelson Mandela University’s repertoire for changing culture and improving institutional performance. The time is nigh for every employee to become intentional about behaving in a way that depicts the values of our iconic namesake, and to simultaneously, evoke “The Mandela Way” throughout the University in a manner that binds us as a collective.

For higher education leaders to be successful in times of uncertainty, we suggest a model that embeds the five principles of complexity science, within a well-adopted institutional framework for continuous improvement i.e., People, Process, and Tools (Siemens, Dawson & Eshleman, 2018: 38-39).

All six Institutional Culture Signature Programmes feed into the People, Process, and Tools definitions provided below and these are visibly expressed when employees *act out* each of the Signature Programmes. *This is a critical link that serves to imbue a direct and transferable Change Leadership Methodology into the University – a way of life for work.*

#	Principle	People	Process	Tools
1	Networks	Leadership actively connects and promotes within and intra-institutional research projects, exploring novel network models for research, teaching, and governance.	Incentivising innovations results in research network formation across countries and institutions; explore academic programmes that involve multiple institutions.	Tools and processes that promote institutional idea exchanges and activates collective intelligence.
2	Emergence	Leadership supports and solicits novel ideas and creates physical and virtual spaces for idea exchange.	Leadership has detailed processes to capture and share institutional innovations and to communicate how promising ideas are moved toward adoption and scale.	Tools for emergence are related to feedback and general institutional communication tools. The key is to promote broad-scale interactions that enable emergence.
3	Self-institution and social coordination	Self-institution benefits from leadership promoting a culture of shared governance. Leadership needs to invest in spaces and enable permission for self-institution.	Self-institution is the process.	Tools for self-institution overlap with the other tools presented. Communication, idea generation, and voting and ranking tools and processes are needed.

#	Principle	People	Process	Tools
4	Feedback sensitivity	For leadership, feedback is essential not only for innovation but also for continued evaluation and monitoring of institutional culture.	Institutional, processes are in place to solicit feedback and assess the impact on culture.	Technologies for capturing feedback continually – a culture of listening – are consistently deployed.
5	Agility	Leadership develops and deploys future scenarios, actively stress-testing the institution against various future outcomes.	Planning processes that focus less on multi-year plans and more on creating flexibility in processes and mindsets are required here.	Models are used to assess economic impact of trends. Data-centric approaches are used to plan and simulate possible outcomes of new programme initiatives.

10.2. The role of Nelson Mandela University leadership in cultivating a transformative institutional culture

The sustainability of Mandela University rises or falls with leadership – the tone at the top sets the tune in the middle. Leaders can inspire and produce extraordinary performance from those whom they serve.

The statement by the Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu (1999: 263) highlights the advantages of positive leadership as follows:

“The world is hungry for goodness, and it recognises it when it sees it – and has incredible responses to the good. There is something in all of us that hungers after the good and true, and when we glimpse it in people, we applaud them for it. We long to be just like them”.

Positive leaders enable extraordinary performance by:

- Fostering a positive work climate and culture.
- Fostering positive relationships amongst employees.
- Fostering positive communication, which builds trust.
- Associating the work being done with positive meaning (Cameron, 2008).

If culture is the way we do things in the University and climate (employee engagement) is the way

employees feel about the way things are done in the University, then it is safe to say that our sustainability is dependent on leadership, at all levels.

An important output of this strategy is the co-creation of a Leadership Ethos for the University through the implementation of a Leadership Development Programme emanating from Signature Programme 1, which intends to tangibly display what “The Mandela in Us” means for the University.

10.3. Features of the Institutional Culture Signature Programmes

In complexity science, implementing various experiments can be used to explore the effects of variations on existing systems. At its core, innovation is about culture change. It is suggested that analysing and developing our desired culture is achieved through inspiring robust innovation by all employees, hence the creation of six Signature Programmes.

As we begin analysing the ideas emerging from our employees, students, and communities through these Signature Programmes, we will make sense of their lived experiences of our culture and then co-create and shape our desired culture together, applying the principles of complexity science. A standing feature of the institutional culture strategy will be measuring the impact of the Signature Programme/s including annual monitoring and evaluation processes.

There are six Institutional Culture Signature Programmes namely:

- i. The Mandela in Us
- ii. Hub’ing
- iii. Masonge Siphuhlise Campaign
- iv. Umthombo
- v. i-Human
- vi. Vision 2030 Leaders at all Levels Short Learning Journey

The nomenclature for these Signature Programmes has been refined through intentional stakeholder consultation. The act of optimising the naming conventions or nomenclature of these Signature Programmes is a low-hanging fruit and lever to achieve societal and employee engagement. Nomenclature is currently an under-utilised scholarly and community engagement lever in the University’s culture and, if correctly applied, can facilitate the advancement of strategy. Naming conventions that resonate with stakeholders by default achieve the following:

- *Clarification* of the meaning of any Signature Programme.
- *Universality* in that everyone uses the same name to identify the Signature Programme.
- *Education* in that the names of the Signature Programme are easier to remember and internalise.
- *Classification* in that the Signature Programmes are more easily categorised and commonly understood.

It is thus recommended that the University's strategic priorities are accelerated through deliberate and meaningful naming conventions of these Signature Programmes, which could then purposefully accelerate the societal and scholarly engagement of the University.

The salient features of each of the Signature Programmes are expounded on below.

i. The Mandela in Us	
Background	Founded on the values of diversity, excellence, ubuntu, social justice and equality, integrity, and sustainable stewardship, Nelson Mandela University draws on the ethos and legacy of its namesake in the execution of its core functions of learning, teaching, research, innovation, internationalisation, and engagement. In line with these values, the University's Vision 2030 strategy articulates the need to inculcate an inclusive and transformative institutional culture. In pursuance of this intention, Nelson Mandela University established an Institutional Culture and Equality Working Group (ICE WG) to enhance oversight, leadership and coordination of transversal institutional culture interventions designed to foster an inclusive institutional culture at all levels of the institution. In addition, the Institutional People Strategy directly aligns with and supports all the Vision 2030 strategic enablers and foundational values of the University. Seven (7) Strategic Pillars (Goals) were co-created through robust transversal dialogue within the HR community and considering all inputs from talent thought leaders. One of the Strategic Pillars is an i-Madiba culture which aims to foster a values-driven performance culture that is inclusive and people-centred.

Short Description	Nelson Mandela University needs to analyse the current shape of its inclusive and transformative institutional culture and then articulate and develop a framework and implementation plan for enhancing it. This signature programme will serve to co-create, implement, and breathe life into the Statement of Commitment to an Inclusive Institutional Culture at Nelson Mandela University and frame a Leadership Ethos and Leadership Development Programme for the University.
Broad actions	• The team needs to take photographs and document reflections as the creation and building of their artifact grows. • By 01 July 2024, each team needs to have prepared a one-page write-up explaining how their artifact symbolises “The Mandela in Us” (meaning them). • The University will arrange a Mandela in Us Exhibition for teams to showcase their artefacts and symbols on 18 July 2024. The University can decide on any form of acknowledgment or recognition for this. • A picture brochure of all artefacts will be created as a means of knowledge management and celebration. • Should any artefacts be donatable to our communities, this will coincide with Mandela Day on 18 July 2024 or later but upholding the same principles. • All the “Mandela in Us” one-page contributions and artefacts will be analysed in detail to frame a standard Leadership Ethos (The Mandela in Us) for the University. • The above will be supported by having an Institutional Culture Ambassador for each faculty and PASS portfolio. • Based on this analysis, the following subsequent actions will be undertaken in October 2024: ○ The co-creation of Leadership Development modules into a Leadership Development Journey (Programme) for all levels of leadership. ○ Implementation of a Culture Survey and/or a Q12 Employee Engagement Survey which will provide the much-needed baseline data. ○ Analysis of results of the Culture Survey and Employee Engagement Survey. ○ Compilation and initiation of action plans to improve engagement levels by at least 5% in 2025. ○ Monthly monitoring of action plans to ensure improved results in 2025.

Team Members	CANRAD Communication and Marketing A student nominated by the Student Representative Council Unions University Campuses A representative nominated by the Employment Equity Forum Campus Health and Employee Wellness Institutional Culture "Ambassadors" Any other members co-opted by the Working Group
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ii. Hub'ing

Background	The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) were established in 2018 to co-create <i>"physical spaces where the University meets the community to engage on common platforms to find solutions to problems that affect our immediate communities"</i> (Muthwa, 2018). From its inception, the broader community has been invited to actively participate in shaping the vision and objectives of the HoC, and its expression of those have evolved through repeated cycles of planning, action, and reflection, founded in the bedrock of our key principles: convergence, reciprocity, and multiple forms of outputs. The many projects housed within the HoC speak to Mandela University's vision through developing collaborative teams that bring industry, university, staff and students, NGOs, and communities into a collective commitment to finding solutions to the problems that affect our communities. Through our concerted efforts, the HoC and the Engagement Office Projects are showcasing how our University and the community can effectively collaborate, emphasising our dedication to meaningful engagement and transformative change in the service of society, to create a more just and equitable world.
Short Description	The literature shows that teams that are doing 'real work' together generate more solidaristic working cultures. This signature programme will entail getting staff involved, in a planned way, to work in, any one or more of the HoC, and in various diverse and transversal University teams.

	This plays into reimagining our engagement strategic imperative and allows us to 'get our hands dirty' whilst building solidarity in pur pose.
Broad actions	1. The HoC document is shared and discussed with all teams. 2. Employees select which HoC they would like to be affiliated with and send their selection to the HoC coordinator. 3. HoC coordinator invites employees to various activities as they occur, in the normal course. 4. Platforms for sharing of experiences occurs in the normal course. 5. Impact is ascertained through the Culture Surveys and Employee Engagement Surveys which are conducted annually.
Collaboration	All employees and students.
Institutional Location	Engagement and Transformation portfolio
Team Members	HoC Coordinators

iii. Masonge Siphuhlise Campaign	
Background	Vision 2030 placed considerable emphasis on financial viability as one of the strategic priorities (Strategic Enabler 4: Enhance long-term financial sustainability through responsible resource stewardship). Various strategic interventions were embarked upon to advance this strategic imperative These include the development of an institutional Resource Mobilisation Strategy and the establishment of a Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT). Communication about the University's financial sustainability, to every employee, has become critical. It is important that every employee becomes prudent – showing care and thought for our future.
Short Description	The intention of this campaign is twofold, namely, to encourage every employee and team to embark on a thought process of how to: • Count every cent and make every cent count daily as they get work done. • Advance sustainability by expanding and growing the revenue in their spaces.

Broad Actions	The University will create a Masonge Siphuhlise Campaign, through which employees and teams can make suggestions for prudence and growth through: • Reducing waste. • Enhancing strategy-aligned resource mobilisation and allocation. • Promoting academic and financial viability. • The Masonge Siphuhlise Campaign is to be launched by the VC's Office spelling out the purpose and intent of the campaign as alluded to in the short description above. • The ED: Finance to prepare a standard presentation for all portfolio leads to share with their teams, through discussion. • The principles mentioned in the short description above will be emphasised and employees and teams will be provided with a STAR/AR template to place their ideas about where we could <i>count every cent and make every cent count</i>. • We should also never underestimate the strategic impact of such transactional activities. Employees are in the trenches every day and instinctively know where opportunities exist. • There is no limit to ideas which could include: ○ A commodity analysis per portfolio ○ Time and motion studies ○ Interrogate every cost line item on P&L ○ Work patterns and smart shift patterns ○ 4-day work week (reduce salary bill) ○ +R200 on student application fees ○ Robust management of overtime and pre-approval systems ○ Proper management of leave – it is a liability on the balance sheet ○ Absenteeism insights ○ Quality of presenteeism – employee productivity vs quiet quitting
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Broad Actions	○ Revisit perennial underspends – creates unnecessary strain on fiscus ○ Approval process and costs for Short Term Contracts ○ Catering for meetings- when is it necessary ○ Revisit assumptions made with Insourcing – social justice vs cost ○ Impact of technology on efficiencies ○ More robust finance systems for budget control and management – block the system when the budget is depleted ○ No salary increases and impact/alternatives to salary increases • The Campaign to dovetail with related projects in the office of the DVC: People and Operations and all SIVTT work. • Capacity-building interventions will be conducted throughout the campaign ○ Forecast accuracy as a KPA on all budget holder performance contracts ○ Finance for non-financial managers training for relevant staff • Finance will analyse suggestions and implement low hanging fruit and place other suggestions on an institutional workplan. • The University can decide if any initiatives need to be rewarded or recognised in any way.
Collaboration	All employees
Institutional Location	Finance
Team Members	Finance and HR; Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT)

iv. Umthombo	
Background	With great sadness, we reflect on the tragic passing of Zimkhitha Ntshisela on June 6th, 2023, a second-year student pursuing a Diploma in Tourism on our George Campus. This devastating event, along with the rising need for mental health support among students reported by Emthonjeni Student Wellness and the increase in stress- and anxiety-related illnesses reported through the Wellness@Work Employee Wellness Programme, has prompted us to take a different approach to creating safe spaces for staff and students to seek support and healing. In a recent session facilitated by the Engagement and Transformation Offices, representatives from various DVC portfolios and faculties came together to discuss how Zimkhitha's passing has affected them personally and collectively. We recognised that Zimkhitha was more than just a student but a representation of the hopes and dreams of her family, community, and marginalised communities across the globe. As a community, we are galvanised to take collective action in response to increasing mental health challenges and gender-based violence. It is heartbreaking that so many have suffered emotionally due to the ongoing scourge of GBV within our spaces. GBV survivors continue to silently carry their pain and trauma in our community, hoping to find healing. Creating third spaces for holistic wellness presents an opportunity for transdisciplinary and transversal collaboration that can help our community reflect on and respond to mental health and other related challenges. Together, we can work towards creating a safer and more supportive space for everyone in the Mandela University community.
Short Description	Nelson Mandela University needs to create "spaces of being" for its staff and students. Providing a space for individuals to reflect and come together as a community can significantly impact mental health and overall wellness. These spaces should enable people to take a break, meet, relax, and engage in various activities.

Short Description	It is important to consider the significance of these spaces and the role these play within the University community for students and staff. Literature suggests that third spaces are important for engagement and establishing feelings of this sense of belonging. These spaces provide a support system and social network for retreat and reflection. They also foster broader, more creative interaction for personal and collective enrichment. The tone of conversation in third spaces is usually light-hearted, and people feel welcome and included. Therefore, these spaces should be where staff can experience healing, reflection, and enriching transformative encounters towards strengthening self-agency for holistic wellness. In this way, the University will be able to review the root causes of the need for these spaces so that these can be intentionally addressed.
Broad Goals	There is a need for immediate responsiveness where various sets of programmatic work complement ongoing intellectual and scholarly engagement around Umthombo to inform the co-construction of an Umthombo blueprint. Umthombo must be formally incorporated into the institution's operational plans. A detailed phased project plan will be co-constructed to ensure stakeholder buy-in and implementation. Phase 1: January 2024 – May 2024 • Co-constructing the University blueprint of Umthombo, which will be responsive to the contextual needs of the various campuses. • Engaging with stakeholders in identifying suitable spaces. The George Campus consultation took place in 2023. • Assessment of human and material resources required for these spaces. • Develop a project plan and budget and submit them to MANCO for approval.

	Phase 2: May 2024 - ongoing • Establish campus specific Umthombo working groups informed by the respective project plans. • Implement campus specific project plans with ongoing support, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and learning by campus-specific working groups. • Campus specific launches of Umthombo initiatives. • Quarterly monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and learning reflection workshops by the various campus specific working groups.
Collaboration	MANCO Portfolios; Faculties; Students, Institutional Strategy, Engagement and Transformation LT Collab and Emthonjeni Psychology (academic) Industrial Psychology (academic) Biokinetics, Nutrition, Dietetics (academic) Health and Reward including Occupational Health Medical School (academic) Finance HR Student Life and Development
Institutional Location	Transformation and Engagement Offices (TEO): HoC: Hubs 1, 3
Team Members	DVC: LT; Directors TO & EO; Senior Manager: HoC and EO Strategic Projects; Equality Complaints Counsellor; Equality Complaints Coordinator; EO Post-Doc

v. i-Human	
Background	Council at its meeting on 30 September 2023 considered and approved the broad conceptualisation of the Phase 1 proposal of the Virtual Academy. Catalysing Phase 1 includes: • Identifying thematic areas in which to initiate CoPs and identify leaders • Tackle large transversal, multi-dimensional digital innovation projects, with sub-projects that involve all portfolios. • Locating and designing an area for the maker space. • Developing proposals to acquire the technologies, software, and equipment needed. • Implementing various human resource and operational objectives leading to the launch of the Virtual Academy.
Short Description	An opportunity exists to take employees along on this digital journey. Literature shows that the human element must not be left behind in the rapid acceleration of technological advancement and digitalisation.
Broad Goals	1. Compile and conduct a Digital Competence Assessment that has already been prepared under the auspices of the Virtual Academy Task Team 2. Use the results to: a. Ascertain the state of digital literacy or employees b. Compile a digital list of competencies and their commensurate proficiencies c. Deliver a Digital Literacy Training Programme
Collaboration	All Manco portfolios
Institutional Location	ICT; LT Collab
Team Members	ICT and HR

vi. V2030 Leaders at all Levels Short Learning Journey (SLJ)	
Background	Following on from the successful Vision 2030 Leaders at all Levels pilot project conducted from September to December 2022, Prof Nel commissioned during August 2023, to initiative and have the facilitator convene three cohorts of the Short Learning Journey (SLJ) during October/November 2023 to further explore the viability of offering the SLJ in an online format.

	Various general institutional culture issues were raised during the three pilot sessions. Whilst we cannot know how widespread or representative these comments are, they were shared in a spirit of goodwill and commitment to the institution and deserve consideration (<i>sic</i>): • There is currently a 'silent resignation' going on in our institution and work has become transactional. We must prioritise our own wellbeing now, over the transformation challenges. • Bullying culture has re-asserted itself in past 4 years in a way that is sometimes more hurtful than Apartheid. Added to the bullying culture is a culture of competition and survival rather than collaboration, support, and co-creation. Mandela University is not a kind space anymore. • There is a disconnect between our espoused 'African identity' and some of our policies such as 3 days family responsibility leave for funerals in an African context. • Still don't feel a sense of belonging as a non-South African Black academic. • VC needs to do another Listening Campaign/Fireside chats. • People need to be inducted into the kind of institutional culture we want. This is not something that happens automatically and not something that is a once-off event. • COVID wiped out the institutional culture we created prior to 2020 and we are coming back to a dead and empty place. We need new ways of working post Covid. What do we want to bring back with us from a post COVID world? We need to re-think all our systems. The world has changed, people have learnt the value of time and that we can work differently. It is impossible to go back to how it was before. • Process of re-entry was traumatic with no support and engagement whatsoever. The people who are coming back to work are very different from the people who left. We need some form of recognising the losses, we need rituals, and we need to create something like a sanctuary area for rest and reflection to commemorate the losses and the new ways of working and being. • The critical mass of new staff and leaders with no induction into V2030 and no experience of ICEP, together with the impact of Covid
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	and Lockdown, has significantly impacted and diluted the desired Institutional culture at Mandela University
Short Description	We believe it is our responsibility to keep the Vision 2030 Leaders at All Levels conversation vital and alive since it re-ignites a sense of deeper purpose and meaning. It is a critically important aspect of the vitality of the ongoing project of a transformative institutional culture at Nelson Mandela University. A critical mass of staff alive to the intentions, aspirations, and commitments of Vision 2030 is what will ensure that the University thrives despite all the challenges facing higher education, and as we go into an ever more turbulent future. The Short Learning Journey will thus be presented again in 2024 across various cohorts coupled with delivery of some low-hanging fruit items.
Broad Actions	The SLJ will be delivered to new cohorts after being customised with relevant realisable suggestions below. • The offering will be made available to all staff in both online and in-person formats regularly throughout the year, bearing in mind the university calendar. • Both the online and in-person format to be extended in terms of allocated time as per the feedback from the focus groups. If this is not possible it is recommended that the 8 Modules be reduced to three key cross-cutting themes and that the offering be re-designed accordingly to fit more comfortably within the allocated time constraints. • The 'core messages' and core components relating to Institutional culture, the Vision, Values, Educational paradigm, Graduate Attributes and so on of V2030 to be lifted out from the more time-bound strategic plan; and form the core curriculum of this offering as per the current 8 – Module offering. • The V2030 Infographic will be revisited and slightly redesigned to reflect these different aspects. • The existing eight modules will be augmented with selected data on transformation and indicators of progress; as well as a short explanation about how transformation is 'operationalised' within the institution. • The strategic plan dimensions of V2030 will form part of a separate planning engagement in Faculties and Departments; possibly alongside

	the 'cascading' of the V2030 Leading a transformative Institutional culture Core Curriculum offering. • Where possible, the SLJ is offered in the current format of diverse groups representing different domains, roles, and hierarchies in the university community. • A Workbook and other forms of contracting to precede the on-line offering. • V2030 and SLJ offering forms a key aspect of the compulsory Induction Programme for new employees. • MANCO be requested to consider the request for all positional leaders to participate in one of the sessions. • The picture presented by the current lived experiences of the participants indicated that it might be worthwhile to explore the creation of a group of V2030 'Volunteer Champions'/'Culture Ambassadors' who could set aside some time and have the resilience to lead the cascading of the V2030 offering throughout the institution. This could play an invaluable role in respective Departmental and Faculty initiatives or supporting sister Departments and Faculties as co-facilitators or co-hosts in the other institutional culture Signature Programmes. This aspect of the 'cascading' process requires further thinking and designing, depending on whether the offering takes the form of 'whole system' groups; or Department and Faculty-specific conversations. The role of V2030 Champions in the online format is also not yet clear but all will be explored.
Collaboration	Institutional Strategy and HR
Institutional Location	It is currently being incubated in the Office for Institutional Strategy and will later be mainstreamed by HR
Team Members	Prof Nel; Ms Sishuba; Dr Anderson

The following supporting documents are being built as part of the Institutional Culture Toolkits:

- Gallup Q12 Employee Engagement Survey (Climate Survey)
- Institutional Culture Survey
- HoC Brochure
- Stakeholder Consultation Plan
- Two Year Calendar of Activities / Project Plan

- The two reports on Vision 2030 Leaders at All Levels SLJ
- Report from students about institutional culture
- Process for co-creating a Leadership Ethos for the University and commensurate Leadership Development Journey (Programme)
- Institutional culture launch and communication plan
- Monitoring and Evaluation Tools and Processes

11. CONSULTATIONS AND INTERNAL HISTORICAL DOCUMENT REPOSITORY

The principle of ‘many voices in and one voice out’ was applied which ensured extensive collaboration with various stakeholders, including but not limited to:

- Staff
- Students
- ICE WG (Institutional Culture and Equality Working Group)
- Engagement and Transformation Committee
- MANCO
- EMANCO
- HRREM

The following internal historical documents were reviewed to capture value from past thought leadership about institutional culture and to breathe life into the current proposals.

- Deepening the Conversations – ICEP Publication - November 2017
- Meta-analysis Institutional Culture Studies Report – September 2021
- Organisation-wide Climate Survey Template – April 2022
- Embodying Mandela Mapping Note – July 2022
- Vision 2030 SLJ Leaders at All Levels Reports – March 2023 and 2024
- Vice-Chancellor’s Address – Advancing Mandela University: Consolidating the Gains, Charting the Future Together - March 2023
- Transversal Deanery Discussion – April 2023
- Q12 – Employee Engagement Survey - Marcus Buckingham modified by Amber Anderson

12. CONCLUSION

Employees spend most of their time at work and the environment must be conducive to their mental, physical, and professional well-being. They need to do meaningful work and feel valued for doing it.

A desired culture does not happen by osmosis since it is everyone's responsibility, and we believe these initiatives will go a long way to recalibrate the culture and levels of employee engagement. Every conversation held and every decision made, creates culture, so it becomes critical to instil this granular level of awareness in employees about the direct impact of their daily behaviour and actions on institutional culture.

The explicit link of each of these initiatives to the proposed complexity science Change Leadership methodology of building networks, emergence, creating self-institution and social coordination, feedback sensitivity, and agility, will directly inculcate and embed a change leadership philosophy and methodology that transcend the Signature Programmes and become a way of life in the University.

The following considerations are paramount to the success of the recommended programmes:

- The University's readiness to embark on an institutional culture recalibration of this magnitude.
- It is envisaged that these programmes will take a minimum of two years to be implemented.
- The capacity of leaders at all levels to embrace change for this period and with sustained energy.
- These initiatives fall under Institutional Culture and Employee Engagement, which is a new category of funding for the University, at an institutional level. The quantum of funding will be costed as a next step.

We will know we have achieved our desired culture when all employees intrinsically believe that their job contributes to every student who graduates from Nelson Mandela University with the desired attributes.

This strategy is fundamentally a clarion call to action to create The Mandela Way as a collective.

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