SPECTRUM
Journal of Social Sciences

ASPUR PUBLISHING

Vol. 04, No. 01 (2027) 57-68, doi: 10.61552/SJSS.2027.01.006 - http://spectrum.aspur.rs

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Ismael Wating Baog [1]

Received 21.08.2026.
Revised 28.09.2026.
Accepted 18.10.2026.

Keywords:

Organizational culture, higher education, Schein, leadership, governance, systematic review.

Original research

A B S T R A C T

This systematic literature review examined how organizational culture in highe education is expressed through artifacts, espoused values, and underlyin assumptions, and how leadership and governance relate to cultural alignmer and institutional outcomes. Twenty-five scholarly reports published from 202 to 2026 were synthesized from 312 identified records using PRISMA-informe selection and deductive thematic analysis. The synthesis identified five artifac themes, five value themes, six interpretive assumption themes, and seven cultura configurations. Collaboration and relational support were the most frequentl coded values. Supportive and adaptive configurations were associated wit commitment, service quality, innovation, and institutional responsiveness, whil control, fragmentation, and inconsistencies between values and practic produced context-dependent tensions. Direct examination of underlyin assumptions, external stakeholder perspectives, and Philippine institution remained limited. The findings support examining cultural coherence acros organizational levels while treating inferred assumptions and heterogeneou evidence cautiously. Institutional assessment should connect formal policies everyday practices, and members' interpretations within their particula contexts.

© 2027 SPECTRUM Journal of Social Sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture influences how higher education institutions interpret their purposes, distribute authority, respond to change, and judge acceptable conduct. Formal policies explain what institutional members are expected to do, while shared values and assumptions shape how those policies are understood and enacted. Universities and colleges can therefore adopt similar structures yet develop different approaches to teaching, administrative work, collaboration, and public service. Understanding these differences requires attention to the cultural meanings attached to institutional practices. Schein's (1985, 2010) distinction among artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions provides an analytical basis for examining how visible organizational arrangements relate to deeper beliefs about appropriate action.

Recent studies connect university culture with a wide range of organizational concerns. Jung (2022) examined authentic leadership, trust, and organizational commitment, while Edema et al. (2024) considered culture in the relationship between mentoring and service delivery. Gorzelany et al. (2021) investigated cultural differences and university innovativeness across four European countries. Halmaghi et al. (2023) and Ranf et al. (2024) addressed sustainability in Romanian higher education, although their findings require attention to the

[1] Corresponding author: Ismael Wating Baog
Email: i.baog@ccd.edu.ph

strength and context of the reported relationships. Together, these studies indicate that culture intersects with institutional improvement through several processes whose meaning varies across settings.

The literature also documents tensions within institutional cultures. Faculty and administrators may differ in their assessments of authority, participation, or the need for reform. Henning et al. (2025) identified different cultures and subcultures among institutions implementing the same developmental education policy. Watts (2024) reported differences between executive leaders and enrollment management personnel. Mierzwa and Mierzwa (2020) described movement toward market and hierarchical cultures alongside resistance associated with academic traditions. Such findings suggest that an institution's published commitments provide only part of the evidence needed to understand its culture. Everyday decision-making and the experiences of different groups also require investigation.

These questions have particular relevance to Philippine higher education, where publicly funded institutions combine educational responsibilities with government accountability and community service. Within the reviewed corpus, Diocos and Resol (2023) examined organizational culture and management performance in a state college, Yngson et al. (2025) investigated commitment and job satisfaction, and Manlegro et al. (2026) explored values and practices in a local government college. These reports provide contextually relevant evidence, but their institutional coverage remains narrow. A synthesis can position their findings within international debates while identifying questions that require direct investigation in Philippine universities and colleges.

Existing evidence is dispersed across cultural typologies, leadership models, reform studies, and analyses of institutional outcomes. This diversity complicates comparisons because studies can use the same cultural label while examining different organizational processes. It also permits visible practices and stated values to receive greater attention than the assumptions that give them meaning. Literature reviews can clarify such differences by organizing evidence around explicit questions and identifying the boundaries of existing knowledge (Snyder, 2019). For higher education management, an integrated synthesis can explain where findings converge, where tensions remain, and where further evidence is needed.

This review examines organizational culture in higher education through four questions. It asks how studies describe artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions; which leadership practices and governance mechanisms shape or sustain these levels; what institutional outcomes are associated with their alignment or misalignment; and which contextual gaps remain. Its contribution is an interpretation of cultural relationships across studies, supported by a transparent account of the retained evidence and its limitations. The purpose is to inform institutional assessment and future research through a framework that connects organizational practices, declared commitments, and the beliefs through which members understand their institution.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Schein (1985) and Schein (2010) conceptualized culture as shared learning that becomes embedded in a group's assumptions about adaptation and internal integration. Artifacts are its visible expressions, including organizational structures, routines, documents, technologies, and observable behavior. Espoused values describe the principles an institution says should guide its work. Basic underlying assumptions concern beliefs that members regard as self-evident and may seldom articulate. The three levels require different forms of evidence. A policy can be observed directly, a value can be stated explicitly, and an assumption usually requires interpretation supported by contextual inquiry.

This distinction is especially relevant to higher education because academic and administrative authority coexist with professional traditions and institutional missions. Birnbaum (1988) described colleges as organizations whose coordination cannot be understood through formal hierarchy alone. Governance scholarship similarly emphasizes the interaction of participation, authority, and institutional context (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). In this review, governance includes formal rules, strategic planning, accountability, shared decisions, staff development, and communication. Leadership concerns how individuals exercise authority, interpret institutional priorities, and model expected conduct. Both can make values observable through recurring decisions and organizational arrangements.

The synthesis uses Schein's levels as deductive categories while allowing patterns within each category to emerge from the reviewed reports. Leadership and governance are examined as processes connecting these levels. Alignment describes situations in which practices, declared values, and interpreted assumptions reinforce one another. Misalignment describes contradictions among them, and fragmentation describes differences among organizational groups or between existing and preferred cultures. The associated outcomes include trust, commitment, service quality, innovation, institutional effectiveness, and acceptance of change. These relationships are interpreted within each report's design and setting, with causal language reserved for evidence capable of supporting it.

The resulting framework extends the organization of the review by linking cultural levels, institutional processes, and recurring configurations. It also applies a contextual lens to the entire evidence base, including its countries, sectors, participant groups, and treatment of time. This arrangement supports comparison across heterogeneous reports without assuming that every study directly investigated Schein's complete model. In particular, the review distinguishes assumptions elicited through research from assumptions inferred during synthesis. The

integrated diagram presented with the results summarizes these analytical connections and provides a basis for further empirical investigation.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Design and Scope

The study used a systematic literature review with deductive thematic synthesis. Selection stages were organized using PRISMA 2020 reporting guidance (Page et al., 2021), and the synthesis drew on Thomas and Harden's (2008) approach to integrating findings across studies. The review addressed English-language scholarship published from 2020 to 2026 concerning organizational culture in higher education. The publication window defines the scope of the retained corpus, while the absence of an exact final search date limits its interpretation as complete coverage of the final calendar year. The unit of analysis was the scholarly report and its documented findings.

3.2 Information Sources and Eligibility

Records were identified through Scopus or Scopus-indexed sources, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, and ProQuest. Reported search terms combined organizational culture with higher education institutions, universities, and colleges. These terms establish the search's substantive focus. Exact database-specific strings, search dates, and the number of records retrieved separately from each source were unavailable in the search documentation. Database labels were consequently treated as discovery routes, and potentially overlapping coverage was considered when interpreting the evidence. Overlapping coverage prevents exclusive attribution to one discovery source without a source-level retrieval log.

Eligibility focused on English-language reports within the stated publication window that examined higher education and provided information relevant to at least one research question. The eligibility description prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles and excluded editorials, opinion papers, conference proceedings, duplicate records, and studies outside higher education. The retained matrix nevertheless included two doctoral dissertations and one scholarly book chapter alongside 22 journal articles. This discrepancy is reported explicitly because publication form affects how the evidence should be assessed. The retained 25-report corpus was therefore interpreted as a synthesis of mixed scholarly sources.

3.3 Screening and Selection

The reported selection record contained 312 initially identified records. Removing 47 duplicates left 265 records for title and abstract screening. At that stage, 188 records were excluded, leaving 77 reports for eligibility consideration. Fifty-two were subsequently removed, producing a final corpus of 25 reports. Reported reasons included insufficient relevance to the research questions, inadequate findings for synthesis, and unavailable full texts. Separate counts for these reasons and a distinct retrieval log were unavailable. Figure 1 presents the documented totals using labels that accommodate both exclusions and unavailable reports.

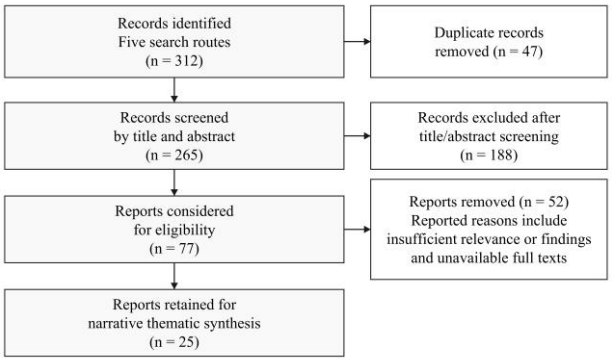


Figure 1. Reported Study Selection Flow

The 52 removals combine eligibility exclusions and unavailable reports because separate reason counts were not documented.

The retained selection record does not specify the number of screening reviewers, how disagreements were resolved, or whether a review protocol was registered. These omissions restrict reproducibility and independent assessment of selection decisions. The numerical flow is internally consistent, but the available information supports only a partial account of the reporting elements recommended by PRISMA 2020.

3.4 Extraction and Thematic Synthesis

A structured matrix recorded author, publication year, title, source, country, institutional setting, research approach, cultural findings, leadership and governance processes, associated outcomes, and contextual gaps. The matrix also linked individual reports to synthesized themes. Descriptive inconsistencies in aggregate summaries were reconciled against the named study records. Where an accessible original publication clarified a substantive summary, that clarification informed the manuscript. For example, Ranf et al. (2024) reported a low correlation between culture and sustainability, and their contribution is interpreted in that light.

Analysis began with artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions as predetermined categories. Recurring patterns within each category were grouped into descriptive themes, followed by analytical comparisons concerning leadership, governance, cultural configurations, and contextual gaps. This combination of theoretical direction and interpretation is consistent with the flexibility of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and the synthesis principles of Thomas and Harden (2008). Findings from quantitative reports

were integrated narratively alongside qualitative and conceptual material. Differences in measures, designs, populations, and outcomes supported thematic comparison rather than statistical pooling.

Theme counts indicate the number of retained reports assigned to a category in the extraction matrix. A report could contribute to several categories, so frequencies overlap. Percentages use 25 as the denominator. These counts describe coverage within the corpus and accompany the interpretation of findings. Formal risk-of-bias ratings, a documented independent coding procedure, and sensitivity analyses by publication form were unavailable. Consequently, the synthesis does not provide graded certainty estimates or establish the relative evidential weight of individual reports.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Coverage and Characteristics of the Evidence

The corpus comprised 25 reports representing diverse higher education settings, with 22 journal articles, two doctoral dissertations, and one scholarly book chapter.

Table 1. Characteristics of the retained scholarly reports (n = 25)

Study	Setting and Publication	Contribution to the Synthesis
Akanji et al. (2020)	Nigeria Journal article	Interviews connect cultural expectations with hierarchical, paternalistic, relational, and gendered leadership practices.
Caliskan and Zhu (2020)	Turkey Journal article	Student perceptions link organizational culture, autonomy, communication, and educational innovation.
Cumar et al. (2025)	Somaliland Journal article	Leadership styles are associated with cultural types in a post-conflict university setting.
Dee et al. (2023)	United States Book chapter	Institutional transformation is examined alongside academic identity, managerial pressures, and public purpose.
Demissie and Egziabher (2022)	Ethiopia Journal article	Existing hierarchy culture contrasts with participants' preference for a stronger clan culture.
Diocos and Resol (2023)	Philippines Journal article	Culture is examined in relation to state college management and performance.
Edema et al. (2024)	Nigeria Journal article	Mentoring and service delivery relationships vary with organizational culture.
Gebretsadik (2022)	Ethiopia Journal article	Cultural types show differing relationships with institutional effectiveness.
Gorzelany et al. (2021)	Four European countries Journal article	Cross-national evidence connects cultural profiles with university innovativeness.
Gray Parker (2021)	United States Doctoral dissertation	Annual reports are examined for organizational narratives within a racialized historical context.
Habibi and Prasetyo (2022)	Indonesia Journal article	University competitiveness is interpreted through culture, services, and institutional partnerships.
Halmaghi et al. (2023)	Romania Journal article	Bibliometric and questionnaire evidence addresses culture and sustainable development management.
Henning et al. (2025)	United States Journal article	Cultures and subcultures differentiate corequisite reform implementation across seven institutions.
Jung (2022)	South Korea Journal article	Authentic leadership, organizational culture, trust, and commitment are examined together.
Manlegro et al. (2026)	Philippines Journal article	A local government college case connects ethics, values, governance, and service quality.
Mierzwa and Mierzwa (2020)	Poland Journal article	Cultural profiles reveal managerial change alongside tensions concerning academic traditions.
Nauffal and Nader (2022)	Lebanon Journal article	Coexisting cultural forms support interpretation of institutional stability amid turbulence.
Nguyen (2020)	Vietnam Journal article	A qualitative case directly examines artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions.
Paredes-Saavedra et al. (2024)	Peru Journal article	Culture and work climate are considered in relationships involving university team effectiveness.
Petersen and Bartel (2020)	United States Journal article	A change case documents communication, coalitions, and cultural accommodation.
Ranf et al. (2024)	Romania Journal article	A low culture–sustainability correlation qualifies expectations about cultural support for sustainable development.
Sankar (2026)	India Journal article	Empowerment and culture are examined within adaptive leadership and performance relationships.
Twabu (2025)	South Africa Journal article	Conceptual IRACE development uses an illustrative university application to propose cultural change processes.

Watts (2024)	United States Doctoral dissertation	Executive leaders and enrollment personnel differ in their assessments of community college culture.
Yngson et al. (2025)	Philippines Journal article	Job satisfaction partially mediates the association between culture and organizational commitment.

Table 1 summarizes their settings and principal contributions. The reports included surveys, qualitative cases, studies of organizational documents, mixed approaches, and conceptual analysis. These differences shaped what could be observed about culture. Surveys commonly linked perceptions to organizational outcomes, while case and document studies provided contextual accounts of authority, institutional meaning, and change. Conceptual work offered explanatory models whose proposed benefits still require empirical evaluation.

The table distinguishes publication forms. Contributions include empirical findings, documentary interpretations, and conceptual propositions.

Three reports addressed Philippine institutions, representing 12% of the corpus. Two considered state higher education settings and one examined a local government college. Gorzelany et al. (2021) provided the sole explicit cross-national comparison in the extraction matrix, covering Poland, Austria, Germany, and Ukraine. Most other reports examined culture within one national context. This distribution provides breadth of examples but a limited basis for comparing institutional cultures under otherwise similar conditions. It also places boundaries around the transfer of international findings to Philippine local colleges.

4.2 Artifacts and Espoused Values

Five artifact themes described the visible expression of culture. Change, innovation, technology, and sustainability mechanisms appeared in 12 reports (48%). Leadership and governance practices, and participation, communication, teamwork, and mentoring each appeared in 11 (44%). Formal structures and authority, and staff development, empowerment, and rewards each appeared in nine (36%). These themes show that cultural evidence extends from formal organization to everyday relationships. Table 2 presents the complete set of cultural themes and their frequencies, including the assumption themes developed through interpretation.

Table 2. Cultural Themes Identified in the Extraction Matrix

Cultural level	Synthesized theme	n (%)
Artifacts	Formal structures, rules, bureaucracy, and authority	9 (36)
Artifacts	Leadership and governance practices	11 (44)
Artifacts	Participation, communication, teamwork, and mentoring	11 (44)
Artifacts	Change, innovation, technology, and sustainability mechanisms	12 (48)
Artifacts	Staff development, empowerment, and reward systems	9 (36)
Espoused values	Academic excellence, service quality, achievement, and competitiveness	9 (36)
Espoused values	Collaboration, trust, inclusion, and relational support	18 (72)
Espoused values	Accountability, order, efficiency, and performance	10 (40)
Espoused values	Innovation, adaptability, and sustainability	13 (52)
Espoused values	Ethics, authenticity, professionalism, and public purpose	6 (24)
Interpreted assumptions	Order and control support stability and survival	7 (28)
Interpreted assumptions	Trust and supportive relationships support commitment and effectiveness	10 (40)
Interpreted assumptions	Participation, autonomy, and flexibility enable sustainable change	11 (44)
Interpreted assumptions	Legitimacy rests on performance, quality, and stakeholder responsiveness	11 (44)
Interpreted assumptions	Academic identity and public purpose coexist with managerial pressures	5 (20)
Interpreted assumptions	Cultural responses vary across contexts, groups, and subcultures	7 (28)

Formal structures included reporting requirements, organizational hierarchies, institutional rules, administrative controls, and official documents. Henning et al. (2025) showed that implementation practices differed among institutions with different dominant cultures and subcultures. Akanji et al. (2020), using interviews with senior academics and non-teaching staff, linked hierarchical and paternalistic expectations to leadership behavior in Nigerian universities. Mierzwa and Mierzwa (2020) documented market and hierarchy orientations alongside tensions concerning academic traditions. Together, these findings make structures culturally meaningful through the forms of authority and relationships they support.

Relational artifacts included mentoring arrangements, consultation, teamwork, and opportunities for professional support. Edema et al. (2024) associated supervisory and career mentoring, peer review, and role modeling with service delivery. Jung (2022) connected authentic leadership with culture, trust, and commitment. Observable systems for participation and staff development therefore supplied evidence about the enactment of relational values. Innovation artifacts included revised programs, delivery arrangements, technologies, and sustainability initiatives. Their presence indicated organizational activity, while the surrounding findings helped establish whether

participants experienced those activities as enabling or restrictive.

Five themes also described espoused values. Collaboration, trust, inclusion, and relational support were most frequent, occurring in 18 reports (72%). Innovation, adaptability, and sustainability appeared in 13 (52%), accountability, order, efficiency, and performance in 10 (40%), academic excellence and service quality in nine (36%), and ethics, authenticity, professionalism, and public purpose in six (24%). The prominence of collaboration suggests that institutions commonly legitimize their work through relationships and shared responsibility. Its frequency also makes discrepancies between collaborative language and centralized decisions a relevant focus for cultural assessment.

Values concerning excellence and competitiveness appeared alongside service and professional commitments. Habibi and Prasetyo (2022) connected university competitiveness with academic services, technological renewal, and partnerships. Manlegro et al. (2026) described ethical leadership and shared values in a Philippine local government college. Sustainability studies added a further qualification. Halmaghi et al. (2023) examined cultural conditions for sustainable development, whereas Ranf et al. (2024) reported a low correlation between university culture and sustainability. The sustainability evidence therefore includes both proposed connections and limitations in their observed strength.

4.3 Interpretations of Underlying Assumptions

Six assumption themes were developed in the extraction matrix. Participation, autonomy, and flexibility as conditions for sustainable change, and performance, quality, and responsiveness as sources of legitimacy each appeared in 11 reports (44%). Trust and support as foundations for effectiveness appeared in 10 (40%). Assumptions concerning order and survival, and variation across contexts and subcultures each appeared in seven (28%). Balancing academic identity and public purpose with managerial pressures appeared in five (20%). These themes organized interpretations of why particular practices or values were treated as appropriate. The strength of these interpretations varied with the available evidence. Nguyen (2020) directly examined all three cultural levels in a Vietnamese teacher education institution and reported expectations concerning morality, professional knowledge, teaching methods, hierarchy, and role modeling. Most other reports concentrated on cultural types, practices, leadership, or outcomes. Their underlying assumptions were inferred during synthesis from the relationships among these findings. Accordingly, the six themes describe analytical propositions supported to different degrees by the reports. They should be investigated further through interviews, observation, and examination of how members explain significant institutional decisions.

4.4. Leadership and Governance Processes

Five leadership themes connected cultural expression with institutional action. Adaptive and change-oriented leadership, and supportive, relational, mentoring, and empowering leadership each appeared in seven reports (28%). Participatory and collaborative leadership appeared in six (24%). Ethical and authentic role modeling, and hierarchical or paternalistic leadership each appeared in five (20%). These categories included practices associated with maintaining existing expectations as well as processes intended to introduce change. Cultural influence was also reciprocal. Akanji et al. (2020) showed how existing cultural expectations shaped the forms of leadership considered legitimate.

Supportive leadership connected most clearly with trust, professional development, and employee participation. Jung (2022) examined relationships among authentic leadership, trust, culture, and commitment, while Sankar (2026) identified employee empowerment and culture as mechanisms within relationships involving adaptive leadership and workplace performance. Cumar et al. (2025) associated supportive and achievement-oriented leadership with cultural dimensions in Somaliland universities. These reports suggest several possible pathways through which leadership becomes embedded in organizational relationships. Their predominantly observational evidence supports interpretation of associations within the studied settings.

Six governance themes complemented the leadership findings. Structured change, innovation, reform, and sustainability systems appeared in 11 reports (44%). Formal rules and accountability, strategic planning and mission alignment, and human resource development each appeared in eight (32%). Shared governance and partnership mechanisms appeared in seven (28%), while communication and cultural framing appeared in six (24%). Governance supplied recurring arrangements through which leadership priorities were enacted, including policies, consultation procedures, staff development, and criteria for institutional performance.

Evidence concerning change also differed in form. Petersen and Bartel (2020) described communication and guiding coalitions during the implementation of change at one university. Dee et al. (2023) examined transformation in relation to academic identities and public responsibilities. Twabu (2025) proposed the IRACE framework through conceptual development and an illustrative University of South Africa application. Its governance and capacity-building elements informed the thematic synthesis, while its suggested benefits remain propositions requiring empirical assessment. This distinction matters when comparing an explanatory framework with outcomes documented through institutional research.

4.5. Cultural Configurations and Institutional Outcomes

Seven configurations summarized relationships among cultural levels and organizational processes. Table 3 presents their frequencies and associated outcomes. Innovation and adaptive alignment appeared in seven reports (28%). Relational and developmental alignment, and alignment among mission, values, and performance each appeared in five (20%). Value–practice misalignment appeared in four (16%). Control-oriented configurations, fragmentation or discrepancy, and managed realignment each appeared in three (12%). The categories overlap and represent synthesized interpretations of the retained evidence.

Table 3. Cultural Configurations and Associated Institutional Outcomes

Configuration	Outcomes or tensions reported across contributing sources	n (%)
Relational and developmental alignment	Trust, commitment, empowerment, team effectiveness, and quality service delivery.	5 (20)
Innovation and adaptive alignment	Innovation, institutional responsiveness, change processes, and sustainability initiatives, with variable support for benefits.	7 (28)
Mission, values, and performance alignment	Goal achievement, academic or management performance, service quality, and competitiveness.	5 (20)
Control-oriented configuration	Coordination and stability alongside tensions concerning academic effectiveness and acceptance of change.	3 (12)
Value–practice misalignment	Conflicts involving academic identity, inclusion, innovation, autonomy, and institutional credibility.	4 (16)
Fragmentation and existing–preferred discrepancy	Different cultural perceptions, uneven implementation, and dissatisfaction with prevailing arrangements.	3 (12)
Managed cultural realignment	Change acceptance, connections with institutional identity, and proposed or documented cultural transformation processes.	3 (12)

Relational configurations linked mentoring, supportive leadership, and empowerment with trust, development, and commitment. Paredes-Saavedra et al. (2024), Jung (2022), Edema et al. (2024), and Sankar (2026) contributed evidence connecting these processes with team effectiveness, service quality, or workplace performance. Yngson et al. (2025) provided additional Philippine evidence that job satisfaction partially mediated the association between culture and commitment. Innovation configurations linked experimentation, strategic change, and institutional responsiveness, although findings such as the low sustainability correlation reported by Ranf et al. (2024) qualify claims of uniformly strong organizational benefits.

Control-oriented configurations produced mixed implications. Formal authority and stable routines offered coordination under uncertainty, as illustrated by Nauffal and Nader's (2022) Lebanese analysis. Gebretsadik (2022) and Mierzwa and Mierzwa (2020) also identified tensions involving hierarchy, academic effectiveness, or acceptance of change. Misalignment arose when institutional practices contradicted values such as participation, academic identity, or inclusion. Caliskan and Zhu (2020) connected limited autonomy and communication with barriers to educational innovation, while Gray Parker (2021) examined how institutional narratives represented racialized historical conditions through ostensibly neutral discourse.

Fragmentation concerned differences among units, roles, and desired cultural arrangements. Demissie and Egziabher (2022) identified a prevailing hierarchy orientation alongside preference for clan culture. Henning et al. (2025) and Watts (2024) documented differences in institutional implementation or organizational perceptions. Managed realignment described efforts to connect new practices with accepted institutional purposes through consultation, communication, and strategic interpretation. Figure 2 integrates the cultural levels, leadership and governance processes, configurations, and contextual lens. Its arrows summarize interpretive relationships developed in the synthesis.



Figure 2. Synthesis of Organizational Culture in Higher Education Through Schein's Three Cultural Levels.

Note: Arrows summarize interpretive relationships. The contextual lens applies across the synthesis.

4.6. Contextual and Research Gaps

The extraction matrix identified limited direct application of Schein's complete framework. Nguyen (2020) was the only report explicitly coded as investigating artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions together. Watts (2024) used Schein as a theoretical influence, but its cultural assessment also relied on the Competing Values Framework. This distinction separates theoretical citation from direct examination of all three levels. It explains why a sizeable literature on culture can still provide limited evidence about the meanings institutional members take for granted.

Participant coverage was also restricted. Three reports explicitly included or centered students, while none identified external stakeholders as their principal participant group. Four examined subcultures or divergent internal perceptions, and two foregrounded identity-related dynamics. Twelve focused on clearly public institutions, two on private institutions, and 11 had mixed or insufficiently specified sector coverage in the matrix. These classifications describe the retained records and indicate where comparisons remain difficult. They also show how institution-wide conclusions can depend heavily on the perspectives of employees or leaders.

No entry was classified in the matrix as a formal repeated-wave longitudinal panel. Three reports nevertheless contributed historical or process-oriented evidence through reform implementation, annual reports, or reconstructed change. Three addressed crisis, instability, or post-conflict settings. Geographical coverage included one Latin American report and no report from Oceania, alongside only one cross-national comparison. The three Philippine reports did not directly examine all three Schein levels together. These gaps concern the coverage of this corpus and provide directions for further searching and research.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Cultural Coherence and the Meaning of Institutional Practice

The synthesis indicates that organizational culture is most informative when institutional practices are interpreted alongside the values and assumptions attached to them. The same formal arrangement can support different organizational purposes. Reporting requirements may communicate accountability, reinforce distrust, or provide continuity during instability. Consultation may express shared responsibility when members influence decisions, while its cultural meaning may differ when participation has little practical consequence. Schein's (2010) framework directs attention to these relationships by treating visible arrangements as evidence whose meaning requires further inquiry.

The prominence of relational values makes this issue particularly relevant. Collaboration and trust appeared across more reports than other value themes, yet the evidence also contained centralized authority, restricted autonomy, and differing cultural preferences. These findings support examining whether everyday governance gives practical effect to institutional commitments. They also suggest why a mission statement alone offers a limited basis for diagnosing culture. Leaders' treatment of disagreement, the allocation of professional opportunities, and the handling of routine problems can reveal how institutional values operate under ordinary conditions.

The synthesis also clarifies the difference between coherence and desirable outcomes. A control-oriented institution can exhibit consistency among its structures, values, and assumptions while producing tensions around innovation or academic autonomy. Conversely, disagreement among groups can make neglected problems visible and prompt institutional learning. Cultural assessment therefore requires explicit attention to the educational and ethical purposes that a particular form of coherence serves. Birnbaum (1988) and Kezar and Eckel (2004) support a contextual understanding of coordination and governance in institutions where multiple sources of authority and professional judgment coexist.

5.2. Leadership and Governance in Cultural Development

Leadership and governance appeared as interdependent processes through which values acquired organizational expression. Supportive conduct can encourage trust, but recurring policies determine whether participation, professional development, and fair recognition remain available beyond a particular leader's tenure. Similarly, a strategic change initiative depends on how decisions, resources, and responsibilities are organized. The findings therefore connect interpersonal leadership with the institutional arrangements through which its priorities are sustained. This interpretation is consistent with Uhl-Bien and Arena's (2018) account of organizational adaptability as involving relationships and enabling conditions across an organization.

The evidence also shows that leadership develops within an existing cultural context. Hierarchical or paternalistic expectations can shape which behaviors members accept, while professional traditions influence how reforms are interpreted. Akanji et al. (2020) make this reciprocal relationship visible. It qualifies approaches that treat leadership style as an independent cultural solution transferable across institutions. A culturally informed change process needs to examine how members understand authority, what they fear losing, and which institutional purposes they regard as legitimate. Such inquiry can help explain why similar leadership actions receive different responses across settings.

The configurations concerning managed realignment suggest that communication and participation can

connect reform with institutional identity. Petersen and Bartel (2020) illustrated this through a particular change process, while Dee et al. (2023) examined transformation alongside public and academic responsibilities. Twabu's (2025) conceptual framework provides a further set of propositions about governance integration and capacity building. These contributions offer different kinds of support. Their combined value lies in identifying questions about change mechanisms that can be examined through comparative cases and research following implementation over time.

5.3. Implications for Higher Education Assessment and Philippine Research

Institutional assessment can use the three cultural levels to organize evidence around a concrete concern, such as service quality, staff participation, or implementation of a new academic policy. Artifacts may include documented procedures, meeting practices, resource allocations, and reward arrangements. Espoused values can be identified in strategic statements and participants' accounts of institutional expectations. Inquiry into assumptions can then examine how members explain decisions, resolve contradictions, and describe practices they regard as inevitable. Comparing these accounts across organizational groups can reveal culturally meaningful differences that aggregate scores may obscure.

The limited representation of students and external stakeholders restricts understanding of institutional responsiveness. Students encounter culture through teaching, services, communication, and the application of rules. Employers, alumni, families, and community partners can provide evidence about institutions' public commitments and relationships beyond campus. Their involvement is particularly relevant when legitimacy is interpreted through service and responsiveness. The synthesis supports widening participation in cultural inquiry, with methods suited to each group's experience and relationship to the institution.

For Philippine research, the three retained reports establish useful starting points but leave substantial institutional diversity unexplored. The evidence on local government colleges is especially narrow. Comparative cases could investigate how academic authority, local public accountability, staff relationships, and community expectations interact within these institutions. Applying the full framework would require direct examination of underlying assumptions alongside documents and reported values. Following institutional changes over time could also show whether new policies alter daily practices and members' interpretations, or whether apparent improvements remain concentrated in formal arrangements.

Future studies should assess the seven configurations as propositions open to refinement. Relational support, innovation, mission alignment, control, misalignment, fragmentation, and realignment may coexist or change during an institution's development. Research can examine their boundaries, the evidence needed to identify them, and how their implications vary across institutional sectors. Designs combining observation, interviews, documentary evidence, and repeated measurements would strengthen the basis for understanding cultural development. Comparative and longitudinal work would also help distinguish enduring organizational patterns from responses to a particular leadership team or external disruption.

5.4. Limitations of the Review

Several limitations constrain interpretation. The search documentation lacks exact dates, complete source-specific strings, a retrieval log, and information about screening independence. The eligibility description and retained publication forms also differ. Including dissertations and a book chapter broadens the scholarly material considered, but the absence of a documented sensitivity analysis prevents assessment of how these sources influence the conclusions. The review's database labels provide discovery information and do not establish exclusive origin or current indexing status. These reporting gaps should be addressed in an updated review.

The evidence itself is heterogeneous, and several reports rely on perceptions collected within a limited number of institutions. Conceptual models and observational associations provide different levels of support for claims about outcomes. Formal risk-of-bias appraisal and graded confidence assessments were unavailable, which limits the strength of recommendations drawn from the synthesis. Theme frequencies indicate coverage and may reflect the review's coding decisions, the reporting depth of each publication, and overlapping concepts. They cannot establish the magnitude of an institutional effect.

Finally, most assumption themes are interpretations developed across reports that used frameworks other than Schein's complete model. Direct investigation of members' taken-for-granted beliefs was uncommon. The selection is also restricted by language, publication window, and the documented corpus. Consequently, the contextual gaps identify areas underrepresented in these 25 reports. An expanded search and more complete audit record could change both the distribution of evidence and the interpretation of particular cultural configurations.

6. CONCLUSION

This review synthesized 25 scholarly reports on organizational culture in higher education using Schein's distinction among artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. It identified recurring cultural themes and seven configurations linking institutional practices and meanings with reported outcomes. Collaboration and support were prominent values, while leadership and governance provided visible processes through which institutional priorities were maintained or changed. Relationships involving innovation,

commitment, service quality, stability, and reform varied across settings and forms of evidence.

The principal implication is that cultural assessment should connect formal arrangements, declared commitments, and members' explanations of institutional life. Direct examination of assumptions, differences among groups, and change over time remains particularly necessary. Philippine local government colleges offer an underexplored setting for this work. The synthesized configurations provide propositions for further investigation, with their interpretation bounded by the mixed evidence base and the review's documented methodological limitations.

Acknowledgement: The author gratefully acknowledges the research supervision, dissertation panel feedback, editorial guidance, and institutional support that contributed to this study.

References:

Akanji, B., Mordi, C., Ituma, A., Adisa, T. A., & Ajonbadi, H. (2020). The influence of organisational culture on leadership style in higher education institutions. *Personnel Review, 49*(3), 709–732. DOI: 10.1108/PR-08-2018-0280

Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Caliskan, A., & Zhu, C. (2020). Organizational culture and educational innovations in Turkish higher education: Perceptions and reactions of students. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 20*(1), 20–39. DOI: 10.12738/jestp.2020.1.003

Cumar, M. A., Kidane, B. Z., Golga, D. N., & Dinsa, F. (2025). Leadership as cultural architect: A path-goal theory analysis of leadership styles and organizational culture in Somaliland higher education. *Discover Education, 4*, Article 448. DOI: 10.1007/s44217-025-00887-8

Dee, J. R., Nakajima, H., & Korbek-Erdogmus, E. (2023). Organizational culture and the transformation of higher education institutions. In L. Leišytė, J. R. Dee, & B. J. R. van der Meulen (Eds.), *Research handbook on the transformation of higher education* (pp. 333–350). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781800378216.00032

Demissie, D., & Egziabher, F. G. (2022). An investigation of organizational culture of higher education: The case of Hawassa University. *Education Research International, 2022*, Article 1222779. DOI: 10.1155/2022/1222779

Diocos, C., & Resol, V. P. (2023). Organizational culture and management performance of a state college in the Philippines. *International Journal of Educational Research Review, 8*(1), 44–50. DOI: 10.24331/ijere.1217227

Edema, A. J. M., Otalor, J. I., Kola, H. M., Ada, J. A., Efiong, E. J., Nkiri, J. E., & Inyang, I. O. (2024). Mentoring and quality service delivery in Nigerian public universities: Does organizational culture matter? *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 24*(1), 212–228. DOI: 10.33423/jhetp.v24i1.6771

Gebretsadik, D. M. (2022). Impact of organizational culture on the effectiveness of public higher educational institutions in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 25*(5), 823–842. DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2020.1722248

Gorzelany, J., Gorzelany-Dziadkowiec, M., Luty, L., Firlej, K., Gaisch, M., Dudziak, O., & Scott, C. (2021). Finding links between organisation's culture and innovation. The impact of organisational culture on university innovativeness. *PLOS ONE, 16*(10), e0257962. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0257962

Gray Parker, A. (2021). *Making meaning of the 1960s on campus: Examining organizational culture and policies through university annual reports* (Publication No. 28496358) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas at San Antonio]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Habibi, S., & Prasetyo, M. A. M. (2022). University management: Organizational culture as a factor of university competitiveness. *Development: Studies in Educational Management and Leadership, 1*(1), 1–20. DOI: 10.47766/development.v1i1.638

Halmaghi, E.-E., Ranf, D.-E., & Badea, D. (2023). Interdisciplinary exploration between organizational culture and sustainable development management applied to the Romanian higher education environment. *Sustainability, 15*(13), Article 10688. DOI: 10.3390/su151310688

Henning, H. N., Danyi, M. M., Park-Gaghan, T. J., & Mokher, C. G. (2025). What does organizational culture tell us about developmental education reform? Corequisite implementation in Texas. *Innovative Higher Education, 50*(6), 2193–2213. DOI: 10.1007/s10755-025-09787-z

Jung, J.-Y. (2022). The effect of authentic leadership of deans and directors on sustainable organizational commitment at universities: Mediated by organizational culture and trust. *Sustainability, 14*(17), Article 11051. DOI: 10.3390/su141711051

Kezar, A. J., & Eckel, P. D. (2004). Meeting today's governance challenges: A synthesis of the literature and examination of a future agenda for scholarship. *The Journal of Higher Education, 75*(4), 371–399. DOI: 10.1080/00221546.2004.11772264

Manlegro, D. L., Jr., Reyes, I. O., & Clarin, A. S. (2026). A case study on the organizational culture of local government colleges: Exploring values, practices and challenges in public administration. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 10*(1), 2457–2475. DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10100193

Mierzwa, D., & Mierzwa, D. (2020). Organisational culture of higher education institutions in the process of implementing changes: Case study. *Journal of Decision Systems, 29*(sup1), 190–203. DOI: 10.1080/12460125.2020.1848377

Nauffal, D., & Nader, J. (2022). Organizational cultures of higher education institutions operating amid turbulence and an unstable environment: The Lebanese case. *Higher Education, 84*(2), 343–371. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-021-00771-y

Nguyen, H. T. (2020). Exploring the organizational culture of higher education institutions in Vietnam from faculty's perspective: A case study. *Journal of International and Comparative Education, 9*(2), 59–76. DOI: 10.14425/jice.2020.9.2.0704

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., … Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ, 372*, n71. DOI: 10.1136/bmj.n71

Paredes-Saavedra, M., Vallejos, M., Huancahuire-Vega, S., Morales-García, W. C., & Geraldo-Campos, L. A. (2024). Work team effectiveness: Importance of organizational culture, work climate, leadership, creative synergy, and emotional intelligence in university employees. *Administrative Sciences, 14*(11), Article 280. DOI: 10.3390/admsci14110280

Petersen, S. A., & Bartel, S. M. (2020). When culture and change collide in higher education: A case study at one university. *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research, 10*(2), 46–59. DOI: 10.5929/2020.10.2.4

Ranf, D. E., Halmaghi, E.-E., Badea, D., Gorski, A.-T., & Gorski, H. (2024). Modelling the influences of universities culture on sustainable development. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy, 12*(4), 448–466. DOI: 10.2478/mdke-2024-0026

Sankar, J. P. (2026). Adaptive leadership on workplace performance mediated and moderated by employee empowerment and organizational culture. *Discover Education, 5*, Article 70. DOI: 10.1007/s44217-025-01093-2

Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research, 104*, 333–339. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Thomas, J., & Harden, A. (2008). Methods for the thematic synthesis of qualitative research in systematic reviews. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 8*, Article 45. DOI: 10.1186/1471-2288-8-45

Twabu, K. Y. (2025). Transforming organizational culture in higher education: A strategic change management case study for higher learning institutions using the IRACE framework. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, Article 1690451. DOI: 10.3389/feduc.2025.1690451

Uhl-Bien, M., & Arena, M. (2018). Leadership for organizational adaptability: A theoretical synthesis and integrative framework. *The Leadership Quarterly, 29*(1), 89–104. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.12.009

Watts, T. T. (2024). *Organizational culture at Texas community colleges and the leadership response to the enrollment management environment* [Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED660147

Yngson, R. S., Jr., Quiachon, L. Y., & Paulino, M. A. (2025). Impact of organizational culture on organizational commitment: Mediating role of job satisfaction. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research, 14*(4), 641–655. https://buscompress.com/uploads/3/4/9/8/34980536/riber_14-4_41_s24-265_641-655.pdf

Ismael Wating Baog
City College of Davao,
Philippines.
i.baog@ccd.edu.ph
ORCID: 0009-0002-3720-419X