

CHALLENGES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIVISIONAL GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT MODEL: A COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY

Nombeko Felicity Dwesini *

* Department of Administration and Hospitality, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, Eastern Cape, South Africa
Contact details: Department of Administration and Hospitality, Walter Sisulu University, Nelson Mandela Drive, Private Bag X1,
Mthatha, 5117, Eastern Cape, South Africa



Abstract

How to cite this paper: Dwesini, N. F. (2023). Challenges of the implementation of the divisional governance and management model: A comprehensive university case study [Special issue]. *Journal of Governance & Regulation*, 12(4), 390–404.
<https://doi.org/10.22495/jgrv12i4siart19>

Copyright © 2023 The Author

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN Online: 2306-6784

ISSN Print: 2220-9352

Received: 28.02.2023

Accepted: 18.12.2023

JEL Classification: I18, G38, G34, I23

DOI: 10.22495/jgrv12i4siart19

This article explored challenges experienced in merged higher education institutions during restructuring using a selected comprehensive university (CU). As part of its restructuring, the CU abandoned the unitary governance model it had adopted when it merged and opted for a new governance model — the divisional governance and management (DGM) model. This was to consolidate the problematic merger and expedite the achievement of the objectives of the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE). The governance model being investigated here is important because it is unique in the South African higher education context (Stumpf, 2008). It has been adopted in only one merged South African university, the North West University; it has not been attempted anywhere else in the merged South African universities (Mantashe, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 39 respondents, purposively selected for data collection. The findings revealed the following challenges: resistance to change, lack of clear reporting lines, inadequate financial resources and high costs of implementing the new governance model, unequal treatment of the different campuses or sites of the merged university, inconsistent application of institutional policies across the different campuses of the merged institution, the institutional culture, highly unionised institution, leadership instability, and inadequate communication. Based on the findings of the research, the study provided some recommendations to address the challenges identified by the study.

Keywords: Higher Education Institution, Comprehensive University, Divisional Governance and Management Model, National Plan for Higher Education, Organisational Change

Authors' individual contribution: The Author is responsible for all the contributions to the paper according to CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) standards.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the adoption of the Divisional Governance and Management (DGM) model that proceeded with the restructuring of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa (SA), using the case of ABC University. ABC University is the pseudonym selected to protect the identity of the merged university being investigated here. The contemporary literature on the characteristics and trends in HEIs reveals that institutions of higher learning worldwide have gone through a drastic transformation (Chetty, 2010; Wan, 2008). These changes have been fuelled by greater competition, globalization, rapid technological change, increased accountability, and income generation among other things (Bor & Shargel, 2020; Hiatt & Richardson, 2017; Khan et al., 2020; Ribando et al., 2017; Sulkowski et al., 2019; Vlachopoulos, 2021; William et al., 2019). HEIs have been forced to examine their governance and restructure themselves to adapt to a fast-changing academic and economic industry. In South Africa, however, one key driver of such a transformation was the dawn of democracy ushered in, in 1994 (Lethoko, 2016). When South Africa attained democracy and a new government was heralded, one of the first initiatives, the post-apartheid government engaged in, was the development of legislative and policy tools, whose purpose was to transform the higher education sector in line with the vision of the new democratic government. The main idea was that, for the higher education sector to play a meaningful role in the development of a democratic society, it had to undergo a radical transformation. To achieve this, the government exercised a strong and direct intervention in the higher education sector. The change in government brought the restructuring of the academic landscape by introducing new institutional reforms. In March 2001, the then Minister of Education released the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) where transformation and restructuring proposals were approved by the Cabinet. Those proposals culminated in the combination of public institutions of higher learning through mergers and incorporations which largely happened from 2004 to 2007. These mergers resulted in the reduction of higher education institutions from 36 to 21; which comprised 11 traditional universities, 6 universities of technology, and 4 comprehensive universities (Lethoko, 2016).

According to Sulkowski et al. (2019), mergers are complex management processes that require a long-term implementation plan, in line with the strategic plan for the development of the whole institution. HEIs that have undergone mergers in South Africa have experienced various challenges. Lethoko (2016) reveals that there were more failures than success stories in relation to higher education mergers in South Africa. Arnolds et al. (2013) allude to this contention by stating that the merger and consolidation of higher learning institutions in South Africa was a failed project that brought complex challenges to the university sector. The post-merger phase took longer than anticipated. There were some institutions that merged successfully, while others were unable to successfully complete the mergers, others de-merged, yet others were put under administration as a strategy to prevent a de-merger.

The comprehensive university (CU) being investigated here was established as a result of a merger of two technikons and one traditional university. The university under study failed to consolidate the pre-existing three institutions into one. The merger arguably was only on paper, as operations were still as they were in legacy (founding) institutions under the name of the merged CU. The bringing into existence of a new institution is a complex exercise fraught with challenges as borne out in the present case study. Extant literature (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2011; Jack, 2007; Mantashe, 2013; Ncayiyana, 2011) reveals that from its inception this CU has encountered challenges that were later identified by an assessor that was appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. These were: the merger was set up to fail because the process was underfunded by the government; before the merger, the traditional university was at the brink of being closed down by the former Minister, Prof. Kadar Asmal — there was an exodus of highly qualified academics and it was merged whilst crawling on its knees (Ncayiyana, 2011).

The Minister of Higher Education and Training having received recommendations from the assessor, placed the merged institution under administration. The Administrator was given a mandate to turn the CU around. This resulted in the new institution abandoning the unitary governance model it had adopted when it merged and opted for a new governance model, the DGM model. The DGM became a cornerstone for the whole turnaround strategy of the CU. The intention of the CU leadership in opting for the DGM model was to accomplish efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the institution. The DGM was used as an apparatus for the institution to complete the merger started in 2005 to meet the goals of the NPHE. The post-merger phase was not yet complete at the time the DGM was introduced in this CU, so there was still time for improvement. This study explored the challenges encountered during the implementation of the DGM model in a selected comprehensive university in South Africa and therefore provided recommendations to address the identified constraints. The governance and management model being investigated here is important because it is unique in the South African Higher Education Sector (Stumpf, 2008). It has been adopted in only one merged South African university context, the North West University (NWU); it has not been attempted anywhere else in the merged South African universities (Mantashe, 2013). This makes this model significant to research. However, it should be noted that North West University later abandoned this model due to the challenges that this university experienced as a result of adopting this model at its inception. Moreover, where this model has been used internationally, the context is totally different, as Western countries are tier-one countries with fewer contextual factors such as socioeconomic, financial, cultural, and environmental constraints (Mantashe, 2013). Various scholars (Kezar, 2001; Leslie et al., 2018; Wollscheid & Rosdel, 2021) lament that there is a paucity of organizational change research within higher education institutions. They specifically contend that there is a dearth of research conducted during the organizational change implementation. This research is an attempt to close that gap.

Furthermore, this study will provide insight into the impact that the restructuring of this CU has on its operations and academic programmes, by identifying measures that will enable appropriate restructuring. This article used open-ended interviews to not limit participants when discussing aspects of the change experience and thus addressed specifically two research questions, which are:

RQ1: What are the major challenges experienced by stakeholders of the merged CU while implementing the divisional governance and management model?

RQ2: What recommendations can be made to address the challenges identified by the study?

The current study contributes to empirical literature on governance models in the context of higher education.

The rest of the article is organised in the following manner. Section 2 reviews the literature related to the topic of the study. Section 3 analyses the methodology that underpinned this study. Section 4 presents the findings of the study. Section 5 discussed the findings. Section 6 provides the conclusions and recommendations that emerged from this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The intent of the current study was to explore the experience of multiple stakeholders in a merged higher education institution (HEI), relative to the implementation of a new governance model, the DGM model, and recommendations that could be provided to address the challenges identified by the study. The focus of this research was on identifying the major challenges faced by these stakeholders while implementing the new governance model and strategies that could be used to address the challenges. Therefore, this article is about stakeholders' experiences of a radical organisational change that took place within the context of change (merger). The need for change in this CU came about because the leaders were consolidating the problematic merger in an attempt to achieve the objectives of the merger in terms of the NPHE which are effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The successful implementation of the DGM would then culminate in the achievement of the mission and the strategic goals of ABC University, which are aligned to the three core functions of the HEI, namely: teaching and learning; research development and innovation and community engagement (Sulkowski et al., 2019). This research is in consensus with Sulkowski et al. (2019), who point out that the implementation of the university consolidation alone does not mean the strategic success of the merger, but the effects thereof are also of strategic importance. The merged university must therefore consider and deal with the various challenges of consolidation processes if they must achieve the effects of consolidation. Accordingly, this section reviewed the literature on organisational change, change management, and strategies for successful change management. Discussing these concepts would open space for presenting challenges in the implementation of radical organizational change. It is assumed realising challenges, and providing strategies to address them, will help the organisational leaders of ABC University. It must be noted that this review is limited by the dearth of

literature on the divisional governance model itself in the context of higher education. It has been mentioned somewhere in this work that ABC University is the only merged HEI in South Africa, currently (at the time of conducting this research) using the DGM, except for the NWU, which later abandoned this model. Challenges experienced by NWU in implementing the divisional model will therefore also be presented and discussed briefly in this review.

Adda et al. (2019) argue that organisational change incorporates the participation of leaders, employees, structures, and systems as a method to foresee and adapt to environmental changes. They further explain that the change process includes the implementation of activities in new methods, following new pathways, embracing new technologies, putting in place new systems, pursuing management procedures, merging, reorganising, or having troublesome events that are very significant. On the other hand, Maroun and El Hage (2020) view organizational change as the embracing of an idea, procedure, process, and behaviour that is breaking new ground in an organization. The process of change emerges sequentially by developing a clear vision (Kotter, 2012), imparting it to the group level, influencing individuals to accept it, bolstering the momentum of its implementation (Kotter, 1995), and institutionalizing it. Sistare (2022) presents a simple definition of organizational change where she opines organizational change is about seeing what the situation is at present, and how the situation should be for the organization's future to be successful. Meanwhile, Darmawan and Azziz (2020) contend organizational change is a process to alter the direction of history, which impacts the organization to accomplish a particular level of functionality. Simply stated, organizational change is a normal and inevitable part of organizational life, and it involves solving the problems and challenges of an organization so that the organization accomplishes its mission and goals.

Research indicates organizational leaders can respond effectively to change if they understand the organization well, its structures, strategies, and culture. Having this knowledge will enable leaders to choose the most suitable model to manage change and will also be able to pinpoint barriers to change, as well as elements that will facilitate change (Burnes, 1996). This makes change management important for this review. Pundyke (2020) defines change management as a mechanism of identifying where the organisation is, establishing where it wants to go, and designing the direction between, and closely relates this whole process to problem-solving. Pundyke further likens this conceptualisation to Lewin's (1947a, 1947b) planned approach, which also conceptualises change management as a three-stage process comprising: freezing, movement, and unfreezing. Change management is the process that allows members to participate in change easily while, at the same time, overcoming their shock and resistance to the process of change (Sung & Kim, 2021). Sung and Kim (2021) further opine change management intentionally alters the behaviour and perceptions of members of the organization so that they accomplish target performance by preventing and getting rid of resistance. In simple terms,

change management facilitates the change process. Maroun and El Hage (2020) are of the view that organisational change will not be significant until employees believe differently, think differently, and behave differently. Research explored various strategies for managing change which are: organizational goals, transformational leadership, clear and consistent communication among organizational members and participation, and education and training (Sung & Kim, 2021). Errida and Lotfi (2021) took this discussion further specifying stakeholder engagement as one of the success factors for the implementation of change. As such, they recommend the establishment of a “stakeholder engagement strategy” that will identify the required involvement of the different stakeholders and the essential tasks to achieve the necessary engagement. These factors taken together comprise effective change management which is necessary for leaders to obtain buy-in and support and facilitate generating awareness of the need for change. The primary objective of change management is to achieve buy-in and support and ascertain employees have the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitude for change to be successful (van der Voet, 2016). Thus, change management is the basis of the successful implementation of any change initiative, and if it is not executed properly, it can bring disastrous results. This review will briefly discuss each of these change drivers.

Ngcamu and Teferra (2015), in their work, on leadership features influencing transformation in the post-merger and post-incorporation in a HEI in South Africa define leadership as a process in which change intervention must emerge from key stakeholders, all of whom are involved in this process. The transformational leadership style is touted as the best approach in implementing change successfully. Transformational leaders are responsible for motivating employees at all levels to embrace and accept change. They must ensure there is common understanding of organisational goals and direction to create transformations. The vision must be communicated clearly and consistently to all employees across all levels (Poole & Van de Ven, 2021). Islam et al. (2020) assert that transformational leadership builds up followers’ trust in leadership, which enhances the accomplishment of a common vision and achieve the change objectives. Nevertheless, Chandrasekara (2019) pointed out that leading employees is an arduous task and it demands a positive relationship between the leader and employees to be successful.

Research reveals that for many employees including low-level managers, “change is neither sought after nor welcome. It is disruptive and intrusive” (Tadesse, 2013, p. 14). Various scholars agree that in order to successfully implement change, leaders must recognize, understand, embrace, and engage the multiple stakeholders in the organization, structures and cultures that exist within the organization. Notably, clear and continuous consultation, communication, and participation are critical when undertaking a fundamental change like the one being implemented at ABC University (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Sung & Kim, 2021; Maison, 2018). Several authors also emphasize the importance of blending the different cultures of the pre-existing organisations to achieve a unified organisational or

institutional culture in cases of HEI post-merger integration that is taking place at ABC University. Azziz (2013) contends merger success can be invariably associated with leaders who understand how to build organizational culture.

There is consensus among various scholars (Jones et al., 2008; Sulkowski et al., 2019) that change constitutes special challenges at different levels of the organization as the various facets of the change process may be significant to employees and may be judged quite distinctly. In a study conducted by Stumpf (2008) on the evaluation of North-West University’s management model, a lot of challenges of the model were flagged which included ineffective communication, high cost of the model, unhealthy competition, and inequitable distribution of funding among the three NWU campuses (Potchefstroom Campus, Vaal Campus, and Mafikeng Campus) and perceived superiority status of the merged NWU. NWU is the only merged university in South Africa that opted for the divisional governance model when it merged. However, it must be noted that NWU later abandoned this governance model due to numerous challenges experienced with it. Still on NWU, Cloete (2008) in a ministerial task team report, he compiled on the Mafikeng Campus (one of the three campuses of NWU), confirmed recommendations that were provided by the task team after the investigation into the causes of disruptions in NWU. These recommendations included NWU discontinuing the divisional model and adopting a new model that would enable the merged university to achieve the aims and objectives of the merger with a leadership structure that would manage change on all three campuses. It is hoped ABC University’s top management will take note of and learn from the experiences of NWU with the divisional model.

The notion of resistance to change is a common subject in organisational change literature. Various scholars have written about the central role that resistance to change plays in the change process. Tamunomiebi and Akpan (2021) define resistance to change as an attitude or behaviour of an individual(s) who can frustrate the purpose of the change goals. Additionally, Tamunomiebi and Akpan (2021) assert there are employees who understand the need for change while, on the other hand, there are those who oppose change and resist it. Darmawan and Azizah (2022), on the other hand, explained resistance as a general response to the transformation process and opposition to change itself. It is generally believed when employees contemplate they will benefit from the change they will support it whereas if they believe they will lose benefits, status, prestige, power, or the job itself because of the change, they will fight it (Tamunomiebi & Akpan). Still on resistance to change, previous studies (Aka & Onoyima, 2023; Darmawan & Azziz, 2020; Lehmann, 2017; Neves et al., 2018; Serra et al., 2021; Ekowati, 2021) reveal that not all employees always welcome change, and the failure rate still remains at 70%, where resistance to change is rated as the top reason why implementation of change in organisations fails. It is, therefore, emphasized that organizational transformation programs must incorporate resistance to change and guarantee buy-in into the vision, or it is a straightforward exercise.

Leslie et al. (2018), in a study of the perceptions of multiple stakeholders in a merged HEI, reported three major impediments to the change process, which were inadequate communication, ineffective leadership, and improper cultural and systems integration. Leslie et al. (2018) further elaborated that while the change looked attractive on paper, the implementation was met with resistance from both erstwhile institutions of the merged university. The extent of cultural and structural differences between the two erstwhile institutions, coupled with the incapability of the merged university leaders to identify and resolve key barriers to the change implementation in due course, inadvertently culminated in the stakeholders of the merged university resisting change (Leslie et al., 2018).

Serra et al. (2021), in consensus with Aka and Onoyima (2023), Darmawan and Azziz (2020), Lehmann (2017), Neves et al. (2018), and Ekowati (2021), reported that 70% of change projects are unsuccessful in spite of all the research by the technical and project management organisations. The causes of the failure, provided by Serra et al. (2021), were leadership problems, low morale, lack of motivation, and conflicts. It is believed employees will only be inclined to change if they anticipate worthwhile benefits and clear and consistent communication from leadership to inspire everyone to change. According to Sung and Kim (2021), factors that impede organisational change are primarily organisational inertia, traditional culture, the successful response strategies learned in the past, the cost of driving transformation, and conscious and unconscious resistance by organizations. In general, change commences when the factors that facilitate change prevail over the factors to impede change.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The article has arisen from the researcher's doctoral thesis that was completed in 2020 at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa. This study adopted an interpretivistic qualitative case study design to understand the challenges encountered by the institution under study when implementing the new governance model and provide strategies to address the identified constraints. The quantitative approach was the alternative that could have been adopted by this article. Labaree (2003) points out that quantitative methods focus on objective measurements and numerical analysis of data gathered using polls, questionnaires or surveys. Quantitative research emphasize collecting numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people. The qualitative design was selected because it allows the gathering of data, which is directly related to subjective personal experiences and hence, by nature, it is exploratory in its application. In-depth interviews were chosen for this study because of their potential to generate rich and detailed data regarding the individual's experience.

3.1. The study sample

The researcher made use of the non-probability purposive sampling method to choose 39 participants comprising 9 senior managers, 4 managers, 5 heads of departments, 12 staff (academic and non-

academic), 3 union representatives, 4 Student Representative Council (SRC) representatives, and 2 students. It must be noted that the category of senior managers included the vice-chancellor (VC), rectors, and directors. It must be noted that some of the senior managers, deans, and heads of departments interviewed (not all of them) were professors. Employees were selected to participate in the study provided they were employees of the comprehensive university at the time the legacy institutions merged in 2005. By using these participants, it was envisaged that they had an understanding of the restructuring process taking place in the institution and the related challenges. Secondly, the researcher considered the accessibility and availability of the participants. The senior managers included the VC, campus rectors and executive directors, professors, senior directors, and directors. Senior managers were important participants in this study since they were drivers of change management. They were responsible and accountable for most of the governance activities. Before data gathering, a pilot study was undertaken using face-to-face semi-structured interviews with two employees of the institution under the study. In addition to in-depth interviews, the data was also collected through document analysis and observation.

3.2. Data analysis

In this study, the analysis of data from all sources — interviews, document review, and observations — was done concurrently as time permitted. All interviews conducted were audio recorded, transcribed and data then manually analysed and subsequently identified the key themes. The researcher analysed the data by reading each transcript carefully several times and reflecting on the points raised by participants. The researcher selected to manually analyse the data instead of using qualitative computer software programme, like NVivo, in keeping with Carson et al.'s (2001) contention that manual analysis culminates in a deeper appreciation of many interpretations that may be derived from qualitative data.

3.3. Ethical considerations

Appropriate ethical considerations were observed in conducting this research. These include seeking permission from various gatekeepers to undertake the research, protecting and respecting participants' rights by obtaining informed consent, informing participants that participation in the research was not compulsory, avoidance of harm or hurting participants during the study among other ethical acceptance practices. The pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of participants. Sotuku and Duku (2015) state that pseudonyms refer to participants in research but they are not supposed to resemble the nicknames of the participants.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings, discussion, and interpretation of data collected during this study and includes findings from a thematic analysis of the 39 interviews conducted. The qualitative data

was gathered through face-to-face interviews with 9 senior managers, 4 managers, 5 heads of departments, 12 staff members (academic and non-academic), 3 union representatives, 4 SRC representatives, and 2 students within the ABC

University. The respondents' experiences relating to the change in the management model were documented and analysed to identify the challenges they faced and the strategies recommended to address the challenges identified by the study.

Table 1. Summary of themes that emerged during data analysis

<i>Summary of identified themes</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
1.No clear continuous consultation, communication, and participation, and lack of clear reporting lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden consultations • Not enough consultations • Some stakeholders were not even consulted before the implementation of DGM • The structure is complex and confusing • No proper role clarification • Dual reporting system • DGM creates uncertainties and confusion
2. Costly and bloated organogram while there are inadequate financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organogram has changed drastically • The institutional office is more like a campus • Duplication of portfolios • The organogram does not reflect cutting costs • New vice-chancellor is introducing new executive positions that are expensive while there are inadequate financial resources • Too much duplication of academic programmes
3. Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership instability • Leadership approach top-down
4. Inequitable treatment of campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No equitable distribution of resources among different campuses • Former traditional university (main campus) favoured by executive management • Former traditional university staff acting like big brothers to employees from other campuses • Executive management has more interest in traditional university programmes and technikon programmes are marginalised • Main campus employees were back-paid from 2005 to 2009 but harmonisation of benefits which would affect employees from other campuses never happened
5. Comprehensive university highly unionised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University wanted to get rid of duplication of academic programmes but unions blocked that saying it would lead to loss of jobs • Unions are viewed as impediments to progress
6. Resistance to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent application of policies across different campuses • Employees still identify with pre-existing institutions
7.No unified institutional culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGM is seen as encouraging employees to stick to cultures of legacy institutions • DGM is not conducive to building new institutional identities, cultures, and brands widely
8. Inadequate financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three legacy institutions were financially distressed at the time of merging • Insufficient financial support from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)

To examine the challenges experienced by the merged CU stakeholders during the implementation of the new model and recommendations that could be made to address the challenges identified by this study, two research questions underpinned this study.

It was found the post-merger phase presented the HEI leaders and employees with many complex challenges. The eight (8) themes that emerged during data analysis are listed in Table 1 above and discussed below. In response to the first research question which sought to determine the major challenges experienced by stakeholders of the merged CU the following constraints were identified.

4.1. Insufficient consultation, communication, and unclear reporting lines

The findings in this study resonate with those of other similar studies in the literature review of this article. The interviewees in this study cited insufficient consultation and communication, as well as a lack of clear reporting lines as challenges experienced in the case study institution. When asked if there was proper consultation before the decision to change the governance model, various responses were made by different stakeholders. Most of them felt that they were not consulted, but they were informed that the DGM model had been adopted as a new governance and management system. One manager commented that:

“There is a difference between being consulted and being informed. We were informed of a decision that had already been made” (personal communication).

During the interviews in the current study, one of the faculty managers agreed that there was consultation for the restructuring, but it was not consistent and was very short. She lamented about the nature of the consultation conducted as seen in the following expression:

“In our faculty it was for 1 day and we were to respond and say how we are going to divide ourselves from schools to departments. There was limited time to respond. My role as Director of School was to say which areas of specialization would cluster together in order to form a department” (personal communication).

In order to successfully implement change, leaders must recognise, understand, embrace, and engage the multiple stakeholders in the organization, structures, and cultures that exist within the organisation. Clear, continuous consultation, communication, and participation are critical when undertaking a fundamental change (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Maison, 2018; Sung & Kim, 2021).

Participants decried the need for an employee to report to one supervisor. For example, one of the participants mentioned that she reports to two people who would have different demands at the same time, which puts pressure on her work. Similarly, another participant mentioned that many

employees are confused because there is no proper role clarification. It is important to note that there is a difference between the functional reporting line and the operational reporting line.

For example, it was reported that the campus deputy directors for finance report to their campus rectors and the chief financial officer (CFO). One of the research participants complained about the dual reporting system and indicated that:

"This dual reporting system is making things difficult because you have to do two reports, e.g., one to the rector and the other to your director. You find that the format of reports is different. Your two bosses will have a different understanding of the issue at hand" (personal communication).

Yet, another participant observed that there was an element of confusion concerning the institutional structure and campus structure. Another interviewee lamented about the role confusion as seen in the extract below.

"Institutional managers want to interfere with activities happening at the campus level without the involvement of campus heads. They bypass the rector to get information from campus staff. They are guilty of not upholding the statute of the institution. This confuses reporting" (personal communication).

Particular concerns were raised that the presence of the institutional office on one campus confuses sometimes. Regarding this, a participant had this to say:

"We cannot draw lines between what must be done by institutional managers and what must be done by campus managers if they are on one site" (personal communication).

A few participants in the senior management positions also complained that there was a challenge with decision-making. For example, one rector said:

"I'm told whatever decision I take will affect other campuses. You cannot apply your solution on your campus, you will be told to wait for a decision to be taken centrally" (personal communication).

In the same manner, another campus-based manager complained that:

"You find institutional managers that want to give instructions at campus level whereas according to the policy, the implementation rests with campus rectors. Process owners are supposed to have functional authority at the campus level. For example, concerning issues to do with academic matters the DVC [Deputy Vice-Chancellor] can speak directly to the Dean. The challenge is, we cannot differentiate and manage these grey areas" (personal communication).

The DGM model is perceived by the majority of interviewees to be creating uncertainties and indecisions. This was linked to the challenge of unclear reporting lines. One of the participants indicated a sense of dissatisfaction with the reporting lines as seen in the following expression:

"The biggest challenge is that our department has been split into different departments. That has an impact on communication and on working as one entity" (personal communication).

"This model is not a good one. It forces the institution to have representatives from all levels, i.e., top, middle, and lower management. A mix of matrix and divisional would be suitable. The problem

or challenge — it is only the top management that has authority and power. This is the case in support services" (personal communication).

The importance of communication in an organisation cannot be over-emphasized. Gourley (2016) is of the view that no matter how much one thinks one is communicating, it is still not enough. Further, he noted that reaching people where they are, in a way that they understand, is the essence of good leadership.

4.2. High cost of and bloated institutional structure or organogram

The participants had varied views on the organogram as evidenced in the selected verbatim.

For example, one participant lamented that:

"Most challenges spring from the organogram itself. It has changed drastically from the previous one" (personal communication).

Another challenge with the organogram that kept coming up in the interviews was that the institutional office was becoming bloated. One manager commented:

"The institutional office is becoming more like a campus. Furthermore, there is a lot of duplication of portfolios. For example, there is a deputy director for student affairs in the institutional office when there are four campus-based deputy directors for student affairs" (personal communication).

In support of the above contention, another interviewee commented as follows:

"There is a challenge of acting positions that are not filled because of the complexity of the structure. Much as the structure is expensive, the new VC continues to bring in new executive positions that are expensive" (personal communication).

It is evident from the above that the participants expressed disappointment with the new organogram. For example, it was noted there was no inclusion of the post of DVC for teaching and learning in the organogram, which was justified by claims that the institution under the study is predominantly an undergraduate university. This was against the reality of several teaching and learning challenges the institution was experiencing which required the presence of teaching and learning DVC.

Again, the issue of role confusion came up where for instance, it was mentioned that the role of the rectors was not clearly defined. One respondent lamented that the current organogram is problematic. She mentioned that:

"For me, it made sense when the DGM model was introduced as a tool that would rationalize and consolidate learning programmes. Also, the fact that they wanted to cut down on expenses. The organogram is problematic because it does not reflect the thinking of cutting costs. It is more costly" (personal communication).

The interviewee further explained that:

"We were supposed to have fewer campuses. We had four faculties but now we have eleven. The idea of cutting down expenditure is done at the bottom, i.e., at department and faculty levels. They took away support staff (departmental secretaries) only to go and create positions that cost the institution a lot of money, i.e., directors are promoted to senior directors. The structure is

a pyramid. There is no rationalization of academic programmes instead there is duplication" (personal communication).

Yet, another dean commented that:

"We have not yet managed to implement the new organogram. We struggle to understand how it should be implemented successfully. There is a lack of understanding of how such systems are supposed to be implemented successfully" (personal communication).

Concerning the organogram, one of the deans responded to the question by saying that it is too expensive to run and there is too much duplication of academic programmes.

There was a general view among the participants that the DGM model is costly and leads to unnecessary duplication of structures and services. For instance, it was mentioned that there are deputy directors at both institutional and campus levels. A majority of the participants mentioned "too many committees" as one of the challenges in the implementation of the DGM model. For example, one senior manager commented:

"When you look at the documentation of the DGM model the intention of the designers was not to have many committees, but for purposes of quality assuring the university operates through committees. It is now overburdened with committees. This system has become very inefficient" (personal communication).

Other participants mentioned that the people attending these committee meetings are supposed to be in classes. Arguably, this interferes with the academic activities of the institution. Gourley (2016) believed that governance arrangements are not always satisfactory and they need to change from time to time. The author further points out that governance arrangements should be as streamlined as possible, with as little repetition in terms of reference to sub-committees as possible. Gourley (2016) continued to advise that, there should be as few sub-committees as possible and they should also be reasonable in size of membership. This means committees need to be reviewed from time to time to see how the processes can be improved to save time.

4.3. Inadequate financial resources

This research revealed inadequate financial resources as one of the challenges and this was mainly attributed to the fact that this institution resulted from a merger of three historically disadvantaged institutions all of which were financially distressed at the time of merging. The lack of minimum required levels of financial support from the DHET was viewed as another cause for the lack of financial resources in the institution. It was also mentioned that the DHET funding framework does not provide for multi-campus institutions like the university in question. Generally, it was believed that after merging different institutions and campuses, the DHET was supposed to provide greater allocations. The scarcity of financial resources contradicts the main goal of restructuring HEIs in South Africa.

4.4. Inequitable treatment of campuses/sites

The study found that the campuses were not treated equitably by both executive management and employees themselves. Concerning this issue, one participant from Campus "W" had this to say:

"We were surprised by the way match and place was handled on this campus. We were not properly consulted in the process. Positions were filled with people from other campuses when we expected to be given priority" (personal communication).

In emphasizing the challenge of equality, one senior manager mentioned that there was no equitable distribution of resources between campuses. This was confirmed by another participant who said:

"The organisation of this campus [referring to Campus "W"] is not in line with other campuses. We are told we do not have enough student numbers, as a result, senior positions have been cut off and three positions are handled by one person, which is unfair. Deputy registrar, Chief admissions officer, Chief examination and graduation officer, are not on this campus, but they are on other campuses" (personal communication).

Another interviewee mentioned that anything done by the Campus "W" is carefully watched. She went on to say:

"We're always under scrutiny and other campuses are not given the same treatment" (personal communication).

A participant, Head of Department (HoD) from Campus "E", shared similar sentiments that campuses are not treated in the same way, by saying that:

"Top management of this university favours Campus "M" [Campus "M" is the main campus and also the former traditional university] a great deal. Maybe it is because it is where the Institutional Management Committee (IMC) is based" (personal communication).

Another interviewee, who was also a Dean in Campus "B", concurred with the above views by saying that:

"The Campus "M" staff think that they are the mother body and everything must start with them. They are the ones who get the lion's share in everything" (personal communication).

This participant went on to say:

"Academic events like guest lectures and memorial lectures by professors are always taking place in Campus "M" and these are supported by the Campus Management Committee (CMC). Campus "M" staff undermine the other campuses" (personal communication).

An interviewee based at a site that is part of Campus "M" lamented that:

"In the CMC the different sites should be represented, but that is not the case, that is why we are in the dark in this site [site "Z" which is a component of Campus "M"]. Deans are from the former traditional university, deputy directors are also from the former traditional university and there are none from site "Z" [former technikon site], HoDs are from Campus "M" and only two are from site "Z" [those are HoDs in the Department of Education]. The interest of this institution is in the former traditional university offerings. They show absolutely no interest in our [former technikon] programmes" (personal communication).

In support of the view that Campus “M” employees are favoured by the top management of the merged CU, one HoD from Campus “E” complained about the harmonization of benefits that has not taken place, but the Campus “M” employees had already been back-paid from 2005 to 2009.

There seemed to be a general perception that Campus “M”, particularly the former traditional university site, receives preference in everything as evidenced by responses from interviewees on other campuses. However, there is also a perception that Campus “E” is better when it comes to remuneration as one HoD participant from Campus “B” expressed the following:

“Harmonization of services is still outstanding, and people are disgruntled. People feel they work for the same institution but the benefits are different. That is the reason people feel some campuses are better than others. Campus “E” is thought to be better off when it comes to remuneration. This is supposed to have been sorted out a long time ago” (personal communication).

4.5. The merged comprehensive university is highly unionized

One deputy director participant from Campus “M” cited the fact that the institution is highly unionized which brings some organisational challenges. The participant further explained that the institution wanted to move away from having the same programmes/faculties on different campuses as this was very costly. The following interview extract attests to this finding.

“If that happened certain deans and heads of departments would have lost jobs. Labour is frustrating the DGM model — it is not happening because unions would not want their members to lose jobs. This would allow us to resource the departments. Now, this is very expensive and there are some academic risks” (personal communication).

Similarly, one dean had the view that:

“Trade unions in this institution are an impediment to progress. I am a union member myself. Usually, they are not honest. Even if someone has done wrong, unions will defend that person on the basis that he/she is their member” (personal communication).

The participant further said:

“Unions are necessary, they are watchdogs, I like them, but sometimes they forget that they are unions and regard themselves as managers” (personal communication).

Another senior manager contended that trade unions are opinion leaders but the current situation at this CU was that trade unions were unstable and therefore could not play their role properly. It was also mentioned that a third union had emerged, which led to the CU having three unions at the time. These trade unions were identified as the National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (NEHAWU), National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), and Academic and Professional Staff Association (APSA). Unfortunately, only one union, the NEHAWU was recognized at the time of data collection. As a result, NEHAWU was the only trade union in the merged CU that had signed a recognition agreement with the institution.

4.6. Inconsistent application of policies across campuses

The study revealed that the CU policies are not applied consistently across all campuses. Different reasons as to why this is the case were given by the different participants. For instance, one of the HoDs noted that:

“The policies are the same but the application is not the same. Some campuses are lenient in the application of policies. At one stage we were told not to introduce new programs but our Campus has introduced many new programs” (personal communication).

In agreement with the above, a dean from Campus “M” responded to the same question by saying:

“There are policies that are not applied consistently. The problem is, there are old policies that have not been changed. This is because of resistance to change where staff members do not want change in the policy of their legacy institution because it favours them” (personal communication).

Another interviewee from Campus “M”, who concurred with the above participant, said:

“There are still policies that are not applied consistently, e.g., Campus “B” still has travelling allowances which you do not find in Campus “M”. There are benefits that by now are supposed to be applied uniformly but are not” (personal communication).

Yet, another participant said:

“We have old policies. We don’t have cross-cutting policies. Even requisition forms are not the same” (personal communication).

From the trade union point of view, one union representative noted that:

“Even though we have policies, the application is not the same. We need to have standard operating procedures (SOPs). SOPs get into detail on the implementation. It is only now they are starting to develop them” (personal communication).

4.7. No unified institutional culture

There was a general view by all participants that the CU has not been able to cultivate a unified institutional culture. Every participant perceived employees on different campuses as holding on to their legacy institutions’ different organisational cultures. Moreover, the participants perceived that the DGM model has not been conducive to building an institutional identity, culture, and brand widely. Most of the participants viewed the institutional culture as the greatest challenge. When asked whether the CU has been able to create a new institutional culture, an SRC member noted that:

“The major problem here is the institutional culture. We have former technikon staff and former traditional university staff, and all of these institutions have different cultures. Staff from legacy institutions do not want to change. This CU must try to abolish the old cultures” (personal communication).

Another HoD interviewee from Campus “B” concurred with the above participant by indicating:

“We still have institutional cultures of legacy institutions. Someone from Campus ‘E’ cannot be employed in Campus ‘M’ or Campus ‘B’” (personal communication).

In addition, another interviewee responded to the question on an institutional culture by putting it bluntly and saying:

"There is no institutional culture, instead there is 'M' culture, 'B' culture, and 'E' culture" (personal communication).

Generally, a close examination of the interviewees' concerns was around the lack of a unified culture and identity in the CU under the study. They also perceived the new model itself as playing an encouraging role for them to stick to their old cultures. However, all participants mentioned that what connects the four campuses is the fact that they all belong to one institution, that is, they have one VC, one IMC, one institutional office, and one institutional senate. All the participants were also of the view that other than these structures, there were no mechanisms in place to encourage cooperation between the campuses. However, one HoD in Campus "B" mentioned that campuses offering common academic programmes do cooperate in terms of syllabi and setting exams. It was further mentioned that these were the only times the different campuses worked together.

4.8. Leadership instability

The study revealed that leadership at the CU has never been stable, and the university has not been able to transform. This challenge was attested to by one of the managers who observed that:

"The change in leadership results in changes in the organogram. Every new leader targets the organogram and that causes instability in the workforce" (personal communication).

Another participant also indicated that:

"The main challenge here is the change of leadership. That is why progress in transformation is slow" (personal communication).

During the interviews, it was discovered that since the merger, the CU had leadership problems. In 2005, when the three legacy institutions merged, the new CU had an interim vice-chancellor. In 2007, the first vice-chancellor of the merged university was appointed. In 2012, the systems at the CU were near collapse and the institution was bankrupt, forcing the government to intervene by bringing in the administrator with his team of experts. Thereafter, when the administration period ended, an acting vice-chancellor was appointed until the current VC took over the office.

Previous studies underlined the strategic importance of strong and effective leadership during a merger process. Harman and Harman (2003, as cited in Sulkowski et al., 2019) emphasise that human and cultural factors and effective leadership are critical success factors that universities must pay special attention to during mergers. Additionally, Saunders (2016) posits that a VC should stay in an institution for at least five years. Saunders (2016) believed that those who come and go quickly, damage the university and undermine any legacy they might have had. Apparently, and based on the evidence provided above, this was the case for the merged CU under the study.

The second research question of this study sought to establish what strategies could be implemented to address the challenges identified by

the study. Participants' responses regarding strategies to address the challenges of implementing the DGM model revealed mixed feelings. Some participants believed that ABC University should stick to the DGM model, but implement it properly, while others felt the institution should go back to the unitary model where everything was centralized. Yet, others felt that ABC University should adopt a federal system so that heads of campuses will have complete power and therefore can make decisions. This was evidence that not everyone believed in the DGM model at the time of data collection in this study. There were also participants who suggested reviewing the statute to avoid contradictions. It also emerged that there should be an alignment of intentions and objectives.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings obtained in this article allow a critical reflection on the two research questions that underpinned this study. The first research question sought to identify the major challenges experienced by the merged CU stakeholders while implementing the divisional governance and management model. Interview responses from the participants revealed numerous challenges that were experienced by the university stakeholders as a result of the introduction of the DGM model. These challenges included insufficient communication and unclear reporting lines, high cost of and bloated organogram, inadequate financial resources, inequitable treatment of the campuses or sites of the merged university, inconsistent application of institutional policies across the different campuses of the merged institution, disparities in institutional culture, highly unionised institution, leadership instability, and institutional student representative council. The findings of this study are mostly consistent with the results of previous studies in the literature review of this article which reveal that change is implemented successfully only when organisational members embrace change and align their behaviour with the objectives of the organisation.

The findings indicated that there were challenges experienced by the university community during the implementation of the DGM. Specifically, stakeholders had varied perceptions on the implementation of the DGM where senior managers stated there was consultation and communication before the adoption of the new model while employees at the lower echelons were adamant that there was no consultation or communication prior to the implementation of the DGM. It came out clearly that the university's top management did not consult well with the other stakeholders. Implementation of the strategic plans is executed by the employees in the lower echelons of the institution. Therefore, they need to understand the plans thoroughly as the plans indicate the direction the merged institution is supposed to take. In the present case study, it appeared that not all the stakeholders were made aware of the strategic plans of the institution. This became apparent from the interview responses of the lower-level employees when asked if they know and understand the strategic plan of the institution. The majority of lower-level employees did not even

know there was a strategic plan. Employees who participate in the planning of change will have a better understanding of the change process and the vision and direction of the institution implementing change. Another important observation is that while lower-level employees revealed negative perceptions about the new governance model, senior managers had positive perceptions. This can be attributed to the fact that senior managers were part of the consultations that took place before the new model was rolled out. This view is supported by Jones et al. (2008), who argue that different attitudes between managers and staff arise because managers are more involved in the process. Another possible reason why senior managers expressed positive perceptions about the change compared to employees at the lower levels is that senior managers have more access to information, as well as greater decision-making responsibility. They have the power to contribute to decisions because they are directly involved in decision-making, whereas lower-level employees are less directly involved.

Lack of clear reporting lines, as well as blurring communication lines were mentioned as additional constraints experienced by stakeholders. For any governance system to function well, leaders and employees need to understand clearly their roles, responsibilities, and their reporting lines. Another issue was the non-alignment of legacy policies with the new DGM policies. When asked if policies of pre-existing institutions had been integrated and policies applied consistently across all four ABC campuses, all participants alluded to the fact that even though policies of the legacy institutions had been integrated and new policies formulated, these were not applied consistently across all campuses. This reveals employee resistance to change, which is cited by numerous scholars (Aka & Onoyima, 2023; Darmawan & Azziz, 2020; Lehmann, 2017; Neves et al., 2018; Serra et al., 2021; Ekowati, 2021) in the literature review of this article as the top barrier that can make change difficult if not impossible. Therefore, it is contended that change management is used to identify the sources and causes of resistance and provide strategies to manage and overcome it.

Another crucial matter that emerged during data collection is the fact that ABC was experiencing financial constraints while the DGM model itself was costly. Any institution's functions and performances are negatively affected when the institution is financially distressed. When a university does not have sufficient financial resources to support its core business, the academic enterprise declines. It has been explained in the introductory section of this article that the three pre-existing institutions that formed ABC were financially distressed at the time of the merger and these were all historically disadvantaged institutions that were established by the former homeland system and were poorly resourced (CHE, 2011; Jack, 2007; Mantashe, 2013; Ncayiyana, 2011).

Experiences in the re-structuring of universities are complex in terms of marrying institutions with different cultures, purposes, and geographic locations as is the case in the current study. Also, when employees have not internalized the vision, mission, and values of the institution, they cannot

live these out. This could lead to difficulty in establishing a single institutional culture, which, in turn, affects the construction of a unified organizational identity and brand as was happening in the current case. This is in line with Sung and Kim's (2021) assertion that traditional culture, organisational inertia, the cost of driving transformation, and resistance to change are factors that impede organizational change.

The second research question of this study sought to establish what strategies could be implemented to address the challenges identified by the study. The findings regarding strategies to address the challenges of implementing the DGM model revealed mixed feelings. Some participants believed that ABC should stick to the DGM model, but implement it properly, while others felt the institution should go back to the unitary model where everything was centralized. Yet, others felt that ABC should adopt a federal system so that heads of campuses will have complete power and therefore can make decisions. This was evidence that not everyone believed in the DGM model at the time of data collection in this study. There were also participants who suggested reviewing the statute to avoid contradictions. It also emerged that there should be an alignment of intentions and objectives.

The study participants also recommended that ABC University needs to revisit its organogram. This is, according to participants, because the organogram needs to be properly linked to the desired results. It was also emphasized that ABC University needs to develop policies that are in line with the achievement of its strategic objectives. It is believed this would facilitate the achievement of the institution's strategic objectives. The strategic objectives must also be aligned with the current operating style and management philosophy. Staff development must be prioritized, with campuses offering different qualifications, as well as specialized courses. This view is supported by Wan (2008), who recommended that staff development could be implemented as a strategy to enhance human integration. Wan (2008) further stated that in this way employees would perceive the organizational change as carrying benefits for them in the way of professional and career development. He also believed as employees see benefits that go hand in hand with change, they would accept change.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to identify major challenges experienced by the various stakeholders of ABC University while this institution was undergoing restructuring. This article presented findings from a study that was carried out in a South African higher education institution, arising from a further restructuring of the merged CU. This institution abandoned a unitary governance model it initially chose when it merged and adopted a divisional governance model in an attempt to consolidate a problematic merger started in 2005. The unitary governance model adopted when the three pre-existing HEIs combined failed the merged institution in no uncertain terms (Ncayiyana, 2011) and was therefore abandoned and a new model was implemented.

This study set out to answer two research questions.

Regarding RQ1: This study found that the DGM was good on paper but its implementation was fraught with challenges which included insufficient consultation and communication by top management of ABC, and lack of clear reporting lines; costly and bloated organisational structure; inadequate financial resources; leadership instability; inequitable treatment of campuses; inconsistent application of policies across campuses; no unified institutional culture; highly unionised merged university. While senior managers of ABC maintain there was consultation and communication prior to rolling out of the new governance model it was insufficient and inconsistent, lower-level employees, union representatives, and some managers stated that there was no consultation and no communication. They said the decision to adopt and implement the DGM model was top-down and dramatic. This finding is consistent with the findings of Leslie et al. (2018) recorded in the literature review in the present study. Also, lower-level employees understood the purpose of the DGM as that of de-merging ABC. The actual strategic success of a change initiative is not only the implementation thereof, but the effects are also critically important (Sulkowski et al., 2019). Planning is a vital phase of any change initiative and it is very important for a complex change like the one taking place at ABC University. Although the top decision-makers of ABC University had a vision for the consolidation of the CU, they did not consult well with the various stakeholders and the vision was not well communicated across the institution. Clear, continuous consultation and successful implementation of organisational change depend on the motivated and committed organisational members. Stakeholder consultation and participation in the early phases of a change process wins the buy-in, support, and commitment of the various stakeholders. The sudden roll-out of the DGM, without proper consultation, communication, and participation on the part of other university stakeholders, leadership instability, high cost of and bloated organogram, inadequate financial resources, inequitable treatment of different campuses/sites high unionisation of the CU, inconsistent application of policies across campuses and no unified institutional culture. The leaders of the CU need to pay special attention to stakeholder consultations and involvement. Employees feel more positive when they know their input and involvement have an impact on decisions, and when they are kept up to date with change that affects them personally.

Regarding RQ2: The findings in this study revealed that the selected CU was executing a complex change that seemed problematic. Due to the challenges encountered during the operationalisation of the DGM model, this study recommends that for this model to work successfully, full operational control must be devolved to campuses. In this way, campus autonomy will be given to individual campuses through full devolution of authority. This means control of campus resources and support services. Also, in this way decisions will be made at the lowest possible level of authority and accountability which includes individual level, without getting authority from higher

echelons. These can enhance better relationships among different campuses' staff, academic staff development, and academic exchange of staff and students, especially postgraduate students across campuses to share expertise and develop capacity. These would help to overcome historical divisions, promote a more equitable staff and student body, build academic and research capacity, and consolidate the deployment and use of academic personnel. Lastly, this will also address the challenge of dual reporting which is currently causing considerable confusion.

To help employees overcome resistance to change and negative perceptions towards organisational change, it is recommended that the CU top management provide adequate change communication to enhance employees' motivation. The CU's top management should expand the bottom-up communication to involve employees who have the potential capability to influence the change process and provide real input for future decisions. The top management of ABC University must improve on communication and render the process of change transparent for all stakeholders. Leadership should also share the vision with all stakeholders to ensure the change meets minimal resistance from university stakeholders.

As this study was limited to a single case study, caution should be taken in generalising the findings of this research. Additionally, the limitation of this study was the paucity of published studies on the DGM model itself implemented in the context of the higher education sector as ABC is the only higher education institution in South Africa that is currently adopting this kind of model. NWU as explained somewhere in this article abandoned this governance model due to its challenges.

Throughout the collection of data through interviews in this study, it became evident that the CU so far had not succeeded in creating a new institutional culture and identity. All the stakeholders across all four campuses unanimously agreed that employees in the different campuses were sticking to their old ways of doing things. It also emerged that even though there were new institution-based policies, they were not applied consistently because of resistance to change. Therefore, the CU must conduct a "cultural audit" to determine the different cultures in the four campuses that form the merged CU. The study of organizational cultures is more important in this case since the institution is experiencing a considerable challenge in creating a single institutional culture. A "cultural audit" would identify the expectations, values, and commitments of employees to reveal their dreams so as to bring about the necessary change. In addition, a study that interrogates the qualitative and quantitative impact of the implementation of the DGM could be conducted. Lastly, a study could be embarked on to establish the extent to which leaders in the merged HEIs have incorporated transformational leadership.

This study presents a complex case study that highlights the significance of effective communication and organizational culture in a post-merger university. The top management of ABC University should conceptualize and implement a dedicated internal communication program to explain the new governance model and its advantages to all stakeholders across all campuses

of the merged institution. They need to dispel the perception that the institution has de-merged. They need to use the campaign to convey a unified message of commitment and investment in regular communication with all stakeholders of the institution. Additionally, leaders of ABC University require

an in-depth understanding of organizational culture and how to blend the divergent cultures of pre-existing academic institutions. The study of organizational culture is important in post-merged universities as the cultures of legacy institutions might be different.

REFERENCES

1. Adda, H. W., Natsir, S., & Rossanty, N. P. E. (2019). Employee perceptions towards organizational change and leadership in the banking industry. *Bank and Bank Systems*, 14(3), 113-120. [https://doi.org/10.21511/bbs.14\(3\).2019.10](https://doi.org/10.21511/bbs.14(3).2019.10)
2. Aka, C. P., & Onoyima, N. S. (2023). Managing educational policy in Nigerian higher education: Implications for effective practice. *IAA Journal of Management*, 10(1), 68-76. https://issuu.com/journalpublisher/docs/iaa_jm_10_1_68-76_2023_managing_educational_poli
3. Arnolds, C. A., Stofile, R. N., & Lillah, R. (2013). Assessing the outcomes of the higher education mergers in South Africa: Implications for strategic management. *Independent Research Journal in the Management Sciences*, 13(1), Article 175. <https://actacommercii.co.za/index.php/acta/article/view/175/179>
4. Azziz, R. (2013, May 20). What happens when 2 colleges become one? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 37. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/what-happens-when-2-colleges-become-one/>
5. Bor, H., & Shargel, R. (2020). The merger of Baltimore Hebrew University with Towson University: Three leadership models converge. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(10), 1595-1613. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-12-2018-0397>
6. Burnes, B. (1996). No such thing as a "One best way" to manage organisational change. *Management Decision*, 34(10), 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251749610150649>
7. Cai, Y. (2006). A case study of academic staff integration in a post-merger Chinese university. *Tertiary Education Management*, 12(3), 215-226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2006.9967169>
8. Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., & Gronhaug, K. (2001). Qualitative marketing research. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209625>
9. Chandrasekara, W. (2019). The effect of transformational leadership style on employees' job satisfaction and job performance: A case of apparel manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, 7(7), 385-391. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342898481_THE_EFFECT_OF_TRANSFORMATIONAL_LEADERSHIP_STYLE_ON_EMPLOYEES_JOB_SATISFACTION_AND_JOB_PERFORMANCE_A_CASE_OF_APPAREL_MANUFACTURING_INDUSTRY_IN_SRI_LANKA
10. Chetty, G. (2010). *The transformation of the South African Higher Education sector through mergers — The case study of the Durban University of Technology* [Doctoral thesis, Durban University of Technology]. DUT Open Scholar. <https://doi.org/10.51415/10321/561>
11. Cloete, N. (2008). *Report by ministerial task team* (Report on Mafikeng Campus, compiled by Cloete). Council on Higher Education and Training.
12. Council on Higher Education (CHE). (2011). *Audit report on Walter Sisulu University: Report of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to the Walter Sisulu University* (HEQC Audit Report No. 33). https://www.ch.ac.za/sites/default/files/institutional_audits/institutional_audits_2011_wsu_executive_summary.pdf
13. Darmawan, A., & Azizah, S. (2020). Resistance to change: Causes and strategies as an organizational challenge. In *Proceedings of the 5th ASEAN Conference on Psychology, Counselling, and Humanities* (ACPCCH 2019) (Advances in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities Research, Vol. 395(1), pp. 241-261). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200120.010>
14. Ekowati, D. (2021). Organisational change in public service. *International Research Journal of Business Studies*, 14(2), 159-170. <https://doi.org/10.21632/irjbs.14.2.159-170>
15. Errida, A., & Lotfi, B. (2021). The determinants of organizational change management success: Literature review and case study. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 13, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18479790211016273>
16. Gourley, B. M. (2016). Lessons of leadership in higher education. In *Reflections of South African University leaders: 1981 to 2014* (Chapter 3, pp. 43-68). Council on Higher Education (CHE). <http://www.africanminds.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CHEC-Reflections-proof-05a.pdf>
17. Hiatt, M., & Richardson, R. (2017). The effects of higher education organisational consolidations on students stress levels. *International Management Review*, 13(2), 53-68. <http://americanscholarspress.us/journals/IMR/pdf/IMR-2-2017/IMR-v13n2art7.pdf>
18. Islam, M., Furuoka, F., & Idris, A. (2020). Mapping the relationship between transformational leadership, trust in leadership and employee championing behaviour during organizational change. *Asia Pacific Management Review* 26(2), 95-102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2020.09.002>
19. Jack, L. (2007). Reflections on the merger experience of Walter Sisulu University. *Discourse*, 35, 36-41. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA0000004_45
20. Jones, L., Watson, B., Hobman, E., Bordia, P., Gallois, C., & Callan, V. J. (2008). Employee perceptions of organisational change: Impact of hierarchical level. *Leadership and Organisational Journal*, 29(4), 294-316. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730810876122>
21. Kezar, A. (2001). Investigating organizational fit in a participatory leadership environment. *Journal of Higher Policy and Management*, 23(1), 85-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600800020047261>
22. Khan, Z., Soundararajan, V., Wood, G., & Ahammad, M. F. (2020). Employee emotional resilience during post-merger integration across national boundaries: Rewards and the mediating role of fairness norms. *Journal of World Business*, 55(2), Article 100888. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2017.06.009>
23. Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 37(3), 42-48. <https://doi.org/10.1109/EMR.2009.5235501>
24. Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*. Harvard Business Review Press.

25. Labaree, D. F. (2003). The peculiar problems of preparing educational researchers. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 13–22. https://web.stanford.edu/~dlabaree/publications/Peculiar_Problems_of_Ed_Researchers.pdf
26. Lehmann, S. (2017). Bridging strategies and action: Towards a method for change management in Danish emergency management organizations. *Journal of Change Management*, 17(2), 138–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2017.1301060>
27. Leslie, H., Abu-Rahma, A., & Jaleel, B. (2018). In retrospect: A case of a merger in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 32(3), 382–395. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-03-2017-0077>
28. Lethoko, M. (2016). Taking stock thirteen years later: An investigation into the impact of mergers on institutions in the higher education landscape in South Africa. Can policy learn from practice? *Alternation*, 23(1), 15–39.
29. Lewin, K. (1947a). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; Social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 5–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674700100103>
30. Lewin, K. (1947b). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; Social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 143–153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674700100103>
31. Libaree, R. (2013). *Organising your social science research paper*. University of California. <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide>
32. Maison, A. A. (2018). *Higher education mergers: Challenges blending organizational culture and the influence of leaders* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of New England]. UNE Library Services. <https://dune.une.edu/theses/236/>
33. Malek, R., & Yazdanifard, R. (2012). Overview of change management and its implementation. In M. Zhu (Ed.), *Business economics, financial successes, and management* (Advances in Intelligent and Soft Computing, Vol. 143, pp. 149–153). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-27966-9_21
34. Mantashe, L. X. (2013). *Stakeholder perceptions on the impact of the Walter Sisulu University (WSU) turnaround strategy (TS), with special reference to the Divisional Management Model (DMM)* [Bachelor's thesis, Walter Sisulu University].
35. Maroun, F., & El Hage, U. (2020). Change management in higher education: A new perspective. *Lebanese Science Journal*, 21(2), 178–203. <https://doi.org/10.22453/LSJ-021.2.178-202>
36. Mazwi-Tanga, L. V. (2016). Gender and transformation in higher education. In *Reflections of South African university leaders: 1981 to 2014* (Chapter 8, pp. 159–181). Council on Higher Education (CHE). <https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/publications/Reflections%20of%20South%20African%20University%20Leaders%201981-2014.pdf>
37. Nasir, N. F., Nasir, M. N. F., Mohamad, M., Nasir, M. A., Salleh, S. M., & Mohamad, N. A. (2022). Organisational culture: Reviewing the conceptual and importance of organisational culture. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Science*, 12(12), 902–910. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i12/15830>
38. Ncayiyana, D. J. (2011). *Report of the Independent Assessor into the affairs of the Walter Sisulu University, appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training*. Department of Higher Education and Training. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/34641gon822.pdf
39. Neves, P., Almeida, P., & Velez, M. J. (2018). Reducing Intentions to resist future change: Combined effects of commitment-based HR practices and ethical leadership. *Human Resource Management*, 57(1), 249–261. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21830>
40. Ngcamu, B. S., & Teferra, D. (2015). Leadership features influencing transformation in the post-merger and post-incorporation era: A case of the Durban University of technology. *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, 4(4–3), 400–407. https://doi.org/10.22495/jgr_v4_i4_c3_p5
41. Ovsieiko, P. V., Melham, K., Fowler, J., & Buchan, A. M. (2015). Organisational culture and post-merger integration in an academic health centre: A mixed-methods study. *BMC Health Services Research*, 15, Article 25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-014-0673-3>
42. Poole, M., & Van de Ven, A. H. (2021). *The Oxford handbook of organizational change and innovation* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198845973.001.0001>
43. Pühringer, S. (2020). *Resistance to change: A literature review about resistance to change on the individual and group level in general and in the organizational context* [Master's thesis, Johannes Kepler University Linz]. Repository of the University Library Linz. <https://pub.jku.at/obvulihs/download/pdf/5795520?originalFilename=true>
44. Pundyke, O. S. (2020). Change management in higher education: An introductory literature review. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 24(4), 115–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2020.1809545>
45. Ribando, S. J., Slade, C. P., & Fortner, C. K. (2017). Once more into the breach: Examining the human capital impact of a university consolidation over time. *Innovative Higher Education*, 42(5), 521–535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-017-9404-0>
46. Saunders, S. (2016). The challenges of politics and collegial relations. In *Reflections of South African University leaders: 1981 to 2014* (Chapter 1, pp. 1–15). Council on Higher Education (CHE). <http://www.africanminds.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CHEC-Reflections-proof-05a.pdf>
47. Serra, F. R., Scafuto, I. C., Vils, L., & Mattos, M. S. (2021). Skills and project managers: Relationship between personal characteristics and performance indicators. *Journal of Project Management*, 9(1), 17–23.
48. Sistare, S. (2022). *Overcoming resistance through organizational change models and leadership strategies* [Doctoral thesis, Charleston Southern University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/19cb2bc547c3152fc87df5dfb9a012ec/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
49. Sotuku, N., & Duku, N. S. (2015). Ethics in human sciences research. In C. Okeke & M. van Wyk (Eds.), *Educational research: An African approach* (pp. 112–130). University Press Southern Africa, Pty (Ltd).
50. Stumpf, R. H. (2008). *Evaluation of North-West University's management model* (Report compiled by Dr R. H. Stumpf, consultant, at the request of North-West University). Council on Higher Education.
51. Stumpf, R. H. (2016). Academic leadership during institutional restructuring. In *Reflections of South African University leaders: 1981 to 2014* (Chapter 6, pp. 119–142). Council on Higher Education (CHE). <http://www.africanminds.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CHEC-Reflections-proof-05a.pdf>
52. Sulkowski, L., Fijalkowska, J., & Dziminska, M. (2019). Mergers in higher education: A proposal of a novel conceptual model. *Managerial Finance*, 45(10/11), 1469–1487. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MF-01-2018-0048>

53. Sung, W., & Kim, C. (2021). A study on the effect of change management on organisational innovation: Focusing on the mediating effect of members innovative behaviour. *Sustainability*, 13(4), Article 2079. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042079>
54. Tadesse, Y. M. (2013). *An assessment of employees' perception towards organisational change in Adama Science and Technology University* [Master's thesis, Addis Ababa University]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359312241_An_Assessment_of_Employees'_Perception_towards_Organizational_Change_in_Adama_Science_and_Technology_University
55. Tamunomiebi, M. D., & Akpan, E. (2021). Organizational change and the imperative of managing employee resistance: A conceptual review. *Journal of Strategic Management*, 6(1), 18-32. <https://doi.org/10.47672/jsm.683>
56. Välimaa, J., & Ylijoki, O. (Eds.). (2008). *Cultural perspectives on higher education*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6604-7>
57. van der Voet, J. (2016). Change leadership and public sector organisational change: Examining the interactions of transformational leadership style and red tape. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 46(6), 660-682. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074015574769>
58. Vlachopoulos, D. (2021). Organizational change management in higher education through the lens of executive coaches. *Education Sciences*, 11(6), Article 269. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11060269>
59. Wan, Y. (2008). *Managing post-merger integration: A case study of a merger in Chinese higher education* [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan University]. University of Michigan Library. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/58541>
60. Watson, S. D. (2020). *Exploring faculty perceptions of campus climate before and after consolidation* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Walden University Scholar Works. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=10945&context=dissertations>
61. Williams, H., Roberts, C., & Shires, J. (2019). Merger acquisition, hostile takeover: Unification of two colleges. *Organizational Development Journal*, 37(3), 31-44. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/542840fe5bdb1c6a6e66d641c56fb585/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=36482>
62. Wollscheid, S., & Rosdal, T. (2021). The impact of mergers in higher education on micro-level processes — A literature review. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 27(3), 257-280. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11233-021-09074-4>
63. Yilmaz, D., & Kilicoglu, G. (2013). Resistance to change and ways of reducing resistance in educational organisations. *European Journal of Research on Education*, 1(1), 14-21. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301292908_Resistance_to_change_and_ways_of_reducing_resistance_in_educational_organizations