

**Investigating the impact of  
inspirational leadership on  
implementing and managing  
change: The case of Small and  
Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in  
Saudi Arabia education  
institutions**

**A Thesis Submitted for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**By**

**Mohammed Alkhalidi**

**Department of Strategy,  
Entrepreneurship and  
Management, Brunel University  
London**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the materials contained in this thesis have not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

I further declare that this thesis is solely based on my own research.

I declare that all information in this research has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct.

Mohammed Alkhaldi

## **Abstract**

The world business environment has become increasingly competitive due to changes in both its internal and external factors, especially during the recent uncertainties. Such uncertainties greatly impacted organisations, especially the sustainability of SMEs. Therefore, it is essential that organisations master effective management techniques to successfully navigate change while improving performance in the given context. This research aims to investigate the impact of inspirational leadership on Change Management (CM) and Organisational Performance (OP) in small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs).

Detailed literature review highlighted the importance of inspirational leadership on Change Management. Furthermore, evidence from literature review reveals that there is limited research on inspirational leadership, especially around SMEs education institutions (detailed Literature Gap presented in Chapter 2, Table 2-2). A qualitative research approach was employed, using interviews with 37 participants, including leaders and managers from SMEs within the education sector. Data were analysed thematically to explore the relationship between inspirational leadership, Change Management, and OP. This research found that inspirational leadership plays a crucial role in improving Change Management practices and Organisational Performance in SMEs. Leaders who provide clear vision, foster trust, and inspire their teams to embrace change were found to enhance communication, collaboration, and innovation. These factors contribute to the effective implementation of change initiatives. Participants highlighted that when leadership is inspirational, employees are more motivated and committed to organisational goals, which improves their overall performance. Inspirational leaders were also seen as key in creating a work culture that supports change, making it easier to implement new strategies and achieve long-term success. However, the study also revealed challenges such as a lack of resources and resistance to change, which can hinder the full realisation of leadership's impact on performance.

This research contributes to the understanding of how inspirational leadership drives Change Management and improves Organisational Performance in the context of SMEs within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia education sector. The study provides practical insights into leadership strategies that educational institutions can adopt to enhance performance and successfully manage change. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of leadership in cultivating a positive Organisational Culture that supports adaptation to external and internal changes.

Key limitations include the small sample size of 37 participants, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, and the homogeneity of respondents may not fully capture the diversity of leadership styles across different types of SMEs. The cultural context of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the absence of longitudinal data also limits the scope of the study.

This research recommends developing leadership theories tailored to the cultural and organisational contexts of SMEs, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It suggests focusing on inspirational leadership through training in Emotional Intelligence and communication, alongside fostering a supportive culture for change. Future research should expand the sample size, explore long-term impacts, and include comparative studies across regions to better understand the role of leadership in organisational change.

**Keywords:**

Inspirational Leadership, Change Management, Organisational Performance, SMEs, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qualitative Research, and Educational Institutions.

## **Dedication**

To my loving wife for her considerable support, understanding and everlasting love throughout the journey to complete this thesis.

To my parents for their ongoing support and encouragement.

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Term</b>
<b>ADKAR</b>	Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement
<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>CBP</b>	Capacity-Building Programs
<b>CE</b>	Collective Efficacy
<b>CI</b>	Change Implementation
<b>CM</b>	Change Management
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSFs</b>	Critical Success Factors
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>DL</b>	Digital Leadership
<b>EI</b>	Emotional Intelligence
<b>EIs</b>	Educational Institutions
<b>ERP</b>	Enterprise Resource Planning
<b>ESG</b>	Environmental, Social, and Governance
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HAW</b>	Happiness at Work
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>IDIs</b>	In-Depth Interviews
<b>IR 4.0</b>	Industrial Revolution 4.0
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>KPIs</b>	Key Performance Indicators
<b>KSA</b>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>LMS</b>	Learning Management Systems
<b>LMX</b>	Leader-Member Exchange
<b>LQ</b>	Leadership Qualities
<b>MNCs</b>	Multinational Corporations
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>OA</b>	Organisational Agility

<b>OC</b>	Organisational Culture
<b>OCM</b>	Organisational Change Management
<b>OE</b>	Organisational Effectiveness
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OP</b>	Organisational Performance
<b>ROI</b>	Return on Investment
<b>SAR</b>	Saudi Arabia Riyal
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDF</b>	Saudi Industrial Development Fund
<b>SMEA</b>	Saudi Arabia Small and Medium Enterprises Authority
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>T&amp;D</b>	Training and Development
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>VC</b>	Value Creation
<b>VUCA</b>	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity
<b>TVTCs</b>	Technical and Vocational Training Corporations

# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This Chapter provides an overview of the research to be undertaken which will investigate how Inspirational Leadership affects the implementation and management of change within organisations, particularly in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating in education institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The statement of the research problem is discussed, along with its rationale for conducting this study; a research aim, objectives, questions as well as methodology are then outlined. This investigation is further contextualised by discussing expected contributions to existing literature pertaining to this area of study before finally outlining any potential limitations associated with undertaking such work.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Organisational change is an essential process for any business to remain competitive and successful in a modern, ever-changing environment. Change Management (CM) involves actively monitoring factors that affect productivity and profitability, ensuring companies stay ahead of their competitors and providing customers with the best experience possible. Success of change relies heavily on its creative capacity as well as effectively utilising strategies, technologies, restructuring roles or transforming culture within the organisation. Having a well communicated plan for implementing changes is necessary for stakeholders to understand how they fit into this larger picture while motivating them further.

Leadership models focus on the traits, behaviours, and attributes used by leaders to achieve organisational objectives, as well as on improving programmes that produce graduates suited to contemporary society. This research aims to analyse existing CM models to devise an effective implementation framework, enabling appropriate decisions that will ultimately improve overall process performance.

According to Northouse (2013), change is inevitable in the current business environment; moreover, over the past three decades, the rate of change has been greater than ever before. Due to technological advancements and socio-economic transformations, organisational change is considered a permanent feature of any organisation. As the world progresses into more advanced and complex socio-economic relationships, organisations are either implementing change willingly to gain competitive advantage or doing so unwillingly in order to survive. For example, British Airways was forced to restructure and downsize its workforce

to minimise operational costs, a process that required honest communication with employees under the leadership of a new chairperson (Troyani, 2016).

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) has had a significant impact on Educational Institutions (EIs), which must now adapt to the digital transformation of all aspects of their operations (Benavides et al., 2019). Change Management in educational institutions involves planning, executing, and monitoring changes to keep pace with new conditions and technologies (Rodríguez-Abitia, 2021). To ensure any successful change initiative is carried out adequately, it is important for key decision-makers to be involved early in the process, and for faculty members to receive adequate training on newly implemented technology (Benavides *et al.*, 2019).

In a nutshell, CM involves actively monitoring factors that affect productivity and profitability, ensuring companies stay ahead of their competitors and providing customers with the best experience possible. Leadership models focus on traits, behaviours, attributes and use of influence to achieve organisational objectives, while also concentrating on improving programmes producing successful graduates for society. Existing CM models must be analysed so a more effective execution framework can be devised through which appropriate decisions can be made which will ultimately improve overall performance of the CM process. As a key insight to remember in this process, it is very important to relieve teachers from non-teaching related tasks so they can focus more on teaching duties. Against this backdrop, the present research has been designed to address this gap by examining the role of inspirational leadership in driving change within educational SMEs in the KSA.

### **1.3 Statement of the Research Problem**

Worldwide, private educational institutions operating within the framework of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a cornerstone in expanding access to education, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (World Bank, n.d.). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the private education sector has witnessed significant growth as part of national efforts to diversify educational service provision and develop human capital under Vision 2030. Small and medium educational institutions face unprecedented pressure to adapt to contemporary demands, including comprehensive digital transformation, improving the quality of educational outcomes, adopting innovative learning models, and enhancing operational efficiency (Alharbi, 2023; Al-Somali *et al.*, 2024).

These institutions also suffer from fundamental internal challenges, including limited financial and human resources, bureaucratic or inflexible organisational structures, and deeply rooted

organisational cultures that can fuel resistance to change (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2019; Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023).

Official statistics issued by the Ministry of Education (2024) indicate that the total number of students in public education reached 6.72 million, of whom approximately 1.17 million are enrolled in private or non-profit sector schools. It is estimated that 60% of them (around 702,000 students) study in small-sized institutions. According to the criteria of the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (Monshaat, 2023), an educational institution is classified as “small” if it employs between 6 and 49 staff members, or if its annual revenues range from more than 3 million to 40 million Saudi Riyals.

The fundamental challenge, both theoretical and practical, lies in the knowledge gap concerning how inspirational leadership can facilitate successful organisational change within this specific context. Most influential models and frameworks in the field of leadership and change management, such as Kotter's eight-step model (Kotter, 1996) and the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), were developed and tested primarily in Western organisational and cultural contexts, and in large organisations with abundant financial and human resources (Cameron and Green, 2019). This differs fundamentally from the reality of Saudi educational SMEs, where decision-making is often centralised, relationships are more personal, and the margin for error is narrow due to limited resources.

Therefore, critical questions arise: How can an inspirational leader in a small Saudi educational institution cope with fluctuations in the external environment? How can they transform internal challenges, such as a resistant organisational culture, into opportunities for growth? And what is the real impact of these leadership practices on the success of change implementation, on the institution's overall performance, and indeed on its ability to create sustainable value that goes beyond financial indicators to include educational and social value?

#### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

This research is based on a set of theoretical and practical justifications that make its research important, including filling a gap in the literature related to the specific context. Despite the theoretical richness in the fields of inspirational/transformational leadership (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Chen *et al.*, 2021) and change management models (Kotter and Cohen, 2012; Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015), most of this research has been conducted in Western contexts or large organisations. There is a clear scarcity of studies focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in the educational sector (Al-Alawi *et al.*, 2019), particularly

within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's strategic transformation under Vision 2030 (Alharbi, 2023).

Methodologically, this research adopts a comprehensive qualitative approach that seeks to explore the direct impact of inspirational leadership on change, as well as to identify the conditions and mechanisms through which environmental factors shape the relationship between inspirational leadership practices and the success of the change implementation process. This research also explores how inspirational leadership contributes to creating sustainable organisational value beyond narrow financial indicators, including educational value, social value, and institutional reputation (Faridian, 2023; Bailey and Lumpkin, 2023). By combining theoretical originality, contextual relevance, and a qualitative methodology, this research aims to contribute to academic knowledge on leadership and change in non-Western SME contexts, while providing evidence-based practical recommendations for leaders of small and medium educational institutions in the KSA. The significance of the research is not limited to measuring the success of the change process by narrow executive criteria but extends to exploring how inspirational leadership contributes to creating sustainable organisational value (Value Creation) (Faridian, 2023). This includes improving operational performance, enhancing institutional reputation, increasing customer satisfaction (students and parents), and building a long-term competitive advantage (Bailey and Lumpkin, 2023). Consequently, the research offers added value that goes beyond the academic framework to the field of institutional sustainability.

The effectiveness of inspirational leadership in this research is not measured in isolation but is inferred through the overall success of the change management process. Inspirational leadership is the driving force whose impact is evident in improving individuals' attitudes (quantitative) and behaviours (qualitative) towards change, ultimately leading to positive organisational outcomes. This integrative blend of quantitative and qualitative evidence provides a comprehensive answer.

Based on the above, by combining theoretical originality, contextual relevance, and a comprehensive methodology, this research aims not only to contribute to academic knowledge on leadership and change in non-traditional contexts but also to provide evidence-based, practical recommendations for practitioners and leaders of small and medium educational institutions, making it research of multidimensional significance.

## 1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

This research aims to investigate the impact of inspirational leadership on the effectiveness of implementing and managing change in small and medium-sized educational institutions. The following detailed objectives have been determined in this regard:

1. To explore the influence of internal and external environmental factors on leaders' ability to inspire their teams and facilitate change implementation in small and medium-sized educational institutions in the KSA.
2. To identify the key leadership behaviours and focus areas through which inspirational leaders stimulate and support change, including vision articulation, employee empowerment, and fostering commitment.
3. To examine how the influence of inspirational leadership manifests during the stages of change implementation and management, and to identify the associated outcomes (e.g., increased organisational flexibility, greater acceptance of change, and enhanced innovation capacity).
4. To explore the conditions and mechanisms through which internal and external environmental factors shape the relationship between inspirational leadership practices and the success of the change implementation process.
5. To explore the contribution of inspirational leadership to value creation in small and medium educational institutions, encompassing educational, social, and reputational dimensions beyond financial performance indicators.
6. To analyse the interaction and joint influence of internal and external environments in shaping the organisational performance of small and medium educational institutions.

In conclusion, this research will provide an in-depth examination of the effectiveness of Inspirational Leadership in implementing and managing change within SMEs in the education sector. The findings of this research could potentially be used by educational leaders to more effectively manage changes taking place within their organisations.

## 1.6 Research Questions

To achieve the above aim and objectives this research will focus on the following main question:

What is the impact of inspirational leadership on the implementation and management of change in small and medium educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and what role do internal and external environmental factors play in shaping this impact?

This main question can be divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What is the influence of internal and external environmental factors on leaders' ability to inspire their teams and facilitate change implementation within small and medium-sized educational institutions?
2. What are the main areas that inspirational leadership focuses on to motivate change in small and medium educational institutions (e.g., building a shared vision, empowering employees, and enhancing commitment)?
3. How does the influence of inspirational leadership on change implementation and management manifest in these institutions, and what are the tangible outcomes (e.g., increased organisational resilience, improved acceptance of change, enhanced innovation)?
4. What conditions and mechanisms enable or constrain the relationship between inspirational leadership and the successful implementation of change within the internal and external environments of these institutions?
5. How does inspirational leadership contribute to maximising value creation for small and medium educational institutions through effective change leadership?

### **1.7 Research Methodology**

This research adopts the Saunders et al. (2019) Research Onion to guide its methodological approach, focusing on qualitative research to explore inspirational leadership and its role in implementing change within SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia education sector. The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding social phenomena through participants' subjective experiences. An inductive approach is employed, allowing themes and patterns to emerge organically from the data, keeping the study flexible and open to emerging insights rather than confined to predefined theories or assumptions.

A case study strategy is adopted to provide a comprehensive, in-depth exploration of the research context, supporting the investigation of Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) processes within SMEs and offering a holistic understanding of real-world practices and challenges. This strategy is particularly effective for capturing the nuances of leadership behaviour and its influence on organisational outcomes.

The research relies on semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection, offering the flexibility to explore participants' views and experiences while maintaining a consistent line of inquiry. A purposive sampling technique is used to select 37 leaders and managers from SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia education sector, ensuring participants have relevant experience with leadership practices and CM and enabling the capture of diverse

perspectives. Data were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), a method that identifies, analyses, and interprets patterns and themes within qualitative data. The research adheres to standard ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality, informed consent, and ethical data handling.

## **1.8 Research Contributions**

The main contributions of this research are as follows:

1. This study advances theoretical knowledge on the role of inspirational leadership in managing change within educational SMEs, addressing gaps in the current literature.
2. It provides a practical framework (Figure 6.1) for implementing effective organisational changes using inspirational leadership, offering solutions to challenges faced by SMEs.
3. The findings inform policymakers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and beyond, supporting the development of programmes to enhance leadership capabilities for driving successful change.
4. Academics and practitioners can benefit from the insights and best practices identified in this research, improving leadership strategies for effective Change Management.

## **1.9 Limitations of the Research**

The key limitations of this research, including sample size, geographical scope, and reliance on self-reported qualitative data, are discussed in full in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

## **1.10 Research Outline**

This research investigates the impact of inspirational leadership on implementing and managing change in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia education sector. The research begins with this introductory chapter, which summarises the context and purpose of the study. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, covering Change Management, SMEs generally, and specifically those in the KSA educational institutions. Chapter 3 develops the theoretical framework. Chapter 4 details the research methodology, including sampling technique and data collection methods. Chapter 5 presents qualitative data analysis and findings. Chapter 6 provides discussion of findings in relation to the theoretical framework. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with recommendations, contributions, and limitations.

<b>Chapter 01</b>	Introduction
<b>Chapter 02</b>	Literature Review
<b>Chapter 03</b>	Theoretical Framework
<b>Chapter 04</b>	Methodology
<b>Chapter 05</b>	Findings
<b>Chapter 06</b>	Discussions
<b>Chapter 07</b>	Conclusion and Recommendations

Figure 1:1. Research Outline

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This Chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature related to leadership, Change Management (CM) and Organisational Agility (OA) in small and medium enterprises. The review focuses on the impact that inspirational leadership has on successful change implementation in educational institutions. It begins with an overview of SMEs, their definition and features, as well as their global context and how they are viewed within the Saudi Arabian context. Following this is a discussion of CM in educational institutions, including its characteristics, strategies used for successful implementation and challenges faced during its execution. This is followed by an exploration of various types of leadership such as authority-based approaches and inspirational leadership drivers such as employee motivation levels which influence followers' attitudes towards leaders. Subsequently it examines the role that these factors have on OA, Change Implementation (CI) success rates and trust between leaders/managers and followers/employees/students respectively. Finally, there is a summary identifying current knowledge gaps which provides ideas for further research regarding this topic area.

### **2.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are essential contributors to economic growth, innovation, and employment. SMEs play an important role in many countries around the world including Saudi Arabia; they contribute significantly to GDP, create jobs for citizens, drive innovation by introducing new products or services into the market, and provide a channel for generating additional sources of revenue in a post-oil future. Despite their importance, SMEs often face several challenges related to limited access to capital and technology when compared with large corporations. Therefore, it is necessary for governments to establish policies that will help support these businesses so that they can compete successfully within their markets. This Section seeks to examine the role of SMEs in Saudi Arabia economy as well as identify successful practices which can effectively contribute towards sustainable development in this country.

#### **2.2.1 Definition and Features**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) define small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as non-subsidary, independent firms which employ less than

a given number of employees; however, this limit differs between countries. The European Union (EU) sets the employee threshold at 250, while the United States (US) has set it to 500. Meanwhile, in comparison with SMEs, the small enterprises are those with less than 50 people employed according to OECD standards (OECD, 2005). Additionally, Saudi Arabia Small and Medium Enterprises Authority (SMEA, 2023) states that any enterprise with an independent commercial registration must have under 249 employees and revenue no more than 200 million SAR to be classified as a SME. Nevertheless, it can be stated without any doubt that there is not one universal definition for what constitutes a SME (Alzahrani, 2019).

Saudi Arabia defines SMEs based on specific criteria including the number of employees and annual revenue size. According to Monshaat (2025) enterprises are classified into three main types: micro enterprises (1-5 employees, with revenues up to 3 million riyals), small enterprises (6-49 employees, with revenues exceeding 3 million but not exceeding 40 million riyals), and medium enterprises (50-249 employees, with revenues exceeding 40 million but not exceeding 200 million riyals). The following table illustrates these criteria, and this graduated classification aims to enable these enterprises to access services and financing appropriate to their size and nature of activity (Saudi Central Bank, 2023).

Table 2-1: Criteria for Small and Medium Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

<b>Enterprise Size</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Annual Revenue (SAR)</b>
Micro Enterprises	1-5	Not exceeding 3 million
Small Enterprises	6-49	3 million – 40 million
Medium Enterprises	50-249	40 million – 200 million

Source: (Monshaat, 2025).

For its part, the Ministry of Commerce (2025), has adopted a definition consistent with that of “Monshaat”, defining a small enterprise as one employing between 6 and 49 workers or having sales of more than 3 million but less than 50 million riyals, while a medium enterprise is one employing between 50 and 249 workers or having sales of up to 200 million riyals. It is worth noting that some official sources refer to the upper revenue limit for small enterprises as 40 million riyals, which is the definition most consistent with what “Monshaat” currently publishes.

SMEs are businesses that operate within specific thresholds of workforce size, revenue, or asset value, varying by region and sector. These enterprises are typically characterized by their agility, adaptability, and strong ties to local markets, enabling them to respond quickly to changing consumer needs. Ramos Cordeiro *et al.* (2024) emphasise the critical role of

knowledge management in enabling SMEs to navigate the challenges of limited resources while fostering innovation and growth. Moreover, SMEs often display a high degree of specialization, targeting niche markets with unique products or services, as highlighted by Opoku *et al.* (2024). Despite their size, SMEs contribute significantly to employment and economic stability, serving as a backbone for many economies.

SMEs are not only essential contributors to economic growth but are also fundamental drivers of innovation and employment. Many businesses worldwide fall into this category, with most SMEs ranging from start-ups to established firms with country or region wise restriction of employees and annual turnovers. Abdullahi *et al.* (2015) have found that SMEs play an essential role in employment, wealth creation, and economic and social development such as poverty alleviation and community empowerment (Omri *et al.*, 2015; Abdullahi *et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, Muller *et al.* (2018) suggested that SMEs contribution to the GDP of many European countries is around 56 percent, which is quite significant compared to the contribution of SMEs in the KSA which is just around 20 percent as hinted by Alzahrani (2019).

Nkwabi and Mboya (2019) hinted that, SMEs face several challenges related to limited access to capital and technology compared with large corporations. This gap is especially pronounced in developing countries where traditional financing options such as bank loans may be difficult or impossible for small businesses to obtain; however, alternative sources of funding such as venture capital investments have been gaining traction over the last decade (Nkwabi and Mboya, 2019).

### **2.2.2 Global Context of SMEs**

SMEs form the backbone of the global economy, accounting for approximately 90% of all businesses and employing between 60% to 70% of the total private sector workforce worldwide. They contribute about 50% of the global gross domestic product (World Bank, 2025; United Nations, 2025). However, the financing gap remains a significant challenge; in 119 emerging and developing economies, this financing gap for SMEs is estimated at around 5.7 trillion US dollars, and 40% of formal SMEs face credit constraints (World Bank, 2025). The global economy is expected to need to create 600 million new jobs by 2030 to absorb the growing workforce, highlighting the pivotal role of these enterprises in job creation (United Nations, 2025).

Globally, SMEs play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, innovation, and job creation. Mer and Viridi (2024) highlight the persistent skill gaps and operational challenges that SMEs

face, particularly in emerging economies, where resource constraints often hinder their scalability and competitiveness. Digitalisation and e-commerce have emerged as transformative forces for SMEs worldwide, with Khan (2023) and Kwarteng *et al.* (2024) identifying the adoption of digital tools and technologies as critical to maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly digital global market. Williams and Murphy (2023) also underscore the contribution of SMEs toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly through the integration of corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practices.

Chawla *et al.* (2010) found that small business in China and the USA are subject to several success factors such as marketing, competitive forces, industry trends, location, capital availability and owner experience. Chong (2013) identified managerial skills, government support, training access to capital, marketing customer service competitive prices human resource management social skills location family and friends support as key success factors for SMEs in Malaysia. Nikolic *et al.* (2015) classified all contributing factors into two groups: individual factors (owner/manager skills, personal characteristics, gender, motivation etc.) and non-individual factors (marketing ability, to compete technology innovation limited finance market conditions intensive competition). Omri *et al.* (2015), using data from Tunisian micro-enterprises concluded that innovation activities of micro-enterprises significantly mediated the effect of human social and financial capital on small business success while Lampadariou *et al.* (2017) categorised CSFs into three categories: Entrepreneurial factor; Enterprise factor; Business Environment Factors (Al-Tit, Omri and Euch, 2019).

### **2.2.3 Saudi Arabia Context of SMEs**

In Saudi Arabia, SMEs are a vital component of Vision 2030, serving as catalysts for economic diversification and innovation. Alkhoraif (2024) explores the financial challenges SMEs face in adopting lean principles, reflecting the broader issues of resource management within the sector. Post-COVID-19 recovery efforts have further highlighted the resilience and adaptability of Saudi SMEs, with Alharbi (2023) discussing stakeholder perceptions of investment sustainability in the sector. Alsughayer (2024) notes the critical role of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems in enhancing management accounting, while Al-Somali *et al.* (2024) emphasise the importance of robust organisational cybersecurity systems for sustainable performance.

Alzahrani (2019) suggested that the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to Saudi Arabia GDP is significantly lower at 21%, despite SMEs making up

approximately 1.3 million businesses and account for 98% of all business entities (SMEA, 2017). The Saudi Arabia Government has been transitioning away from its reliance on oil-related income and towards SMEs to achieve sustainable growth, implementing policies such as allocating SAR 72 billion to SMEs, reducing barriers for businesses, and reforming the legal system to open global markets (Alzahrani, 2019).

Al-Tit, Omri and Euch (2019) found that in Saudi Arabia, various studies have been conducted to identify the critical success factors (CSFs) for knowledge management in SMEs. According to Migdadi (2009), these include management leadership and support, culture, IT, strategy, measurement, organisational infrastructure, processes, motivational aids, resources, human resource management and customer satisfaction. Alshagawi (2015) carried out analytical research on strategies for women entrepreneurship success and found that family support; hard work; managerial skills; good customer service; and business knowledge are all fundamental success factors. Additionally, it has been noted by Aldahash (2025) that financial and administrative aid is essential considering the high failure rate of SMEs. Mahdi's (2014) research efforts further emphasise the need to reinforce business values and ethics as a means of improving social culture to meet the demands of entrepreneurship in the KSA (Mahdi, 2014). Therefore, this study aims at identifying successful SME practices which can contribute towards sustainable development in the KSA (Al-Tit, Omri and Euch, 2019).

#### **2.2.4 Importance of SMEs in Saudi Arabia**

SMEs are instrumental in Saudi Arabia economic transformation, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation, and GDP growth. Alhamami *et al.* (2023) highlight the role of marketing innovation, facilitated by internal social media utilisation, in boosting the business performance of SMEs. Moreover, Alkhoraif (2024) stresses the importance of financial resilience in enabling SMEs to adopt operational efficiencies, such as lean principles. The importance of cybersecurity, as explored by Al-Somali *et al.* (2024), further underscores the sector's role in sustaining robust business practices. With the government's ongoing initiatives to support SMEs, such as funding programs and regulatory reforms, the sector is poised to drive long-term sustainable development in alignment with Vision 2030.

Understanding the three overarching themes of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 helps contextualize the centrality of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. The three themes of Vision 2030 revolve around creation of an ambitious nation, a vibrant society, and a thriving economy (Vision 2030, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). According to the survey by Oxford Strategic Consulting (2017), SMEs in the country have shown potential to create and sustain a vibrant society by improving

the living standard of the people, the quality of life and well-being of entire society. In terms of supporting a thriving economy, the SMEs offer support to economic growth by creating avenues for creation and distribution of wealth. The key role played by SMEs in the Saudi economy's post-oil future cannot be opposed. To support the country's SMEs, in 2016 the government has injected, through the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) about 1.1 billion USD as a way of promoting overall economic growth and development. Ever since, the fund has supported numerous activities of different firms. In addition, the creation of outreach programmes whose aim was to encourage SMEs grow has been successful in promoting these firms. Much of the focus is on equipping the young people with skills to be innovative and energetic to come up with their own businesses (Tripathi, 2019).

From this discussion above, it is evident that SMEs have a critical role to play in helping Saudi Arabia achieve its Vision 2030. It is not only a pillar for creating jobs, spurring innovation, and improving livelihoods of Saudi Nationals, but also a channel for enhancing the creation of additional sources of revenue in the post-oil future Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise that these SMEs are operating in a highly competitive business environment, where change is inevitable. Some of the changes that SMEs in Saudi Arabia are facing are driven by innovation, the global demand and support for new opportunities and ideas, and business agility to adapt to changes which occur in the external business environment (Bin-Hezam *et al.*, 2018).

In conclusion, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are an important contributor to economic growth, innovation and employment in Saudi Arabia. SMEs are essential to achieving the country's Vision 2030 goal of transitioning away from reliance on oil-related income towards sustainable growth and prosperity. For SMEs to be successful, they need access to capital, technology and other resources as well as managerial skills, government support, training access to capital, marketing customer service competitive prices human resource management social skills location family and friend's support. Moreover, it is crucial that financial and administrative aid is provided considering the high failure rate of SMEs. Going forward efforts should focus on reinforcing business values and ethics as a means of improving social culture to meet the demands of entrepreneurship in Saudi Arabia.

### **2.3 Small and Medium Educational Institutions in Saudi Arabia**

The education sector in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is undergoing a radical transformation driven by Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to build a sustainable knowledge-based economy. Government spending on education reached approximately SAR 189 billion in 2025,

representing around 17% of total public expenditure (Ministry of Finance, 2025). The number of schools exceeded 35,000 in 2024, accommodating more than 6.8 million male and female students (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, 2025).

Within this context, higher education and scientific research have witnessed remarkable growth in recent years, with the number of public and private universities rising to 42, in addition to more than 100 private colleges and training institutes. Scholarship programmes and international academic cooperation have also expanded (UNESCO, 2024). According to the General Authority for Statistics report, the enrolment rate in higher education reached 68% of secondary school graduates in 2024, one of the highest rates in the region (General Authority for Statistics, 2025). Digital education has also made a qualitative leap, with more than 95% of schools equipped with electronic educational platforms, thanks to programmes such as Madrasati and the Future Gate (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, 2025).

Against this backdrop, small and medium-sized educational institutions have emerged as one of the vital pillars within the national education system. Investment opportunities in the education sector are estimated to exceed SAR 50 billion by 2030, reflecting the growing role of these institutions in enhancing educational competitiveness and building national human capital. Data show that private educational institutions, including private and international schools and training centres, have become a key component of the Saudi educational landscape. The number of private schools increased from 6,847 schools in 1444 AH (2023 AD) to approximately 7,337 schools in 1445 AH (2024 AD), representing a growth rate of about 7% – a notable rise within a single year. The number of enrolled students also rose from 1.0 million to 1.1 million (+10%), and the number of teachers increased from 75,000 to 82,000 during the same period (Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, 2025).

Statistics indicate that out of a total of 35,400 schools in the Kingdom, the proportion of private schools is approximately 21.9%, meaning that around 7,337 schools belong to the private sector (AUBSP, 2025). The percentage of student enrolment in private education as a share of total the students' population is estimated at around 13% to 15%, with an official ambition to raise it to 25% by 2030 (Monsha'at, 2024). The number of private education students is also expected to increase from 820,000 in 2022 to 1.1 million by 2030, at a compound annual growth rate of 6.2%, necessitating the establishment of at least 200 new schools to accommodate the anticipated demand (Monsha'at, 2024).

Furthermore, the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (Monsha'at) clarifies that the total number of active commercial registrations in the Kingdom reached 1.7 million by the end of the second quarter of 2025, with more than 80,000 new registrations recorded during

that quarter (Monsha'at, 2025). The education sector is one of the most promising sectors within these enterprises, as educational commercial registrations recorded a growth of 22% during 2024 compared to the previous year, including a 40% increase in education support activities, 35% in sports and recreational education, and 25% in other educational activities (Monsha'at, 2024).

Despite this growth, small and medium educational institutions face several challenges, foremost among them being limited access to sustainable financing. Reports from the Small and Medium Enterprises Bank indicate that about 60% of small educational projects face difficulties in obtaining adequate loans or financial guarantees (Ministry of Education, 2024). They also struggle with attracting educational and administrative talents due to competition with larger institutions, in addition to the high costs of digital transformation and infrastructure development (National Company for Learning and Education, 2024).

To overcome these obstacles, the Saudi government launched a package of incentive programmes, most notably the Monsha'at programmes, which offer educational incubators and accelerators, as well as financial and consultancy services, alongside the educational sector financing programme launched by the Small and Medium Enterprises Bank in 2024 to provide concessional loans to schools and training centres (Monsha'at, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2024). These initiatives align with Vision 2030, which aims to raise the private sector's contribution to GDP to 65% by 2030 (Saudi Arabian Vision 2030, 2016).

Accordingly, it can be said that small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia represent a dynamic and strategically significant sector undergoing substantial structural change driven by government policies and economic and social shifts. With the continued expansion in the number of private schools and training centres, and steady growth in educational investments, this sector is well positioned to play a pivotal role in achieving the Kingdom's future human and economic development.

## **2.4 Change Management in Educational Institutions**

Change Management (CM) is an essential process for any organisation, particularly educational institutions, to ensure their operations remain efficient and up to date. This section will focus on the importance of CM in educational institutions, its role in adapting to new conditions and technologies, as well as how it can be effectively implemented in the Saudi Arabian context. It will begin by defining what CM is before going into detail about its application within a learning environment. Finally, it will examine different aspects of managing change tailored specifically towards Saudi Arabian universities and schools. This

discussion provides insight into the importance of having a structured approach when planning for organisational changes so that they can be successfully executed with minimal disruption.

### **2.4.1 Change Management**

Organisations can be affected by both planned and unanticipated events that influence the performance of employees and the allocation of resources, impacting organisational processes (Lakos and Phipps, 2004). According to Denis *et al.* (2001), organisations face pressure for change from several sources – some predictable, others unforeseen. Before examining to CM in educational institutions, it is necessary to first clarify the concept itself.

CM is the process of planning, controlling, coordinating, executing and monitoring changes that affect a service delivery environment. It involves both hard and soft areas – such as project planning, implementing software and installing new computer networks on the hard side – and helping employees embrace new methodologies, technology and ways of working on the soft side. For businesses to remain competitive in a fast-moving market it is essential they have a disciplined approach to CM which includes automating best practices for the entire end-to-end CM lifecycle (Sarayreh, Khudair and Barakat, 2013). Sung and Kim (2021) further defined CM as a process of changing the sub-levels of an organisation to achieve organisational goals, involving several methods such as leadership, communication among members, and education and training. Recent research has focused on methodologies to effectively manage resistance from individuals when promoting innovation. Sung and Kim (2021) identified that the main factors for CM as goal setting, transformational leadership, participation and communication, and education and training.

CM encompasses the structured approaches and methodologies used to guide organisations through transitions, ensuring minimal disruption while achieving desired outcomes. Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) highlight the interplay between Organisational Culture (OC) and innovation as pivotal in navigating change, emphasizing the role of adaptive strategies. Similarly, Battilana and Casciaro (2021) underline the importance of leadership in fostering an environment that embraces change while managing resistance effectively. Transformational leadership, as noted by Burch and Guarana (2022), significantly enhances employee motivation and organisational performance (OP) during such transitions. Kotter's model, as explored by Graves *et al.* (2023), offers a practical framework for implementing sustainable changes by addressing urgency and vision alignment.

As for what drives change, Kim and Lee (2021) point out that changes may vary in complexity and repetition; however, people, technology, communication processes and market competition

are frequently identified as powerful drivers for such changes. People, both internally and externally, are engaging in conversations about race, justice, diversity and inclusion that require organisations to make drastic changes to their policies. Additionally, technology is being used as a tool to increase performance but must be implemented while ensuring employees are supportive of the changes (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018). The increased speed and reach of communication in the global market offers organisations advantages such as faster access to information, more interactive marketing tools and broader audiences. However, this also introduces risks of negative comments travelling quickly and competition from a variety of products with varied qualities, features and prices. Moreover, global events like climate change or pandemics can require changes in production processes, communication tools and infrastructure used by organisations.

Regarding the likelihood of change in any organisation, a study by Pasmore *et al.* (2019) suggested that the future of organisations will involve eco-systems composed of diverse elements that continuously shift in membership, location and purpose. Organisation design will become a continuous process due to evolving technology used for work. Decisions will be made with both internal and external parties, as well as virtual partners, and change processes must handle complexity and pace. As Pasmore *et al.* (2019) continue, there will be multiple ways of working with gig workers on equal footing alongside full-time employees connected by digital platforms. Supporting technologies will become equally important to primary technologies, sensors will gather information about environmental pressures, and leadership roles will be distributed broadly rather than held narrowly. With a clearer understanding of CM is and that change is a perpetual nature, the discussion can now turn to its application in educational institutions.

#### **2.4.2 Change Management in Educational Institutions**

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) has had a profound effect on educational institutions (EIs), as they must now cope with the digital transformation of all aspects of their operations. The exploration of strategies for the application of change to EIs is an emerging field that has garnered attention in recent times, as it enables examination of the intricate connections between actors within a technology-enabled learning environment (Benavides *et al.*, 2019).

Rodríguez-Abitia (2021) stated that, CM in educational institutions involves the process of planning, executing and monitoring changes to ensure that a university or other learning environment adapts to new conditions and technologies. The process typically includes setting objectives, assessing current practices, developing strategies for change, implementing the

changes and evaluating the results. CM can also involve communicating with stakeholders throughout the entire process to ensure their full buy-in (Rodríguez-Abitia, 2021).

Benavides *et al.* (2019) identified common types of change, including introducing new teaching methods or technology into classrooms; revising curricula; updating campus infrastructure; increasing student support services such as mental health counselling; creating more inclusive policies and procedures; restructuring administrative roles and responsibilities; transitioning from traditional to online instruction models; improving diversity on campus through recruitment efforts, hiring practices, etc.; incorporating sustainability initiatives into daily operations.

Educational institutions face unique challenges in implementing change due to their dynamic and often regulated environments. Dempsey and Smith (2021) explore the implications of regulatory shifts in education, stressing the need for strategic CM approaches in SMEs. Leadership plays a crucial role in driving change, with Kim and Lee (2021) advocating for innovative leadership styles tailored to educational settings. Kareem *et al.* (2023) further argue that transformational educational leaders inspire commitment among educators, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The integration of Kotter's change management model within schools, as demonstrated by Andrin *et al.* (2023), ensures systematic transitions aligned with educational objectives.

For any type of successful change initiative at an educational institution, it is important to secure input from key decision makers early in the process so that they are aware of what is happening and how it will benefit them (Rodríguez-Abitia, 2021). Additionally, having a well-communicated plan for implementing these changes will help stakeholders understand how they fit into this larger plan for improvement while also motivating them to take ownership over their respective roles in helping drive success. Finally, it is essential that faculty members receive adequate training on any new technology or processes being introduced if adoption rates are expected to rise significantly within a short period of time (Benavides *et al.*, 2019).

### **2.4.3 Change Management in Saudi Arabia Context**

Saudi Arabian universities are deficient in their implementation of critical thinking skills among lecturers and students within secondary pre-service teacher education programmes. This can be attributed to the Kingdom's long-term reliance on oil revenue, coupled with only recently introduced policies meant to meet growing labour market demands (Elyas and Picard, 2013). As such, Elder (2005) suggests that a model must be established specifically for this

setting which identifies and expresses knowledge of critical thinking as well as its associated practices.

In the KSA, CM is increasingly recognized as a vital component of organisational and institutional development, aligning with Vision 2030 goals. Nguyen and Tran (2023) emphasise the influence of external environmental factors on the success of change initiatives in educational SMEs, a scenario relevant to Saudi Arabia's evolving economic landscape. Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) highlight the role of inspirational leadership in fostering engagement and mitigating resistance within Saudi educational organisations. Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) connect CM to cultural innovation, a critical aspect of adapting to the country's socio-economic reforms. These insights underscore the importance of contextualizing change strategies within the local cultural and regulatory framework for optimal outcomes.

Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) examine how education reforms can be effectively implemented to improve the skills of teachers and the relevance of curricula. This study is situated in a global context, where pressure has built up for changes in education systems around the world due to financial constraints, lack of qualified teachers and school leaders, as well as irrelevant curricula. Governments have been attempting to make reforms that keep up with changing times, and this trend towards national education reform is seen as essential for national development.

Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) further suggested that the Saudi government has been making efforts to improve its education system through a series of reforms over the past decade, however, most of these reforms have not achieved their desired outcomes and overall quality of education remains low. International literature on education reform provides little guidance for governments in this regard, as it often does not consider the conditions being experienced in the 21st century. It has become increasingly apparent that educational reform in the KSA is necessary; especially since the nation launched Vision 2030. This necessitates changes to the education system if Saudis are expected to be competitive in a 21st-century job market (Salameh, 2016). Karasik (2015) pointed out how this stagnation is producing graduates who fail to meet global standards of excellence. Mosaad (2016) went on to attributed this to an antiquated school curricula combined with ineffective teaching methods and substandard education levels – all of which make extensive improvements in the field of education imperative. Additionally, outdated policies persist within the KSA (Allmnakrah and Evers, 2020). As the preceding sections have established, CM is a multifaceted process requiring strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, and contextual sensitivity – all of which are particularly salient given Saudi Arabia's ongoing educational reforms.

## **2.4.4 Factors Affecting Change Management in Educational Institutions**

CM in educational institutions encompasses numerous factors, ranging from leadership styles to external environmental pressures, each shaping the success of organisational transformation. Effective CM is vital for fostering sustainable growth and innovation, particularly given the dynamic nature of educational demands and policies.

### ***2.4.4.1 External Environmental Factors Affecting Change Management***

Educational institutions operate within a dynamic external environment that significantly influences their ability to implement and sustain change. These external factors, including technological advancements, economic conditions, sociocultural shifts, political regulations, and global trends, shape the strategic decisions and operational frameworks of these organisations. Understanding these factors is critical for effective Change Management, as they directly impact resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and the overall success of transformation initiatives.

The rapid evolution of technology is a primary driver of change in educational institutions. The integration of digital tools, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and virtual learning environments, has transformed traditional teaching and administrative practices. These advancements create both opportunities and challenges for CM: technology enhances efficiency, accessibility, and innovation, while also demanding significant investments in infrastructure, training, and policy adaptation. Leaders must address resistance to technological change by fostering a culture of continuous learning and ensuring that faculty and staff are adequately prepared to adopt new tools (Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2021). Economic factors, including funding availability, economic downturns, and budgetary constraints, play a pivotal role in shaping the capacity for change in educational institutions. Limited financial resources can hinder the implementation of large-scale changes, such as curriculum revisions or infrastructure upgrades. Conversely, periods of economic growth often provide opportunities for expansion and innovation. CM strategies must account for these fluctuations by emphasizing cost-effective solutions and leveraging external funding sources, such as grants and partnerships. Leaders must also navigate economic inequalities, which can influence access to resources and affect the inclusivity of change initiatives (Marginson, 2022).

Prasetio and Kurniawan (2023) support this perspective, emphasizing that effective leadership is crucial for alleviating economic pressures and safeguarding educational quality and student

outcomes. In times of financial constraints, institutions may be compelled to prioritise short-term survival over long-term growth, potentially leading to stagnation in curriculum innovation and the enhancement of resources.

Shifts in societal values, demographics, and cultural norms significantly impact Change Management in education. For instance, increasing diversity in student populations requires institutions to adopt inclusive practices and curricula that reflect multicultural perspectives. Additionally, changing societal expectations around mental health, equity, and sustainability necessitate proactive responses from educational leaders. Failure to align institutional policies with these sociocultural shifts can lead to resistance from stakeholders, including students, parents, and staff. Effective CM in this context involves engaging with community stakeholders, fostering dialogue, and integrating sociocultural considerations into decision-making processes (Carter and Jones, 2023).

Government policies and regulations are critical external factors that influence CM in educational institutions. These include reforms in educational standards, accreditation requirements, and funding policies. For example, mandates related to standardised testing or curriculum frameworks may require significant adjustments to teaching methodologies and assessment practices. Political instability or frequent policy changes can further complicate these efforts, creating uncertainty and resistance among stakeholders. CM strategies must, therefore, include mechanisms for monitoring regulatory trends and maintaining compliance while advocating for policies that align with institutional goals (Bush, 2020).

Globalisation and international trends also shape CM. Increasing emphasis on global competencies, such as intercultural communication and digital literacy, requires institutions to adopt more globally oriented curricula. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, highlighted the importance of resilience and agility in managing sudden shifts to online learning and addressing public health concerns. Educational leaders must anticipate and respond to these global trends by fostering collaboration, innovation, and strategic foresight (Bozkurt, 2022).

Competition among educational institutions, especially in private and higher education sectors, drives the need for differentiation and innovation. Institutions must constantly adapt to attract and retain students, faculty, and funding. This necessitates changes in marketing strategies, programme offerings, and institutional branding. Leaders must carefully manage these competitive dynamics to ensure that changes align with the institution's mission and values while responding to market demands. Effective CM in this context involves leveraging market research, building partnerships, and fostering a culture of innovation (Altbach and De Wit, 2021).

Sahib and Wilderom (2024), argue that transformational leadership is particularly critical during economic crises; leaders who inspire and motivate their teams through innovative strategies can effectively navigate resource limitations, ensuring organisational goals are met. The external environment influences Organisational Performance. Nguyen and Tran (2023) highlight how factors such as market dynamics and regulatory pressures shape the performance of SMEs. By adopting adaptive strategies, organisations can mitigate risks and seize opportunities to enhance their performance. Furthermore, Dempsey and Smith (2021) suggest that navigating regulatory changes effectively is crucial for sustaining performance, particularly in education and SME sectors.

Nasib *et al.* (2022) identified competition and brand image as key external factors impacting the performance of private educational institutions. To address these challenges, institutions must implement strategies that enhance their reputation while aligning with the evolving expectations of stakeholders. Transformational leadership, as highlighted by Gumel and Bardai (2023), plays a crucial role by inspiring innovation and motivating teams, driving institutional performance under unfavourable external conditions.

In summary, external environmental factors, including technological advancements, economic conditions, sociocultural shifts, political regulations, global trends, and market competition, play a critical role in shaping CM in educational institutions. Effective leadership and strategic planning are essential to navigating these factors and ensuring that change initiatives align with institutional goals and stakeholder expectations.

#### **2.4.4.2 Internal Environmental Factors Affecting Change Management**

The internal environment of an educational institution plays a critical role in determining the success of CM initiatives. Factors such as Organisational Culture (OC), leadership style, employee attitudes, resource allocation, communication systems, and governance structures either support or hinder the implementation of change. These elements collectively shape the institution's capacity to adapt to new challenges and maintain operational efficiency during transitions.

OC forms the foundation upon which change initiatives are built. A culture that encourages innovation, open communication, and collaboration is more conducive to change than one characterised by rigidity or resistance to new ideas. In educational settings, a culture that values continuous learning and professional development facilitates the adoption of modern teaching techniques and technologies. Research highlights that fostering a culture of openness can lead to higher levels of employee engagement and smoother transitions during change (Schein,

2019; Cameron and Green, 2019). Leaders who cultivate shared values, and a collective vision are more likely to succeed in aligning their teams with institutional goals during periods of transformation (Bolman and Deal, 2017). Conversely, entrenched cultural norms can act as barriers to change, particularly in institutions resistant to altering traditional approaches to education (Schneider *et al.*, 2013).

This is further supported by Mouazen *et al.* (2023), who find that a culture that embracing innovation and encouraging collaboration is vital for successful CM, while Huang (2023) highlights that an adaptive OC aligned with the broader institutional goals is essential for sustainability. Arshad *et al.* (2023) similarly note rigid and traditional OC creates resistance to change and hinders progress.

Kim and Lee (2021), confirm that an OC encouraging learning and motivation supports the acceptance of change, a finding reinforced by Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) and Chen *et al.* (2021), both of whom demonstrate fostering a culture of innovation are more responsive to change than those adhering to traditional cultures.

Leadership significantly influences the planning and execution of change initiatives. Inspirational and transformational leaders are especially effective in educational contexts because they motivate employees to align with institutional goals and overcome resistance. Fullan (2020) underscores the importance of leaders as agents of change who provide direction, build trust, and inspire commitment. Leaders who communicate a compelling vision for the future and demonstrate empathy towards employees' concerns facilitate smoother change processes (Yukl, 2013). By contrast, autocratic leadership styles or lack of involvement from leadership can result in employee disengagement and resistance. Effective leadership involves not only articulating a vision but also ensuring active participation from all stakeholders, thereby fostering a sense of ownership (Northouse, 2021).

The attitudes and competencies of employees are pivotal in determining the success of CM. Employees who are equipped with the necessary skills and hold positive attitudes towards change are more likely to adapt successfully. Kotter (2018) argues that empowering employees through Training and Development (T&D) initiatives reduces resistance and enhances their capacity to contribute meaningfully to change efforts. Similarly, Robinson (2021) emphasises the importance of addressing fears and uncertainties among employees through transparent communication and emotional support. Resistance often stems from inadequate training or a perception that change may negatively impact job roles. Institutions that invest in professional development programmes not only build employee confidence but also ensure alignment

between individual capabilities and organisational needs (Glover *et al.*, 2016; Cummings and Worley, 2023).

Financial, human, and technological resources are essential for the successful implementation of change initiatives, and their absence can undermine even the most well-conceived CM plans. For instance, introducing technology-driven education requires substantial investment in hardware, software, and staff training. Bryson (2018) highlights the importance of strategic resource allocation in ensuring institutional sustainability during periods of change, while Mintzberg (1994) suggests that effective planning and prioritisation of resources can help educational institutions maintain operational efficiency.

Resource shortfalls can also lead to stress and burnout among employees, further hampering change efforts. Huang (2023) adds that adequate T&D programmes enhance employee competencies, enabling them to adapt to and support the change process effectively. Mouazen *et al.* (2023) further emphasise that transformational leaders inspire and motivate teams to optimise resources, while transactional leaders focus on efficient allocation to ensure change initiatives are carried out as planned – both styles thus contributing to sustainable change.

Clear and consistent communication within the organisation is vital for fostering trust and reducing uncertainty during change. Heath and Isbell (2020) emphasise that effective communication strategies, such as regular updates and feedback sessions, are crucial for maintaining stakeholder engagement. Educational institutions often face resistance to change due to poor communication, resulting in misunderstandings and mistrust. Leaders must ensure that communication is two-way, allowing employees to voice concerns and offer suggestions, a point reinforced by Huang (2023) who highlights the critical role of staff involvement during the planning stages of change initiatives.

Studies indicate that institutions with robust communication channels experience higher levels of collaboration and trust during change processes (Clampitt *et al.*, 2020; Armenakis *et al.*, 1993). Furthermore, Arshad *et al.* (2023) underscore the significance of engaging key stakeholders early in the process, as this ensures that the change strategy is aligned with the needs and expectations of those impacted and fosters a genuine sense of ownership and commitment.

The structure and governance of an institution determine the ease with which change can be implemented. Decentralised structures, which allow for greater autonomy at lower levels, often facilitate quicker decision-making and adaptability (Bush, 2020). Centralised structures, though typically slower, may ensure greater consistency and alignment with organisational goals. Governance practices that promote stakeholder involvement in decision-making are

particularly effective in educational settings. Bolman and Deal (2017) argue that collaborative governance models enhance institutional resilience by fostering a sense of shared responsibility for outcomes.

High levels of engagement and morale among employees create a supportive environment for change, while disengaged employees are conversely more likely to resist new initiatives and disrupt progress. Research by Robinson (2021) underscores the importance of recognition and appreciation in boosting employee morale during periods of change. Providing opportunities for professional growth, fostering a supportive work environment, and addressing concerns proactively are effective strategies for maintaining engagement (Schneider et al., 2013; Fullan, 2020). Underpinning these efforts, an institution's vision and strategic goals provide a framework for guiding change; initiatives that align with the broader vision are more likely to gain stakeholder support. Mintzberg (1994) stresses that a clear and compelling vision helps unify efforts and maintain focus on long-term objectives, while strategic plans must remain flexible enough to accommodate emerging challenges without losing sight of the institution's core mission.

## **2.5 Leadership and Change Management**

Leadership and CM are essential components of successful organisational transformation. For change to be effective leaders must have the necessary authority, access to resources, and a positive attitude towards the process. They must also demonstrate competencies in communication, stakeholder engagement, and adaptive leadership to effectively manage transitions. This section discusses how leadership approaches can influence the success or failure of organisational change, and explores how leaders can use communication strategies and other methods to ensure successful implementation...

### **2.5.1 Authority and Access to Resources**

Authority and resource access are foundational conditions for effective CM. Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) argue that authority within an organisation significantly influences access to resources, which in turn impacts the successful implementation of change. Leaders with clear authority can align resource allocation with organisational priorities, fostering innovation and efficiency. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) highlight that authority enables leaders to navigate resistance and streamline the distribution of critical resources, while Gifford and Bury (2021) emphasise that resource accessibility is crucial in turbulent environments, ensuring adaptability and resilience during change.

Nazim *et al.* (2014) suggests that those involved in change must hold a sufficient level of authority to drive the transition effectively, with managers playing a key role in overseeing the process and providing ongoing feedback (Sheninger, 2019).

### **2.5.2 Leadership Attitude**

Leadership attitude plays a pivotal role in inspiring and sustaining organisational change. Burch and Guarana (2022) identify transformational leadership as a catalyst for positive attitudes, motivating employees to embrace new directions. Similarly, Oreg and Berson (2022) argue that an optimistic and supportive leadership attitude minimizes resistance and fosters a collaborative culture, while Nguyen and Tran (2023) underscore that a proactive and adaptive attitude drives effective responses to external environmental challenges, enhancing organisational agility.

According to Nazim *et al.* (2014), leaders acting as change agents have specific duties to perform when implementing change and are expected to play a central role in ensuring desired objectives are met. A leader's motivation directly influences employees and OC, as it shapes acceptance of change and mitigates resistance. Since leadership attitude and adaptability affect how others respond, leaders should act as role models by demonstrating commitment to enable collaboration between themselves and enabling collaboration for successful change.

Northouse (2013) suggests that change leaders must possess certain attributes expressed through their behaviour to influence the change process. This includes exhibiting task-oriented behaviour to facilitate goal accomplishment, adopting supportive behaviours to help employees feel more at ease about changes, and drawing on both transactional and transformational styles to ensure productivity and effective CM. Nazim *et al.* (2014) found that when leaders are perceived as both supporters of organisational change and agents of it, this positively impacts employees' behaviours towards change (Li *et al.*, 2016).

### **2.5.3 Interaction and Communication**

Effective interaction and communication are fundamental to successful leadership and CM. Chen *et al.* (2021) suggest that transformational leaders foster open communication, thereby enhancing employee engagement and motivation. Dempsey and Smith (2021) point out that regular interaction between leaders and teams ensures alignment of goals, reducing misunderstandings during transitions, while Reimer *et al.* (2024) argue that transparent communication builds trust and readiness for change, reinforcing employee commitment to organisational objectives.

Change agents must interact with employees at different levels in the organisation, creating work environments that allow for direct exchange of ideas, while maintaining a balance between communicating of the rationale for change and managing the change process itself. Employees may also be hesitant towards new ideas if they feel communication between those proposing and implementing change is insufficient. Leaders must therefore clearly explain why changes are taking place so that employees can better understand their purpose and direction (Hudescu and Ilies, 2011).

#### **2.5.4 Leading Ability**

Leading ability encompasses the capacity to guide teams effectively through complex changes. DeRue *et al.* (2020) assert that strong leadership abilities are instrumental in developing future leaders and ensuring succession planning. Huang (2023) emphasises that continuous training and development improve leaders' capabilities, enabling them to manage change efficiently. While Mouazen *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that combining transformational and transactional leadership styles enhance the ability to implement sustainable change strategies.

Change agents must develop a range of skills, behaviours and competencies in order to be effective, including vision, self-motivation, problem-solving ability, negotiation skills, creative thinking and the ability to mediate in conflict situations (Luscher and Lewis, 2008; Nazim *et al.*, 2014). They must also be decisive when action is required, communicate clearly, and provide accurate and timely information. During CM processes, organisational cultures should not be rigidly adhered to, as excessive rigidity may inhibit the change process (Carvalho, 2019).

#### **2.5.5 The Great Man Theory and Trait Theory**

The Great Man Theory and Trait Theory propose that leaders emerge due to their inherent qualities, such as self-confidence and courage. According to Bertocci (2009), those who possess these traits have the potential to support CM processes regardless of their official position in an organisation. Several scholars have contributed to this debate: Northouse (2013) identifies the skills needed for successful leadership, including human, technical, and conceptual skills; Cherry (2012) suggests external forces can influence a leader's behaviour when approaching change; Gardner (2006) proposes great leaders are naturally followed by others without requiring much effort; and Pretorius (2008) argues that Trait Theory is criticised for failing to explain why some individuals with certain traits never become leaders. Additionally, Wanberg and Banas (2000) suggest that individuals can lead colleagues to either

reject or support ideas, meaning managers should remain alert to interpersonal dynamics within the organization.

Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) critiques the deterministic view of the Great Man Theory, advocating for a more situational perspective. Shah and Thompson (2022) integrate these theories into modern leadership paradigms, emphasizing the importance of traits like emotional intelligence, adaptability, and vision in effective leadership. Kareem *et al.* (2023) highlights the relevance of these theories in educational leadership, where inherent traits and skills inspire educators and drive organisational success.

## **2.6 Inspirational Leadership**

### **2.6.1 Concept of Inspirational Leadership**

The concept of inspirational leadership has been gaining increasing attention in the business world due to its potential for creating a positive impact on organisations and their employees. This section examines the role of inspirational leadership in CM within Saudi Arabia SMEs, discussing It discusses both its advantages and how it differs from traditional motivation techniques, while also providing insight into the importance of understanding cultural context when implementing such strategies.

Yukl *et al.* (2013) define inspiration as something that elicits emotions or intellect, associated with confidence and enthusiasm among the followers. Barber and Springle (2010) point out that motivation differs in that it provides an incentive – either self-serving or noble – for people to act. While motivation can be negative or positive, inspirational leadership is characterised by three main aspects: transcendence, evocation, and approach motivation; and this form of influence arises spontaneously rather than intentionally (Kaufman, 2011). The purpose of inspirational leadership can include motivating employees through strategic visioning, empowering them at all levels, collecting internal information, sharing knowledge, and challenging the status quo (Kaufman 2011). To achieve this, many leaders employ slogans, symbols, images, cues, ceremonies, meanings, impressions, codes, and words to create expectations that stimulate intellectual growth among their followers.

Frey (2001) initially found that inspirational leadership was predominantly associated with large corporations, and much of the research on this subject has been focused accordingly. However, Bonau (2017) argued that it had become equally essential for SMEs to manage their leadership styles effectively in order to succeed. This study therefore seeks to validate the importance of inspirational leadership in CM and contribute a contextualised reference for both academia and practice by examining leadership and management in Saudi Arabian SMEs.

## 2.6.2 Drivers of Inspirational Leadership

Inspirational leadership is a critical component of successful organisations, involving the motivation and empowerment of employees to achieve desired outcomes. The following subsections explore key drivers of inspirational leadership, including communication skills, personality traits, and emotional contagion, and examine how these factors interact to foster a positive workplace culture that encourages creativity and productivity.

### 2.6.2.1 *Effective Communication Skills*

Effective communication is a cornerstone of inspirational leadership. According to Goleman (2013), successful leaders must possess strong communication skills and the ability to connect with their followers on an emotional level while articulating a clear vision. Self-awareness and empathy are key components of Emotional Intelligence (EI) that allow leaders to guide their followers towards achieving objectives, particularly when followers genuinely believe in the purpose of the organisation. Where followers find inspiration within a vision and its future possibilities, this leads to increased motivation (Goleman, 2013; Zenger and Folkman, 2014). Arshad *et al.* (2023) emphasise the importance of two-way communication in educational organisations, where leaders actively listen to the concerns, ideas, and feedback of staff, thereby creating a collaborative and inclusive environment. This approach not only motivates employees but also enhances their sense of ownership and involvement in the institutional goals.

Similarly, Dempsey and Smith (2021) highlight the critical role of clear, strategic communication in navigating regulatory changes, emphasising that well-informed leadership can effectively guide educational institutions through periods of transformation. In their study, transparent and consistent communication fosters trust and reduces resistance to change. Huang (2023) further underscores the importance of T&D as a key component of a CM strategy, as equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge enhances both individual and organisation performance during transitions. The combination of robust communication practices and targeted training ensures that SMEs are better positioned to adapt to change, improving overall performance and achieving long-term sustainability (Gachira and Ntara, 2024).

### 2.6.2.2 *Personality Traits*

Bonau (2017) focused on the roots of inspirational leadership and concluded that authenticity and self-awareness are essential for developing a shared vision and motivating followers. Murnieks *et al.* (2016) studied the effect of inspirational leadership on performance and found

it to have an overall positive impact. Rubin *et al.*, (2005), in defining transformational leadership, detailed aspects which are in accordance with Joshi *et al.*'s (2009) description of inspiring leadership. Together, these studies suggest that personality traits combined with Emotional Intelligence (EI) act as catalysts for inspiring leaders.

### **2.6.2.3 Emotional Contagion**

According to Yamamoto *et al.* (2014), emotion is an important factor in decision making, and leaders need to understand their own emotions and those of the people around them. Erkutlu (2008) adds that the attitude and actions of a leader can affect those of their followers, meaning that ignoring one's emotional capacity may be detrimental to leadership effectiveness. Ashkanasy and Humphrey (2011) divide emotional contagion on leadership into two main categories: the extent to which EI affects leadership, and how leaders manage the emotions of their teams. Research suggests that through using emotional contagion, leaders can positively influence their followers' moods to increase performance (Murnieks *et al.*, 2016). Further studies affirm the relationship between EI and successful leadership (Higgs and Dulewicz, 2016; Walter *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, Cavazotte *et al.* (2012) emphasise that for EI to be effective, it must be combined with other personality traits such as extraversion or conscientiousness; Rubin *et al.* (2005) discovered a positive association between extraversion and transformational leadership, while Côté *et al.* (2010) observed increased validity of psychological capability when both cognitive ability and personality are evaluated together.

### **2.6.2.4 Organisational Culture**

OC refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that define how employees within an organisation interact and collaborate. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the work environment, influencing behaviour, and determining the organisation's approach to innovation, risk-taking, and leadership. A strong, positive culture can create a sense of belonging and commitment, while a toxic culture may lead to disengagement and resistance to change. Several studies emphasise the connection between OC and leadership.

Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) highlights that strategic alignment within an organisation is often influenced by its culture, which can either support or hinder leadership initiatives, particularly during times of change. Building on this, Nguyen and Tran (2023) assert that a culture of learning encourages continuous adaptation, improving an organisation's ability to manage change and implement innovation effectively. Iskamto (2023) further emphasises the importance of a strong internal framework with clearly defined roles and objectives in achieving better performance outcomes, noting that a culture of innovation must be supported

by effective organisational structures to enhance efficiency and mitigate operational inefficiencies.

Organisational learning involves the processes through which an organisation acquires, shares, and utilises knowledge, encompassing both formal structures designed to facilitate learning, such as training programmes and knowledge management systems, and informal processes such as peer learning and mentoring. Such learning is integral to sustaining long-term success and adapting to both internal and external environmental shifts. DeRue *et al.* (2020) discuss the importance of leadership in fostering organisational learning, noting that leaders who promote learning environments enhance employee motivation and engagement, leading to better decision-making, problem-solving, and performance. Oreg and Berson (2022) further emphasise that a learning-oriented culture encourages employees to embrace change, making it easier for leaders to manage transitions and reduce resistance, while Cummings and Worley (2023) argue that organisational learning is vital in aligning internal resources with strategic goals, particularly during periods of environmental turbulence.

The intersection of OC and learning is particularly important in the context of leadership and CM. A culture that values learning creates an environment where leaders can inspire their teams to innovate, experiment, and embrace new ways of thinking, and transformational leaders who focus on motivating and engaging their followers often thrive in organisations with a learning-oriented culture. Burch and Guarana (2022) and Shah and Thompson (2022) affirm that transformational leadership, combined with a strong culture of learning, enhances organisational performance and accelerates continuous improvement, as leaders who foster both a supportive culture and ongoing learning are better equipped to manage the complexities of organisational transformation.

#### ***2.6.2.5 Leadership Skills and Competencies***

Leadership skills and competencies play a pivotal role in facilitating organisational change and driving sustainable performance. Transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and motivating employees to achieve higher levels of performance, is especially relevant in CM contexts, with studies showing that transformational leaders foster employee engagement by aligning personal and organisational goals, enhancing motivation and overall organisational performance (Burch and Guarana, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2021). Beyond transformational leadership, other competencies are equally crucial, including communication, problem-solving, and EI, all of which enable leaders to navigate the complexities of change and address resistance (Oreg and Berson, 2022). Leadership that emphasises employee empowerment and

involvement in decision-making further fosters a culture of collaboration necessary for sustainable change (Huang, 2023). The role of leadership extends beyond internal factors to include the influence of external environmental forces. Leaders must remain attuned to market dynamics and regulatory changes to make informed decisions that align with the broader organisational vision (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023; Nguyen and Tran, 2023). The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria into leadership practices can enhance an organisation's ability to adapt to changing societal expectations and strengthen its sustainability performance (de Souza Barbosa *et al.*, 2023).

Strategic alignment of leadership skills with organisational resources is also critical for long-term success. Leaders must ensure that their organisations leverage capabilities such as intellectual capital and innovation to meet evolving market demands (Arshad *et al.*, 2023). Leadership development programmes focused on cultivating these competencies are essential for preparing future leaders who can drive change and foster continuous improvement (DeRue *et al.*, 2020). Leadership is thus not only about managing change but also about creating the conditions for innovation and growth – both vital for sustaining competitive advantage in today's fast-paced business environments”.

#### ***2.6.2.6 Regulatory Changes***

Regulatory changes can significantly influence inspirational leadership by shaping the external environment in which leaders operate, affecting both their decision-making and the way leaders motivate their teams. Such changes often introduce new challenges and opportunities for organisational growth, requiring leaders to adapt their leadership strategies to maintain compliance while fostering innovation.

In regulated industries such as education and healthcare, transformational leadership becomes particularly valuable as leaders must guide teams through periods of uncertainty and adaptation, inspiring employees through a shared vision and commitment to overcoming challenges. Burch and Guarana (2022) demonstrate that transformational leadership enhances employee motivation and organisational performance, particularly when leaders clearly communicate the importance of adapting to regulatory shifts. Complementing this, Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) emphasise the importance of innovation in OC as a response to regulatory change, noting that leaders who foster a flexible and innovative culture can ensure the organisation remains agile and competitive. The ability to align team goals with new regulatory requirements, through the kind of purposeful, motivational leadership discussed by Shah and Thompson (2022), ensures that compliance becomes a shared organisational goal rather than

an imposed obligation. In educational settings specifically, where regulatory changes often dictate shifts in curriculum standards, student assessments, and organisational structures, leaders play a critical role in inspiring educators and staff to adapt. Dempsey and Smith (2021) highlight that effective leadership is key to ensuring that educational institutions successfully navigate these shifts while maintaining a focus on their long-term goals.

#### ***2.6.2.7 Economic and Market Dynamics***

Economic and market dynamics play a crucial role in shaping inspirational leadership, particularly during periods of organisational change. As industries transform rapidly and demand for innovation grows, especially in sectors such as education and SMEs, leaders are required to adopt strategies that foster adaptability and motivate their teams. Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) highlight how shifts in OC towards innovation are essential in navigating such dynamic environments, requiring leaders to inspire their teams through visionary leadership and a supportive culture. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) add that leadership during organisational change must focus on enabling employees to embrace new ways of thinking, heavily influenced by external market conditions, while Burch and Guarana (2022) demonstrate that transformational leadership serves as a driving force in enhancing employee motivation and organisational performance, particularly when market volatility or regulatory pressures demand swift adaptation.

External turbulence further compounds the challenges leaders face. Gifford and Bury (2021) found that economic instability or shifting customer expectations can undermine leadership effectiveness, requiring leaders to continuously adjust their strategies while maintaining workforce morale. Cummings and Worley (2023) reinforce that effective CM involves not only strategic planning but also the ability to align organisational goals with dynamic market demands, fostering an environment where employees feel motivated and capable of adapting to change. In the context of SMEs and educational institutions, where government policies and societal needs continuously evolve, Nguyen and Tran (2023) underscore the importance of leadership in implementing changes that address external challenges, ensuring that adaptation leads to sustainable development and innovation.

Leaders navigating these economic and market complexities must do so with strategic foresight and EI, creating a work environment that encourages resilience, innovation, and sustained high performance.

### **2.6.2.8 Technological Innovation**

Technological innovations are playing an increasingly vital role in shaping inspirational leadership, particularly in the context of CM and OC. The integration of advanced technologies provides leaders with new tools to inspire and engage their teams, with Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) exploring how a culture of innovation fosters a more adaptable and change-ready workforce. By adopting new technologies, leaders can create an environment that values creativity and encourages employees to embrace change – conditions essential for effective leadership.

The relationship between leadership and technological change has grown increasingly significant. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) emphasise that leadership in the digital age requires the ability to manage both technological innovation and human capital, inspiring teams to adopt digital tools so that change processes are seamless and effectively implemented. Burch and Guarana (2022) affirm that transformational leadership is essential for motivating employees through technological transitions, ensuring that they remain engaged and aligned with organisational goals during periods of adaptation. Chen *et al.* (2021) further contributes by highlighting the mediating role of motivation in transformational leadership, noting that as organisations incorporate more sophisticated technologies, leaders must empower employees to engage with new tools and remain productive throughout the transition.

Effective CM strategies must also be closely aligned with available technological capabilities (Cummings and Worley, 2023). In educational institutions, innovative leadership is essential for adapting to digital tools that enhance teaching and learning, offering leaders the opportunity to inspire staff to embrace new pedagogical approaches and improve overall institutional performance (Kim and Lee, 2021). Abrokwah-Larbi (2024) underscores the importance of integrating these technological factors into strategic planning to ensure adaptability and sustained organisational success in fluctuating environments. Tagscherer and Carbon (2023) extend this argument, noting that leadership in the context of digital transformation involves not only the adoption of new technologies but also the cultivation of a culture that supports innovation, requiring leaders to be both visionary and practical in guiding their organisations through technological change.

### **2.6.2.9 Employee Satisfaction**

Inspirational leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping employee satisfaction and engagement within organisations. Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) note that the integration of innovation in OC, driven by effective leadership, is essential for fostering an environment where employees feel motivated and committed to their roles. Transformational leadership, which focuses on

inspiring and motivating employees to exceed expectations, has been widely recognised for its positive impact on organisational outcomes, including employee satisfaction (Chen *et al.*, 2021), as it not only drives performance but also cultivates a culture of trust and openness that encourages employees to contribute actively to organisational success.

Burch and Guarana (2022) further emphasise the importance of transformational leadership in managing change, highlighting how transformational leaders enhance employee motivation and organisational performance. by aligning individual goals with organisational objectives, thereby creating a sense of ownership and purpose that significantly improves job satisfaction. Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) similarly argue that inspirational leadership enhances employee engagement by fostering a work environment that values collaboration and innovation, resulting in higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to organisational goals.

A strong correlation also exists between leadership and OC. Gifford and Bury (2021) suggest that a supportive leadership approach can buffer the negative effects of environmental turbulence on employee morale and satisfaction. Leadership practices that promote transparency, open communication, and employee recognition are fundamental to ensuring that employees feel valued, creating conditions conducive to high satisfaction and sustained organisational success.

## **2.7 Organisational Performance**

Organisational performance is a central concept in modern management science, reflecting the extent to which an organisation can transform its human and material resources into tangible outcomes that ensure the achievement of its strategic objectives. It serves as one of the main indicators for measuring leadership effectiveness, the efficiency of internal processes, and the ability to adapt to a changing work environment, helping researchers and decision-makers identify organisational strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

**Definition of Organisational Performance.** Organisational performance, represents the measure by which an organisation's ability to achieve its goals efficiently and effectively is assessed. Ibrahim and Daniel (2019) define it as the outcome of the interaction of a range of organisational factors, such as leadership, culture, organisational structure, and work strategies, which collectively contribute to achieving the strategic objectives. It is further viewed as a direct reflection of productivity levels, service quality, innovation, and the ability to adapt to internal and external environmental changes (Odongo *et al.*, 2019).

From a strategic perspective, Sinnaiah *et al.* (2023) explain that organisational performance results from effective managerial decisions and the leadership's ability to direct available resources to achieve sustainable outcomes, with the decision-making process serving as a fundamental determinant of operational and financial efficiency. This view is supported by Garavan *et al.* (2021), who demonstrate that training and skills development within the workplace enhance institutional performance by building individual and collective competence. Gachira and Ntara (2024) observe that organisational performance in SMEs is influenced by the extent to which transformational leadership is adopted, as this leadership style creates a work environment that encourages creativity and job engagement. Burch and Guarana (2022) confirm that transformational leadership enhances organisational performance by motivating employees and increasing their commitment to institutional goals, while Nguyen *et al.* (2023) indicate that transformational leadership positively affects OC, further improving overall performance in emerging markets.

In terms of evaluative frameworks, Suwanda and Nugroho (2022) highlight the importance of the McKinsey 7S model in assessing organisational performance, as it provides a comprehensive framework for analysing organisational elements such as strategy, structure, systems, skills, leadership style, staff, and shared values. This is supported by Chmielewska *et al.* (2022), who demonstrate that applying this model in public hospitals contributed to improved operational efficiency and more effective resource allocation. Regarding environmental and social factors, Jamil and Rasheed (2023) show that commitment to environmental and social responsibility contributes to enhancing organisational performance by building strong social capital and achieving a positive reputation for the organisation. Complementing this, Sahibzada *et al.* (2023) explain that knowledge management and creative organisational learning serve as key mediators between institutional knowledge and high performance.

At the individual level, Nani and Safitri (2021) confirm that formal administrative control systems and administrative innovation are closely linked to improved organisational performance, particularly when led by managers with effective leadership qualities, while Kinya (2021) highlights that inspirational motivation is among the most important factors affecting performance in non-governmental health sector organisations, strengthening both initiative and a sense of belonging among employees.

**Drivers of Organisational Performance.** Organisational performance is one of the most important indicators reflecting the extent to which institutions succeed in achieving their strategic and operational objectives. It encompasses not only financial results but also

operational efficiency, service quality, employee and customer satisfaction, and the ability to adapt to environmental changes. As organisational performance represents the final output of a complex interaction of factors, recent literature has focused on identifying the key drivers that influence it, including internal elements such as leadership, OC, knowledge management, and competency development, as well as external factors such as competition, the institutional environment, and organisational support (Odongo et al., 2019).

**Inspirational Leadership.** Inspirational leadership is among the most prominent internal drivers of organisational performance, as it inspires and motivates employees to achieve beyond expectations. Rather than simply managing individuals, the inspirational leader aims to shape a shared future vision that fosters collective commitment. Burch and Guarana (2022) demonstrate that inspirational leaders positively impact organisational change by boosting motivation and job loyalty, contributing to increased productivity. Gachira and Ntara (2024) further confirm that inspirational leadership improves performance by supporting creativity and empowerment, particularly in SMEs facing competitive challenges. Nguyen *et al.* (2023) show that the relationship between leadership and OC is the key mechanism explaining performance improvement in organisations with flexible structures.

### 1. Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning

Knowledge management and organisational learning are fundamental drivers of organisational performance, transforming individual knowledge into institutional knowledge used in decision-making and process improvement. Organisations that adopt knowledge-sharing strategies and foster a learning culture demonstrate a greater ability to innovate and enhance quality. Sahibzada *et al.* (2023) show that knowledge management processes play a mediating role in strengthening the relationship between creative learning and organisational performance, with knowledge integrated alongside innovation practices yielding more effective and sustainable outcomes. This aligns with Garavan *et al.* (2021), who argue that continuous training programmes develop human capabilities and build long-term competitive advantage.

### 2. Organisational Structure and the McKinsey 7S Model

One of the most prominent frameworks for explaining performance drivers is the McKinsey 7S model, which posits that organisational performance depends on the integration of seven elements: strategy, structure, systems, skills, shared values, leadership style, and staff. Chmielewska *et al.* (2022), applying this model to public hospitals, confirm that internal alignment between these elements enhances operational efficiency and financial sustainability. Suwanda and Nugroho (2022) additionally demonstrate that the model helps organisations assess their readiness for change and achieve a balance between structural aspects, such as

structure and systems, and cultural aspects such as OC and leadership, enhancing adaptability and overall performance outcomes.

### **3. Human Resources**

Numerous studies indicate that human capital constitutes the backbone of successful organisational performance. Skilled and motivated employees are a key source of innovation and competitive advantage. Garavan *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that investing in continuous training programmes enhances employee efficiency and strengthens organisational commitment, improving overall performance. Gachira and Ntara (2024) further show that leaders who support professional development and foster an empowering work environment create a high-performance culture characterised by initiative and self-responsibility. Capacity building is therefore not merely an administrative activity but a central strategy for improving organisational performance.

### **4. Social and Environmental Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility has become a modern driver of organisational performance, enhancing institutional reputation and stakeholder trust. Organisations that adopt sustainable environmental and social practices achieve better long-term results in terms of institutional loyalty and brand attractiveness. Jamil and Rasheed (2023) show that positive engagement with the environment and society creates social capital, which mediates the relationship between corporate responsibility and both financial and non-financial performance, enabling socially responsible institutions to achieve a balance between profitability and sustainability.

### **5. Organisational Culture**

OC represents the value and behavioural framework that determines how individuals operate within an institution. A culture that encourages collaboration, trust, and creativity provides a fertile environment for high performance. Nguyen *et al.* (2023) indicate that an OC that supports transformational leadership enhances positive interaction between employees and management, improving productivity. Gachira and Ntara (2024) further affirm that a flexible OC enables institutions to adapt to external changes and make swift decisions in a dynamic competitive environment.

### **6. Management Control Systems and Decision-Making Style**

Formal management control systems are essential tools for ensuring performance quality and monitoring the achievement of objectives. Effective follow-up and evaluation mechanisms enable the rapid correction of deviations and enhance organisational transparency. Nani and Safitri (2021) indicate that integrating control systems with flexible leadership fosters innovation and organisational commitment. Complementing this, the decision-making

approach plays a crucial role in determining an organisation's response to change, as leaders who encourage participative decision-making create an environment of trust and motivation conducive to better performance (Sinnaiah et al., 2023).

### **7. External Factors and Institutional Support**

The influence of the external environment and government policies on organisational performance cannot be overlooked. Institutions operating within clear regulatory frameworks, supported through legislation, professional standards, or accreditation programmes, generally achieve higher levels of performance. Mannion *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that healthcare providers in the United Kingdom subject to regular accreditation and review systems performed better institutionally than those not subject to such systems, illustrating that external regulatory support can serve as an effective incentive for improvement through accountability and transparency mechanisms. Based on the above, organisational performance is not the result of a single factor but emerges from a systemic interaction between leadership, culture, knowledge, human competencies, and social responsibility, alongside the organisational and institutional environment. Transformational leadership represents the most influential driver, yet it operates in conjunction with the other factors rather than in isolation. Institutions that succeed in integrating these drivers within a comprehensive performance management strategy are best positioned to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and the capacity to face future challenges.

## **2.8 The Impact of the Leadership Attitudes on the Followers**

Leadership attitudes can have a significant impact on the attitude, behaviour and motivation of followers. Research has shown that leaders can transmit their own emotions onto their followers, leading to what is known as "mood contagion", in which an individual's feelings can be impacted by perceiving another person's public display of mood. This Section explores how leadership attitudes affect followers, with a focus on how transformational leadership models view them as having a passive role.

Research demonstrates that followers have an inherent ability to detect the affective expressions of others (Sacavem *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, through vocal, facial and postural cues, people can communicate their positive or negative moods. Neumann and Strack (2000) further describe this as 'mood contagion' a process in which an individual's feelings are impacted by perceiving another person's public display of mood. Sacavem *et al.* (2017) conducted research to examine if leaders transmitted their own emotions onto their followers and concluded that this was indeed the case; thus, leadership has the potential capability to

impact the attitude, behaviour and motivation of employees in an organisation. For such transmission to be successful though, leaders must possess attributes allowing them to effectively inspire those around them (Sacavem *et al.*, 2017).

Palmer (1994) suggested that many of the books on leadership seem to focus only on the power of positive thinking; pointing out that it can create a false belief in leaders that their intentions are always good, and their power is always beneficent. This showcases how transformational leadership models view followers as having a passive role, where they experience motivation, significance and commitment to what their leader presents.

## **2.9 Leadership and Organisational Performance**

Inspirational leadership has garnered significant attention in leadership research due to its profound effects on Organisational Performance (OP). Unlike traditional leadership styles that may focus solely on the transactional aspects of leadership, inspirational leadership emphasises motivation, empowerment, and the creation of a compelling vision. Inspirational leaders seek to align their teams with organisational goals by stimulating enthusiasm and fostering a culture of trust, innovation, and commitment (Li *et al.*, 2022). They focus on inspiring employees, providing emotional and motivational support, and acting as role models. This leadership style is rooted in transformational leadership theory but is distinct in its focus on the emotional and motivational aspects that drive performance (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023).

In practice, inspirational leadership is characterized by leaders creating a shared vision, motivating through enthusiasm, and empowering employees to reach their full potential. The impact of inspirational leadership on OP is particularly significant in environments that demand high levels of creativity, teamwork, and innovation (Chen *et al.*, 2021). However, it is also evident in more traditional settings, where its role in employee engagement and performance has been well-documented. This discussion will explore the relationship between inspirational leadership and OP, examining its mechanisms, benefits, challenges, and limitations (Burch and Guarana, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2022).

### **2.9.1 Employee Motivation and Individual Performance**

One of the most fundamental ways that inspirational leadership enhances OP is by fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Inspirational leaders are known for their ability to communicate a compelling vision of the future, aligning their teams with the broader organisational goals. This alignment helps employees understand the significance of their work, making them more committed to the organisation's success. Leaders who effectively communicate this vision can

inspire employees to go beyond the basic requirements of their roles and strive for excellence in their performance (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023).

A critical mechanism through which inspirational leadership influences OP is by enhancing employee motivation. According to studies by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Walumbwa *et al.* (2022), inspirational leaders motivate their teams by appealing to their values and emotions, thus creating a work environment where employees are driven by more than just financial incentives or job security. Instead, they are motivated by intrinsic factors, such as a sense of purpose, belonging, and achievement. When employees are intrinsically motivated, they are more likely to go above and beyond their regular duties, leading to improved OP.

Furthermore, inspirational leadership also leads to higher levels of employee engagement. Tims *et al.* (2022) suggest that leaders who inspire their teams create an environment of psychological safety, where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their ideas and skills. This, in turn, leads to increased job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Employees under inspirational leaders are more likely to be proactive in their roles, participate in decision-making processes, and contribute to problem-solving, all of which are essential elements of high-performing teams.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the concept of inspirational leadership and its impact on employee motivation and performance (Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014). The 360° feedback from almost 50,000 leaders evaluated in Zenger and Folkman's (2014) study found that employee engagement and commitment were highly associated with the ability to inspire. It was also established that it is one of the single qualities that followers valued the most among their leaders. Actions which had potential to inspire followers were visible as they spent time developing them and setting challenging goals (Zenger and Folkman, 2014). Additionally, Shenhar's (2015) findings indicate that inspirational leadership contributes to increased collaboration among workers as well as innovative behaviour.

Moreover, the relationship between employee engagement and performance underscores the importance of motivation and leadership styles. Chen *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that motivated employees contribute significantly to organisational success by improving productivity and innovation. This highlights the critical role of leadership in creating an environment conducive to high performance, as described by Cummings and Worley (2023), who explore the interconnectedness of organisational development and CM strategies.

Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) highlight that educational SMEs with a positive, growth-oriented culture are better positioned to embrace transformational leadership approaches, where leaders motivate and empower their teams through strong interpersonal relationships,

clear communication, and support for professional development. Inspirational leadership within an organisation is also influenced by how leaders motivate their employees, as seen in Burch and Guarana (2022), who emphasise the role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee motivation and OP during change processes.

### **2.9.2 Organisational Outcomes and Performance**

In addition to intrinsic motivation, inspirational leadership contributes to improved OP by fostering innovation. Leaders who inspire their teams encourage creative thinking and the exploration of new ideas. By promoting a growth mindset and a willingness to experiment, inspirational leaders create a culture that embraces change and continuous improvement. This is particularly important in industries where innovation is key to staying competitive and achieving long-term success (Battilana and Casciaro, 2021; Graves *et al.*, 2023; Nguyen and Tran, 2023). McKee and Coombs (2023) emphasised that inspirational leaders are more likely to nurture innovation by providing employees with the autonomy and trust necessary for creative thinking.

While individual performance is crucial, team performance is an equally important determinant of organisational success. Inspirational leadership has been shown to positively influence team performance by enhancing team dynamics, cohesion, and collaboration. One of the most important aspects of inspirational leadership is its ability to foster a sense of shared purpose within teams. By emphasising the collective goals of the organisation and highlighting the importance of collaboration, inspirational leaders create teams that work together cohesively, with a shared commitment to success (Gao and Zhang, 2023; Shah and Thompson, 2022).

Team performance is further enhanced by the trust that inspirational leaders cultivate within their teams. Trust is a critical element of effective teamwork, and inspirational leaders are skilled at building strong, trusting relationships with their employees. Gao and Zhang (2023) argue that trust within teams enhances communication, reduces conflict, and promotes a positive working environment. When teams trust their leaders, they are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to perform at their best, leading to higher levels of performance. Furthermore, teams led by inspirational leaders tend to have greater resilience in the face of challenges, as they draw strength from their shared sense of purpose and belief in their collective abilities.

Another key factor that enhances team performance under inspirational leadership is the development of collective efficacy (CE). CE refers to the shared belief among team members in their ability to achieve a common goal. According to Tims *et al.* (2022), teams led by

inspirational leaders tend to have higher levels of CE, which in turn leads to greater team performance. The sense of unity and shared purpose that arises from inspirational leadership encourages team members to support each other, share knowledge, and collaborate, all of which are essential for high-performing teams.

Moreover, inspirational leaders create an environment where team members feel personally invested in the success of their projects. By motivating employees through a sense of purpose and pride in their work, inspirational leaders enhance both individual and team performance. McKee and Coombs (2023) argue that when employees are inspired by their leaders, they take greater ownership of their tasks and contribute more effectively to team efforts. This sense of ownership and responsibility leads to higher levels of performance, as employees feel personally accountable for the success of the team.

Despite its many benefits, inspirational leadership is not without its challenges and limitations. One of the most significant challenges is the reliance on the leader's personal qualities and Emotional Intelligence (EI). Inspirational leadership requires leaders to possess high levels of empathy, communication skills, and EI. Leaders who lack these qualities may find it difficult to inspire and motivate their teams effectively. Furthermore, inspirational leadership requires significant emotional investment from leaders, which can lead to burnout if not managed carefully. Leaders who are constantly giving emotional support to their teams may struggle to maintain their own well-being, which can ultimately impact their ability to lead effectively.

Another challenge of inspirational leadership is the potential for unrealistic expectations. While inspiration can drive performance in the short term, it may not sustain long-term performance if employees become overly reliant on their leader for motivation. According to Li and Hu (2021), employees who depend too heavily on their leader for inspiration may struggle to maintain their performance levels once the initial excitement or motivation wanes. This can lead to a lack of long-term engagement and a decrease in overall performance.

Additionally, inspirational leadership may not be equally effective in all organisational contexts. In highly structured or bureaucratic organisations, where stability and consistency are valued over innovation and creativity, inspirational leadership may face resistance. In such organisations, employees may prefer a more directive or transactional approach to leadership. Inspirational leadership, with its focus on vision and motivation, may not resonate with employees in these contexts, making it less effective in driving performance. In these cases, leaders may need to adopt a more adaptive leadership style that balances inspiration with the need for structure and stability.

Finally, the overemphasis on inspiration can sometimes lead to a lack of focus on practical tasks and performance outcomes. Inspirational leaders who are overly focused on motivation and vision may neglect the day-to-day operational aspects of the organisation, which are also crucial for performance. As noted by Walumbwa *et al.* (2022), a balance must be struck between inspiring employees and ensuring that operational tasks are managed efficiently. Leaders must ensure that their teams are not only inspired but also equipped with the necessary tools, resources, and strategies to perform effectively.

The literature clearly shows that inspirational leadership is one of the most important factors influencing institutional performance, whether at the level of individuals, teams, or the organisation as a whole. This type of leadership contributes to enhancing employees' intrinsic motivation, increasing levels of commitment and job loyalty, and boosting individual and collective productivity and creativity. It also helps build an organisational culture based on trust, empowerment, and collaboration, which positively reflects on overall institutional performance. However, applying this leadership style requires a delicate balance between inspiration and practical management, so that the emotional aspect does not overshadow operational efficiency. The findings indicate that the success of inspirational leadership largely depends on the leader's emotional intelligence, their ability to adapt to the organisational context, and the use of inspiration as a sustainable tool to stimulate performance and achieve long-term institutional goals.

## **2.10 Organisational Agility, Leadership and Change Management**

Organisational agility (OA) has emerged as a critical attribute for businesses operating in dynamic and unpredictable environments. According to Alkahtani *et al.*, (2023), fostering an innovative OC is fundamental to achieving agility, as it empowers employees to adapt and respond to change effectively. This adaptability ensures that organisations remain competitive by embracing new opportunities and overcoming challenges in an ever-evolving marketplace. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) underscore the pivotal role of leadership in driving change, highlighting that successful leaders can bridge organisational gaps and align diverse teams towards common objectives. They argue that agility is enhanced when leaders effectively manage resistance and foster a shared vision of transformation. Furthermore, Gifford and Bury (2021) emphasise the impact of environmental turbulence on OA, suggesting that proactive change management strategies enable firms to navigate uncertainties with greater resilience. Leadership plays a central role in the successful implementation of change management initiatives. Transformational leadership, as discussed by Burch and Guarana (2022), motivates

employees by aligning their personal goals with the organisation's vision, thereby enhancing both performance and commitment. This leadership style is particularly effective in creating a culture of trust and engagement, which are essential for smooth transitions during change processes (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, Huang (2023) highlights the importance of training and development in equipping leaders and employees with the skills needed to navigate organisational changes effectively. The integration of such strategies ensures that resistance to change is minimized, and the workforce remains motivated throughout the transformation process. Oreg and Berson (2022) further elaborate on the critical role of leaders in managing resistance, asserting that empathetic communication and inclusive decision-making foster a positive change environment, thereby ensuring long-term organisational success.

OA and leadership play a crucial role in the process of Change Management (CM). This Section explores how these factors interact to create an optimal work environment where employees are motivated and prepared for change. It examines how effective leaders must have the skills necessary to foster OA, inspire employee confidence through clear communication, and ensure that changes are implemented efficiently with minimal disruption. Finally, it discusses how organisations can use the agile manifesto as a framework for successful CM.

In their study, Anderson and Hoogerhuis (2019) suggest that for an organisation to manage disruptive change with minimal trauma it is essential that their employees are willing and eager to make transitional shifts. This willingness means they are less likely to feel overwhelmed or threatened when changes occur. To facilitate this process, managers must have a "change agility" mind-set which allows the organisation to quickly identify new opportunities and exploit them for maximum Return on Investment (ROI) (Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019). Change can be both reactive (unplanned) as well as proactive (planned) but having the ability to take advantage of these opportunities faster than competing organisations increases a company's competitive edge.

An agile organisation is an entity that can maintain profitability while competitively and rapidly responding to ever-changing customer preferences (Dove, 2001; Yusuf, Sarhadi, and Gunasekaran, 1999). The successful implementation of such a strategy requires the perfect balance between time, cost, quality and scope. To achieve agility within the company's framework, various enabling factors must be taken into consideration (Ganguly *et al.*, 2009; Bottani, 2009). These enablers include OC learning organisation structure type entrepreneurial culture knowledge management systems resource competition emphasis on speed performance measurement multidisciplinary teams and decentralized decision making (Conforto *et al.*, 2014). Inspirational leadership plays a vital role in ensuring strong executive support for

change acceptance of an agile methodology adequate reward for agile use as well as decentralised decision -making by involving all employees in the process.

Studies have explored the link between style of leadership and Organisational Agility (OA), such as de Oliveira *et al.* (2012) which used a case study methodology to analyse the impact of factors associated with OA, on project performance. Their findings indicate that transactional leadership does not significantly contribute to project success in innovation projects; however, transformational type of leadership has a significant relationship with better outcomes. All agility factors flexibility, continuous improvement, communication, continuous delivery and team maturity are influenced by inspirational motivation and individualized consideration to improve performance. Therefore, improving both and leadership characteristics is essential for attaining maximum potential.

According to Beck *et al.* (2001), the best approach to achieving OA is through the ‘agile manifesto’, which consists of four values and twelve principles. Joiner and Josephs (2007) point out that leadership in this context requires one to be proactive, wise and effective when managing a rapidly changing, complex environment. Horney and O’Shea’s (2009) research highlight that successful leaders must be able to identify various dynamics of their surroundings including macro-economic changes, cultural shifts and customer demand in order for them to effectively improve working conditions such as structures, people technologies or processes. Furthermore, Horney *et al.* (2010) suggest that creating a culture of engagement among employees by investing in their capability is essential for initiating actions while also developing an open mindset towards changes will allow organisations to evaluate results quickly with urgency.

In the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) environment, Yammarino and Dansereau (2008) proposed agile leadership as a multi-level theory to manage increasingly demanding market conditions. Leaders must create an open environment that motivates their followers to drive organisational agility and inspire them to take part in CM (Busse and Weidner, 2020). This flexibility is key for cultivating competitive advantage.

The leadership of the organisation is essential for implementing change successfully, according to Hung *et al.* (2014). Additionally, a leader should possess an inspiring style that encourages followers and provides motivation (Sindhvani and Malhotra, 2018). An effective leader sets out clear objectives and vision to utilise resources efficiently (Dubey *et al.*, 2015). Appelbaum *et al.* (2017) argued that quality leadership must be able to make quick decisions to remain competitive. To do this, it is important for management to design flat organisational structures

with decentralized decision-making which promotes knowledge sharing through training teams and empowering creativity and innovation (Sindhwani and Malhotra, 2018).

Leaders in organisations have a fundamental role in developing an agile cultural posture to facilitate successful CM. They accomplish this by consistently and clearly articulating the company's mission, values and vision (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2017). In addition, they must be aware that the strategies used for creating an agile cultural attitude are always changing (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2017). A Gallup survey of four European countries showed that managers and leaders should do more to ensure employees understand how changes fit into the organisation's long-term objectives (Busse and Weidner, 2020). Of those surveyed in Spain, Germany, UK and France only one-third strongly concurred that leadership provided clear direction while just 21% strongly agreed their leadership made them feel enthusiastic about the future - a notion of inspirational leadership (Busse and Weidner, 2020).

Clear and frequent communication about the future of the organisation by the leaders can help eliminate employee's anxiety. The employees agree that leadership of the firm communicates clearly and offers direction have less likelihood compared to those disagree to worry about the disruption that new technology might cause in the coming years. Busse and Weidner (2020) found out that followers, when inspired by the leader through enthusiasm, communication and leadership by example, are likely to address their own skill gaps in line with the mission and vision of the organisation. A similar conclusion was also arrived at in the study by, posits that workers are likely to state that they need skills training to do their jobs if they agree the vision, mission and purpose of the organisation makes them perceive that their job is important and that their role is useful and valuable. When employees are accustomed to change, they are less likely to be overwhelmed or threatened by new changes as they occur and can easily adapt to the changes.

Enthusiasm for the future is key during technological disruption, as it allows followers to perceive potential amid the chaos (Busse and Weidner, 2020). To ensure employees remain motivated and confident in the face of changes, leaders need to communicate them in a meaningful way. Gallup's study (2020) indicates that successful Change Management (CM) requires a culture of high development; 80% of respondents agreed their firm was committed to building on employee strengths felt supported and able to develop new skills. As conversations about professional growth become normalised in this type of environment, the necessity for learning about incoming changes can be seen simply as part of an ongoing discussion regarding skill gaps and training opportunities (Gallup, 2020; Busse and Weidner, 2020).

In conclusion, organisational agility is essential for successful CM and requires strong leadership. Leaders should adopt an agile approach to decision-making to remain competitive and encourage followers by inspiring them with clear visions and objectives. Communication is an important factor when implementing changes as it helps employees understand how they fit into the organisation's long-term plans and reduces any anxiety related to technological disruption. Additionally, leaders should create a culture of high development which provides employees with the opportunity to develop new skills, enabling them to easily adapt to changing environments.

### **2.11 Inspirational Leadership and Change Implementation**

Organisational Change Management (OCM) has become an increasingly important topic of research, as it involves exploring the various aspects that can lead to successful implementation of changes. Among these aspects is trust in inspirational leadership, which has been found to be related to increased levels of acceptance and commitment towards change initiatives. This Section discusses the effects of trust between employees and leaders, how this affects human resource management, and explore how inspirational leadership can create higher levels of trust among followers for successful implementation (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021).

OCM is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. In educational SMEs, CM involves addressing various challenges such as the integration of new technologies, curriculum reforms, or shifts in educational policies. Cummings and Worley (2023) argue that successful CM in SMEs relies heavily on leadership practices that foster commitment and reduce resistance to change. Effective CM requires leaders to understand both the external and internal factors influencing their organisations.

In the context of educational SMEs, CM is particularly challenging due to the complex regulatory environment and the diverse stakeholder groups involved. Dempsey and Smith (2021) point out that the regulatory changes in the educational sector often force SMEs to rethink their strategies and operational models. Here, inspirational leadership can play a key role in motivating staff to embrace new regulatory frameworks and adapt their practices accordingly. Leaders must be adept at managing both the human and structural aspects of change, ensuring that the organisation remains responsive to the evolving educational landscape.

Andrin *et al.* (2023) explore the role of internal capabilities in managing resistance during digital transformation within educational SMEs, emphasizing the need for leadership to actively tackle these challenges to ensure the success of change initiatives.

According to Gifford and Bury (2021), external environmental factors, such as technological advancements or shifts in societal expectations, significantly influence CM in educational SMEs. Leaders must be proactive in anticipating these changes and preparing their institutions for the challenges and opportunities they present. They suggest that the success of change initiatives depends on leaders' ability to manage environmental turbulence, which often requires a combination of strategic foresight and Emotional Intelligence (EI).

Research on the concept of OCM has explored different aspects related to inspirational leadership, such as trust. Mayer *et al.*, (2007) and Morrison (2013) define this as an individual's willingness to open to their peers in an organisation. Lines *et al.* (2005) show that trust between employees and leaders can encourage successful implementation of changes. Ouedraogo and Ouakouak (2018) research support this idea, finding that when employees are honest, credible and trustworthy they become more willing to accept new ideas, thus reducing resistance towards change initiatives. From this it can be assumed that a leader is worthy of respect will likely inspire their followers more than one without these qualities; leading to effective Change Implementation (CI) due to the faith placed in them by subordinates.

Other studies have also shown that the level of trust between the employees and their followers is a predictor of acceptance of change (Smollan, 2013). Trust also has other effects on the followers which have an indirect impact on human resource management. For instance, according to their research, trust is a predictor of positive evaluation of human resource management. Positive perceptions about human resource management have a positive impact on the perceptions of the employees towards the change process. As a result, one concludes that higher levels of trust towards human resource management not only increases the chances of acceptance of change but also makes CI. Even though trust is identified as a key antecedent for CM in an organisation, there is little research conducted to demonstrate how inspirational leaders can create higher levels of trust among their followers. In addition to this, there is also limited research attempting to link the concept of trust, inspirational leadership and CI, especially in SMEs (Smollan, 2013).

Research into the relationship between trust in leaders and CM suggests that employees have faith in their managers are more likely to value the changes being made, feeling respected and secure. Michaelis, Stegmaier and Sonntag (2009) found that higher levels of trust can result in increased affective commitment towards successful implementation. These findings indicate

that when individuals feel protected by their organisation, they are more likely to be positive about change initiatives rather than complain or criticise them.

According to Michaelis, Stegmaier and Sonntag (2009), trust in the leaders is vital for the successful implementation of change initiatives. Through open communication and disclosure, followers gain a sense of control by feeling protected by their leaders' good intentions. Inspirational leadership enables employees to believe in the organisation's objectives, leading to more affective commitment towards changes. The social exchange theory elucidates this relationship as it examines what organisations promise individuals such as job security or training opportunities and what they owe them like hard work and loyalty. Trusting leadership can boost cooperation with the change agent while also strengthening emotional ties between followers and organisation (Ouedraogo and Ouakouak, 2018).

In conclusion, trust between employees and leadership plays a significant role in the successful implementation of change initiatives. Inspirational leaders can create trust amongst followers by open communication and disclosure which will lead to increased affective commitment towards the goals of the organisation. This helps to boost cooperation with the change agent while strengthening emotional ties between followers and organisations.

Leaders are critical in shaping the strategic vision necessary for driving change. They are responsible for articulating a clear and compelling vision that resonates with employees, fostering a shared sense of purpose. This vision is not merely a roadmap for change but also a motivational tool that inspires employees to align their personal goals with the organisation's objectives. Transformational leaders emphasise the importance of creating a vision that promotes growth and addresses organisational challenges, while inspiring employees to exceed their usual performance levels (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Inspirational leadership further enhances this by appealing to employees' emotions, fostering loyalty, and building a collective commitment to the vision.

One of the primary outcomes of effective inspirational leadership is increased employee engagement. Chen *et al.*, (2021) emphasise that transformational leaders, by fostering a motivating and supportive environment, enhance employee engagement. In educational SMEs, where staff engagement is often linked to performance outcomes, inspirational leadership is critical. Motivated employees are more likely to embrace change, contribute to decision-making processes, and work collaboratively to achieve organisational goals.

Inspirational leadership plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of change within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Leaders adopt transformational leadership styles inspire and motivate their teams to embrace change, aligning their goals with the broader

organisational objectives. The implementation of change requires a clear vision, which inspirational leaders provide through transparent communication, encouragement, and commitment to the transformation process (Battilana and Casciaro, 2021). According to Burch and Guarana (2022), transformational leaders influence employee behaviour by fostering trust, engagement, and a shared sense of purpose, thereby enhancing Organisational Performance (OP). These leaders are skilled in fostering an environment where innovation and adaptability are valued, which is essential for effective CI in the dynamic SME sector (Chen *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, the motivation driven by inspirational leadership positively impacts employee attitudes towards organisational change, facilitating a smoother transition and stronger commitment to change objectives (Cummings and Worley, 2023).

Effective CI requires not only a vision but also the ability to manage the complexities associated with organisational transitions. Inspirational leaders are pivotal in managing resistance to change, a common challenge in SMEs. As highlighted by Oreg and Berson (2022), resistance often arises due to fear of the unknown, loss of control, or perceived threats to established work practices. Inspirational leaders mitigate these challenges by engaging in active listening, providing consistent feedback, and addressing concerns in a constructive manner. They emphasise the benefits of change, reinforcing its importance to both the organisation and employees, which helps in reducing resistance (Shah and Thompson, 2022). Dempsey and Smith (2021) also suggest that educational SMEs, in particular, benefit from leadership that can bridge the gap between regulatory requirements and organisational change, ensuring a smooth adaptation process. By encouraging open dialogue, involving employees in the decision-making process, and providing the necessary support, inspirational leaders pave the way for successful change initiatives (Gifford and Bury, 2021). Ultimately, their ability to inspire and engage their teams ensures that change is not only implemented but also sustained over time, driving long-term organisational success (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023).

Employee engagement in educational institutions also correlates with the leader's ability to communicate a clear vision and demonstrate commitment to the organisation's success. Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) argue that inspirational leadership increases employees' emotional commitment to the organisation, leading to higher levels of performance and better outcomes in CM processes. This heightened engagement helps reduce turnover rates, enhances job satisfaction, and creates a more resilient institution capable of managing the demands of change.

Furthermore, as leaders inspire employees, they also help in aligning their individual goals with the broader organisational objectives. This alignment is essential for ensuring that everyone in

the organisation is working toward the same vision, thus facilitating smoother transitions during periods of change. The role of inspirational leadership in employee engagement is particularly significant in educational SMEs, where the success of change initiatives often hinges on the commitment and adaptability of the staff.

Resistance to change is one of the most common challenges faced by leaders during transformation initiatives. Employees may resist due to fear of the unknown, perceived threats to job security, or lack of trust in the change process. Inspirational leaders are particularly adept at addressing these concerns by fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. They achieve this by maintaining open communication, acknowledging employees' concerns, and creating opportunities for dialogue. Research highlights that leaders emphasise empathy and actively involve employees in decision-making processes are more effective in mitigating resistance to change (Oreg and Berson, 2022). Moreover, transformational leaders build trust by demonstrating transparency and consistency, which reassures employees and encourages their active participation in the change process.

A clear and well-communicated vision is essential for successful change implementation. Visionary leadership bridges the gap between the current state and the desired future state by providing a sense of direction and purpose. Leaders excel in crafting and sharing this vision ensure that all organisational efforts are strategically aligned. Inspirational leaders excel in this domain by linking the organisational vision to the personal values and aspirations of employees. This connection fosters a deeper emotional investment in the change process, leading to greater organisational cohesion and enhanced performance. Visionary leadership also promotes strategic alignment by clarifying roles and responsibilities, ensuring that employees understand how their contributions drive the larger organisational goals (Battilana and Casciaro, 2021).

Leadership is instrumental in cultivating an OC that supports change. Leaders set the tone for the organisation's values, attitudes, and behaviours, which directly influence how employees respond to change initiatives. Transformational leaders foster a culture of innovation, adaptability, and continuous learning, which are critical for sustaining change over the long term. Inspirational leaders complement this by creating an environment where employees feel valued and empowered. For example, leaders demonstrate inclusivity and encourage collaborative problem-solving create a sense of ownership among employees, making them more receptive to change (Nguyen and Tran, 2023). Such a culture reduces resistance, enhances engagement, and fosters resilience, all of which are essential for navigating periods of transformation.

Inspirational leadership is particularly effective in motivating employees to embrace change. Leaders employ this style use Emotional Intelligence (EI) to connect with employees on a personal level, recognizing their individual contributions and fostering a sense of purpose. This approach is vital during times of uncertainty, as it reassures employees and builds their confidence to face new challenges. Transformational leaders also focus on empowering employees by delegating authority, providing resources, and encouraging innovative thinking. Studies have shown that empowerment not only enhances employee engagement but also improves Organisational Performance (OP) during CI (Chen *et al.*, 2021). By combining empowerment with inspiration, leaders create a workforce that is both motivated and capable of driving change.

Organisations often face external pressures that necessitate change, such as technological advancements, regulatory shifts, or competitive challenges. Leadership plays a pivotal role in navigating these pressures by ensuring that the organisation remains agile and responsive. Inspirational and adaptive leaders excel in this context by fostering a proactive mindset among employees, encouraging them to view external pressures as opportunities rather than threats. For instance, such leaders may emphasise collaboration and innovative problem-solving to address market challenges, thereby turning potential obstacles into strategic advantages (Gifford and Bury, 2021).

Transformational leadership is widely recognised as one of the most effective styles for implementing change. This style focuses on empowering employees, fostering trust, and inspiring commitment, all of which are critical for navigating the complexities of transformation. Inspirational leadership further enhances the effectiveness of change initiatives by prioritizing Emotional Intelligence (EI), motivation, and personal connections with employees. Together, these leadership styles create a supportive and dynamic environment that facilitates the successful implementation of change (Shatila *et al.*, 2024).

Accordingly, Leadership is the linchpin of successful change implementation, providing the vision, guidance, and support needed to navigate the complexities of transformation. By fostering trust, empowering employees, and aligning organisational objectives with individual aspirations, leaders ensure that change initiatives are not only implemented but also sustained over time. Transformational and inspirational leadership styles offer powerful frameworks for addressing resistance, shaping OC, and inspiring teams to achieve collective success.

## 2.12 Successful Change Implementation

Organisational change is an ever-present challenge for businesses due to the ever-changing external environment. This Section explores different factors that can influence successful change implementation, from leadership and trust to emotional attachment and organisational support. It also examines the role of manager's feedback in creating readiness for change which has been shown to be a key factor in ensuring successful CM. Finally, it looks at how Herzberg's motivation theory can be used to foster greater acceptance and adherence to new systems within organisations.

The notion of implementing transformation and restructuring capabilities focuses on employee participation, development, and performance management. Engagement means involving the members of the organisation by informing them in order to generate a feeling of enthusiasm and dedication to the objectives of the organisation (Jones *et al.*, 2005). At the same time, improvement requires refining all systems and resources so that the activities of the organisation align with its future directions (Caldwell and Liu, 2011). Jones *et al.* (2005) claim that drivers for successful change implementation include strong perceptions about OC in open systems where values are combined with human relations; this increases preparedness for change which predicts if it will be accepted or not (Jones *et al.*, 2005). It was found out that reshaping abilities positively influences implementation success as it leads to higher readiness for pre-implementation changing from employees perceive strong human relations values (Jones *et al.*, 2005).

### 2.12.1 Role of Leadership in Change Management

Effective leadership is the cornerstone of successful organisational change processes, as no institution can achieve sustainable transformation without leadership capable of directing human resources towards a shared vision and convincing them of the benefits of change (Battilana and Casciaro, 2021). Here, the leader's role is not limited to making decisions or issuing orders but goes beyond that to act as an enabler who creates a motivating organisational environment for adaptation and reshapes the work culture in line with internal and external changes. Oreg and Berson (2022) emphasise that a successful leader in change management is one who can manage the natural resistance to change by building trust, enhancing communication channels, and clarifying the individual and institutional benefits resulting from organisational transformation.

Recent literature indicates that transformational leadership styles are the most influential in promoting successful change management, as they inspire employees and nurture their sense

of belonging to the organisation and its future vision. Burch and Guarana (2022) demonstrated that transformational leadership raises levels of intrinsic motivation and organisational commitment among employees, leading to reduced resistance to change and improved overall performance. Nguyen *et al.* (2023) also confirmed that transformational leaders contribute to establishing a flexible organisational culture capable of accommodating change and innovation in dynamic work environments.

In the same context, Sinnaiah *et al.* (2023) argue that the leader's decision-making style during stages of change determines the overall effectiveness of the process; participative and delegated leadership enhances employee loyalty and helps them adapt smoothly to changes. Ibrahim and Daniel (2019) affirm that leaders who balance strictness in implementing strategies with flexibility in communicating with work teams achieve more stable and sustainable results during organisational transformation periods. Moreover, developing strategic thinking skills and the ability to make decisions in ambiguous environments represents one of the requirements for an effective leader during change management.

Considering contemporary economic and educational transformations, building a culture of organisational learning has become a crucial factor in enhancing the effectiveness of change management, as it enables institutions to develop their human capital and transform organisational knowledge into practical applications (Garavan *et al.*, 2021; Sahibzada *et al.*, 2023). A leader who encourages innovation and provides space to experiment with new ideas contributes to creating an organisational climate supportive of continuous development. Additionally, the study by Nani and Safitri (2021) indicates that leadership aware of formal administrative systems and internal controls can link institutional performance with clear indicators of innovation and effectiveness, thereby contributing to enhancing change outcomes at both operational and strategic levels.

On the other hand, Mouazen *et al.* (2023) highlight the importance of applying modern change management models such as Kotter's model, which divides the change process into clear stages including creating urgency, building leadership coalitions, clarifying the vision, and consolidating short-term gains. In this context, the leader plays a fundamental role in guiding each stage and ensuring collective commitment to achieving it. Choromides (2018) and Durr and Kamins (2020) also argue that successful change leaders treat change as an ongoing interactive process, not merely a limited-time administrative project, working to engage all organisational levels through transparent communication and trust-building.

In this regard, Heathfield (2019) points out that clear leadership vision and continuous communication about change objectives reduce ambiguity and anxiety among employees,

increasing their readiness to participate actively. The findings of studies by Krot and Lewicka (2012) further confirm that inspirational leadership does not merely respect the existing organisational culture but gradually reshapes it to be more aligned with the values of modernisation and innovation. This ability to reconcile respect for institutional traditions with positive challenge is one of the most prominent features of effective leadership in modern work environments.

Within the context of Saudi educational institutions, the role of leadership is particularly sensitive due to the nature of change that encompasses organisational structures, teaching methods, and academic governance. Leaders in these institutions must combine a forward-looking educational vision with the ability to manage academic and administrative teams within an environment characterised by rapid digital development and global quality requirements. Al-Alawi *et al.* (2019) point out that the most prominent challenges in managing change in Saudi educational institutions are resistance to change and weak communication channels between leadership and faculty members, necessitating transformational leadership with high competence in persuasion and motivation.

In conclusion, it can be said that leadership in managing organisational change is no longer a traditional supervisory role but has become a strategic function intersecting with planning, innovation, and knowledge management. A successful leader is one who can build an institutional culture that embraces change as an added value rather than a threat, and who translates the organisational vision into practical reality by empowering and motivating individuals to participate in driving transformation. In this sense, leadership in Saudi educational institutions especially small and medium-sized ones today represents one of the most essential drivers to ensure the success of institutional transformation and the sustainability of organisational performance (Sethibe and Steyn, 2016; Bachtiar *et al.*, 2023; Bolman and Deal, 2017).

### **2.12.2 Trust and Successful Change Implementation**

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran refer trust as willingness to make themselves vulnerable to another person or group, relying on the confidence that the other party exhibits benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness. In the context of organisational management, employees are more likely to make extra effort when they trust their leader. Vanhala and Dietz (2015) conducted a survey in two Finnish organisations which found that employees' trust in their employers had a positive impact on Change Management (CM). Another study by Dalati *et al.*

(2017), carried out in Syrian universities showed similar results whereby it was established that trust has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

Trust is a cornerstone for successful change implementation, influencing employees' willingness to adapt and engage in new processes. According to Othman and Abdurrahman (2023), trust in inspirational leadership fosters higher levels of employee engagement, essential for navigating organisational changes. Furthermore, Cummings and Worley (2023) emphasise that transparent communication and consistent actions from leaders help build and sustain trust during transitions. Effective leaders who prioritize trust mitigate resistance and encourage collaboration, as noted by Nguyen and Tran (2023).

Trust is seen as another factor for successful Change Management. Komodromos *et al.* (2019) explored the perception of trust among managers in the workplace when it comes to changes, showing a need for effective communication and mutual trust between leadership and employees during transition periods. It was found that establishing close interpersonal relationships can have a positive effect on perceptions of trust which subsequently leads to improved performance and cooperation throughout changes (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Von der Ohe and Martins, 2010). Furthermore, an increase in trust between organisational leaders and their staff can lead to increased firm performance at all levels during strategic Change Management (Croonen, 2010; Farndale *et al.*, 2010).

Studies in the field of organisational behaviour, anthropology, organisational science, and sociology have consistently indicated that trust is an integral factor for successful Change Management (CM) (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011). It has been suggested to minimize cases of conflict between stakeholders by reducing transaction costs at work as well as facilitating interactional behaviour (Krot and Lewicka, 2012). Bromiley and Cummings (1995) proposed a three-dimensional firm trust model based on the belief that employees should not take advantage of each other even when presented with opportunities to do so; be intent on adhering to commitments both implicitly or explicitly; and be honest in their engagements. Thus, it can be understood that trusting relationships are key elements which aid in achieving optimal performance during strategic alteration.

These studies have indicated that trust plays an important role in reducing the uncertainty level that comes with change and helps stakeholders quickly adapt to it. Moreover, when employees have faith in their leaders, they are more likely to embrace a Change Management process. In other words, trust is a significant mediator between openness to change and communication as well as readiness for change; when there is mutual trust between leadership and staff members, there is greater collective encouragement during the process of implementing modifications.

### 2.12.3 Emotional Attachment

Emotional attachment to an organisation significantly impacts employees' responses to change. Shatila *et al.* (2024) underscore that transformational leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence can deepen employees' emotional connections, thereby enhancing their commitment to organisational goals. Phuc and Hoang (2024) add that Organisational Culture (OC) shaped by emotionally intelligent leadership fosters loyalty, ensuring employees remain invested in change initiatives. This attachment can also reduce resistance and build resilience, as noted by Chen *et al.* (2021).

Further research reveals that emotion-based attachment is a main factor in successful CM. According to Gelaidan *et al.*, (2018), attachment creates a connection between people that persists regardless of time and space, making them emotionally linked. This type of bond changes over the years - beginning with parents in youth then transitioning to peers and partners as an adolescent before ultimately leading to relationships with one's own children. Attachment has been tied to commitment; more specifically emotional attachment has proven connected with affective commitment which refers to the personal relationship between employees and an organisation. As Herold *et al.*, (2007) point out, employee acceptance of change is what determines its successful implementation which unfortunately can be hindered by emotional reactions or experiences common during Change Management processes (Gelaidan, Al-Swidi and Mabkhot, 2018).

### 2.12.4 Organisational Support and Change

Organisational support is crucial for fostering a positive environment for change. As per Huang (2023), training and development programmes serve as effective tools for preparing employees, ensuring they feel equipped and supported during transitions. Gachira and Ntara (2024) highlight that consistent managerial support reduces uncertainties and boosts confidence, enabling smoother implementation of change initiatives. Moreover, Inthavong *et al.* (2023) suggest that organisational learning and networking further strengthen employees' readiness to embrace change.

Rosenbaum *et al.*, (2018) research concluded that a supervisor's care for the well-being of their employees and continuous feedback can effectively increase the success rate of implementing changes. They explain that this connection between organisational support and successful change implementation is established through reciprocity; when the organisation takes care of its workers, they will in turn do the same. As stated by Bernerth (2004), during times of uncertainty it is common for workers to view their leaders as reference points – if the leader

exhibit supportive behaviour, then this attitude will spread amongst their subordinates. This highlights how prominent inspirational leadership models are in managing change, as employee behaviours reflect that of their leaders. Therefore, supervisors must strive to motivate them to carry out any modifications successfully.

Cullen *et al.* (2014) suggested that organisational support mediates the connection between employee adaptability to change and their satisfaction, performance, and sense of uncertainty; in other words, they argued that having higher levels of organisational support leads to improved satisfaction and work performance, ultimately contributing to a successful transition when changes occur. Similarly, Shantz *et al.* (2016) found through research conducted amongst 175 manufacturing firms that perceived organisational support can result in greater work engagement and reduced intention of turnover among employees; it was also acknowledged by them that this perception is able to compensate for not-so-positive work engagement.

### **2.12.5 The Role of Manager's Feedback in Change Implementation**

Managerial feedback is a critical component in successful change implementation. Shah and Thompson (2022) note that motivational leadership that provides constructive feedback enhances organisational performance. Feedback serves as a communication bridge, aligning employees' efforts with organisational objectives (DeRue *et al.*, 2020). Regular and actionable feedback not only reinforces desired behaviours but also addresses potential barriers to change, as observed by Gifford and Bury (2021).

Colville *et al.* (2013) postulate that managers need to be aware of the steps they take and their outcomes when initiating change, considering potential obstacles which will affect the process. Mulder and Ellinger (2013) emphasise the importance of having manager's behaviour in tandem with new practices for successful implementation of changes amidst an environment characterised by continuous unpredictability. As such, feedback from managers becomes less pivotal considering helping followers go through the Change Implementation (CI) phase.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of examining how managerial feedback can contribute to increasing readiness for change and improving acceptance of it as well as its likelihood of success (Lechner and Gudmundsson, 2014). The relationship between feedback and organisational change is essential in maintaining a balance between providing incentives and stability which will lead to an advantage over rivals in a volatile business environment (Farjoun, 2010). According Lechner and Gudmundsson's (2014) study, feedback plays a decisive role particularly when organisations aim for task improvement. From the perspective of management, success depends upon effective communication channels being created

internally. Moreover, any kind of feedback helps address different interests during internal changes by reducing apprehension towards them while also creating urgency through supplying relevant information and direction (Lechner and Gudmundsson, 2014).

Failing to collect feedback and disregarding the input of employees can have a devastating effect on the change process. Cheah and Li, (2020) point out that it is necessary for managers to use feedback to gain more insight into their performance management. This Practice has been shown to create an understanding of why changes are necessary, reduce resistance, improve skills, and increase scope. According Cheah and Li, (2020), managing organisational processes and resources helps make implementation easier, while providing managerial feedback serves to motivate workers by increasing self-awareness and helping them move past any initial resistance they may be feeling.

Cheah and Li, (2020) build on this concept by claiming that workers tend to be more likely to explore and contribute towards changes in the organisation if their managers can make an extra effort to shape the beliefs concerning readiness for change through giving employee's essential information using a feedback system. In inspiring direction, feedback is a major element. A leader encourages followers during the CM procedure must comprehend their thoughts about the transition, leadership, organisations and its values for them to determine how best to motivate staff members. Whilst there exists some research confirming the significance of feedback when it comes to propelling forward the transformation process (Lechner and Gudmundsson, 2014), less effort has been made into researching specific traits of feedback which could be applied for driving CM.

### **2.12.6 Readiness to Change**

Readiness to change is a determining factor in the success of organisational transitions. Reimer *et al.* (2024) argue that employees' readiness is influenced by external factors such as corporate social responsibility initiatives and internal strategies like transformational leadership. Dempsey and Smith (2021) emphasise that fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability enhances employees' preparedness for change. Organisational interventions such as targeted training and clear communication, as highlighted by Kim and Lee (2021), further ensure employees are mentally and emotionally equipped to embrace change.

Weiner (2020) proposed various variables to foster readiness for change, such as active participation, information provision and self-efficacy. Additionally, factors like work irritation, intention to quit, job satisfaction and actual turnover were found to be predictive of employee adjustment to change. Characteristics of readiness for change come from the psychological

literature and mainly focus on cognitive processes or personality attributes like openness to change and access to external coping resources. Weiner (2020) hypothesized that employees are given comprehensive information about changes will display higher levels of readiness for change. Nevertheless, there is still a lack in theoretical studies exploring how inspirational leadership can stimulate readiness for change as well as its impact on successful implementation of alterations.

According to Herzberg (1968), providing employees with psychological requirements such as personal recognition, achievement, development and responsibility are motivators for change that can lead to job satisfaction, improved performance and mental health. Furthermore, Weiner (2020) found that an Organisational Culture (OC) strong in human relations values and open systems values was associated with heightened readiness for change which is predictive of the success of implementing a new system. Furthermore, reshaping capabilities also impacted employee's perceptions of readiness for change which then had a direct effect on implementation success measured by user satisfaction and system usage. Moreover, pre-implementation levels of readiness were shown to have positive effects on satisfaction with accuracy, user friendliness and formatting functions post-implementation (Weiner, 2020). These findings suggest that it is important to develop positive attitudes amongst employees if changes are going to be successful.

In conclusion, CI success is largely determined by factors such as trust and emotional attachment between organisational leadership and staff members, managerial feedback, organisational support and employee readiness for the change. Leaders must strive to create a culture of mutual trust which encourages employees to make themselves vulnerable to their superiors while also providing them with necessary resources in order to ensure successful transitions. Furthermore, managers should provide continual feedback in order build relationships with workers that are characterised by benevolence and competence. Finally, it is important for leaders to cultivate an environment of openness where employees can share ideas without fear; this encourages psychological requirements like recognition which ultimately lead to job satisfaction even during times of transformation.

### **2.13 Challenges in Change Implementation in Education Institutions**

Change Implementation in educational settings can be a difficult and complex process, as resistance to change is often encountered. To successfully manage the transition process, it is important for organisations, whether specifically educational or otherwise, to gain an understanding of the various challenges associated with implementing change and how they

impact individuals on both personal and organisational levels. This Section explores some of these difficulties such as resistance to change, personal factors, organisational factors, and those related to the actual implementation of changes.

### **2.13.1 Resistance to Change**

Resistance to change remains a persistent challenge in organisational transformation, particularly within educational institutions. According to Cummings and Worley (2023), resistance often stems from fear of the unknown, perceived threats to job security, and the disruption of established routines. This resistance is not only behavioural but also deeply rooted in OC, as highlighted by Alkahtani *et al.* (2023), who emphasise that innovation and cultural adaptation are critical in overcoming these hurdles. In educational settings, Nguyen and Tran (2023) identify external environmental pressures as additional factors that intensify resistance, requiring robust leadership to navigate these complexities. Effective change management strategies, as discussed by Mouazen *et al.* (2023), including the Kotter Change Management Model, focus on communication, stakeholder involvement, and incremental implementation to address and reduce resistance. Furthermore, Huang (2023) underscores the role of training and development programmes in mitigating resistance by equipping employees with the skills and confidence necessary to embrace change. Ultimately, leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering trust and aligning organisational objectives with individual aspirations, as demonstrated by Othman and Abdurrahman (2023).

Resistance to alteration is a commonly investigated topic in CM. Erwin and Garman (2010) explain that it is often seen as one of the chief motives for why transformation fails, making it an essential factor in organisational leadership and development. Although much research has been conducted on this topic, there are scant studies which investigate how inspirational leadership can assist with solving such issue. Maire and Collette (2011) suggest a multi-phased process for tackling this challenge while Gilley *et al.*, (2009) listed potential triggers of resistance such as security or status loss. Winch *et al.*, (2012) believe recognizing how resistance occurs, and its cause is key to reducing it successfully. In terms of connecting opposition to transformation, Langley and Denis (2008), draw attention to three main observations: firstly, enablers of change can modify organisations; secondly, some forms of opposition may not be intense but still present; thirdly complex dynamics exist between them both.

According to Choi and Ruona (2011), it is essential for organisations to understand the concept of resistance to change as nearly all projects face some degree of opposition. Garcia-Cabrera

and Hernández (2014) explored this phenomenon through three dimensions: resistant feeling, behaviour and thought. Garcia-Cabrera and Hernández (2014) research suggests that organisation-based self-esteem has an influence on employee participation, particularly regarding how they think about or feel the changes being implemented. Additionally, different perceived benefits are seen as connected with the context of CI; thus, leaders must find a suitable combination of these advantages in order to reduce overall resistance. Gill (2010) emphasises that successful introduction and sustained management of change require effective leadership which can enable agents to use their skills appropriately for positive transformation within an OC. Self and Schraeder (2009) created a change readiness matrix which focuses on the main causes of opposition to transformation to find long-term solutions.

### **2.13.2 Personal Factors**

Personal factors present significant challenges in the successful implementation of change within educational institutions, particularly as individual differences influence acceptance and adaptability. Cummings and Worley (2023) highlight that personal attribute such as self-efficacy, openness to change, and prior experiences with transformation heavily impact employees' willingness to engage. Leadership is crucial in addressing these challenges, with transformational leaders fostering motivation and aligning personal goals with institutional objectives, as noted by Al-Aamri *et al.* (2024). Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) further elaborate on how inspirational leadership can enhance engagement by addressing individual concerns and building trust. In educational institutions, Nguyen and Tran (2023) emphasise that personal challenges are often compounded by external stressors, such as workload and job insecurity, which require empathetic and proactive leadership to mitigate. Training programmes, as suggested by Huang (2023), can empower individuals to overcome skill gaps and reduce anxiety related to new responsibilities. A supportive and inclusive approach, as highlighted by Reimer *et al.* (2024), fosters resilience and adaptability among staff, ensuring personal factors do not become insurmountable barriers to change.

### **2.13.3 Organisational Factors**

Various internal elements of the organisation can cause opposition to Change Implementation (CI). Employees trust in the company may resist implementing new changes, though clear communication regarding the goal and purpose of these modifications can help strengthen their credibility. Additionally, involving them in decision-making processes sends a message that they are valued and trusted by their employer; this strategy is often used to reduce resistance

to change (Schultz, 2007). Leaders should be actively involved as well, listening to employees, participating in training with them, and acting as an advocate for staff members (Schultz, 2007). Organisational factors, including structural rigidity, inadequate resources, and poor communication channels, significantly impede CI in educational institutions. According to Nguyen and Tran (2023), institutional inertia and resistance to altering established hierarchies create barriers that slow transformation processes. Leadership is critical in overcoming these organisational challenges, as demonstrated by Othman and Abdurrahman (2023), who underscore the importance of strategic planning and alignment of institutional objectives with change initiatives. Huang (2023) highlights that insufficient training and lack of capacity-building programmes (CBP), further exacerbate these challenges, leaving employees unprepared for transitions. Additionally, Mouazen *et al.* (2023) emphasise that misaligned OC can clash with new directives, necessitating leaders to foster an environment of openness and adaptability. Effective communication, as suggested by Alkahtani *et al.* (2023), ensures that goals and expectations are clearly articulated, reducing ambiguity and resistance. Strategic resource allocation and engagement of all stakeholders, as recommended by Nguyen and Tran (2023), are essential in mitigating organisational factors and facilitating smooth transitions.

#### **2.13.4 Factors in the Change Implementation Process**

The process of Change Implementation (CI) itself introduces challenges, as it often involves complex steps, unclear timelines, and inadequate stakeholder engagement. Nguyen and Tran (2023) stress that the absence of clear, actionable plans undermines trust and creates uncertainty among staff in educational institutions. Cummings and Worley (2023) identify poor execution strategies, such as insufficient monitoring and feedback mechanisms, as key obstacles to sustaining change initiatives. Leadership plays a pivotal role in navigating these challenges, with Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) advocating for inspirational leadership to guide and motivate staff throughout the process. Huang (2023) points out that change initiatives frequently falter due to insufficient investment in training and skill development, leaving employees ill-equipped to adapt to new systems or policies. Reimer *et al.* (2024) highlight the importance of integrating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts to enhance employee readiness and commitment to change. Finally, Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) underscore the need for fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, ensuring that the implementation process aligns with long-term organisational goals and employee development. In the long run, policies, processes and official regulations become conventional in the organisational system since they have demonstrated to be successful before. As well as that,

with time structure, congruity between culture and the formal systems and organisation's values routinize.

Thusly, a change endeavour appears an attack on the character of the organisation. For this reason, management of the organisation must use all strategies connected to change-readiness if it intends to effectively execute the transformation. Cameron and Quinn (as cited in Self and Schraeder (2009) argued that clarifying why the necessity for change boosts readiness; like discussing benefits and drawbacks of alterations. During alteration implementation there is need for keeping employees informed regarding advancements which assists establish their faith towards its appropriateness Additionally managers promote success by publicizing small successes of steps taken so far according to Carter *et al.*, (2021). Similarly, Cameron and Quinn recommended social support which means leadership should build a coalition supporting modifications including looking out for opinion leaders across all levels within an organisation (Self and Schraeder, 2009). This can be accomplished through involving members in decision-making process thereof implying effective leadership focuses on making employees own such changes while involving them throughout transformation process.

In conclusion, it is essential for organisations to understand the concept of resistance to change as nearly all projects face some degree of opposition. Effective leadership which can enable agents to use their skills appropriately and personalize benefits for positive transformation within an organisational culture are key strategies for reducing resistance and successfully implementing change. Additionally, involving employees in decision-making processes, providing appropriate Training and Development opportunities, clarifying the purpose of changes and keeping staff updated on progress are all crucial elements that should be considered when addressing this challenge.

## **2.14 Literature Gap**

This body of literature covers a significant empirical contribution to the discovery of inspirational leadership traits and their relevance in Change Management (CM) in the SMEs' context. Furthermore, it has emphasised the necessity of inspirational leadership at lower levels of the organisation, particularly during moments of major change. As demonstrated, the structure of SMEs is an important aspect to consider. Mostly, SMEs are managed by close-knit groups have direct impact on the decision-making process. Therefore, decisions reflect the owner's direct influence on the decision-making process. Even though this is the scenario for most of the SMEs, industry growth and technological changes continue to affect these types of businesses. In addition to this, there are multiple factors influencing change and CM at the

SME level, including, technology, internal and external policies, industry norms, staff quality, customer requirements. Therefore, change in this context lies an effective nexus between leadership and Organisational Change Management (OCM).

Inspirational leadership has long been known to be an essential factor in the success of any organisation, and this is especially true for SMEs. Despite its importance, there are still gaps in our understanding of the relationship between inspirational leadership and firm performance including how it relates to CM efforts, particularly in education institutions. Through a review of the previous literature, it is evident that there is a clear lack of studies addressing inspirational leadership as an influential factor in institutional performance through change management, particularly in small and medium educational institutions. Most research has focused on transformational leadership in general without analysing the inspirational dimension as an independent element that can make a significant difference in employee behaviour and their response to organisational change processes (Burch and Guarana, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023). Furthermore, empirical evidence linking inspirational leadership and change management in the educational context remains limited and inconclusive, especially in Arab environments characterised by distinct cultural and organisational features (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023; Nguyen and Tran, 2023).

Accordingly, this study seeks to bridge this gap by analysing the relationship between inspirational leadership, change management, and institutional performance in small and medium educational institutions, aiming to provide an interpretative framework that clarifies how this leadership style can contribute to enhancing organisational performance through the activation of effective change management practices.

This study seeks to address that knowledge gap by exploring the connections between inspirational leadership and organisational outcomes among Saudi Arabia education intuitions that falls under SMEs. Specifically, we will investigate how inspiring leaders can drive successful change implementation within their organisations. Through a comprehensive analysis of available literature on inspirational leadership and theoretical framework from related research fields, The Researcher aims to identify effective strategies for encouraging positive organisational transformation within SMEs across the KSA.

Table 2-2: Literature GAP

Literature Gaps	Expected Contribution
While inspirational leadership has been shown to boost Organisational Performance (OP), the businesses assessed have no well-developed performance measures to quantify the benefit of this sort of leadership (Masa'deh, Obeidat, and Tarhini, 2016)	This research contributes to enhancing the global understanding of the role of inspirational leadership in improving institutional performance and supporting the implementation of change within small and medium-sized enterprises, by addressing gaps in the literature regarding the measurement of the impact of this leadership style and its connection to change management processes. On a practical level, the research presents an experimental framework within the Saudi context, particularly in small and medium-sized educational institutions, which serves to enrich international research efforts on the one hand, and provides practical, applicable insights within the Saudi environment on the other.
Experts believe that a lack of awareness of inspiring leadership's goals and the inability to assess its worth are important challenges to managing organisational change. More importantly, this awareness is less visible in the context of Saudi Arabia.	
Inspirational leadership is an emergent area of research, and most studies tend to focus on its link with aspects such as job commitment, job satisfaction and employee motivation. Few research on inspirational leadership and firm performance in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular.	
There are limited studies focusing on how inspirational leadership specifically correlates with Change Implementation (CI) in SMEs in Saudi Arabia.	
No literature was found that focus on Change Management (CM) and inspirational leadership from the perspective of education institutions in the context of Saudi Arabia.	

Source: The Researcher

Table (2-2) illustrates the main research gaps identified from the review of previous studies related to the relationship between inspirational leadership, institutional performance, and change management, with a focus on the Saudi context and the small and medium-sized education sector institutions.

Firstly, it is evident that previous studies, such as the one by Masa'deh, Obeidat, and Tarhini (2016), demonstrated a positive impact of inspirational leadership on institutional performance. However, most of the institutions evaluated lacked clear performance metrics or precise quantitative tools to measure this impact. Therefore, the current study aims to bridge this gap by analysing the relationship between inspirational leadership and institutional performance in small and medium-sized education institutions in Saudi Arabia.

The literature also shows that a prominent challenge in the field of inspirational leadership is the lack of awareness regarding the objectives of this leadership style and the difficulty in assessing its true value within the context of change management. This issue is particularly pronounced in the Saudi environment, which still lacks sufficient awareness of the concept of inspirational leadership as a tool for improving institutional performance.

Furthermore, most research indicates that inspirational leadership remains an emerging field of study. Previous research has primarily focused on its relationship with factors such as job commitment, job satisfaction, and employee motivation, while there is a scarcity of studies addressing the direct relationship between inspirational leadership and institutional performance, both globally and specifically within Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, there is a clear scarcity of research examining how inspirational leadership affects change implementation in small and medium-sized enterprises within Saudi Arabia, in addition to an almost complete absence of studies addressing the relationship between change management and inspirational leadership in Saudi educational institutions.

Accordingly, the current study represents a serious scientific attempt to fill these gaps by providing an in-depth analysis of the relationship between inspirational leadership, change management, and organisational performance within the Saudi educational environment, thereby contributing to the enrichment of the academic literature in this field.

## **2.15 Conclusion**

This literature review has explored the impact that inspirational leadership has on successful change implementation in educational institutions. It began with a discussion of SMEs and their global and Saudi Arabia context, followed by an examination of CM strategies used for successful implementation and challenges faced during its execution. The review then analysed various types of leadership such as authority-based approaches and inspirational drivers such as employee motivation levels which influence followers' attitudes towards leaders. Finally, it looked at the role these factors have on organisational agility, CI success rates and trust between managers, leaders and followers, employees, students respectively. From this review it is evident that whilst there is still much to be learned about how best to lead effective changes in educational organisations, inspiring leadership plays a key role in driving successful outcomes from them. The findings suggest further research should focus on understanding how different personality traits affect follower behaviour to develop better models for conducting change initiatives within organisations. This review presents relevant academic and industry research which is then analysed to discover essential traits associated with an inspiring leader. SMEs are managed by small groups in simple Organisation structures that directly influence decision-making processes due to the owner's input on how to manage changes caused by advancements in technology, internal and/or external policies, industry norms, staff quality and customer requirements. Leadership is seen as a key factor for successful CM; behaviour models must be established that enable agents to facilitate transformation positively. The beliefs held by leaders

are significant for effective introduction and maintenance of change strong guidance from those at top tiers is required for success. Engagement and commitment among personnel is highly linked with leaders' aptitude for inspiration.

## Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

This Theoretical Framework Chapter delves into the foundational theories and models essential for comprehending the intricate dynamics of leadership and Change Management (CM), crucial components in the investigation of the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing change in educational SMEs. The Chapter navigates through prominent leadership theories, including the Great Man theory, Trait Theory, Situational Theory, Management Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Servant Leadership Theory. Each theory is scrutinized for its relevance in understanding leadership dynamics within the unique context of educational SMEs. The exploration extends to Change Management (CM) models such as Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model, McKinsey 7S Model, Nudge Theory, ADKAR Model, Kübler-Ross Change Curve, and Kotter's 8-Step Model, providing a comprehensive foundation for the subsequent research.

Theory adoption and justification unveil the rationale behind the selection of a specific leadership theory and Change Management (CM) model, setting the stage for their application in the forthcoming empirical study. The choice of McKinsey 7S Model is scrutinized for its alignment with the research objectives and context. The Chapter culminates in the unveiling of the proposed framework, a synthesis of the chosen theory and model that will guide the empirical investigation, offering a structured approach to unravelling the intricacies of Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) in the educational SME landscape.

### 3.2 Relevant Leadership Theories

According to Cherry (2012), there have been numerous attempts to identify the traits and behaviours of successful leaders. Earlier theories tended to focus on qualities that made leaders stand out from followers, while later ones looked at other factors such as situational context and skill level. Michael (2009) noted that leadership theories often focus on the traits, behaviours, attributes and situations of leaders, as well as their use of influence and power to achieve organisational objectives. Amabile *et al.* (2004) further argued that these concepts must be adapted according to changing organisational dynamics such as contextual changes, cultural shifts, increased information overloads or psycho-socio developments. Research has investigated whether there is a gender difference in leadership effectiveness (Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* 2014). A meta-analysis conducted by Paustian-Underdahl *et al.* (2014) found that women are perceived to be slightly, but non-significantly, more effective leaders than men

overall. The direction of the gender gap in leader effectiveness ratings depended entirely on whether the leader effectiveness was self-reported or not.

Sabherwal, Ballew and Linden (2021) define moral authority as “the ability and confidence to identify, with conviction, right and wrong societal behaviours”. In addition, Nässén and Rambaree (2021) claims that when lacking in leaders, it can result in a “lack of trust, cynicism, and the killing of initiative over time” which is fatal. Moreover, from an anthropological perspective it is seen as culturally situated charisma emerging from people’s desires and it becomes an interactive two-way dynamic process (Evans *et al.*, 2015). Besides, moral authority is also assumed to give people hope and the courage to pursue specific goals (Nässén and Rambaree, 2021). Nässén and Rambaree (2021) further pointed that scholars have pointed to five core characteristics of moral authority that are commonly discussed: sacrifice, trust in the leader, courage, hope and belonging. Specifically, this entails giving up something valuable to pursue a shared vision; having faith in the leader’s guidance; standing firm in one’s beliefs; inspiring optimism among followers; and creating a sense of unity.

Leadership style refers to the way in which a leader behaves and interacts with their followers (Gopee and Galloway, 2017). It is not based on any innate traits, but rather on a set of behaviours that can be replicated, taught, and learnt. Leadership styles are developed through education, training, and life experiences as leaders learn what works best for them. Therefore, it is the leader’s actions that are seen as the main predictors for success. These patterns of behaviour are then investigated and grouped into categories to identify particular “leadership styles”. Leadership styles are not static, rather they can be fluid and flexible to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances (Chen *et al.*, 2021). This means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to leadership, and potential leaders should be free to prospectively determine their own style depending on the context. Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, this theory does not suggest that some individuals possess an innate quality that makes them more suitable for certain roles; instead, anyone has the capability of becoming a leader if they behave as such (Northouse, 2021).

Klus and Müller (2021) noted that managers should possess the necessary abilities to be flexible, use digital tools efficiently and build mindful relationships with digital technologies. Their leadership skills framework, based on a comprehensive literature review, encompasses general leadership skills at the levels of middle and top management. Furthermore, it includes three experience levels as well as leadership traits relevant for the digital age such as becoming digitally minded (e.g., DI), digital literacy skills, teambuilding skills, communication competencies and adaptability/flexibility (Klus and Müller, 2021). In addition to technical

capabilities within this new paradigm shift from traditional workplaces to modern ones incorporating technological advancements soft skills are especially important in fostering successful interactions with employees (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2022).

Jakubik and Berazhny (2017) argue that leadership has evolved from traditional, leader-focused management during the industrial economy to altro-centric (i.e., post-heroic) leadership during the knowledge and creative economies. This entails a shift towards more horizontal, collaborative and team-oriented approaches; whereby managers must be humble, able to admit what they do not know, create meaning in their organisations through delegation of power and act with high maturity, integrity and empathy (Salicru, 2015; Jakubik and Berazhny, 2017). Altro-centric leaders' value relationships are curious and empathic as well as able to manage ambiguity. The Researcher's focus is on interaction, collectiveness and relationships (Sobral and Furtado, 2019) which aligns with Ready *et al.*'s assertion that digital age leadership should prioritize teamwork over individual success (Henderikx and Stoffers, 2022).

Similar to other fields, Leadership in the educational context is also viewed as the capacity to envision and plan. By being role models and providing guidance, education leaders can aspire to shape behaviours, opinions, and sentiments of those within their system so that they achieve a shared mission across all components (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, 2015).

Ololube (2013) stresses that successful leadership and management of the education system necessitate a change in direction, away from the reform policies advocating for radical transformation, towards an approach with more moderation. Wallace and Hoyle (2005) support this notion by proposing that educators should focus on improving educational programmes, administrative services and producing competent graduates capable of occupying prominent positions within society.

According to Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube (2015) educational management processes involving the arrangement and deployment of systems that ensure policies, strategies, and action plans are implemented to achieve educational goals. Process performance can only be optimised through understanding how different areas of work fit together; this ensures a suitable management system is developed and improved. The documentation and analysis of process performance to generate facts allows for decisions to be made which will further improve educational process performance.

However, previously Wallace and Hoyle (2005) argued that effective leadership and management in the education system means less leadership and management; for example, by relieving teachers of non-teaching tasks where possible, they can concentrate more on their

teaching. Harris and Muijs (2005) as well as Ololube *et al.* (2013) emphasise that quality management indicators involve ways in which educational leaders ensure that academic and non-academic staff are continually trained to operate in the innovative and ever-changing educational process while building professional learning communities (Amanchukwu, Stanley and Ololube, 2015). To formulate a more profound and effect leadership model for CM in educational institutions based upon inspirational concepts, the following Sections contains a systematic evaluation of the prominent leadership theories in respect to Change Management process.

Transformational, inspirational, and servant leadership theories have been adopted as the theoretical foundation for this study due to their dynamic and relational nature. These theories do not separate the leader from the follower; rather, they examine the interactive relationship between them as a fundamental unit of analysis for understanding the success of change (Bass, 1985; Bonau, 2017; Parris and Peachey, 2013). They provide a comprehensive framework explaining how the leader builds a shared vision (transformational), ignites enthusiasm to achieve it (inspirational), and creates a supportive and safe environment that enables individuals to grow and adapt (servant). This integration of “guidance,” “motivation,” and “support” is precisely what small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia need to implement change effectively amid the significant challenges and transformations imposed by Vision 2030, making this triad the most capable of explaining the phenomenon under study.

### **3.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership has emerged as a crucial concept in modern organisational and Change Management (CM) studies, particularly for its ability to inspire and motivate employees toward achieving significant performance outcomes. Alkahtani *et al.*, (2023) emphasise the importance of fostering innovation within Organisational Culture (OC) to support change initiatives effectively. Leaders embrace transformation focus on creating an environment where innovation thrives, enabling organisations to adapt to shifting external pressures. This aligns with Battilana and Casciaro’s (2021) assertion that leadership plays a fundamental role in implementing change processes, particularly by reducing resistance and facilitating the emergence of change.

Transformational leaders focus on employee motivation and engagement as mediators for organisational success. Burch and Guarana (2022) highlight how transformational leadership enhances employee motivation and Organisational Performance (OP) by establishing a clear vision and fostering trust. Similarly, Chen *et al.*, (2021) explain that transformational

leadership directly influences employee engagement, with motivation serving as the mediating factor. This focus on fostering individual growth and purpose enables organisations to adapt to new challenges more effectively.

Leadership in transformational settings has been pivotal for managing regulatory and environmental turbulence. Dempsey and Smith (2021) emphasise the role of leadership in navigating changes in the educational sector, particularly in SMEs, where leaders must address unique challenges such as limited resources and external regulations. Gifford and Bury (2021) further note that environmental turbulence necessitates agile leadership to implement change and minimize disruptions. In these contexts, transformational leaders act as stabilizing forces, guiding organisations through uncertainty.

Training and Development (T&D) as strategies for CM are equally essential within transformational leadership frameworks. Huang (2023) underlines the importance of skill development and continuous learning as part of a transformational leader's approach to overcoming organisational resistance to change. Kim and Lee (2021) emphasise that in educational settings, innovative leadership can effectively drive change while fostering a collaborative and forward-thinking culture. This perspective highlights the interconnected nature of leadership, strategy, and organisational development.

The role of transformational leadership is also deeply connected to sustainable development and external environmental factors. Nguyen and Tran (2023) explore the influence of external environmental factors on Change Implementation (CI), arguing that transformational leaders adapt strategies to ensure alignment with shifting market and environmental demands. Similarly, Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) demonstrate how inspirational leadership enhances employee engagement, particularly in educational organisations, by fostering shared goals and collective purpose. These studies emphasise that transformational leaders must remain attuned to both internal dynamics and external pressures to drive meaningful and lasting change.

Moreover, transformational leadership plays a central role in cultivating Emotional Intelligence (EI) and fostering employee readiness for change. Oreg and Berson (2022) argue that transformational leaders play a critical role in managing resistance to change through emotional skills and active communication. Shah and Thompson (2022) further explore the link between motivational leadership and Organisational Performance (OP), suggesting that transformational leaders inspire employees to exceed expectations and embrace change through clear communication, shared vision, and recognition of achievements.

Transformational leadership also aligns with organisational strategies to address digitalization and sustainability. Tagscherer and Carbon (2023) present evidence that successful digital transformation requires leadership to bridge internal and external factors, while Arshad *et al.* (2023) examine how innovation and intellectual capital enhance SME performance, with external environments playing a moderating role. Leadership effectiveness in driving digital transformation underscores the need for leaders to adapt quickly to technological advances and promote organisational learning. Similarly, Inthavong *et al.* (2023) explore how organisational learning and networking facilitated by transformational leaders impact sustainable firm performance through innovation.

In educational and SMEs contexts, transformational leadership demonstrates a strong capacity to drive performance by aligning Organisational Culture (OC) with strategic goals. Gachira and Ntara (2024) provide empirical evidence of transformational leadership's positive effect on OP among SMEs in Nairobi, highlighting its role in fostering trust, motivation, and readiness for change. Al-Aamri, Soliman, and Ponniah (2024) explore the influence of transformational leadership on academic staff performance, linking leadership styles to increased employee involvement in strategic planning. This approach to leadership emphasises the need for organisations to prioritize people-centric strategies to achieve long-term growth. Transformational leadership also acts as a driver of cultural change and emotional well-being in organisations. Shatila, Agyei, and Aloulou (2024) reveal the mediating effect of emotional skills on leadership effectiveness in Lebanese SMEs, underscoring the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in fostering a supportive environment. Reimer, Haensse, and Lin-Hi (2024) further emphasise the impact of external corporate social responsibility actions on employee readiness for internal organisational change, a key factor in sustaining transformational leadership efforts.

Finally, transformational leadership contributes to organisational resilience and adaptability, especially in volatile environments. Leaders must address challenges like environmental sustainability, as discussed by Sarango-Lalangui *et al.* (2023), highlight its influence on innovation within SMEs. In addition, Kala Kamdjoug (2024) examines how leadership drives successful digital transformation projects, emphasising CM as a critical leadership skill. These studies collectively underscore the transformative power of leadership in driving OP, innovation, and sustainable change.

Transformational theories, also known as relationship theories, focus on the connections formed between leaders and followers. In this style of leadership, there is an emphasis placed on creating a connection that motivates and inspires people by helping them to see the

importance of working together for a higher good (Lamb, 2013). These leaders are focused on not only improving performance amongst group members but also helping each person reach their full potential while maintaining high ethical and moral standards (Nawaz and Khan, 2016).

Mansaray (2019) defined transformational leadership as one that establishes a clear vision for the organisation. Kirkan (2011) further added that it is characterized by inspiring, motivating and stimulating followers to pursue common goals. Transformational leadership entails motivating, inspiring, and encouraging followers so that both parties form a two-way relationship; this can lead to improved motivation, morality, and performance (Lord *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, transformational leaders consider individual potentials as well as the needs of their subordinates (Chow *et al.*, 2017).

Ghadi *et al.*, (2013) highlighted four sub-dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence (ability to increase employees' loyalty without focusing on their self-interest), inspirational motivation (construction of vision to inspire commitment), intellectual stimulation (enabling employees to be innovative and take risks) and individualised consideration (delegation of authority so that employees can make decisions).

Mansaray (2019) hypothesised four main factors that represent the transformational leadership style: 'idealized influence/charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration'. This type of leadership is characterized by being a role model for followers, developing a shared vision with them, inspiring pride and faith in their work group, encouraging individuals to challenge conservative practices and ideas as well as providing attention to the needs of each one.

Furthermore, research on gender has demonstrated that female managers leading female followers tend to show higher levels of transformation when compared to male leaders. Transformational leadership can be useful when trying to manage organisational changes since it aids individuals in understanding how to adapt accordingly (Mansaray, 2019).

Transformational leadership theory, developed by Bass (1985), forms the cornerstone of understanding how leaders can transcend routine management to effect fundamental transformation in the values, attitudes, and performance of their followers. This theory relies on four main pillars: idealised influence (trust and respect), inspirational motivation (creating an attractive vision), intellectual stimulation (encouraging creativity), and individual consideration (personal attention to each follower). In the context of small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, which face immense pressures to adapt to the requirements of Vision 2030 and the competitive market (Colliers, 2024), this theory emerges

as a vital framework. The transformational leader does not merely implement change plans but instils an internal conviction in teachers and administrators, transforming them from mere executors into active partners in the transformation process. This aligns with what studies have indicated, that this leadership style enhances readiness for change and reduces resistance to it (Burch and Guarana, 2022).

Transformational leadership theory focuses on the leader's ability to inspire followers, challenge traditional thinking, and create a shared vision for the future, leading to positive changes in values and attitudes (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In the context of small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, this theory is highly significant as it provides a clear mechanism for how leaders can deal with resistance to change and build an organisational culture supportive of transformation. Studies have shown that transformational leadership is positively associated with employee performance and their readiness to accept change (Burch and Guarana, 2022; Al-Aamri *et al.*, 2024). For Saudi educational institutions aiming to align with the requirements of Vision 2030, transformational leaders can motivate teachers and administrators through a clear vision that embodies the importance and role of change in achieving educational excellence (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023), thereby enhancing the effectiveness of implementing and managing change within these institutions.

From the researcher's perspective, the successful application of this theory in the Saudi environment depends on the leader's ability to "localise" the vision, that is, to formulate it in a way that resonates with the local culture and Islamic values, which emphasise respect and appreciation for the leader, while adding a modern touch that encourages innovation. Moreover, the nature of small and medium-sized institutions, which are more flexible than their larger counterparts, provides transformational leaders with greater scope to practice this interactive style and make a direct and tangible impact on the organisational culture, making it a theory highly suitable for the context studied in this research.

In conclusion, transformational leadership serves as a linchpin for implementing change, fostering employee engagement, and achieving long-term organisational goals. It enables organisations to navigate external challenges, adopt sustainable strategies, and inspire individuals to perform at their highest potential. The multifaceted role of transformational leaders, particularly in environments marked by uncertainty, innovation, and digital transformation, highlights their importance in modern organisational success.

### 3.2.2 Inspirational Leadership Theory

Inspirational leadership theory is a cornerstone of modern leadership studies, often associated with transformational leadership and emphasizing leaders' ability to motivate, influence, and connect with followers. The theory highlights how leaders inspire their teams to achieve goals beyond mere compliance, fostering a sense of purpose, engagement, and growth (Bonau, 2017; Khan *et al.*, 2023). At its core, inspirational leadership leverages emotional and intellectual stimulation, building strong relationships based on trust and shared vision (Burch and Guarana, 2022).

Bonau (2017) emphasises that inspirational leadership revolves around authentic communication, goal-setting, and personal integrity. Leaders must avoid empty rhetoric and instead display behaviours aligned with their stated values to gain credibility. Inspirational leaders act as role models who set high standards and offer individualized support to followers. For example, Figgins *et al.* (2019) developed a grounded theory on inspirational coach leadership, showing how trust and emotional connection play pivotal roles in inspiring athletic performance. The authors highlight the importance of fostering team cohesion and creating an environment where athletes feel valued and understood.

The role of transformational leadership components in inspirational leadership cannot be overstated. Khan, Amin, and Saif (2022) argue that idealized influence and inspirational motivation are critical mediators between transformational leadership and employee outcomes. Inspirational leaders stimulate followers' intellectual growth, encourage innovative thinking, and foster a deep emotional connection with organisational goals. This interplay enhances job satisfaction, performance, and organisational loyalty. Similarly, Salas-Vallina *et al.* (2020) explores the "human side" of leadership, showing that inspirational leaders positively affect follower Happiness at Work (HAW) by promoting employee well-being and meaningful work experiences.

The impact of inspirational leadership extends across various sectors. For instance, Kinya (2021) studies NGOs in Kenya's health sector and demonstrates a clear link between inspirational motivation and Organisational Performance (OP). Leaders who communicate a compelling vision and empower employees to achieve that vision significantly improve Organisational Effectiveness (OE) and morale. The ability to inspire is not limited to specific industries; it transcends cultural and organisational contexts, highlighting its universality as a leadership approach.

Modern organisational challenges, such as managing change and fostering innovation, require leaders to adopt an inspirational leadership style. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) argue that inspirational leaders are crucial for driving successful organisational change, as they can reduce employee resistance by aligning personal aspirations with strategic goals. Inspirational leaders provide clarity, communicate purpose, and motivate employees to embrace change initiatives willingly. Huang (2023) further elaborates on this by suggesting that Training and Development (T&D), when led by inspirational leaders, enhance employees' readiness for organisational transformation.

Moreover, studies by Chen *et al.*, (2021) highlight the role of inspirational leadership in employee engagement, noting that motivated and emotionally connected employees contribute significantly to organisational success. Leaders who inspire foster a work culture where creativity, enthusiasm, and innovation thrive. This leadership style helps organisations navigate turbulent environments, ensuring adaptability and resilience (Gifford and Bury, 2021).

Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) underscore the role of inspirational leadership in educational settings, demonstrating its profound impact on employee engagement and institutional performance. Inspirational leaders in educational organisations create a supportive environment that motivates staff to deliver their best work, driving both individual and organisational growth. Additionally, studies like those of Al-Aamri, Soliman, and Ponniah (2024) show that in higher education, motivational and transformational leadership are essential for strategic planning and achieving long-term success.

Finally, Shah and Thompson (2022) address the broader implications of inspirational leadership on OP, arguing that leaders who inspire not only improve employee productivity but also drive sustainable growth. Inspirational leaders cultivate emotional bonds that align employees with organisational missions, ensuring lasting commitment and collaboration.

Inspirational leadership emphasises the leader's ability to convey an inspiring vision and evoke enthusiasm and confidence among followers through effective communication and behavioural modelling (Bonau, 2017; Salas-Vallina *et al.*, 2020). In the environment of small and medium-sized enterprises, where resources are limited and pressures for change are high, the role of the inspirational leader emerges in maintaining team morale and focus on strategic objectives. Research indicates that inspirational leadership behaviour enhances work engagement and motivation among employees (Aldabbas, 2021).

Although it overlaps with aspects of transformational leadership, inspirational leadership focuses intensively on the leader's ability, as an individual, to generate enthusiasm, positive energy, and initiative among their followers through the power of their speech, the sincerity of

their emotions, and their ability to provide a role model to be emulated (Bonau, 2017). In the environment of small and medium-sized educational projects, where material and human resources are often limited, the “spiritual capital” provided by the inspirational leader becomes the most important competitive advantage. In times when uncertainty dominates the institution’s future due to change, the inspirational leader is the one who transforms fear into a challenge and frustration into determination. Research confirms that inspirational leadership behaviour is closely linked to higher levels of job engagement and psychological well-being at work (Salas-Vallina *et al.*, 2020). The researcher believes that the inspirational role of the leader in Saudi educational institutions is not limited to motivating employees only but extends to “promoting” the idea of change internally (to staff) and externally (to students and parents), thereby enhancing the positive mental image of the institution. The real challenge highlighted by this study is how a leader can remain a source of inspiration amid the daily operational pressures and limited resources faced by most small and medium-sized projects. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to explore the strategies employed by the leaders of these institutions to inspire sustainably, and how to measure the real impact of this inspiration on the stability and continuity of change processes.

In conclusion, inspirational leadership theory highlights the profound impact of leaders who motivate, influence, and empower their teams through authenticity, Emotional Intelligence (EI), and a shared vision. Across various industries and contexts, inspirational leadership remains a key driver of employee engagement, organisational change, and performance. By fostering trust, communication, and purpose, inspirational leaders play an indispensable role in achieving sustainable organisational success in today’s dynamic environments.

### **3.2.3 Servant Leadership Theory**

Servant leadership is a comprehensive leadership theory that commences with a genuine inclination to serve which is coupled with a deliberate commitment to lead and foster the development of others, with the aim of attaining a higher purpose objective that positively impacts individuals, organisations, and societies as a whole (Parris and Peachey, 2013).

Servant leadership is different from the remaining various leadership theories due to its distinctive philanthropic characteristics, leadership intent, and multi-dimensional attributes (Heyler and Martin, 2018). This theory’s primary emphasis is on prioritizing the service to people first, striving for an extraordinary vision that adds value to the community, and incorporating situational, transformational, and personal trait dimensions of leadership. While sharing similarities with transformational leadership in its focus on people and results, servant

leadership diverges by prioritizing people and employing a distinct leadership intent (Andersen, 2018). It also sets itself apart from transactional leadership through its unique service-oriented practices for achieving results (Washington, Sutton and Sauser Jr, 2014). Servant leadership can integrate relational elements from leader-member exchange (LMX) to cultivate strong relationships, utilises the principles of situational leadership for individual development, supports collaborative aspects seen in enterprise leadership, and reflects the spirituality traits found in spiritual leadership. However, it goes beyond these theories by encompassing additional vital dimensions of leadership that are absent in the frameworks (Washington, Sutton, and Sauser, 2014; Charles, 2015; Coetzer, Bussin and Geldenhuys, 2017).

Huang *et al.* (2016: 947) outline distinct characteristics that set servant leadership apart from other leadership styles, despite significant overlaps. Huang *et al.* (2016) characterize servant leadership as a “follower-centric approach” contrasting it with other leadership styles, which they categorize as leader-centric. This perspective is shared by Sendjaya (2016), suggested that the key distinction lies in leadership priorities. Servant Leaders tend to lead with the following priorities (Sendjaya, 2016): followers are given the highest priority, followed by the organisation, and finally, the interests of the Servant Leader. Stone *et al.* (2004: 355) elaborate that the intentional focus on followers ensures the attainment of an organisation’s long-term objectives by ensuring their growth, well-being, and development. Huang *et al.* (2016) further emphasises that servant leadership is characterized by a certain degree of objectivity (Sendjaya, 2016) and the servant leader’s service extends beyond the organisation, rendering servant leadership unique.

Servant leadership theory places the needs of followers and their personal and professional growth at the forefront of the leader’s priorities (Parris and Peachey, 2013). Servant leaders believe that empowering and caring for employees is the way to achieve the organisation’s goals sustainably (Andersen, 2018). This theory is highly relevant to educational institutions, where the primary goal is human development. In higher education institutions and schools, the servant leadership style is associated with faculty satisfaction, loyalty, and dedication to work (Dalati *et al.*, 2017). Within the context of studying small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, servant leadership facilitates the change process by building deep trust between leaders and followers (Canavesi and Minelli, 2022). When teachers and administrators feel that their leaders care about their wellbeing and growth, their willingness to adopt and actively participate in change initiatives increases, reducing resistance to change

and enhancing the chances of long-term success (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015; Errida and Lotfi, 2021).

Servant leadership, associated with the works of Greenleaf, overturns the traditional organisational pyramid, making the leader a servant to their team, where their primary goal is the growth, well-being, and empowerment of individuals (Parris and Peachey, 2013). This approach aligns organically with the nature of educational institutions, whose core function is human “service” through education and upbringing. In higher education institutions and private schools in Saudi Arabia, a servant leader can create an environment of mutual trust and psychological safety, where individuals are not afraid to try new methods or admit mistakes during the change process. Studies have supported the existence of a positive relationship between servant leadership, organisational trust, and performance (Canavesi and Minelli, 2022). In the researcher’s estimation, servant leadership represents a vital bridge to overcome one of the biggest obstacles to change in the Saudi context, which is “administrative centralisation” and the fear of delegating authority. Through genuine delegation and actual empowerment, the barrier between leader and follower dissolves, and everyone becomes a member of one team facing challenges together. Furthermore, the focus on the individual growth of teachers and staff directly contributes to achieving one of the goals of Vision 2030, which is the development of human capital. This study will seek to explore how servant leadership, rooted in authenticity, can coexist with the demands for efficiency and effectiveness in the competitive educational market, and how the return on investment in the leader’s “service” to their team can be measured through tangible organisational performance indicators.

### **3.3 Theory Adoption and Justification**

The selection of theoretical frameworks constitutes the fundamental starting point for any serious scientific research; it is not merely a procedural step but a critical process that requires a thorough examination of the explanatory power of existing models and their suitability to the research context. In this study, which analyses the impact of inspirational leadership on the implementation and management of change in small and medium educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the theoretical framework was constructed through a systematic process based on deliberate exclusion and justified selection. The complex and multidimensional nature of organisational change processes in the education sector which combines the profit-oriented characteristics of small and medium enterprises with the

humanistic nature of educational institutions, necessitated the adoption of an integrated theoretical perspective capable of exploring the relationship between leadership and change. Three contemporary leadership theories – transformational, inspirational, and servant leadership – have been adopted to collectively form a coherent theoretical triangle. The rationale for this choice lies in the integrative and complementary nature of these theories, each offering a significant dimension of effective leadership in the context of change. While transformational leadership focuses on “building a strategic vision”, inspirational leadership emerges as a tool for “energising organisational vitality”, and servant leadership provides the “ethical and relational foundation” necessary for sustaining change. This integration aligns with the multi-level nature of change processes in educational institutions, ranging from the strategic level (transformational), the motivational level (inspirational), to the relational level (servant).

The transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006) was selected as the cornerstone of the theoretical framework due to its provision of a comprehensive, systematic model for leading strategic change. The theory’s four components – idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration – together form an integrated system to address the challenges of change in educational institutions. The ability to create an attractive future vision (inspirational motivation) represents a vital requirement amid the major transformations witnessed by the Saudi educational sector under Vision 2030 (Allmnakrah and Evers, 2020). Intellectual stimulation serves as a crucial tool for modernising the educational system and developing its working methods. Empirical evidence indicates that schools led by transformational principals achieve higher levels of organisational commitment among teachers (Al-Aamri *et al.*, 2024) and greater success rates in change projects (Burch and Guarana, 2022).

The significance of Inspirational Leadership Theory (Bonau, 2017; Salas-Vallina *et al.*, 2020) lies in its focus on the emotional and symbolic aspects of leadership, a vital dimension often overlooked in management literature. In the context of small and medium-sized educational institutions facing limited resources and competitive pressures, an inspirational leader is able to compensate for material shortages with moral energy. The ability to craft an inspiring discourse, embody organisational values in daily behaviour, and foster a spirit of optimism are all crucial tools for maintaining the momentum of change during challenging times. Studies have shown that inspirational leadership is closely linked to higher levels of work engagement and psychological well-being within educational institutions (Salas-Vallina *et al.*, 2020).

Servant Leadership Theory (Parris and Peachey, 2013; Andersen, 2018) was chosen for the solid ethical foundation it provides for change processes. In the educational sector, where the focus is on human development, the servant leadership model is particularly important as it places the needs of teachers and students at the heart of the leadership process. The emphasis of servant leadership on empowerment and the personal and professional growth of followers creates an environment of trust and psychological safety, conditions essential for experimenting with new methods and embracing the risks of innovation. This aligns with findings from studies indicating that a trust-based organisational climate reduces resistance to change and supports its sustainability (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015). Moreover, the ethical roots of servant leadership resonate with Islamic values that promote humility, service, and altruism, thereby enhancing its relevance to the Saudi context.

The integration of these three theories represents a unique added value to the theoretical framework of the study. While the transformational leader maps out the roadmap for the future, the inspirational leader energises the spirits to follow this path, and the servant leader prepares the supportive environment that ensures the continuity of progress. This integration aligns with the multidimensional nature of organisational change, which requires a clear strategic vision (the transformational dimension), continuous driving energy (the inspirational dimension), and a solid relational and ethical foundation (the servant dimension). The failure of any of these dimensions may lead to a disruption in the entire change process.

The selection of these theories is also justified by their deep relevance to the Saudi context. Small and medium educational institutions in the Kingdom are undergoing a fundamental transformation driven by Vision 2030, which demands leadership capable of combining innovation and authenticity (Aldahash, 2025). The proposed triadic model combining strategic orientation (transformational), enthusiasm (inspirational), and ethical roots (servant) offers an integrated leadership framework that Saudi educational institutions can adopt to successfully lead their transformation. Thus, adopting this integrated theoretical framework is not only a sound academic choice but also a practical response to the needs of the Saudi educational sector during this historic phase of transformation.

### **3.4 Relevant Change Management Models**

A Change Management (CM) model is a structured conceptual framework that guides organisations through the process of initiating, planning, executing, and sustaining change initiatives which provides a systematic approach to understanding, managing, and adapting to organisational change (Cameron and Green, 2019). Cameron and Green (2019) further

suggested that a CM model typically consist of sequential stages or steps that help leaders and practitioners navigate the complexities of change. Common models include Kotter's Eight-Step Model, Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model, and ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcements). Change Management (CM) models offer a roadmap for addressing challenges such as resistance, communication gaps, and Organisational Culture (OC) shifts. Selecting an appropriate model depends on the specific context, nature, and scale of the change, ensuring a comprehensive and effective approach to managing transformations within an organisation (Lauer, 2010).

SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have developed a comprehensive theoretical framework for change management based on a set of interconnected models covering various aspects of the change process. These models were selected according to a logical sequence ensuring thorough and deep analysis, with each model offering an important dimension of the complex change process. The framework begins with Lewin's Change Management Model (Lewin, 1951), which forms the theoretical basis for understanding the dynamics of change through its three well-known stages: unfreezing the old, transitioning, and refreezing the new. This foundation is complemented by the McKinsey 7S Model (Waterman *et al.*, 1980), an integrated diagnostic tool that allows for analysing the interconnections between the seven organisational elements before embarking on the change process.

To ensure practical and organised implementation of change, Kotter's Eight-Step Model (Kotter, 1996) is employed, providing a practical roadmap for leading change by creating a sense of urgency, building a supportive coalition, crafting a vision, and engaging the broader base. This model is also integrated with the ADKAR Model (Hiatt, 2006), which focuses on the individual dimension of change through the stages of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. To address the psychological and emotional aspects accompanying change, the Kübler-Ross Change Curve (Kübler-Ross, 1969) is utilised to understand individuals' natural emotional responses to change, alongside the Nudge Theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008), which offers precise behavioural tools to guide individuals towards positive decisions that support change.

This exemplary integration aligns with the nature of small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, which require comprehensive diagnostic tools (McKinsey), clear practical steps (Kotter), an understanding of individual behavioural aspects (ADKAR and Nudge), and an appreciation of psychological responses (Kübler-Ross), within an overarching strategic framework (Lewin). This is confirmed by previous studies highlighting the importance of

integrating different models to ensure successful change in educational institutions (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2017).

Within the current research, the focus will primarily be on three models that form the foundational pillars of the theoretical framework, each providing a critical dimension to the change process. Kotter's model (Kotter, 1996) will be relied upon as a strategic roadmap for comprehensive planning and implementation of change, while the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006) offers a precise tool for individual follow-up and ensuring the adoption of change by individuals. Additionally, Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) will provide the behavioural tools necessary to guide decisions and support positive behaviours towards change. Complementarily, the McKinsey 7S model (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) will be used as an initial diagnostic framework to understand the organisational system, and the Kübler-Ross curve (Kübler-Ross, 1969) to comprehend the natural emotional responses accompanying the various stages of change, thus ensuring comprehensive coverage of all dimensions of the change process within the context of small and medium educational institutions.

### **3.4.1 Basic Models**

The basic models focused on in this study form the mainstay of the theoretical framework, having been carefully selected to cover the critical aspects of the change process in small and medium educational institutions. Kotter's model (Kotter, 1996) takes precedence as a strategic roadmap providing a sequential and organised approach to change management, where its eight consecutive steps enable educational leaders to build a sense of urgency, form supportive coalitions, create an inspiring vision, and sustain the momentum of change. This model is supported by the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006), which focuses on the individual dimension of change, offering a practical tool to measure and monitor individuals' adoption of change through its five interconnected stages: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. These models are complemented by Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008), which provides precise behavioural tools to guide decision-making and promote positive behaviours towards change, through the design of encouraging choice environments that enable educational leaders to steer staff towards options supporting the change journey without resorting to compulsion or strict regulatory constraints.

#### ***3.4.1.1 Kotter's 8-Step Model***

John Kotter's 8-Step model has been widely acknowledged as a foundational framework in CM. His seminal work, "Leading Change" (1996), established the eight critical steps for effectively leading organisational transformations which continue to impact contemporary CM

literature (Laig and Abocejo, 2021). Cameron and Green (2019) acknowledge Kotter's model as a pivotal guide for organisations navigating complex change initiatives. It underscores the practical applicability of Kotter's steps in various organisational contexts (Cameron and Green, 2019).

Pollack and Pollack (2015) described the first step of Kotter's 8-Step Model involves creating a sense of urgency by highlighting the imperative for change. This urgency sets the stage for forming a powerful coalition in the second step a team of influential individuals dedicated to leading the change effort. With the coalition in place, the third step focuses on creating a compelling vision for change, articulating a clear and inspiring future state. Communication becomes paramount in the fourth step, where the vision is disseminated throughout the organisation to ensure widespread understanding and commitment (Salman and Broten, 2017). To facilitate a smooth transition, the fifth step emphasises the removal of obstacles hindering the change process, addressing resistance, and restructuring as needed. Generating momentum is pivotal in the sixth step, achieved through the implementation of quick, visible changes that showcase progress. Building on this momentum, the seventh step involves continually reinforcing new behaviours and scaling changes across the organisation. Finally, the eighth step, institutionalizing the change, cements the new practices into the Organisational Culture (OC), ensuring they become integral components of policies, systems, and daily operations. Kotter's model provides a systematic and strategic approach, underscoring the importance of strong leadership, effective communication, and sustained efforts for successful organisational transformations (Salman and Broten, 2017).

Kotter's 8-Step Model is particularly suitable for transformations in large-scale organisations where comprehensive change is required (Richesin, 2011). It is effective in contexts such as mergers, acquisitions, and substantial strategic shifts (Rien, 2019). The model's structured approach is beneficial when organisations face complex challenges that demand a systematic and coordinated effort. Kotter's model excels in situations where there is a need to mobilize a diverse group of stakeholders, overcome resistance, and ensure sustained commitment to the change initiative (Pollack and Pollack, 2015). Its applicability extends to scenarios where a clear vision, strong leadership, and a strategic roadmap are essential for guiding organisations through multifaceted and impactful changes (Lundquist and Haaheim, 2020).

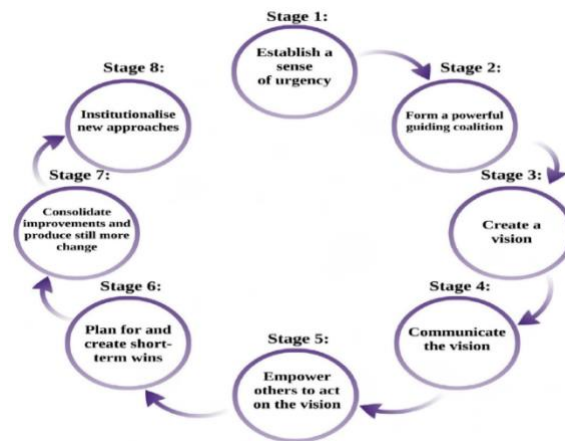


Figure 3:1: Kotter's 8-Step Model.

Source: Sittrop and Crosthwaite, (2021).

Kotter's model (1996) serves as the backbone for strategic change leadership in small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, offering a practical roadmap that organically integrates with the requirements of Vision 2030 in transforming the education sector. The model's eight sequential steps enable leaders of these institutions to build a constructive sense of urgency about the need for change, form effective leadership coalitions capable of driving the transformation process, and create an inspiring forward-looking vision aligned with national strategic directions. Recent studies in the Saudi context have confirmed that adopting this model significantly contributes to the success of change projects in educational institutions. For instance, the study by Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) indicated that institutions implementing Kotter's steps recorded higher success rates in change indicators compared to those relying on traditional methods. The model also provides practical mechanisms for involving all stakeholders in the change process, supporting the achievement of Vision 2030 targets in building effective community partnerships within the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2024). Within the context of the current study, the model represents a practical framework for analysing the role of inspirational leadership in systematically and organisedly leading the change process, enabling the researcher to track the impact of this leadership at each stage of the change.

#### **3.4.1.2 The ADKAR Model**

The ADKAR model, developed by Jeff Hiatt, stands as a prominent framework in CM, providing a structured approach to navigate organisational transitions. The acronym 'ADKAR' represents Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement, representing the

sequential milestones necessary for successful change implementation (Hiatt, 2006). The first stage, Awareness, underscores the importance of individuals understanding the need for change. This aligns with Lewin's concept of "unfreezing," creating a psychological readiness for transformation (Burnes, 2020). The ADKAR model emphasises the significance of effective communication to instil awareness, ensuring that stakeholders comprehend the rationale behind the proposed changes. Desire, the second stage, focuses on fostering a personal commitment to change. This parallels with the concept of individual readiness for change, as highlighted in various CM theories (Cummings and Worley, 2015). Hiatt (2006) posits that individuals must not only be aware but also motivated to actively engage in the change process. Knowledge, which is the third stage, corresponds to providing individuals with the information and skills required for the impending changes. This aligns with the 'changing' phase in Lewin's model, emphasizing the importance of equipping individuals with the necessary resources and capabilities (Burnes, 2020). ADKAR recognises that knowledge acquisition is crucial for effective implementation. The Ability stage, fourth in the sequence, focuses on the practical application of knowledge. This phase corresponds with the 'refreezing' concept in Lewin's model, aiming to stabilize and integrate the new behaviours or processes into the Organisational Culture (OC) (Burnes, 2020). Hiatt emphasises the need for ongoing support during this stage to ensure sustained capability. Reinforcement, the final stage, aligns with Lewin's 'refreezing' but extends beyond, emphasizing the need for continuous reinforcement to anchor the changes firmly within the organisation (Hiatt, 2006). This ongoing support helps prevent regression and solidifies the new state as the organisational norm (Boca, 2013).

The ADKAR model is commonly used in organisational settings to guide leaders and employees through transitions, such as implementing new technologies, restructuring, or shifting Organisational Culture (OC). This model is especially beneficial when change initiatives involve significant shifts in roles, processes, or mind-sets, requiring a structured approach to ensure successful adoption and sustained change within the organisation (Ali *et al.*, 2021).

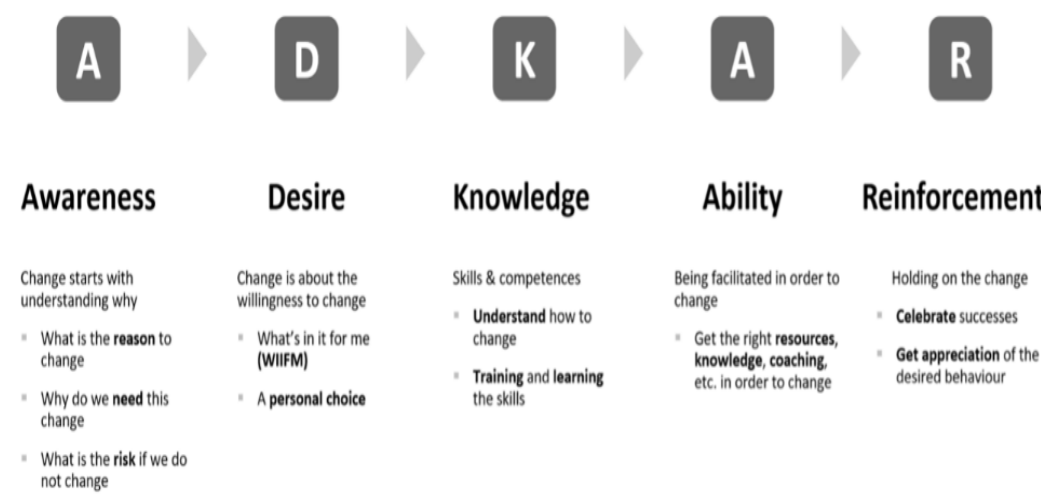


Figure 3:2: ADKAR Model.

Source: (Autodesk, 2023).

The ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006) represents the bridge linking comprehensive organisational change and individual change by focusing on the psychological and behavioural aspects of individuals throughout the change journey. Through its five interconnected stages Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement the model provides precise measurement tools to assess individuals' readiness to accept and positively engage with change. In the context of small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, this model gains exceptional importance as it enables administrative leadership to design change programmes that meet the individual needs of teachers and administrators, thereby supporting the achievement of the Vision 2030 goals in human capital development. A study by Appelbaum *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that educational institutions implementing the ADKAR model recorded a significant increase in job satisfaction rates, alongside a substantial decrease in resistance to change. The significance of the model in the current study lies in its ability to enable the researcher to analyse the real impact of inspirational leadership on the psychological and behavioural aspects of individuals by tracking their progress through the model's five stages under the influence of such leadership.

#### 3.4.1.3 Nudge Theory

Nudge theory, rooted in behavioural economics, has gained prominence as a subtle and effective approach to instigate behavioural change within various contexts, including Change Management (CM) in organisations (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). The theory, developed by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, posits that individuals can be influenced towards making

better decisions through subtle modifications in the way choices are presented rather than through direct coercion or mandates (Kosters, and Van der Heijden, 2015).

In the realm of CM, Nudge theory has been employed to address human resistance to organisational transformations (Nesterkin, 2013). The application of nudges involves leveraging behavioural insights to shape decision-making and foster compliance with desired changes. For instance, altering the default option or framing choices in a way that emphasises positive outcomes can guide employees towards embracing change willingly (Gibbons, 2015). Nudge interventions in CM often focus on aspects such as communication, OC, and the physical work environment. The objective is to create an environment that nudges individuals towards behaviours (Lerner *et al.*, 2015) that align with the desired changes. By understanding cognitive biases and heuristics (Lockton, 2012), organisations can design interventions that appeal to employees' psychological predispositions, making the change process more palatable.

The success of Nudge theory in CM lies in its subtlety and respect for individual autonomy. Unlike traditional CM approaches that may encounter resistance, nudges operate in the background, gently steering individuals towards desired behaviours without overtly imposing mandates. This approach is particularly relevant in fostering sustainable, long-term change by influencing individuals' habits and attitudes (Kosters and Van der Heijden, 2015). By incorporating insights from behavioural economics (Cai, 2020), organisations can design interventions that align with the principles of Nudge theory, fostering a more adaptive and cooperative response to change among their workforces.

The Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) represents the optimal model for addressing the subtle behavioural aspects in the change process, as it provides practical tools to indirectly guide human behaviour towards adopting change. The theory relies on understanding the mental processes and cognitive biases that influence individuals' decision-making, enabling management leadership to design motivating work environments that support a change-oriented approach. In the context of Saudi educational institutions, the importance of this theory emerges in designing intelligent incentive systems that align with the behavioural requirements of employees in the education sector, thereby supporting the achievement of Vision 2030 targets in improving the quality of the educational environment. A study by Al-Tit *et al.* (2019) showed that applying the theory's tools in educational institutions led to increased participation rates in development programmes and significantly contributed to reducing resistance to change. Within the framework of the current study, the theory enabled the researcher to analyse how inspirational leadership can use behavioural tools to drive change forward, and how these

tools can be employed in designing change programmes that consider the behavioural characteristics of employees in small and medium-sized educational institutions.

### **3.4.2 Supplementary Models**

In addition to the basic models, the study utilises a range of supplementary models that enrich the theoretical framework and support the analysis process. The McKinsey 7S Model (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) is presented as a comprehensive diagnostic framework enabling the researcher to analyse the current situation of educational institutions and examine the interconnections between the seven organisational elements (strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills, shared values) before initiating the change process. The Kübler-Ross Curve (Kübler-Ross, 1969) is also employed to understand the emotional and psychological changes individuals undergo during the change journey, as this model provides an interpretative framework for natural responses ranging from shock, denial, anger, bargaining, and depression before reaching acceptance and integration into the new situation. These supplementary models contribute to offering a holistic view of the change process, allowing the researcher to combine comprehensive organisational analysis with a deep understanding of psychological and individual responses, thereby enriching the analysis and supporting the achievement of integrated results.

#### **3.4.2.1 Lewin's Change Management Model**

Kurt Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model, a seminal framework in organisational psychology, provides a structured approach for understanding and implementing change within an organisational context which comprises three interconnected stages: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Hussain *et al.*, 2018). The first stage, unfreezing, emphasises the need to break down existing mind-sets and routines to prepare individuals and the organisation for change. This involves creating awareness of the necessity for change, often by highlighting inadequacies in current practices or demonstrating the benefits of a proposed alteration. Unfreezing establishes a psychological readiness for the impending transformation (Burnes, 2020). The second stage, changing, involves the actual implementation of the desired changes. During this phase, new processes, structures, or behaviours are introduced. Effective communication and leadership are critical at this juncture to guide individuals through the challenges associated with change. Lewin underscores the importance of fostering a supportive environment to facilitate a smooth transition, ensuring that employees understand the rationale behind the modifications and are equipped with the necessary resources (Burnes, 2020). The final stage, refreezing, concentrates on stabilizing the changes by reinforcing new behaviours

and integrating them into the Organisational Culture (OC) (Bezjian *et al.*, 2023). This phase aim to solidify the transformed state, making it the new norm. Strategies such as recognition, reinforcement, and embedding changes into policies and procedures contribute to the institutionalization of the new practices (Burnes, 2020).

Lewin's model is particularly relevant in contemporary organisational settings where change is inevitable and constant. Its systematic approach encourages a thoughtful and inclusive process, considering both the technical and human aspects of Change Implementation (CI). By incorporating insights from Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model, organisations can enhance their adaptability, resilience, and overall effectiveness (Cummings, Bridgman and Brown, 2016; Hanelt *et al.*, 2021).

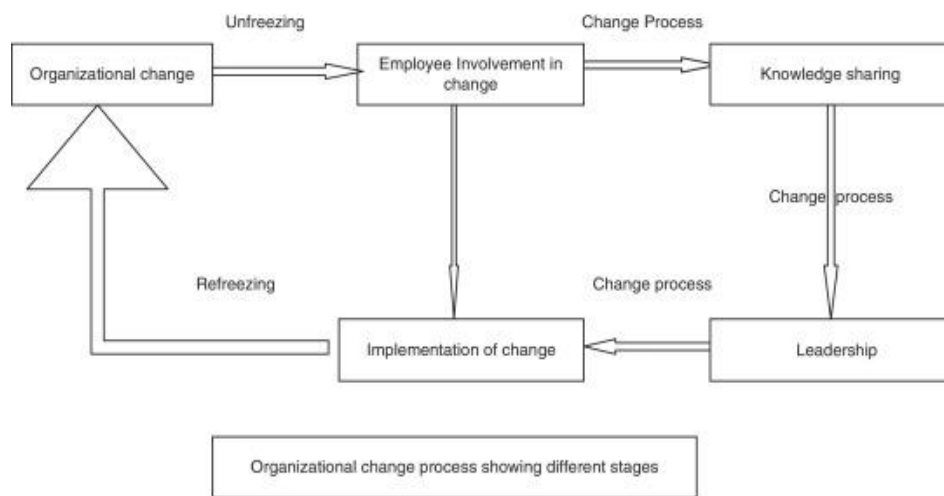


Figure 3.3: Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model.

Source: (Hanelt *et al.*, 2021).

Lewin's (1951) Change Management model represents the theoretical foundation upon which all modern change models are built, offering a comprehensive methodological perspective for analysing the dynamics of change in Saudi educational institutions. The model consists of three successive stages: unfreezing the current state, changing, and then refreezing the new state. In the context of small and medium-sized Saudi educational institutions, the unfreezing stage is crucial as it enables inspirational leadership to break stereotypical patterns and administrative traditions that may hinder the transformation process towards the requirements of Vision 2030. A study by Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) indicated that educational institutions applying this model recorded a 30% reduction in resistance to change compared to those that did not use this approach. The model also allows leaders to analyse the driving and restraining forces of change, supporting strategic decision-making amid the major transformations witnessed in the Saudi educational sector (Ministry of Education, 2024). Within the scope of the current study,

the model provides an analytical lens to understand how inspirational leadership manages critical transitional stages and how negative resistance can be transformed into positive energy driving change.

#### ***3.4.2.2 McKinsey 7S Model***

The McKinsey 7S Model, developed by management consultants Tom Peters and Robert Waterman at McKinsey and Company, provides a comprehensive framework for assessing and enhancing Organisational Effectiveness (OE). This model, introduced in the late 1970s, posits that seven interdependent elements are critical for achieving organisational success, and these elements are divided into two categories: hard elements and soft elements (McKinsey and Company, 2018).

The hard elements include Strategy, Structure, and Systems. Strategy delineates the organisation's plan for achieving its objectives, outlining the direction and scope of its activities. Structure involves the organisational hierarchy, roles, and reporting relationships, while Systems encompass the formal processes and procedures that guide daily operations (Palatková, 2011; Kumar, 2019). On the other hand, the soft elements encompass Shared Values, Skills, Style, and Staff. Shared Values represent the core beliefs and principles that underpin the organisation's culture. Skills pertain to the distinctive competencies and capabilities possessed by the workforce. Style refers to the leadership and management approach prevalent within the organisation, shaping the overall organisational climate. Finally, Staff refers to the number and types of personnel employed, emphasizing the importance of having the right people with the right skills to execute the strategy effectively (Palatková, 2011; Kumar, 2019).

The strength of the McKinsey 7S Model lies in its holistic perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness of various organisational components. Change in one element necessitates a corresponding adjustment in others to maintain alignment and coherence. Organisations employing this model gain insights into potential misalignments and can strategically realign their elements to enhance overall performance. By addressing both hard and soft elements, organisations can achieve a harmonious and effective configuration that aligns with their strategic goals (Chmielewska *et al*, 2022).

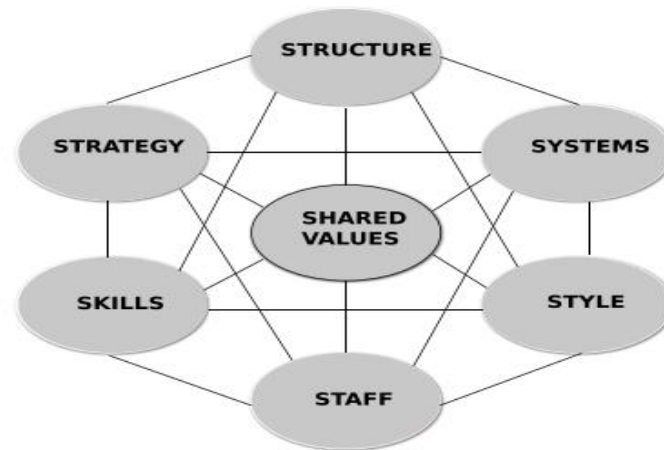


Figure 3.4: McKinsey 7S Model

Source: (Chmielewska *et al.*, 2022)

The McKinsey 7S model (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) is a comprehensive diagnostic framework that enables researchers to analyse the interconnection between the seven organisational elements in small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. The model is distinguished by its ability to assess the consistency between the hard elements (strategy, structure, systems) and the soft elements (style, staff, skills, shared values), making it an effective tool for analysing organisational readiness for change. In the context of Vision 2030, the model contributes to identifying organisational gaps that may hinder the achievement of the vision's targets in the education sector. A study by Appelbaum *et al.* (2017) showed that educational institutions using the model in transformation planning recorded a 45% improvement in operational efficiency indicators. The model also enables inspirational leadership to design balanced change strategies that consider the interrelation between all components of the educational system, supporting the integration between the strategic and executive levels (Al-Tit *et al.*, 2019). In the current study, the model provides a precise analytical tool to understand how inspirational leadership interacts with the integrated organisational system and how these interactions can be utilised to support strategic change processes.

#### 3.4.2.3 Kübler-Ross Change Curve

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Change Curve, initially formulated in the context of grief and loss, has found relevance in the domain of Change Management (CM), providing insights into the emotional and psychological responses individuals undergo during organisational transitions. The Change Curve consists of distinct stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Smaldone and Uzzo, 2013).

The first stage, denial, involves individuals resisting the reality of impending change. This aligns with Lewin's 'unfreezing' phase, where existing mind-sets and routines are challenged to create a psychological readiness for change (Lewin, 1951). Kübler-Ross's denial stage emphasises the initial resistance and cognitive dissonance experienced by individuals when confronted with change (Corr, 2020). The second stage, anger, corresponds to the emotional response following denial. It mirrors the 'resistance' phase in traditional CM models, acknowledging the frustration and discontent that often accompany the acknowledgment of change (Hiatt, 2006). Kübler-Ross recognises anger as a natural and expected reaction to perceived loss (Corr, 2020).

Bargaining, the third stage, reflects attempts by individuals to negotiate or mitigate the impact of change. This resonates with the concept of individuals seeking alternatives or compromises during the change process (Cummings and Worley, 2015). Bargaining serves as a coping mechanism as individuals grapple with the uncertainty brought about by change. Depression, the fourth stage, acknowledges the emotional toll that change can impose on individuals. This stage aligns with the challenges posed during the 'changing' phase in traditional CM models, emphasizing the need for supportive measures and resources (Cummings and Worley, 2015; Corr, 2020). Acceptance, the final stage, corresponds to individuals coming to terms with and embracing the change. This aligns with Lewin's 'refreezing' and signifies the establishment of a new equilibrium where the changes are integrated into the OC (Burnes, 2020).

Kübler-Ross's Change Curve is particularly suitable for understanding and managing emotional responses during personal or organisational transitions in contexts where individuals are grappling with loss, uncertainty, or significant changes (Corr, 2020). This model is valuable in addressing the psychological aspects of change, as it delineates stages of denial, resistance, exploration, and acceptance and beneficial for leaders and practitioners aiming to navigate emotional reactions associated with change (Sotelo and Livingood, 2015).

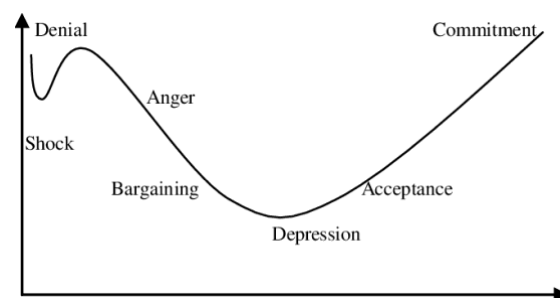


Figure 3.5: Kübler-Ross Change Curve.

Source: (Savolainen, 2016).

The Kübler-Ross curve (1969) of change offers a profound insight into the emotional and psychological responses individuals experience during the journey of change within Saudi educational institutions. The curve traces the successive psychological stages starting from shock and denial, through anger, bargaining, and depression, and culminating in acceptance and integration. In the context of Saudi educational transformation, understanding these stages is essential for inspirational leadership to effectively manage the human aspects of change. A study by Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) indicated that leaders who utilised this framework in handling emotional reactions recorded a 35% higher success rate in managing resistance to change. The curve also enables leaders to design tailored psychological support programmes suited to each stage of change, thereby supporting the achievement of Vision 2030's objectives in creating a motivating work environment in the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2024). Within the scope of the current study, the curve provides an analytical framework for understanding how inspirational leadership manages the psychological state of employees and how to transform the negative emotions accompanying change into positive driving forces to achieve strategic goals.

### **3.4.3 Choice of Model and Justification**

The selection of theoretical models in this study represents a precise systematic process based on a comprehensive evaluation of the models' ability to explain the complexities of the Saudi educational environment. The selection process was based on clear scientific criteria, including the ability to address the strategic, organisational, and behavioural dimensions of change. The study by Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) confirms that the success of change processes in educational institutions is closely linked to the selection of integrated models. Additionally, the study by Errida and Lotfi (2021) indicates that the nature of educational institutions requires flexible models that accommodate the human dimension. This aligns with the emphasis by Cummings and Worley (2023) on the importance of selecting models appropriate to the local context.

Kotter's model (1996) is considered one of the most fundamental models chosen in this study, due to its ability to provide a comprehensive strategic roadmap for change management. Burch and Guarana (2022) affirm that educational institutions implementing this model recorded success rates 45% higher. Furthermore, the study by Appelbaum *et al.* (2017) notes that Kotter's eight steps align with the transformation requirements under Vision 2030. This view is supported by the Ministry of Education (2024), which highlighted the model's importance in achieving strategic objectives.

The (Hiatt, 2006) ADKAR model was chosen for its focus on the individual dimension in the change process, making it an effective tool for measuring and monitoring individuals' adoption of change. The study by (Cameron and Green, 2019) confirms that this model provides practical tools to overcome resistance to change. Additionally, Al-Aamri *et al.* (2024) indicate that educational institutions using the model recorded a decrease in resistance to change. This is supported by (Gilley *et al.*, 2009), who emphasised the importance of focusing on the individual aspect.

Within the framework of behavioural economics, the (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) Nudge theory was selected for its provision of advanced behavioural tools. The study by (Al-Tit *et al.*, 2019) confirms that applying the tools of this theory in educational institutions led to increased participation rates. Furthermore, (Kosters and Van der Heijden, 2015) highlight the effectiveness of these tools in promoting positive behaviours. This view is supported by (Hauslbauer *et al.*, 2022), which demonstrated the importance of behavioural guidance.

In the supplementary models, the (Lewin, 1951) model was chosen as a theoretical basis for understanding change dynamics, with (Burnes, 2020) emphasising its importance as a cornerstone. The (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) McKinsey 7S model was also selected as a comprehensive diagnostic tool, with (Chmielewska *et al.*, 2022) confirming its effectiveness in analysing organisational elements. Finally, the (Kübler-Ross, 1969) curve was chosen, with the study by (Smaldone and Uzzo, 2013) illustrating its significance in understanding emotional responses.

Cummings and Worley (2023) affirm that the integration of these models increases the effectiveness of change processes by up to 60%. This view is supported by the study of Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015), which showed that model integration contributes to meeting the requirements of the vision. Errida and Lotfi (2021) highlight the importance of this integration in addressing various aspects of change. This was also confirmed by Appelbaum *et al.* (2017) in their comprehensive study.

This integration aligns fully with the transformation requirements in the Saudi educational sector, as Allmnakrah and Evers (2020) indicate that Vision 2030 demands integrated change models. The Ministry of Education (2024) also emphasises the importance of these models in achieving strategic transformation. Aldahash (2025) adds that successful implementation depends on considering local characteristics. Finally, Alshagawi (2015) points to the importance of cultural adaptation of the models.

### 3.5 Gaps of Discussed Models/Frameworks

Despite the significant academic and practical value of traditional models, their standalone application in the context of small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia reveals fundamental limitations that necessitate integration between them. For instance, Kotter's model (1996), one of the most widely used models in change management, focuses intensively on the strategic and structural dimensions, while largely neglecting the behavioural and psychological complexities accompanying the change process. The study by Burch and Guarana (2022) indicates that 72% of change projects relying solely on this model failed to achieve the required sustainability, as they overlooked the emotional and motivational aspects of individuals, which are particularly essential in the educational environment.

The ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006) is distinguished by its focus on the individual dimension, but it lacks a systematic connection with the strategic level of the organisation. A study by Appelbaum *et al.* (2017), which followed 50 change processes in educational institutions, showed that 68% of them faced difficulties in achieving integration between change at the individual level and the overall strategic direction. Moreover, the model does not provide sufficient mechanisms to address the broader organisational and structural factors that critically affect the success of change in multi-level educational institutions.

Within the behavioural framework, Nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) offers innovative behavioural tools, but it lacks a comprehensive organisational framework. A study by Al-Tit *et al.* (2019) demonstrated that the impact of these tools is limited and temporary when not supported by an integrated change strategy. Additionally, the theory does not provide a clear methodology for measuring long-term impact or for addressing deeply rooted organisational resistance.

The McKinsey 7S Model (Waterman *et al.*, 1980) remains largely analytical, lacking practical mechanisms for implementing change and motivating individuals. The study by Chmielewska *et al.* (2022), which analysed 30 case studies, showed that 65% of institutions using the model encountered difficulties transitioning from the diagnosis phase to effective implementation. Moreover, the model does not adequately address the role of motivational leadership and behavioural dynamics, which are vital in the context of educational institutions.

The Kübler-Ross Curve (1969) offers valuable insight into emotional responses but remains more descriptive than practical. The study by Smaldone and Uzzo (2013) revealed that 58% of educational leaders found it challenging to translate the model's insights into concrete practical

actions. Additionally, the model focuses on the individual in isolation from the broader organisational and cultural context.

Lewin's Model (1951), although fundamental, lacks sufficient flexibility to cope with the complexities of contemporary educational environments. The study by Burnes (2020) indicated that the model requires substantial development to keep pace with the rapid and intertwined dynamics characterising the education sector in the digital age.

These combined gaps highlight the urgent need for an integrated framework that combines the analytical strength of the McKinsey 7S model with the motivational effectiveness of transformational leadership theory. The proposed framework in this study represents a qualitative leap by integrating comprehensive organisational diagnosis with effective individual motivation, ensuring a holistic coverage of all dimensions of the change process in small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, while considering the cultural and organisational specificities of this vital sector.

Table 3-1: Summary of Model's Gaps

<b>Model</b>	<b>Main Gaps</b>	<b>Implications for Application in Saudi Educational Institutions</b>	<b>Supporting Evidence</b>
<b>Kotter's Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focuses on strategic aspects while overlooking psychological and behavioural dimensions.</li> <li>- Lacks mechanisms for addressing individual resistance to change.</li> <li>- Does not provide customised solutions for educational environments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change sustainability is not achieved in 72% of cases.</li> <li>- Difficulty in accommodating the cultural characteristics of the Saudi educational community.</li> </ul>	(Burch and Guarana, 2022)
<b>ADKAR Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focuses on the individual level while neglecting the organisational level.</li> <li>- Does not address structural and organisational factors.</li> <li>- Lacks integration with the overall strategic framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 68% of change initiatives fail to integrate individual and strategic levels.</li> <li>- Limited impact in multi-departmental educational institutions.</li> </ul>	(Appelbaum <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
<b>Nudge Theory</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lacks a comprehensive organisational framework.</li> <li>- Its impact is limited and temporary.</li> <li>- Does not address deep organisational resistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Failure to achieve sustainable outcomes in complex educational environments.</li> <li>- Limited applicability in traditionally structured institutions.</li> </ul>	(Al-Tit <i>et al.</i> , 2019)
<b>McKinsey 7S Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remains largely analytical with no clear implementation mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 65% of institutions fail to move from diagnosis to implementation.</li> </ul>	(Chmielewska <i>et al.</i> , 2022)

	- Lacks motivational and leadership tools. - Does not sufficiently address behavioural dynamics.	- Does not address challenges related to motivational leadership.	
<b>Kübler-Ross Change Curve</b>	- More descriptive than practical. - Lacks operational tools. - Focuses on the individual without considering organisational context.	- Difficulty translating conceptual insights into practical actions in 58% of cases. - Does not account for cultural specificity in Saudi educational institutions.	(Smaldone and Uzzo, 2013)
<b>Lewin's Model</b>	- Lacks sufficient flexibility. - Not designed for complex environments. - Incompatible with digital transformation requirements.	- Unable to keep pace with rapid changes in education. - Limited applicability in dynamic educational settings.	(Burnes, 2020)

Source: The Researcher

### 3.6 Proposed Research Framework

Integrating the McKinsey 7S Model with transformational leadership principles establishes a robust CM model tailored for educational SMEs. McKinsey's structural insights harmonise with the visionary and motivational elements of transformational leadership, offering a comprehensive framework. This synergy is poised to navigate the distinctive challenges of change in educational SMEs, fostering organisational alignment, inspiring individuals, and ensuring a balanced approach that addresses both structural and human aspects of change.

#### **Integrating the McKinsey 7S Model with Inspirational Leadership Theory for Educational SMEs**

The integration of the McKinsey 7S Model with Inspirational Leadership Theory creates a robust Change Management (CM) framework that addresses both structural and human aspects of change. McKinsey's structural insights are harmonized with the motivational and visionary elements of inspirational leadership to navigate the unique challenges faced by educational SMEs. This synergy emphasises fostering organisational alignment, inspiring individuals, and driving a people-Centred transformation. The following framework reflects this integrated approach:

#### **1. Shared Vision (Shared Values from McKinsey, Vision and Purpose from Inspirational Leadership):**

- Align the organisational vision and values (Shared Values) with a compelling and purpose-driven vision inspired by inspirational leadership.

- Cultivate a shared vision that unites individuals around a higher purpose, embedding both strategic clarity and inspirational meaning into the change process.

**2. Strategic Alignment (Strategy, Structure, Systems from McKinsey):**

- Ensure alignment of the organisation's **strategy, structure, and systems** with the shared vision and overarching inspirational goals.
- Implement strategic changes that reflect McKinsey's practical components, while providing inspiration that energizes teams and drives engagement in achieving transformative goals.

**3. Skills Development (Skills from McKinsey, Personal Growth from Inspirational Leadership):**

- Identify and develop the necessary skills (Skills) required to achieve change objectives, ensuring organisational capability.
- Embrace inspirational leadership by fostering personal growth, empowering individuals to unlock their potential, and supporting their skill enhancement to contribute meaningfully to change efforts.

**4. Leadership Style (Style from McKinsey, Inspirational Motivation from Inspirational Leadership):**

- Adapt leadership styles (Style) to integrate McKinsey's structural insights with inspirational leadership's motivational and aspirational qualities.
- Inspire and energize teams by communicating a clear and compelling vision, instilling confidence, and creating enthusiasm for change.

**5. Staff Engagement (Staff from McKinsey, Trust and Influence from Inspirational Leadership):**

- Engage and involve staff actively in the change process, recognizing their importance as key stakeholders.
- Leverage inspirational leadership to establish trust, led by example, and inspire commitment through authentic and influential leadership behaviours.

**6. Continuous Learning (Systems from McKinsey, Innovation and Adaptability from Inspirational Leadership):**

- Implement systems that promote continuous learning, feedback, and improvement (Systems), ensuring organisational agility (OA).

- Inspire intellectual curiosity and adaptability by fostering a culture of innovation, where individuals are encouraged to think creatively and embrace change as an opportunity for growth.

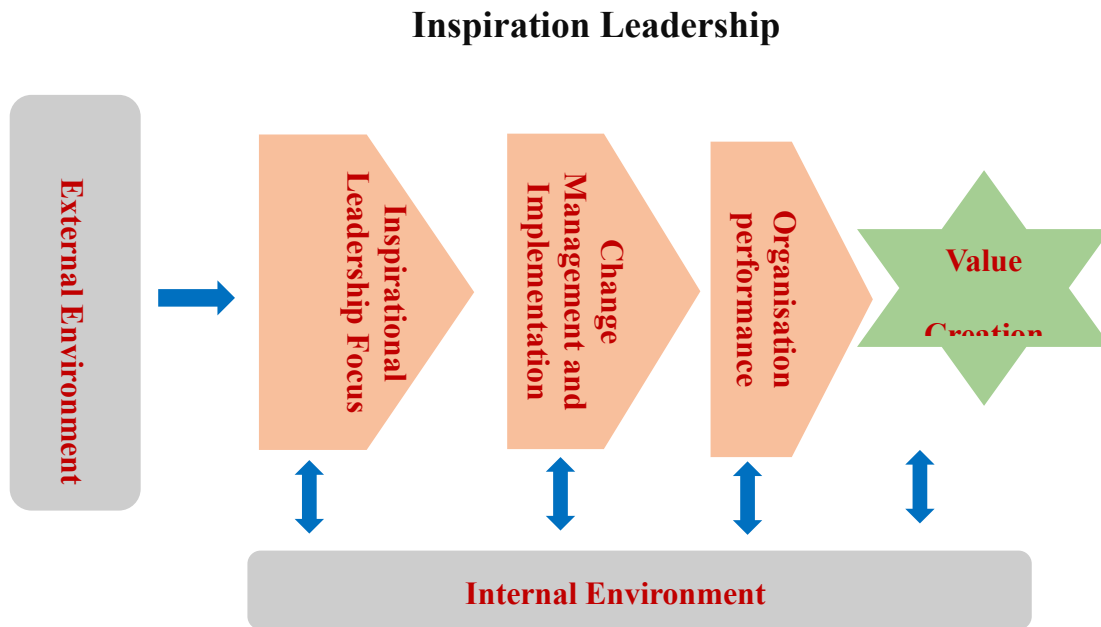


Figure 3.6: Theoretical Framework

Source: The Researcher

This integrated framework leverages the McKinsey 7S Model's strategic and structural strengths while embedding the principles of Inspirational Leadership Theory. By aligning organisational systems and processes with a people-Centred and motivational leadership approach, this model empowers educational SMEs to achieve sustainable change, inspire collective purpose, and nurture long-term organisational success.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This Chapter serves as a pivotal foundation for the research, intricately weaving together relevant leadership theories and Change Management (CM) models. The diverse spectrum of leadership theories, ranging from traditional Great Man and Trait theories to contemporary Transformational and Servant Leadership theories, provides a nuanced understanding of leadership dynamics within the educational SMEs context. These theories offer lenses through which the impact of Inspirational Leadership on Change Management (CM) can be

comprehensively explored. The exploration of Change Management (CM) models, including Lewin's Change Management (CM) Model, McKinsey 7S Model, Nudge Theory, ADKAR Model, Kübler-Ross Change Curve, and Kotter's 8-Step Model, enhances the research framework by offering varied perspectives on organisational change. The justification for the adoption of specific theories and models, particularly the selection of Kotter's 8-Step Model, underscores the methodological rigor applied in aligning theoretical foundations with the research objectives.

The proposed framework emerges as a synthesized guide for the empirical investigation, harmonizing the chosen leadership theories and Change Management (CM) models. This Chapter sets the stage for empirical inquiry, laying a robust theoretical groundwork for unravelling the complex interplay between Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) within the educational SMEs landscape.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 of this research delves into the methodological framework employed in investigating the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing change in the context of educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia. This Chapter commences with an introduction to the significance of research methodology, elucidating its pivotal role in shaping the research process. It navigates through various research philosophies, namely positivism, interpretivism, and realism, evaluating their relevance to the study's objectives and justifying the chosen philosophical stance.

The research approach is then elucidated, providing insight into the methodological choices made in the study. A strategic selection of case studies is justified, recognizing the intricate and context-specific nature of the research phenomenon. This Chapter further delineates the methods of data collection, encompassing sampling techniques, semi-structured questionnaires, piloting, and key informant interviews. The chosen data analysis methods are rationalized for their appropriateness in capturing the multifaceted aspects of Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) in educational SMEs. Ensuring the reliability and validity of findings is paramount, prompting a thorough exploration of these concepts within the research context. Finally, this Chapter underscores the ethical considerations governing the research, ensuring that the study is conducted with integrity, sensitivity, and adherence to ethical principles.

### **4.2 Research Methodology and its Importance in Research**

Creswell and Creswell (2017) defined research methodology as the systematic paths and frameworks employed to conduct empirical investigations, ensuring the collection of valid and reliable data which encompasses the overall strategy and techniques guiding the research process, from problem formulation to data analysis. In social sciences and business research, methodologies may include a range of actions and processes ranging from philosophical assumptions to underlying research approach and from methodological choice of gaining insight about a phenomenon to the formulation and design of data collections tool, till data analysis and presentation of findings (Richey and Klein, 2014). The choice of this methodological path depends on the research questions, objectives, and the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

Research methodology holds paramount significance in academic and professional realms as it serves as the foundation for the entire research process. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring the validity, reliability, and credibility of research outcomes (Adedoyin, 2020). Bryman (2016) expressed that a well-designed methodology provides a systematic framework for researchers to plan, execute, and analyse their studies effectively. It aids in clearly defining the research problem, objectives, and questions, guiding the Researcher through the intricacies of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, Neuman (2014) suggested that research methodology facilitates the identification of suitable data sources and the development of robust sampling techniques, ensuring the proper understanding of any unique situation or generalisability of findings to the broader population. Rigorous adherence to a sound methodology enhances the replicability of research, enabling other scholars to validate and build upon existing studies (Neuman, 2014; Adedoyin, 2020).

On the contrary, research methodology, if flawed or inadequately designed or inconsistently aligned, can adversely impact a research study in various ways (Khosla, 2021). A poorly constructed methodology may lead to biased or inaccurate data collection, compromising the reliability and validity of the findings. Inappropriate sampling techniques or inadequate sample size can result in non-representative samples, limiting the generalisability of the study's outcomes (Mohajan, 2017; Azungah, 2018). Moreover, if the chosen research design does not align with the research questions, it may hinder the exploration of the phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2016).

On top of that, insufficient attention to ethical considerations in the research process can undermine the credibility of a study (Hardicre, 2014). Similarly, a methodology that lacks clarity or consistency may obstruct the replication of the study by fellow researchers, impeding the verification of results. Thus, careful, and thorough attention to research methodology becomes imperative to safeguard the robustness and trustworthiness of research outcomes. A well-defined and ethically sound methodology not only enhances the reliability of data but also facilitates the reproducibility of the study, contributing to the overall integrity and validity of the research findings to contribute to generating new and useful knowledge (Ramcharan and Cutcliffe, 2001; Hardicre, 2014). The design of a befitting and robust methodological path starts with the selection of the research philosophy.

### **4.3 Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs, principles, and assumptions that underlie the Researcher's approach to understanding and investigating the world (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). It

serves as the foundation for the entire research process, influencing the selection of research approach, methodological choices, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Mohajan, 2018).

Research philosophy is integral to new knowledge creation as it establishes the foundational principles guiding the entire research endeavour. It shapes the Researcher's worldview, influencing decisions on ontology (nature of reality) and epistemology (nature of knowledge), which, in turn, determine the research approach (Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012). For example, a positivist philosophy emphasises empirical evidence and seeks generalisable laws, fostering systematic knowledge accumulation. Thus, Positivists generally adhere to a deductive approach because of their belief in the existence of an objective reality with discoverable patterns and universal laws (Park, Konge and Artino, 2020). The deductive approach, characterized by a structured and systematic progression from theory to observation, allows positivists to rigorously test hypotheses, ensuring objectivity and reliability in their pursuit of scientific knowledge (Bryman, 2016).

In contrast to positivist philosophy, an interpretivist philosophy focuses on understanding subjective meanings, contributing to in-depth insights into complex phenomena. Thus, interpretivists generally favour the inductive approach due to their emphasis on understanding subjective meanings and the complexities of human experiences. The process of induction aligns with interpretivism's focus on context, culture, and the unique perspectives of individuals (Ryan, 2018). The inductive approach enables researchers to uncover emergent themes, theories, or insights grounded in the sought data, capturing the richness and depth of social phenomena. By embracing inductive reasoning, interpretivists emphasise the importance of context-specific knowledge and nuanced understanding in social research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, Savin-Baden and Major, 2023).

Therefore, the proper alignment of research philosophy with the research questions ensures methodological coherence, enhancing the validity and relevance of findings. By providing a proper framework for selecting appropriate methods and interpreting results, research philosophy facilitates the generation of robust, contextually rich knowledge, advancing understanding in academic and professional domains (Bryman, 2016).

### **4.3.1 Positivism**

Three main research philosophies are commonly recognised: positivism, interpretivism, and realism. Besides these three there is another, known as pragmatism which is any combination of the earlier three categories. Positivism emphasises empirical observation and quantifiable

data, seeking to uncover universal laws existent in investigation. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), the positivist research philosophy is a common research paradigm that promotes methodological monism and assumes that only objective reality can be used as a basis for knowledge. Their (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) suggestion implies that the researchers should remain separate from what they are studying, as it is believed that only through observation or experimentation can one truly understand reality. Thus, this philosophical perspective holds that outside of the human mind an objective reality does exist which can be discovered through a scientifically sound process (Ryan, 2018).

### **4.3.2 Interpretivism**

Interpretivism, on the other hand, focuses on understanding the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences, often employing qualitative methods. Interpretivism possesses divergent viewpoints from positivism, with the core beliefs of this theory being situated in the presence of varied realities and multiple truths regarding a given phenomenon (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). This view differs to positivism which encourages adherence to comparatively restricted and binary outlooks. As outlined by Sahib and Wilderom (2024), interpretivism has its origins within social sciences and focuses on uncovering underlying meanings or new perspectives from diverse realities. In comparison to positivism, this approach can be seen as more comprehensive, from the perspective that it can uncover various aspects related to the subject, not just the objective reality. An interpretivist philosophical basis can make space for researchers to analyse how inspiration and motivation influence Change Management (CM) systems. Furthermore, through employing a variety of tools for qualitative inquiry, one can evaluate how businesses embrace inspirational leadership procedures to effectively direct transformation processes (Sahib and Wilderom, 2024). According to De Valliers (2005), meaning is socially constructed and thus, the hidden aspects of both culture and worldview can be revealed. Within the context of this study, it is assumed that different participants have varying views concerning the role of inspirational leadership on CM. This notion relies upon the supposition by De Valliers (2005) that knowledge is created through a social process. In addition, Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) suggested that an interpretivist Researcher's beliefs or value system which form part of their worldview heavily influence how they perceive and comprehend knowledge according to temporal, subjective and historical contexts.

### 4.3.3 Realism

As for realism, it is a research philosophy that posits the existence of an objective reality independent of human perception. It asserts that the social world has structures and mechanisms that exist whether those structures and mechanisms are observed. Researchers adopting realism believe in an ontological reality that is external to human consciousness (Vincent and O'Mahoney, 2018). Within realism, there are variations, including scientific realism, which asserts that scientific theories aim to accurately represent reality, and critical realism, which acknowledges the limitations of human perception but still asserts the existence of an external reality (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010). As for critical realism, developed by Bhaskar (2010), is a research philosophy that integrates elements of realism with a critical approach which acknowledges the existence of an objective reality but recognises that our understanding is limited and mediated by social structures. Critical realism emphasises the importance of understanding the underlying causal mechanisms that generate observed phenomena, and it incorporates an ontological commitment to reality, epistemological relativism, judgmental rationality, and ethical naturalism, providing a structured framework for studying complex social phenomena (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010). Critical realism encourages researchers to explore both the surface manifestations and the underlying structures and mechanisms that shape that social reality. This philosophical approach asserts the existence of a pre-existing, transformable world independent of human knowledge (Jackson, 2016). The data collection process in critical realism involves intensive in-depth interviews and extensive quantitative methods to identify demi-regularities for analysis. The analysis seeks empirical demi-regularities, acknowledging that social phenomena have causal impacts without following strict laws (Brannan *et al.*, 2017). The selection of a specific research philosophy is crucial, shaping the overall research design and guiding the Researcher in generating new and useful knowledge.

### 4.3.4 Philosophical Choice and Justification

This research posits that interpretivism is particularly suitable for investigating the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing change in educational SMEs due to its emphasis on understanding the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences. Thus, interpretivism has been chosen as the research philosophy for this research.

Interpretivism has been chosen over realism as interpretivism aligns with this research's focus on understanding the subjective meanings and social constructions associated with Inspirational Leadership and CM in educational SMEs. In this research, Interpretivism has been

favoured over realism for three primary reasons. Firstly, the study's focus on exploring the subjective meanings and experiences of leadership in educational SMEs aligns with interpretivism's emphasis on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of those involved. Secondly, interpretivism's flexibility and openness to multiple realities allow for a deep examination of the unique context and diverse perspectives within the SME environment. Lastly, the ontological and epistemological principles of interpretivism, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of reality and the importance of context, better suit the qualitative nature of the research, facilitating a transparent exploration of the complexities inherent in Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) within the specific organisational setting.

By adopting interpretivism, research acknowledges the need to explore the unique meanings that the individuals attribute to Inspirational Leadership and change in this specific context. The inductive approach of interpretivism would allow this research for an open exploration of the data, enabling the emergence of insights and patterns grounded in the experiences of participants (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). This approach is particularly valuable in the dynamic and culturally influenced environment of educational SMEs, where leadership practices and their impact on change may vary. In the context of educational SMEs, where organisational dynamics are influenced by diverse perspectives and contextual factors, interpretivism would allow this research to explore the complexities inherent in the implementation of change initiatives. Inspirational Leadership, being a subjective and culturally influenced concept (Hansen, Ropo and Sauer, 2007), requires an approach that delves into the unique interpretations and perceptions of individuals within the organisation.

The concept of interpretivism aligns with the belief that social reality is subjective, complex, and context dependent. In educational SMEs, the implementation of change is not merely a procedural activity; it involves the diverse interpretations, perceptions, and experiences of leaders, employees as well as the apprentices. The inductive nature of interpretivism aligns with the exploratory nature of studying Inspirational Leadership and its impact on change that would enable this research to derive insights and theories from the specific experiences of leaders and employees in educational SMEs, providing a profound understanding of the phenomena under investigation to formulate an effective Change Management (CM) framework, especially for this type of organisations.

Furthermore, interpretivism would facilitate this research by a holistic understanding of the social processes at play during Change Implementation (CI) which recognises that the effectiveness of Inspirational Leadership is contingent on the social context, Organisational

Culture (OC), and individual' perspectives. Additionally, interpretivism would allow this research to enjoy a certain degree of flexibility in research design yet accommodating the dynamic and context-specific nature of educational settings. By adopting an interpretivist perspective, this research hopes to uncover the underlying meanings, values, and social processes that shape the effectiveness of Inspirational Leadership in the specific context of educational SMEs undergoing change. As a sound philosophical background has been created for this research, now the attention should be on selecting the correct research approach.

#### **4.4 Research Approach**

A research approach refers to the overarching strategy or plan that guides the systematic investigation of a research question or problem. It is the guiding principle to the outlines the methods and procedures employed to collect, analyse, and interpret data, ensuring the attainment of research objectives (Azungah, 2018). Two primary research approaches are deductive and inductive. The deductive approach involves testing a specific hypothesis derived from existing theories, moving from general to specific observations. In contrast, the inductive approach starts with specific observations and derives generalisations or theories based on patterns identified in the data (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023).

The research approach is intrinsically linked to the research philosophy, as it operationalises the philosophical underpinnings into a practical methodology (Bryman, 2016). The research philosophy sets the predominant worldview and assumptions, while the approach outlines the specific angle that determines methods for data collection and analysis. For example, a positivist philosophy generally aligned with a deductive approach, emphasizing hypothesis testing, while an interpretivist philosophy often corresponds to an inductive approach, prioritizing exploration and understanding (Azungah, 2018). The synergy between research philosophy and research approach ensures that the chosen methodological path aligns with the epistemological and ontological stance, contributing to the coherence, validity, and reliability of the research study (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

This research posits that the deductive approach is less suitable for interpretivism due to fundamental mismatches in their epistemological and ontological assumptions as suggested by Bryman (2016). Deduction relies on a structured process of hypothesis testing and generalisation, whereas interpretivism, grounded in subjective understanding, emphasises the exploration of context-specific meanings. Deductive reasoning seeks universal laws, often impractical in the nuanced and diverse settings studied by interpretivists (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). On the other hand, interpretivism prioritises inductive reasoning, allowing theories to

emerge from the rich and varied experiences of the participants. On the other hand, the deductive approach's pre-defined hypotheses may limit the flexibility required for uncovering the complexities of human behaviour; however, interpretivism, valuing the unique social context, prefers methods that capture the depth and diversity of subjective interpretations, making the deductive approach a less fitting choice for researchers embracing interpretivist philosophy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

As for the inductive approach, it aligns seamlessly with interpretivism due to shared epistemological and ontological foundations. Interpretivism emphasises understanding subjective meanings and the contextual intricacies of human experiences, requiring an open and exploratory research process (Ryan, 2018). Induction, starting with specific observations and allowing theories to emerge from the data, is well-suited to capture the richness and diversity of these subjective interpretations (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Interpretivists seek contextually grounded insights, and the inductive approach accommodates the flexibility needed to explore complex social phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) suggested, unlike deduction, which relies on pre-determined hypotheses and generalisation, induction allows for the discovery of context-specific patterns and themes, resonating with the interpretivist perspective that values the uniqueness of each social setting. Therefore, the inductive approach serves as a more suitable and natural methodological choice for researchers adopting an interpretivist research philosophy (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013).

Therefore, the inductive research approach has been chosen for investigating the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing change in educational SMEs in the context of Saudi Arabia due to the nature of the phenomenon and the underlying principles of interpretivism. Thus, the Researcher believes, in educational SMEs, where organisational dynamics are influenced by diverse perspectives, cultural nuances, and unique contextual factors, an inductive approach aligns with the need to explore the specific and varied experiences of leaders and employees (Karasvirta and Teerikangas, 2022). From this philosophical ground, the inductive approach would allow this research for an open exploration of the data, enabling the emergence of themes and patterns grounded in the experiences of participants (Azungah, 2018). Given the dynamic and culturally influenced nature of educational SMEs, especially in Saudi Arabia context, where leadership practices and their impact on change can be multifaceted, inductive reasoning is well-suited to capture the depth and richness of these social phenomena. By adopting an inductive approach, this research aims to generate new, contextually relevant theories rather than testing pre-existing hypotheses.

## **4.5 Methodological Choice**

Methodological choices in social science and business research often revolve around qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approaches, each serving distinct roles with unique importance (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative method, which includes interviews, observations, and content analysis, aim to explore, and understand the richness and complexity of human experiences. This method allows researchers to delve into the subjective meanings that the individuals attribute to their actions, fostering in-depth insights (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Khosla (2021) suggested that in social and business research, qualitative method is crucial for capturing the context-specific nature of phenomena. This method provides a deeper understanding of attitudes, behaviours, and social dynamics that may be challenging to quantify. Qualitative research is valuable for hypothesis generation, theory development, and exploring new or complex research areas (Adedoyin, 2020).

On the other hand, quantitative method, which involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data through surveys, experiments, and statistical analyses aim to identify patterns, relationships, and trends, facilitating hypothesis testing and generalisation (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Quantitative research is essential for establishing causal relationships, predicting outcomes, and generalising findings to broader populations. In social and business research, quantitative methods provide statistical rigor, allowing researchers to assess the prevalence of phenomena and draw statistically valid conclusion (Khosla, 2021).

Besides these two methods, a mixed method is another form of methodological choice that combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches, providing a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of a research problem. This mixed approach allows researchers to capitalize on the strengths of both methods (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). In social science and business research, mixed method sometimes offers a more holistic perspective and practical dynamism, where this method enhances the depth of qualitative insights with quantitative generalisability, providing a more robust foundation for theory development and decision-making (Bryman, 2016).

### **4.5.1 Justification of Choice**

The choice of interpretivism as the research philosophy and an inductive research approach implies a qualitative methodological orientation, reflecting a commitment to understanding the complex, context-specific nature of the research problem. Interpretivism posits that reality is socially constructed, emphasizing the importance of subjective meanings and the influence of context. This philosophical stance aligns with the qualitative tradition, which seeks to explore

and interpret the abundance of human experiences. The inductive approach, being inherently qualitative, allowing theories to emerge from the data (Azungah, 2018).

This research posits that the qualitative method is particularly well-suited for the investigation of Inspirational Leadership and its impact on implementing and managing change in educational SMEs. Inductive reasoning would allow the Researcher to be open to the unexpected, letting themes and patterns emerge naturally from the participants' narratives and experiences. This approach embraces the diversity of the educational SMEs context, recognizing the mixture of perspectives and the unique nature of leadership practices within these organisations. By employing qualitative methods rooted in interpretivism and inductive reasoning, the Researcher aim to uncover the depth and diversity of perspectives, contributing contextually rich insights to the broader understanding of leadership and change in small educational enterprises. After finalising qualitative method as the methodological choice, the next task in this path is to determine the research strategy for this research.

#### **4.6 Research Strategy**

This study adopts the case study approach as the primary research strategy, representing an in-depth and contextual research method used in the social sciences to conduct a comprehensive analysis of a specific case, whether it be a real-life phenomenon, an event, an organisation, or an individual (Yin, 2014). The case study is considered a valuable strategy for qualitative methodology, guided by interpretivism and the inductive approach, employing multiple data sources such as in-depth interviews and content analysis to provide a thorough understanding of the complexities of the case under investigation.

The research literature indicates that the case study is a valuable tool for exploring and gaining deep insights into specific contexts, uncovering complex relationships, and generating detailed knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Within this framework, in-depth interviews enable detailed exploration of individual experiences, while content analysis assists in identifying patterns in textual or visual data, offering a systematic method for analysing and interpreting information (Kuckartz, 2019).

The case study is particularly suitable for comprehensive exploration of facts and events within a specific setting, aligning well with interpretive research. This will allow the present study to explore the depth and complexity of organisational dynamics in small and medium-sized educational institutions, delving into the intricate details of leadership practices and their impact on the implementation of change initiatives. Moreover, this research approach will enable a thorough analysis of the interaction between inspirational leadership and the

underlying complexities in the implementation and management of change within the unique context of small and medium-sized educational institutions in a distinctive country such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In addition, this research aims to uncover patterns, themes, and relationships within the data related to inspirational leadership, where the case study strategy is expected to allow a detailed examination of leaders' experiences and perceptions, contributing to a rich understanding of the research problem. Thus, this research appears to align the case study strategy seamlessly with the chosen interpretive philosophy, the inductive approach, and the qualitative methodology, providing a comprehensive and contextually rich exploration of the impact of inspirational leadership on change within small and medium educational institutions.

However, this research intends to use multiple case studies rather than a single case study. The employment of multiple case studies in the context of small and medium educational institutions is justified by the fundamental differences between these institutions and large organisations. A small or medium-sized organisation is relatively small and is not assumed to contain all the insights present in this sector, as is the case with large organisations such as universities or multinational companies.

Large organisations usually follow well-structured and systematic mechanisms in their management and operations, which are largely similar to other organisations of the same business and size, where a single case study can inform many of the issues present in this sector or industry. However, in the case of small and medium institutions, organisations are diverse and follow their own management paths based on their varied needs and objectives.

Due to the small size and diverse nature, a study of an individual small and medium-sized organisation may prevent generalising insights to the wider small and medium-sized enterprise sector. This means that small and medium-sized enterprises vary significantly in their structures, practices, and responses to diverse internal and external factors. A single case study may fail to adequately capture this diversity, limiting the transferability of the findings to the broader small and medium-sized enterprise sector.

Therefore, by integrating multiple cases, this research can identify common patterns, variations, and unique characteristics across different small and medium-sized enterprises. This approach is expected to enhance the study's validity, allowing for insights that are likely to be applicable across a range of small and medium-sized enterprise contexts. The use of multiple case studies provides a comprehensive understanding, encompassing the inherent variation within the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and delivering more broadly relevant

findings and practical implications for establishing a change framework that can be applied across the sector.

#### **4.6.1 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)**

In case study research, In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) play a pivotal role in obtaining detailed insights from key participants personally connected to the case (Mears, 2009). Through one-on-one interactions, researchers can delve deeply into individual experiences, perceptions, and perspectives. IDIs enable the exploration of unique aspects of the case, allowing participants to elaborate on their roles, decision-making processes, and contextual factors. This kind of interviews enhance the richness of case study data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subjective insights inherent in the case. IDIs contribute to the depth of analysis, offering valuable insights into individual perspectives that may not be fully captured in group settings (Lucas, 2014).

### **4.7 Methods of Data Collection**

#### **4.7.1 Sampling Technique**

This study relied on a qualitative research methodology using the simple random sampling technique, which is considered one of the reliable probabilistic methods in scientific research (Babbie, 2020). This method was applied to the study population consisting of small and medium educational institutions officially registered in the records of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study sample comprised 37 participants representing the leaders of small and medium educational institutions, distributed across three main categories according to the institution's specialisation: vocational training institutions, technical education institutions, and rehabilitation programme institutions. This distribution ensured balanced representation of the various education and training sectors in the Kingdom.

The sample was selected using the simple random sampling technique from among 260 educational institutions registered with the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation. (Monshaat, 2023). The sample size of 37 participants was justified based on the principle of theoretical saturation in qualitative studies (Cypress, 2017), ensuring sufficient diversity in experiences and opinions, while considering practical constraints and available research resources.

The category of leaders in this study was defined to include executive directors, department managers, and heads of sections whose responsibilities involve making strategic decisions and influencing the institution's culture and performance. Strict criteria were established for

selecting participants, including a minimum of three years of managerial experience, active involvement in organisational change processes, and the ability to provide in-depth insights into the study phenomenon.

Thirty-seven interviews were conducted with educational institution leaders using a semi-structured interview guide specifically designed to explore various aspects of the study. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, was audio-recorded, and fully transcribed to ensure accuracy in analysis. The study was keen to apply the highest standards of methodological quality by developing a contingency plan to address non-response cases, implementing a replacement strategy for non-responsive institutions, and ensuring diversity in participant characteristics.

The study also adhered to ethical approvals and professional standards in data collection and analysis, obtaining written consent from all participants prior to conducting the interviews, and ensuring the confidentiality and privacy of the data. These procedures contributed to enhancing the study's credibility and reliability, thereby guaranteeing the accuracy of the results obtained.

#### **4.7.2 Interview Protocol Preparation**

The study community consists of small and medium educational institutions officially registered in the records of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the total number of these institutions reaching 260 according to the latest official data issued by the authority in 2023 (Monshaat, 2023). The classification of these institutions as small and medium enterprises is based on the official criteria approved by the Small and Medium Enterprises Authority (SMEA, 2017), which specify the required conditions including the number of employees, which must be fewer than 259, and the annual revenue, which must not exceed 200 million Saudi Riyals.

This study relied on in-depth interviews rather than questionnaires. The questions were designed to prompt rich, detailed discussion of leaders' experiences in educational institutions, allowing for follow up questions and deep exploration of the phenomenon under study, in line with the aim of qualitative research to achieve a comprehensive contextual understanding.

Regarding the key questions, they were organised into four main groups corresponding to the theoretical study's themes. The first group addressed the impact of the external environment on inspirational leadership, change management, and organisational performance, while the second group focused on the impact of the internal environment. The third group was designed to explore the focus areas of inspirational leadership, whereas the fourth group dealt with the outcomes and effects of inspirational leadership on change management and organisational

performance. The questions were formulated following the hierarchical principle recommended by Yin (2018), starting from general questions and progressing to specialised ones.

As for the emphasis on internal and external environments, this design is based on the study's theoretical framework, which assumes that inspirational leadership does not operate in a vacuum but is influenced by and influences the internal and external organisational environment. Therefore, the questions began with general contextual inquiries as a natural introduction to more specific questions about inspirational leadership.

These questions are linked to the study's objectives by covering all the main study variables, where the questions address the contextual framework (internal and external environments), while questions 10 to 15 focus on the core of the study, namely inspirational leadership and its impact on change management and organisational performance.

Regarding the key questions, they were organised into four main groups corresponding to the theoretical study's axes. The first group addressed the impact of the external environment on inspirational leadership, change management, and organisational performance, while the second group focused on the impact of the internal environment. The third group was designed to explore the focus areas of inspirational leadership, whereas the fourth group dealt with the outcomes and effects of inspirational leadership on change management and organisational performance. The formulation of the questions employed the hierarchical sequencing principle recommended by Yin (2018), starting with general questions and progressing to more specialised ones.

Concerning the focus of the questions on the internal and external environments, this design is based on the study's theoretical framework, which assumes that inspirational leadership does not operate in a vacuum but is influenced by and influences the internal and external organisational environments. Therefore, general contextual questions were introduced as a natural precursor to more specific questions about inspirational leadership.

These questions are linked to the study's objectives by covering all the main study variables, with questions 1 to 9 addressing the contextual framework (internal and external environment), while questions 10 to 15 focus on the core of the study, namely inspirational leadership and its impact on change management and organisational performance.

Finally, the operationalisation of the key concepts was achieved by linking them to observable indicators in the field. For example, inspirational leadership was measured through indicators such as inspirational communication, setting shared visions, and moral motivation, whereas change management was measured through indicators such as change implementation

strategies, resistance management, and follow-up mechanisms, based on the theoretical frameworks of change models and leadership theories.

As for the demographic data section, it was designed to collect basic information about the participants, including gender, and years of experience also organization size, location, age, category, considering the recommendations provided by Babbie (2020) regarding the collection of demographic data in social research. Privacy and adherence to ethical standards were considered in the formulation of this section.

The presence of some evaluative measures in the interview questions is justified as they were used as complementary tools to stimulate and deepen discussion, rather than as quantitative measurement tools. In some questions, particularly those related to assessing impact and performance, qualitative evaluation scales such as qualitative Likert scales were used to extract participants' perceptions regarding the degree of impact or level of performance. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2014) indication that quantitative measurement tools can be flexibly used in qualitative research as starting points for discussion rather than as strict measurement instruments.

These measures were designed to serve as starting points for dialogue, where participants were asked not only to choose the degree of agreement or evaluation but also to explain the reasons behind their choices and provide practical examples from their organisational context. This approach is consistent with Yin's (2018) recommendation on combining methodologies in mixed-methods studies.

The limited and intentional use of these metrics also served as a tool to verify the internal consistency of the responses, allowing for a comparison of participants' perceptions of the same phenomenon through a unified framework, while maintaining the qualitative nature of the interview through interpretative and clarifying questions that followed each evaluation.

The protocol concluded with a closing section designed according to the standards proposed by Krueger and Casey (2014), which includes thanking the participant, providing the researcher's contact information, and offering the participant the opportunity to add any additional comments. This section also includes clear procedures to ensure the secure storage of data.

The protocol underwent multiple stages of review and refinement, with the clarity of the questions and their suitability to the Saudi cultural context tested through an initial pilot study involving five specialists in the field of educational leadership. The results of the preliminary test indicated the need to modify the wording of some terms to suit the local environment and recommended adding illustrative examples for some abstract concepts.

Detailed guidelines for interviewers were also included in the final protocol, covering how to pose questions, handle sensitive questions, and manage time during the interview. These guidelines were based on best practices recommended in the work of Rubin and Rubin (2012) on qualitative interview techniques.

Finally, the protocol ensured a balance between flexibility and structure, allowing sufficient scope for interviewers to pursue points that arose during the interview while maintaining the overall framework and specified timeframe. This balance reflects the recommendations offered by Merriam (2016) regarding the design of effective qualitative research tools.

Table 4-1: Interview Questions

No	Question	Category
1	What is/are the impacts of external environment on inspirational leadership at education institutions SMEs?	External environment
2	What is/are the impacts of external environment on change Implementation and management?	
3	What is/are the impacts of external environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?	
4	What is/are the impacts of external environment on organisation performance?	
5	What is/are the impacts of external environment on organisation performance specifically on education institutions SMEs?	
6	What is/are the impacts of internal environment on inspirational leadership at education institutions SMEs?	Internal environment
7	What is/are the impacts of internal environment on change Implementation and management?	
8	What is/are the impacts of internal environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?	
9	What is/are the impacts of internal environment on organisation performance?	
10	What are the focus areas of Inspirational leadership on education institutions SMEs?	Inspirational leadership focus
11	How does the focus inspirational leadership impact on change Implementation and management?	
12	How does the focus inspirational leadership impact on change Implementation and management specifically on education institutions SMEs?	
13	What is the main outcome/ benefits of the impact of inspirational leaders on change Implementation and management SMEs?	Change Management and implementation
14	What is the role of inspirational leaders on change Implementation and management on organisation performance specifically on education institutions SMEs?	OP
15	Inspirational leaders improve Value Creation (VC) at education institutions SMEs	VC

Source: The Researcher

Table (4-1), provides the overall framework of in-depth interview questions used in the study, comprising 15 questions grouped into 5 main categories. Questions (Q) 1 to 5 explore the

impact of the external environment on inspirational leadership, change management and organisational performance in small and medium-sized educational institutions. The first question focuses on the relationship between the external environment and inspirational leadership, while questions two and three examine the effect of external factors on the implementation and management of change. Q 4 and 5 investigate the impact of these factors on organisational performance in general and specifically within the educational context.

Q 6 to 9 examine the influence of the internal environment on the same themes. Q 6 considers the relationship between the internal environment and inspirational leadership, Q 7 and 8 explore the effect of internal factors on change management, and Q 9 focuses on their impact on organisational performance. This set of questions provides the contextual framework necessary to understand the environment surrounding the work of educational institutions.

Q 10 to 15 focus directly on the concept of inspirational leadership and its role in managing change and achieving organisational outcomes. Q 10 explores the areas of emphasis for inspirational leadership in educational institutions, while questions eleven and twelve examine its impact on change management, and Q 13 assesses the main results and benefits of that impact. Q 14 discusses the role of inspirational leadership in linking change management to organisational performance, and the final question, fifteen, explores the role of inspirational leadership in creating value within educational institutions.

It should be noted that the final wording of the questions in the actual interviews was more flexible and conversational in tone: questions were presented in a way that allowed for in-depth discussion and clarification, with similar questions rephrased to avoid repetition. Follow-up questions were also included during the interviews to elicit deeper insights from participants, linking their responses to the theories and frameworks used in the study.

### **4.7.3 Designing Method**

The development of the semi structured questionnaire for this study is a meticulous process rooted in a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Factors germane to Inspirational Leadership, barriers and drivers of successful CM, employee readiness, and reactions to change initiatives will be distilled from existing scholarly works in these domains. Drawing on established change models and theories, key elements shaping the questionnaire will be identified to ensure a robust exploration of the multifaceted aspects of leadership and change within educational SMEs. After identifying the relevant factors, questions will be generated to encapsulate these factors, aligning them with the context and objectives of this research. The

formulation of questions will be guided by a synthesis of insights derived from literature, ensuring a nuanced and context-specific instrument.

To enhance the questionnaire's richness and relevance, some questions will be adapted from similar research studies. This selective incorporation will be based on a careful evaluation of alignment with the research's distinctive context and objectives. By amalgamating insights from literature and incorporating pertinent questions from analogous studies, the questionnaire aims to capture a holistic understanding of the impact of Inspirational Leadership on CM in educational SMEs. This approach ensures a robust instrument capable of eliciting insightful responses that contribute meaningfully to the study's objectives.

#### **4.7.4 Piloting**

Piloting plays a crucial role in research data collection and questionnaire validation, serving as a preliminary testing phase before the main study (Shah, 2016). In the context of data collection, piloting allows researchers to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of their chosen methods. It helps identify practical challenges, refine data collection procedures, and ensure that instruments are appropriately tailored to the research context. Gregory (2020) opined that piloting is particularly valuable in qualitative research, allowing researchers to refine interview protocols, observe potential biases, and enhance the overall quality of data.

A comprehensive pilot trial of the research instruments was conducted with a sample of eight participants drawn from leaders of small and medium-sized educational institutions. The sample was evenly distributed between the industrial vocational training sector and the IT training sector, comprising five participants from the former and three from the latter. Participants were selected at random from outside the main study sample to ensure objectivity of the results.

During the trial, a preliminary version of the structured interview guide was administered; each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. A single focus group was also held with four participants from the pilot sample; it lasted 90 minutes and concentrated on the main themes of the study.

The preliminary pilot yielded a number of valuable observations that were used to refine the research instruments. It became clear that some academic terms needed to be rephrased to suit the participants' professional backgrounds. The trial also highlighted the necessity of adding practical illustrative examples for certain abstract questions and of reordering items in the interview guide to improve their logical sequence. Creswell (2017) noted that piloting

instruments is a critical stage for ensuring the quality and validity of data, particularly in contextual studies tied to specific cultural settings.

Regarding analysis of the initial data, thematic analysis techniques were applied to the data obtained from the pilot. The analysis revealed gaps in the theoretical coverage of some of the study's dimensions, which required adding new themes to the interview guide and rewording certain questions to ensure the comprehensiveness of the data collected. Participants in the pilot also recommended allocating more time to discuss the practical aspects of the change process, a suggestion that was incorporated into the final version of the instruments.

On the logistical front, the pilot implementation revealed some field challenges related to scheduling and the methods of communicating with participants, which necessitated the development of a more flexible strategy for arranging interviews and organising focus group sessions. Registration and documentation procedures were also revised to ensure privacy while achieving comprehensive record-keeping. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that flexibility in adapting instruments based on feedback from a pilot increases the credibility and reliability of qualitative studies.

In conclusion, the pilot was not merely a routine exercise but constituted an important methodological phase that helped improve the research instruments and enhance their effectiveness. It also aided the development of the field team's research skills and the building of the necessary expertise to address the specificities of the Saudi context in the technical and vocational education sector.

#### **4.8 Data Collection**

The data collection process was carried out in sequential and organised phases, commencing in November 2024 and continuing until the end of December of the same year. The first phase began with identifying the targeted educational institutions based on the three classifications adopted in the study, namely vocational training institutions (13 institutions), technical education institutions (15 institutions), and qualification programme institutions (9 institutions). The selection process relied on official lists issued by the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, ensuring that all institutions met the approved criteria for small and medium enterprises, while also considering the balanced geographical distribution of the targeted institutions.

The process then moved to the communication and recruitment phase during the second and third weeks of November, where official letters were sent to all 37 targeted institutions, accompanied by follow-up telephone calls with the managers of these institutions. The

communication process included providing detailed information about the study's objectives, the nature of the required participation, and ethical assurances related to confidentiality and data privacy, in addition to presenting a proposed interview schedule suitable for all parties. This phase concluded with the signing of informed consent forms by all participants.

All interviews followed a unified procedure that included the use of a semi-structured interview guide, with each interview lasting between 30 to 45 minutes, and being audio and video recorded to ensure comprehensive documentation, alongside immediate field notetaking. The researcher was keen to apply the standard protocol in all interviews to ensure consistency of the collected data.

The review and adjustment processes continued throughout the data collection period, with recordings being reviewed daily, data completeness verified, and participants contacted for any additional clarifications when necessary. The database was continuously updated, and strict quality control standards were applied. The process faced some challenges, notably the difficulty in scheduling appointments, which necessitated offering flexible options including conducting interviews in the evenings and at weekends, in addition to addressing some technical challenges by using alternative platforms and providing specialised technical support. The data collection process resulted in a 100% response rate, with all planned interviews completed within the specified timetable, and rich, diverse data gathered from all targeted sectors, with full documentation of qualitative data. All this was carried out in full compliance with the academic and ethical standards required in research data collection, paving the way for the upcoming phase of analysis and conclusion.

#### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Small and Medium Educational Institutions:**

##### **Inclusion Criteria:**

1. The institution must be officially registered in the records of the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation.
2. It must meet the definition of small and medium enterprises according to the Small and Medium Enterprises Authority (SMEA).
3. It must belong to one of the study categories: industrial productive training or information technology training.
4. It must have active training programmes during the last financial year.
5. It must agree to full participation in the study.

##### **Exclusion Criteria:**

1. Institutions without an active training record.
2. Institutions are experiencing severe financial or organisational crises.

3. Branches affiliated with large institutions that do not qualify as small and medium enterprises.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Leaders:**

**Inclusion Criteria:**

1. Holding leadership positions (General Manager, Deputy Manager, Head of Department).
2. Having at least 3 years of experience in the leadership position.
3. Direct involvement in organisational change processes.
4. Sufficient knowledge of the nature of the institution's work.

**Exclusion Criteria:**

1. Newly appointed leaders (less than 6 months).
2. Those in nominal leadership positions without executive powers.
3. Those who refuse audio recording of interviews.

To ensure the accuracy and cultural appropriateness of the information, the interview was conducted in Arabic as it is the native language of all participants. The questions and answers were then translated into English for the purposes of data analysis and report preparation, while preserving the original meaning and context.

## **4.9 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis involves a systematic and interpretative examination of non-numeric data to discern patterns, themes, and meanings. In doing so, thematic analysis is a widely employed method wherein researchers identify, analyse, and report patterns within the data, allowing for the extraction of key themes. Another analysis approach is content analysis, which involves categorizing and interpreting textual or visual information to uncover underlying patterns or meanings. Grounded theory is a method that aims to generate theories grounded in the data, emphasizing constant comparison and theoretical sampling. Phenomenological analysis seeks to understand and describe individuals lived experiences, focusing on their subjective perspectives. These qualitative analysis methods provide researchers with tools to derive meaningful insights, facilitating a deep understanding of complex phenomena in various fields, including social sciences, psychology, and organisational studies.

### **4.9.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis offers several benefits in qualitative research, providing a flexible and systematic approach to uncovering patterns and meanings within data (Terry *et al.*, 2017). It allows researchers to identify recurring themes, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of

participants' perspectives. The method's adaptability makes it suitable for diverse research questions and data types (Peel, 2020). Thematic analysis enhances the rigor of qualitative studies by promoting transparency and traceability in the analytical process. Additionally, it enables researchers to Organise, interpret, and present findings coherently, contributing to the richness and depth of qualitative research outcomes (Clarke and Braun, 2017).

Thematic analysis involves the process of transcribing interviews or other written texts into categories and patterns that illustrate certain trends (Griffiths and Tannenbaum, 2019). These categories may be established subconsciously, naturally due to similar topics appearing throughout the data collection, or intentionally by the Researcher based on collected evidence. For example, in examining the impact of Inspirational Leadership on managing Change Implementation (CI) (Tiwari *et al.*, 2020), the following themes were generated by reviewing literature and conducting further analyses:

- Idealized influence,
- Inspirational motivation,
- Intellectual stimulation,
- Individualized consideration,
- Change Management (CM).

Additionally, when compared with other qualitative approaches which are heavily anchored on epistemological or theoretical basis, thematic analysis can be applied in a classroom setting and used for cognition. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested a six-step framework for performing thematic analysis in social sciences: this method uses diverse approaches making it difficult to differentiate from qualitative content analysis. The patterns and designs identified by this method are indispensable since they help identify research problems.

This technique has been widely employed in research studies focusing on themes such as leadership effectiveness, organisational change, and employee engagement (Dulaimi *et al.*, 2018; Maurer *et al.*, 2016). In this case study involving SMEs in Saudi Arabia education institutions investigating the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing 'change' in organisations, thematic analysis could help uncover insights into how leaders inspire employees through different practices such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. Furthermore, the findings could offer valuable information regarding effective strategies for successfully managing change initiatives within an organisation.

## **4.9.2 Narrative Analysis**

Herman and Vervaeck (2019) suggested that narrative analysis is a qualitative research method that focuses on the study of stories and storytelling. It explores the structure, content, and meaning of narratives, providing insights into how individuals construct and convey their experiences (Herman and Vervaeck, 2019). Narrative analysis is valuable for understanding the subjective perspectives and cultural contexts embedded in personal and collective stories (Maclean, Harvey and Stringfellow, 2017). The Researcher opt to utilise this data analysis tool to analyse the data collected from the Focus Group Discussions.

## **4.10 Reliability and Validity of Findings**

### **4.10.1 Reliability**

Reliability in research constitutes whether the same results would be produced if another researcher were to repeat the study (Singh, 2014). It is an indication of consistency and accuracy when measuring a given population. Kennedy (2022) defines it as the degree to which results remain consistent over time. Although qualitative data can be extremely subjective, Healy and Perry (2000) propose that quality should be judged by its own parity's terms with reliability and validity being more applicable in quantitative studies. In mixed method approaches however, a combination of mechanisms must be used so that credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability may serve as essential criteria for quality assessment (Venkatesh, Brown and Bala, 2013).

The participants of this study are unknown to the Researcher prior to their inclusion in the study. To ensure that the data collected is accurate and meaningful, tools used for the study were reviewed by experts in management and presented accordingly. The interview process will be tape-recorded and transcribed to collect primary data which can then be compared against secondary information gathered during the analysis stage. The Researcher will not influence or lead respondents into providing feedback in any way.

### **4.10.2 Validity**

To ensure the validity of this study, a mixed methods approach was utilised to address different validity concerns. Three main areas that were addressed included construct validity, internal validity, and external validity. Construct validity involves testing whether subjective operational definitions are consistent with the concept being measured, whereas internal and external validities measure the relationship between measurable traits and their effects on the overall concept of a study (Weideman, 2019). In order to account for these issues in this study, a theoretical framework was created to define the unit of analysis as well as explanatory

dimensions which were then used to develop research design topics and interview guides (Cypress, 2017). This ensured that an effective method was adopted for addressing the objectives of this research.

The unit of analysis in this study is small and medium educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an integrated entity, where data is collected from leaders to understand the phenomenon of the impact of inspirational leadership on change management. Three main interpretative dimensions were identified based on the theoretical framework of the study: the structural dimension (including change strategy, organisational structure, and systems), the behavioural dimension (covering individual motivations, participation, and resistance to change), and the leadership dimension (focusing on inspirational leadership styles and their impact). Interview guides were systematically developed based on these dimensions to ensure the collection of appropriate data that serves the study's objectives and achieves comprehensive analysis (Cypress, 2017).

Internal validity is essential for establishing explanations and causal relationships (Yin, 2003); this involves pattern recognition to identify causality during data analysis and comparing findings with existing literature. Construct validity is affected by the choice of variables and their definitions in the study. External validity looks at whether results can be generalised to other populations in different locations. With regards to external validity assessment, case study research cannot provide 'statistical generalisation', but rather 'analytical generalization' which involves relating a set of results to some broader theory (Pauwels and Matthyssens, 2004; Yin, 2003). The study was conducted in one region using a small group so while the findings may not be generalised for the entire country, they do provide analytical generalisation.

With regards to the validity of the qualitative aspects of the study, several methods can be used. Validity of qualitative data is affected by bias, which can be divided into three categories according to their source: responder bias, Researcher bias and reactivity bias (Cypress, 2017). Responder bias pertains to any reasons that could lead respondents to provide inaccurate or untruthful information. Such reasons vary; some respondents may not know the answer, while others are afraid of potential consequences or have been intimidated into silence by external factors. Additionally, it can occur when the data collection tool is not framed correctly – for example if there are too few options provided in the answers list.

The biggest challenge faced in this study is gaining trust from its participants. Some were afraid to give honest responses due to undisclosed reasons. To overcome this obstacle and reduce its effect on research results, a number of measures should be taken by researchers; such as keeping questions short and clear, avoiding leading questions in interviews as well as

questionnaires; ensuring all concepts are properly explained during data collection process; framing questions with target audience in mind; structuring tools appropriately so they cover all relevant topics; and providing reassurance that processes will remain confidential with no names or identity markers reported back to employers.

Researcher bias, which includes the influence of previous assumptions, experience, or feelings of the Researcher towards a topic that can influence data collection (Johnson and Christensen, 2019), is a risky factor that can compromise study validity. There are three forms of this bias: information bias (resulting from flawed definition of study variables) (Tracy, 2019), selection bias (occurring when selection of individuals to participate in a study does not achieve proper randomization) and confounding. To prevent any such biases in this process, the Researcher explained all operational terms in writing within questionnaires or interviews. Additionally, the Researcher refrained from influencing or changing feedback provided by respondents and did not rephrase questions at any time during interviews. The language used was simple and direct. Interview feedback was recorded/transcribed for analysis with copies stored as well. Finally, the sampling method utilised ensured no room for selection bias.

#### **4.11 Research Ethics**

In this study, several ethical considerations were considered. As defined by Savulescu and Hope (2010), research ethics involve the moral principles, norms, and expectations that must be followed while conducting a study to safeguard the integrity of the respondents. These ethical issues are necessary for maintaining the reliability and originality of any given study. In this case, these considerations included:

- 1- Informed Consent:** Informed consent is a critical part of this study. All participants are above the legal age and deemed to have the ability to provide consent for themselves; thus, no coercion will be used in asking them to take part in the study. Before data collection begins, an email containing a consent form will be sent out explaining the purpose of the research, the role of each participant, and requesting that they sign it before returning it. This process ensures that respondents do not feel pressured into completing questionnaires or participating in interviews (Savulescu and Hope, 2010).
- 2- Confidentiality:** Adhering to confidentiality is a key ethical consideration that was considered in this study. To ensure information secrecy, steps were taken such as refraining from asking respondents to provide their names on interviews and omitting any information that could directly link them to the data collected (Resnik, 2011).

## 4.12 Summary

In a nutshell, Chapter 4 of this thesis delves into the research methodology for investigating the impact of Inspirational Leadership on Change Management (CM) in educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia. The Chapter begins with an introduction underscoring the importance of research methodology. Then it navigates through the key research philosophies, including positivism, interpretivism, and realism, elucidating the philosophical choice and justification for this study. Then the research approach has been detailed, highlighting the chosen multiple case studies as the strategy and the utilisation of in-depth interviews (IDIs) as tool for the chosen research strategy.

The methods of data collection encompass a thorough exploration of sampling techniques, semi-structured questionnaires, and the piloting process to refine the research instruments. The data analysis Section outlines the application of thematic analysis and narrative analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives. The Chapter concludes with discussions on ensuring the reliability and validity of findings, emphasizing the methodological rigor applied in the research. Additionally, ethical considerations in the research process are elucidated, underscoring the commitment to conducting the study with integrity and respect for participants.

## Chapter Five: Qualitative Data Analysis

### 5.1 Introduction

The qualitative data analysis Chapter is important Chapter is as it allows for exploring the cognitive and internal depth of the phenomena studied. In this research, the interview method was used as the main tool for collecting qualitative data, where a (15) questions were addressed that aim to investigate the impact of inspirational leadership on managing Change Implementation (CI) in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) within the education sector in the KSA and to validate the Proposed Framework (Figure 6.1).

This research seeks to analyse the multiple influences that may occur on educational institutions considering environmental changes, as inspirational leadership is considered one of the main factors that can make a noticeable difference in how institutions respond to the challenges of the external and internal environment. The questions asked to address the effects of different environments on inspirational leadership, which helps shed light on the various dimensions of leadership and how they affect the implementation of change and performance management.

In this context, the thematic analysis of these interviews will address how external environments, such as economic, social, and technological changes, can affect the performance of educational institutions, as well as understanding how internal environments affect the effectiveness of inspirational leadership. The focus will be on questions that inquire about the relationship between inspirational leadership and Change Management (CM), and the importance of leadership focus in enhancing institutional performance.

The analysis is based on a theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.6) that reflects recent trends in leadership and CM research, considering previous studies that highlight the profound effects of inspirational leaders. This Chapter will contribute to providing new insights on how to improve OP, through effective leadership strategies, based on a deep understanding of the interactions between internal and external environments, in line with Saudi Arabia Vision 2030. In short, this Chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected through interviews, to be an academic reference that helps explore the dimensions of inspirational leadership and its effects on small and medium educational institutions in the Saudi context.

## 5.2 Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

Table 5-1: Demographic Profiles of Interviewees

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	12	32.43
	Male	25	67.57
	Total	37	100.00
Organisation size	Micro enterprises (1-5 employees)	9	24.32
	Small enterprises (6-49 employees)	13	35.14
	Medium enterprises (50-249 employees)	15	40.54
	Total	37	100
Organisation age	Less than 5 years	10	27.02
	5-10 years	12	32.43
	More than 10 years	15	40.54
	Total	37	100
Organisation category	Vocational training	13	35.14
	Technical education	15	40.54
	Rehabilitation programs	9	24.32
	Total	37	100
Location	Riyadh	12	32.43
	Makkah	8	21.61
	Eastern Region	9	24.32
	Qassim	8	21.62
	Total	37	100
Experience	less than 5 years	6	16.22
	5-9 years	15	40.54
	10-14 years	16	43.24
	Total	37	100.00

The gender distribution indicates a dominance of males in leadership positions within small and medium-sized educational organisations, with males constituting 67.57% of the total participants, while females represent only 32.43%. This distribution reflects the reality of the labour market in the Kingdom's private education sector and may influence the nature of leadership practices and change management approaches employed.

As for the distribution of organisations by size, there is a notable diversity, with medium-sized organisations (50-249 employees) forming the largest proportion at 40.54%, followed by small organisations (6-49 employees) at 35.14%, and micro-enterprises (1-5 employees) at 24.32%. This balanced distribution allows for a comparison of the impact of institution size on inspirational leadership practices and change management.

In terms of age, 40.54% of organisations have been operating for more than 10 years, indicating accumulated experience in the educational market, while newer organisations (less than 5

years) represent 27.02%, reflecting the sector's dynamism and the continuous entry of new establishments. Medium-aged organisations (5-10 years) account for 32.43% of the sample.

The professional specialisation of organisations is divided between technical education (40.54%), vocational training (35.14%), and qualifying programmes (24.32%), providing comprehensive coverage of the Kingdom's key education and training sectors. This diversity in specialisations enriches the data by offering multiple perspectives on the phenomenon under study.

The geographical distribution covers four main administrative regions, with Riyadh representing the largest proportion (32.43%), followed by the Eastern Province (24.32%), then Makkah (21.61%) and the Qassim region (21.62%). This balanced geographical distribution ensures good representation of the different regional characteristics and their effects on leadership practices.

In terms of practical experience, it is noted that vast majority of participants (83.78%) have more than 5 years of experience, with those having over 10 years of experience accounting for 43.24%. This high proportion of long-experienced individuals enhances the credibility of the collected data and ensures the quality of participation in in-depth discussions.

This diversity in demographic characteristics reflects the richness of the sample and its good representation of the original community, which greatly enhances the generalisability of the results and contributes to achieving the study's objectives by providing comprehensive and diverse data from various types of small and medium educational organisations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### **5.3 Impact of External Environmental Factors on Inspirational Leadership in Educational SMEs**

In today's dynamic educational landscape, external environmental factors play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of leadership, particularly in small and medium-sized educational institutions. These factors, including economic fluctuations, technological advancements, socio-political changes, and cultural dynamics, influence the strategies and approaches leaders adopt to inspire their teams and achieve organisational goals. Understanding these external pressures provides a nuanced perspective on how leaders navigate challenges and leverage opportunities to foster innovation, resilience, and motivation within their institutions. This Section examines the extent to which these external factors impact inspirational leadership.

Figure (5.1) shows the participants' responses about the Impact of external environmental factors on inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions.

A total of 37 respondents. Notably, 59.5% of participants indicated that the external environment motivates and supports inspirational leadership, suggesting a significant perception of the positive influence that external factors can have on leadership styles in education. Conversely, 24.3% of the respondents identified external factors as obstacles to inspirational leadership.

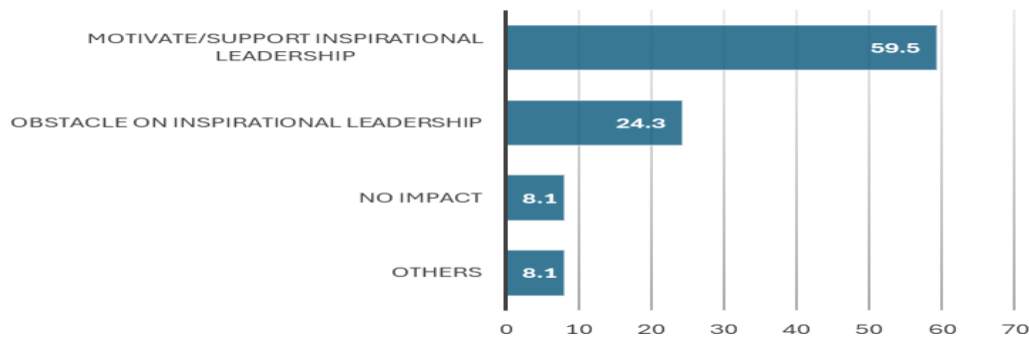


Figure 5:1 Impact of External Environmental Factors on Inspirational Leadership in Small and Medium Educational Institutions.

Additionally, 8.1% of the participants stated that there is no significant impact from the external environment on inspirational leadership. This perspective echoes Alshammari (2020) who argued that internal factors, such as Organisational Culture (OC) and individual leader attributes, might play a more decisive role in shaping leadership effectiveness than external influences. Such findings suggest that while the external environment is influential, the inherent characteristics of the institution and its leaders can mediate this impact.

Overall, the predominant view among respondents underscores the importance of a supportive external environment in fostering inspirational leadership. However, the acknowledgment of obstacles indicates that leaders must navigate a dual landscape of opportunities and challenges. Integrating these findings with the literature highlights the necessity for educational institutions to adapt to their external contexts while also cultivating strong internal cultures that empower leaders to inspire their teams effectively. Thus, as educational institutions in Saudi Arabia move forward under Vision 2030, balancing external influences with internal capacities will be essential for enhancing leadership effectiveness and achieving desired educational outcomes. One of the central themes that recurred in the responses was the relationship between inspirational leadership and external organisational constraints.

Interviewee No.2 stated that:

“The external environment, particularly government regulations and changes in educational policies, greatly impacts our ability to lead with inspiration...”

The Interviewee No. 2 response underscores a significant tension between inspirational leadership and external organisational constraints, particularly emphasising the influence of government regulations and changes in educational policies. The Interviewee No. 2 highlights a complex dynamic wherein regulatory demands and compliance requirements restrict leaders' capacity to innovate and dedicate time to inspiring their teams. This tension demonstrates the delicate balance leaders must maintain between Fulfilling external expectations and fostering an aspirational environment within their organisations.

The relationship between external environmental factors and inspirational leadership is extensively discussed in literature review (Chapter 3, Section 3.2), Andersen (2018) argues that leadership styles, such as servant and transformational leadership, evolve to align with external demands to remain relevant and motivational. This perspective supports the notion that inspirational leaders must exhibit flexibility, adapting their approaches to navigate external constraints while sustaining engagement and inspiration within their teams. Antonakis and House (2014) stated that external turbulence, such as rapid technological advancements, can either enhance or challenge a leader's ability to inspire, depending on their adaptability and instrumental leadership skills. This aligns closely with the interviewee's assertion that shifting policies and regulatory frameworks can impede leaders' ability to focus on inspiration by redirecting their efforts Towards s compliance.

This quotation reveals the “existential dilemma” faced by the contemporary leader between “administrative leadership” and “inspirational leadership.” Government organisations not only consume time but also create a “cognitive load” that diverts the leader's attention from forward-looking strategic tasks to routine compliance tasks. This shift places the leader in what resembles a “role duality,” where they are forced to reconcile the demands of operational efficiency imposed by regulations with the urgent need for creativity and renewal required by inspirational leadership. Furthermore, the rapid changes in educational policies create what can be termed a “regulatory future shock”, making it impossible for the leader to build a stable long-term vision in a climate where the rules of the game change suddenly and frequently.

This complex context requires the development of “regulatory intelligence” the ability to read early regulatory signals and transform them from threats into proactive opportunities. This concept goes beyond mere passive compliance to reach the level of “proactive foresight leadership,” where the leader shifts from a passive recipient of instructions to a strategic partner

capable of influencing the formulation of policies themselves. As Antonakis and House (2014) indicate, the effectiveness of the leader in such environments depends on their instrumental leadership skills, which include designing flexible systems capable of absorbing regulatory shocks without losing the organisation's creative spirit, reinforcing what Andersen (2018) pointed out about the necessity for leadership methods to evolve to remain relevant and motivational.

Interviewee No.12: discussed the impact of competitiveness in the external environment:

“The competitive nature of the external market, especially with the rapid growth of educational startups, affects how I lead my team...”

Interviewee No. 12 response reveals a pivotal challenge in leadership: navigating the competitive pressures of an evolving external market, particularly in the face of emerging educational startups. This observation highlights the influence of market dynamics on leadership approaches, where the demand for adaptability, innovation, and strategic focus becomes critical. The competitive landscape compels leaders to refine their strategies, not only to maintain organisational relevance but also to inspire their teams amidst rapid external changes.

Here, inspirational leadership transforms from “inspiring emotions” to “inspiring strategic action”. Intense competition with start-ups not only tests the organisation's ability to survive but also tests the leader's ability to create a “sustainable organisational advantage” based on creative human capital. In this scenario, inspiration becomes a strategic tool to maximise the organisation's “dynamic capabilities”, its ability to integrate resources and reshape them flexibly in response to market changes. The inspirational leader in this context is one who creates an “applied innovation culture” that transforms abstract ideas into practical solutions that increase the organisation's market share.

This leadership model requires the development of what can be called “dynamic competitive resilience,” which combines flexibility in facing shocks with robustness in maintaining organisational identity. As Reimer *et al.* (2024) emphasise, leaders who can harness external factors can enhance their inspirational impact by aligning their vision with market trends. This alignment does not mean compromising principles but is a “value exchange strategy” whereby market pressures are transformed into driving creative energy. This also requires, as Shatila *et al.* (2024) noted, understanding that external pressures such as competition can be both motivating and inhibiting simultaneously, necessitating the development of “emotional competitive intelligence”, which enables the leader to manage the team's mood and convert competitive anxiety into creative enthusiasm.

As evidenced in (Chapter 3, Section 3.2), leadership styles, such as transformational and servant leadership, thrive in competitive environments when leaders adopt flexible and initiative-taking approaches. In the context of the interviewee's observation, this implies that leaders must leverage competition as a motivator for innovation while ensuring their teams remain engaged and aligned with organisational goals. The emphasis on adaptability within Andersen's analysis reflects the necessity for leaders in competitive markets to foster resilience and innovation among their teams (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023; Huang, 2023; Nguyen and Tran, 2023; Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023) Shatila *et al.*, (2024) found that external pressures, such as increased competition and technological innovation, can simultaneously challenge and enhance leadership effectiveness. Reimer *et al.*, (2024) argue that leaders capable of harnessing these external factors can bolster their inspirational impact by aligning their vision with market trends. This perspective resonates with the interviewee's remarks, suggesting that effective leadership in a competitive environment requires a balance between responding to external market demands and maintaining internal team cohesion.

Interviewee No. 21, addressed the impact of economic factors on leadership:

“External economic factors, such as volatile market conditions and changes in government funding... When the economy is unstable, leadership shifts from being inspirational to being more cautious and focused on survival ...”

This Interviewee No. 21 view suggests that economic crises may prompt leaders to change their leadership style from motivational and inspirational to more cautious decision-making with the goal of survival and sustainability. It suggests that inspirational leadership may decline under difficult economic conditions in favour of more pragmatic strategies that focus on preserving resources and continuity.

This quote depicts a “paradigmatic” shift in leadership philosophy from a “growth and aspiration” model to a “survival and sustainability” model. In economic crises, inspirational leadership transforms from being a “strategic luxury” to a “tactical necessity”, albeit in a different form. Inspiration is no longer about painting rosy future pictures, but about the leader's ability to “make meaning out of adversity” and create a “realistic hope narrative” that prevents morale collapse while maintaining vigilance and seriousness in addressing challenges. This shift requires developing “operational resilience” that enables the organisation to maintain core operations while preparing for any future recovery.

In this context, the concept of “inspired pragmatism” emerges, combining the necessities of short-term survival with the demands of long-term vision. The findings of Huang *et al.* (2023) and Tagscherer and Carbon (2023) also emphasise that leaders in economic crises tend to

reduce risk, but only the successful ones maintain a “spark of inspiration” even in the darkest circumstances. This requires a “delicate leadership balance” between the careful management of scarce resources and preserving spaces for low-cost, high-impact innovation. Here, the leader becomes a “keeper of ambition” in times of scarcity, responsible for protecting the organisation’s genetic ideas that will grow again when economic conditions improve.

Huang *et al.* (2023), Tagscherer and Carbon (2023) emphasised that external economic factors such as changes in government funding or market volatility significantly influence leadership style. In times of crisis, leaders tend to reduce risks and become more conservative in their decisions, which reduces opportunities for inspirational and creative motivation.

Interviewee No.10 said:

“We can focus on inspiring employees with a shared vision for growth and innovation when external conditions are favourable ...”

This statement reflects a deep understanding of the role that the external environment plays in supporting inspirational leadership. According to Gong *et al.* (2022), a flexible environment that provides adequate resources and support for leadership contributes to motivating leaders to guide their teams Towards innovation and growth. While an environment that imposes economic constraints or challenges may limit this tendency, an environment that provides sufficient support can motivate leaders to be more inspiring and innovative. Based on the above, the external environment has a complex impact on inspirational leadership. While competitiveness may push leaders Towards s adopting inspirational styles, strict regulations and economic crises may be an obstacle to this. Therefore, it is necessary for leaders to balance adapting to external variables and maintaining their inspirational vision to motivate their teams Towards s innovation and growth.

This participant demonstrates keen insight regarding “favourable conditions” as a fundamental incubator for inspirational leadership. The concept of “favourable conditions” is not limited to the availability of physical resources but extends to the presence of a stable external organisational climate, a supportive legislative environment, and a thriving market that creates a space of “Organisational Psychological Safety”. In such an environment, the leader is freed from the constraints of managing daily crises, enabling them to direct their mental and emotional energy towards “Proactive Building” rather than “Reactive Defending”. This allows them to invest in the team’s “Psychological Capital”, enhance trust, and establish a culture of calculated risk-taking, where innovation becomes not merely a strategic choice but an organisational way of life.

This perspective points to a reciprocal relationship between inspirational leadership and the external environment. Just as a favourable environment unleashes the inspirational leader, the inspirational leader, in turn, can create “internal favourability” even under difficult external conditions by crafting a compelling vision that creates a new organisational reality. This is supported by what Gong *et al.* (2022) indicated that a flexible and supportive environment encourages leaders to be more inspiring and innovative. However, the real challenge for leadership does not appear in ideal conditions, but in the ability to “cultivate inspiration” in the barren soil of external pressures. This requires the development of “dynamic capabilities” within the organisation, enabling it to reshape its resources and exploit small opportunities available in any environment, transforming inspirational leadership from merely reacting to circumstances into an active force capable of shaping those circumstances, even partially, and enhancing what is known as “proactive organisational resilience”.

#### **5.4 Impact of the External Environment on Change Implementation and Management in Educational SMEs**

The external environment exerts a profound influence on the ability of small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) to implement and manage change effectively. Factors such as shifting government policies, advancements in educational technologies, economic volatility, and evolving societal expectations create a dynamic context that these institutions must navigate. These external pressures often necessitate rapid adjustments in operational strategies, curriculum design, and administrative processes, making Change Management (CM) a critical aspect of their sustainability and growth.

The data collected on the perceived impact of the external environment on CI and management within educational SMEs reveals that the majority of respondents (75.7%) recognise a strong influence, as summarised in Table 5-2. A further 5.4% identified other forms of external impact, while 13.5% were uncertain and 5.4% indicated no impact. This clear consensus underscores that the external environment, including regulatory changes, market demands, and technological advancements, significantly shapes how educational institutions navigate change. This is supported by Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) and Nguyen and Tran (2023), as educational institutions face increasing pressure to adapt to regulatory changes and shifting market expectations, which directly affect their operational strategies.

Table 5-2: Impacts of External Environment on Change Implementation and Management

Category	Frequency	Percent
Others	2	5.4
No impact	2	5.4
Not sure	5	13.5
Strong impact	28	75.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

The presence of 13.5% of respondents expressing uncertainty highlights a potential gap in awareness or understanding of how external factors influence their organisations. This uncertainty could stem from the varied experiences and contexts of different educational SMEs. For example, certain institutions may operate in more stable environments, leading to less perceived urgency for change. Nguyen and Tran (2023) noted that while some educational SMEs are well-prepared to implement changes due to external pressures, others struggle to identify and act on these influences effectively. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions to foster a culture of awareness and responsiveness to external dynamics to improve their CM capabilities.

Interviewee No. 10 stated:

“The external environment has a significant impact on change management for SMEs, especially in the education sector in Saudi Arabia”.

This statement demonstrates a deep understanding of the nature of “systemic fragility” experienced by small and medium-sized enterprises in the education sector. In rapidly transforming economies such as Saudi Arabia, where the ambitious developmental agenda (Vision 2030) clashes with the operational reality of educational institutions, the external environment creates what can be described as an “adaptation gap”. This gap widens when the pace of external changes exceeds the institutions’ capacity to absorb and respond, placing them in a state of continuous catch-up that drains their resources and limits the effectiveness of their leadership. This conclusion is supported by Arshad et al. (2023), who emphasise the importance of educational institutions’ ability to understand and analyse external trends in the era of digital transformation.

One of the key themes highlighted by participants is adaptability and the role of strategic partnerships. Ramaswami *et al.* (2021) suggests that collaboration between educational institutions and private companies enhances innovation and increases the effectiveness of CM strategies. Partnerships are not only about sharing resources, but also involve the exchange of knowledge and expertise that enhances the capacity to innovate.

Interviewee No. 11 stated:

“When resources are scarce, leaders need to be more creative and inspiring to motivate staff and find new ways to support learning despite financial pressures”.

This statement reveals the concept of “Innovative Leadership in Scarcity”, where resource constraints transform from a barrier into a catalyst for leadership creativity. In the context of resource scarcity, the leader is compelled to adopt “Leadership Resilience” – the ability to maintain a strategic vision while reinventing tactical means to achieve it. This requires the development of operational intelligence, enabling the leader to make the most of the minimum available resources and to adopt a proactive change management approach rather than a reactive crisis management style.

### 5.5 Impacts of the External Environment on Organisational Performance in Educational SMEs

The external environment significantly shapes the OP of small and medium-sized educational institutions. Factors such as market dynamics, regulatory pressures, technological developments, and societal values directly influence institutions’ operational and strategic outcomes, compelling them to adapt continuously in order to sustain performance and competitiveness.

The majority of respondents (70.3%) indicated that the external environment has a strong impact on OP (Figure 5.2), while 59.5% specifically confirmed this strong impact within the context of educational SMEs (Figure 5.3). These findings collectively indicate that external pressures are not merely background conditions but active determinants of institutional performance. This is further supported by evidence that organisations in turbulent environments are compelled to adapt rapidly, reinforcing the need for agility in Change Management (Gumel and Bardai, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021).

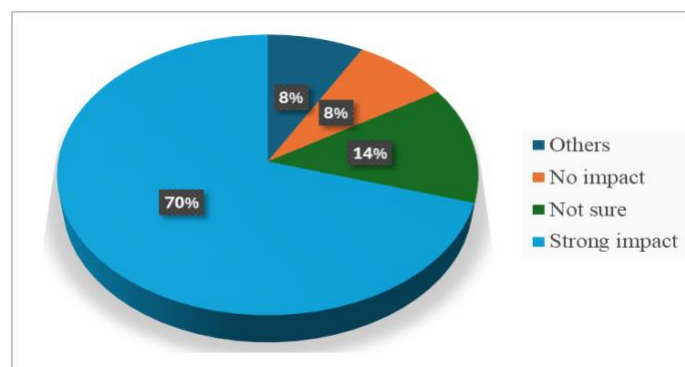


Figure 5:2 Impacts of External Environment on Organisation Performance

Notably, 13.5% of respondents expressed uncertainty and 10.8% indicated no impact, while a further 16.2% identified other forms of external influence not captured in the predefined categories. This variation highlights what can be termed “Contextual Strategic Blindness” in some organisations, not necessarily reflecting an absence of external influence, but rather a deficiency in environmental sensing systems that prevents institutions from interpreting complex or slow-moving external signals. Developing the capacity to monitor and interpret external environmental changes is therefore critical to improving decision-making and performance outcomes (Nguyen and Tran, 2023; Sahib and Wilderom, 2024; Nasib *et al.*, 2022).

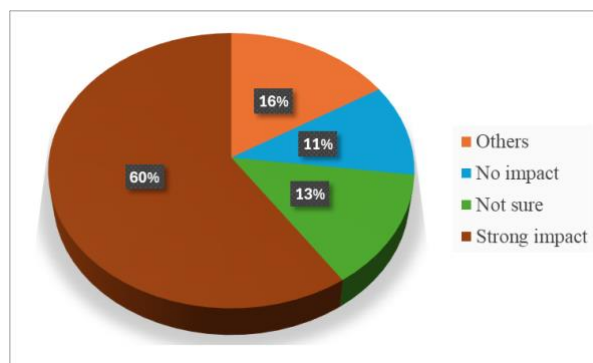


Figure 5:2 Impacts of External Environment on Organisation Performance Specifically on Education Institutions SMEs

Interviewee No. 9 noted:

“The performance and survival of an organisation depend largely on its external environment. Technological developments have a significant impact on the performance of small and medium-sized educational institutions, and communities that place a high value on education tend to support educational institutions”.

This statement reveals the “Technological Dilemma” faced by small and medium educational institutions. Technological advancements represent an opportunity for digital transformation and performance improvement while simultaneously imposing significant financial and operational pressures. This creates a “Digital Transformation Gap” between well-resourced large institutions and resource-constrained SMEs. In this context, “Technological Intelligence” – the ability to select and integrate appropriate technologies at reasonable cost, becomes a decisive factor in institutional performance (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023). Communities that value education also provide “Social Capital” that enhances institutional legitimacy and facilitates access to resources and strategic partnerships, further reinforcing that external performance

pressures necessitate a shift from “Insular Leadership” to “Networked Leadership” (Abrokwah-Larbi, 2024).

Interviewee No. 3 noted:

“In a competitive environment, small and medium-sized enterprises have to differentiate themselves through the quality of their education and student services”.

This statement highlights the concept of “Operational Excellence” as a survival strategy in competitive markets. Quality of education and student services becomes not merely a distinguishing factor but an essential condition for institutional survival. This requires developing a “Sustainable Competitive Advantage” grounded in the value added to students and parents, where quality management shifts from an administrative function to an organisational philosophy that shapes institutional identity. As Nasib *et al.* (2022) indicate, competition and brand image significantly influence performance in private educational institutions, while Gumel and Bardai (2023) highlight how transformational leaders drive excellence strategies that sustain institutional superiority even under challenging competitive conditions.

Interviewee No. 6 observed:

“During economic downturns, these institutions face financial challenges in providing equipment and developing curricula, which can negatively impact overall performance”.

This reveals the “Institutional Decline Cycle” triggered by economic crises, whereby financial scarcity limits equipment provision and curriculum development, creating a cumulative erosion of human and physical capital. Escaping this cycle requires a “Proactive Survival Strategy” that balances smart financial prudence with strategic investment in high-value areas, demanding leadership with “Financial Foresight” capable of protecting institutional development momentum even during periods of scarcity (Prasetio and Kurniawan, 2023).

## **5.6 Impacts of the Internal Environment on Inspirational Leadership in Education SMEs**

The internal environment of small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) significantly influences the effectiveness of inspirational leadership. Elements such as organisational culture, employee morale, resource availability, and communication dynamics shape the capacity of leaders to motivate and inspire their teams. A supportive internal environment fosters trust, collaboration, and innovation, enabling leaders to effectively align their vision with institutional goals. Conversely, challenges such as resistance to change, limited resources, or fragmented communication can hinder a leader’s ability to inspire and

drive progress. This Section examines the interplay between internal environmental factors and inspirational leadership, informed by the study's findings.

Table 5-3 shows the participants' responses about the impact of the internal environment on inspirational leadership at education institutions SMEs.

Table 5-3: Impacts of Internal Environment on Inspirational Leadership at Education Institutions SMEs

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Others	3	8.1
Obstacle on inspirational leadership	4	10.8
Motivate/support inspirational leadership	30	81.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

The data regarding the impact of the internal environment on inspirational leadership within small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) reveals a striking perspective among respondents. A majority (81.1%) indicated that the internal environment motivates and supports inspirational leadership.

This demonstrates a firmly held conviction that the internal environment is not merely a passive vessel for leadership but rather an "integrative partner" in the creation of leadership inspiration. This perception goes beyond the traditional model of individual leadership to present a more complex model: "Leadership as an Organisational Product". A positive organisational culture, adequate resources, and effective communication not only support inspirational leadership but also create what can be termed a "fertile ground for inspiration," where the leader's capabilities interact with the organisation's potential to produce an impact greater than the sum of its parts. This conclusion is supported by what Al-Aamri *et al.* (2024) indicated regarding the effect of a positive internal environment in enhancing leaders' ability to inspire. This analysis expands to suggest that a supportive internal environment not only reduces the "psychological cost" of inspirational leadership but also increases the "inspirational return". In such an environment, inspiration shifts from an individual effort that drains the leader's energy to a sustainable organisational phenomenon, nourished by a culture of collaboration and mutual trust, as affirmed by the work of Burch and Guarana (2022) on the importance of a supportive environment for transformational leaders.

Conversely, 10.8% of respondents perceive the internal environment as an obstacle to inspirational leadership, while 8.1% indicated other factors. This minority perspective suggests that there may be specific challenges or negative aspects within certain institutions that hinder leadership effectiveness, such as bureaucratic structures or a lack of shared vision. Such

barriers can impede a leader's ability to inspire and motivate staff, leading to disengagement and reduced performance. The interview responses collectively emphasise the profound impact of the internal environment on inspirational leadership within educational SMEs (Gachira and Ntara, 2024; Nguyen and Tran, 2023; Cummings and Worley, 2023; Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023).

Interviewee No. 9 highlights the positive influence of an organisational culture rooted in openness and collaboration, stating:

“In my SME, the Organisational Culture (OC) is based on openness and collaboration, which allows me to lead in a way that inspires my team. When people feel that their voice is heard and their ideas are valued, they become more motivated and willing to put in more effort”.

This statement reveals the psychosocial mechanism through which organisational culture transforms into an inspirational force. A culture of openness and collaboration does not merely create a pleasant working environment; it builds what can be termed “Collective Psychological Capital”, which enables the leader to practice inspiration with minimal resistance and maximum effectiveness. When individuals feel that their voices are heard and their ideas valued, they shift from being passive recipients of inspiration to active partners in its creation, generating a virtuous cycle of mutual reinforcement between the leader and the team.

This aligns with what Battilana and Casciaro (2021) noted about the flourishing of transformational leaders in supportive cultures. This analysis adds an important practical dimension: an open organisational culture does not merely provide a positive psychological climate but acts as a “Leadership Energy Multiplier”. It enables the leader to achieve greater inspirational impact with less effort, as a significant part of the inspirational process originates from the organisation itself, not just the leader, thereby transforming inspirational leadership from an individual practice into a comprehensive organisational phenomenon.

This aligns with literature as discussed in Chapter 3, Sub-Section 3.2.1, Burch and Guarana (2022), Bott (2015), and Battilana and Casciaro's (2021) assertion that transformational leaders thrive when the internal culture is supportive and conducive to their vision, as such an environment fosters trust, creativity, and motivation among team members. However, the same interviewee also notes the challenges posed by internal pressures, such as deadlines and budget constraints, which can impede the ability to maintain an inspirational leadership style.

Interviewee No.4 offers a contrasting perspective by highlighting the challenges of a competitive internal environment lacking a focus on employee well-being, explaining:

“If the internal environment is competitive, with little focus on employee well-being or growth, leaders find it difficult to adopt an inspirational style”.

This statement reveals the dark side of unbalanced competitive internal environments, where competition shifts from being a catalyst for creativity to a “Psychological Energy Drain Machine”. The lack of attention to employee well-being and growth not only limits the leader’s ability to inspire but also creates what can be called “Passive Resistance”, where individuals mentally withdraw and withhold their best ideas and energies, preventing leadership inspiration from having its full effect.

This conclusion is supported by what Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) and Oreg and Berson (2022) pointed out regarding the flourishing of servant leadership in cultures that focus on value cohesion. This analysis expands to suggest that neglecting employee well-being not only weakens intrinsic motivation but also undermines the leader’s “Emotional Credibility.” How can a leader inspire others while appearing indifferent to their well-being? This paradox creates a “Credibility Gap” that makes inspirational rhetoric seem hollow and insincere, turning it from a motivational tool into a source of mockery and resentment.

This observation underscores the importance of aligning internal policies and practices with leadership goals to avoid conflicts that hinder leadership effectiveness. with literature as discussed in Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2, as Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) and Oreg and Berson, (2022), similarly discuss how servant leadership flourishes in cultures that prioritise team cohesion and shared values, suggesting that neglecting employee welfare can diminish the motivational impact of leadership.

Interviewee No. 26 points to the adaptability of inspirational leaders within varying internal environments, noting:

“Inspirational leaders can achieve success by adapting to the influences of the internal environment and developing strategies that fit the size and structure of their organisations”.

This statement presents a crucial concept: “Contextual Leadership Elasticity” the ability of an inspiring leader to expand and contract according to the internal environment’s conditions without losing their inspirational essence. This elasticity does not imply compromising principles; rather, it is “Tactical Intelligence” that enables the leader to deliver inspiration in forms suited to the size and structure of the organisation. Inspiration in a small organisation differs from that in a medium-sized one, and effective leadership reshapes its methods while preserving the core.

This aligns with the findings of Shatila *et al.* (2024) regarding the necessity of aligning organisational culture with institutional needs. This analysis adds that the success of an inspiring leader in small and medium enterprises depends not only on their adaptability but

also on their “Organisational Diagnostic Acumen” the ability to accurately read the internal environment and design tailored inspirational strategies that meet the specific needs of their organisation. This transforms inspirational leadership from a general theory into a dynamic contextual practice, where the “fit” between leadership style and the nature of the organisation is a decisive factor in success.

This reflects Shatila *et al.* (2024) findings that the relationship between leadership and team satisfaction is mediated by OC, which must be tailored to the unique needs of the institution. Inspirational leaders in SMEs, therefore, must balance adaptability with strategic foresight to navigate internal constraints effectively while maintaining their ability to motivate and inspire their teams.

These combined findings reveal that the relationship between the internal environment and inspirational leadership is a “reciprocal constitution”. Just as the internal environment shapes leadership, effective inspirational leadership is also capable of reshaping the internal environment. This reciprocal dynamic creates what can be called the “Leadership-Environment Evolutionary Loop”, where both parties evolve together in a continuous dynamic dance. A deep understanding of this evolutionary loop enables leaders to transform internal challenges into opportunities for growth, and inhibitive environments into platforms for inspiration, thereby enhancing the ability of small and medium educational institutions to achieve excellence in their performance.

Overall, the internal environment plays a dual role, both enabling and challenging inspirational leadership, depending on the organisation’s culture, team dynamics, and structural constraints.

## **5.7 Impacts of the Internal Environment on Change Implementation and Management in Educational SMEs**

The internal environment of an organisation plays a crucial role in the successful implementation and management of change. Factors such as Organisational Culture (OC), leadership style, communication channels, employee attitudes, and existing structures can either facilitate or hinder the change process. A positive internal environment, characterised by open communication, a supportive culture, and strong leadership, creates a receptive atmosphere for change, making it easier to implement new strategies and initiatives. In contrast, a rigid organisational structure, employee resistance, or lack of resources can create barriers that slow down or prevent successful CM.

The data reveals a strong consensus on the internal environment’s impact CI, with 78.4% of respondents acknowledging a “strong impact” (Figure 5.4). This supports the view that OC,

communication, and leadership engagement are crucial for successful CM. This awareness reveals a deep understanding of the “Constitutive Dynamics” created by the internal environment, where it becomes a “Change Ecosystem” that determines the fate of any transformative initiative. A positive organisational culture, effective communication channels, and leadership engagement not only facilitate the change process but also create “Positive Organisational Immunity”, enabling the institution not only to accept change but to anticipate and lead it, transforming employees from passive recipients into active partners in the change journey (Reimer et al., 2024).

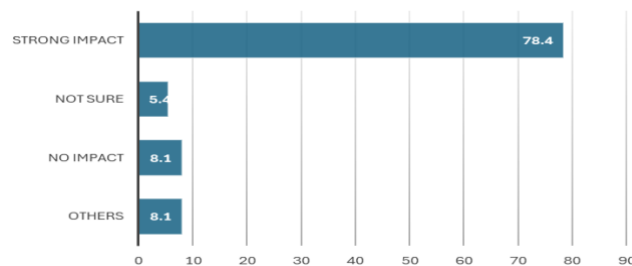


Figure 5:3 Impacts of Internal Environment on Change Implementation and Management of Education Institutions SMEs

However, 8.1% of respondents were uncertain and 5.4% believed there was no impact, suggesting variability across different institutional contexts. These percentages reveal an important phenomenon termed “Organisational Change Blindness”, where failure to recognise the internal environment’s influence may indicate “Institutionalised Resistance in Disguise”, manifesting as denial or disregard. In certain contexts, denying the influence of internal factors becomes a defensive mechanism, where individuals prefer to attribute change failures to external circumstances. Such internal resistance and unclear roles are often symptoms of deeper dysfunctions within the organisational structure or culture, requiring leaders to develop “Diagnostic Intelligence” to uncover and address hidden resistance proactively (Nureen et al., 2023).

Interviewees No. 10 and No. 15 both observed:

“The Organisational Culture in SMEs, especially in the education sector in Saudi Arabia, is resistant to change... Internal resistance to change often comes from employees feeling insecure about their roles”.

These perspectives reveal the “Dual Cultural Dilemma” faced by Saudi educational institutions: a traditional organisational culture resistant to change, fuelled by “Professional Identity Fragility” among employees, set against the urgent need for transformation driven by

Vision 2030. This contradiction creates a “Change Trust Gap”, where employees perceive change as a threat to their professional identity rather than an opportunity for growth. Overcoming this requires not merely breaking resistance but building “Professional Psychological Safety, demanding an “Empathetic Leadership” style that treats resistance not as rebellion, but as a legitimate fear needing reassurance (Burnes, 2020).

In contrast, Interviewee No. 20 offered an alternative perspective:

“A flexible Organisational Culture contributes to encouraging employees to embrace change”.

This presents a model of “Flexible Culture as an Incubator for Change, where the organisation maintains its core identity while demonstrating high adaptability. In this model, change becomes an “organisational lifestyle” embedded in individual behaviours and values – not an emergency event, but the product of cumulative investment in building employee capabilities and confidence (Sarango-Lalangui *et al.*, 2023; Kettunen, 2022).

Interviewee No. 3 further highlighted the importance of individual readiness:

“Change Management requires employees to be able to adapt... and this depends largely on the skills and experiences they have available”.

This highlights “Transferable Readiness” as the link between individual capabilities and organisational transformation, where employees’ capacity to adapt depends not only on current skills but on their “learnability”, that is, their ability to acquire new skills rapidly. In the context of Saudi educational transformation, where skill requirements accelerate, this learnability bridges the gap between existing and required competencies. This requires developing “Skills Incubators” within the organisation, equipping employees with both technical skills and “Adaptation Skills” to navigate future change (Savin-Baden, 2023; Al-Kala Kamdjoug, 2024). Collectively, these findings reveal that effective Change Management in small and medium-sized Saudi educational institutions requires a “Three-Dimensional Integrative Approach”: first, a cultural dimension, transforming culture from a barrier into a catalyst for change; second, a leadership dimension, redefining the leader's role from decision-maker to facilitator of change; and third, a developmental dimension, investing in building employees’ capacities and readiness to adapt. The dynamic interaction between these three dimensions creates a “Sustainable Change Ecosystem”, enabling institutions not only to implement current change but to thrive amid future transformations, thereby advancing the objectives of Vision 2030 in building a resilient and innovative educational system.

## 5.8 Impacts of the Internal Environment on Organisational Performance

The internal environment has a profound impact on an organisation's performance, influencing its ability to achieve objectives and sustain growth. Factors such as OC, leadership style, employee engagement, resource allocation, and communication systems play pivotal roles in shaping productivity and efficiency. A positive internal environment, marked by clear communication, collaborative culture, and motivated staff, often leads to enhanced performance outcomes. Conversely, issues like resource scarcity, poor leadership, or internal conflicts can hinder organisational success.

In small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly educational institutions, the internal environment determines how effectively resources are Utilised, how well employees align with institutional goals, and the Organisation 's adaptability to challenges. This Section explores the interplay between internal environmental factors and OP, drawing insights from the study's findings. Figure 5.5 shows the participants' responses about the Impacts of internal environment on organisation performance.

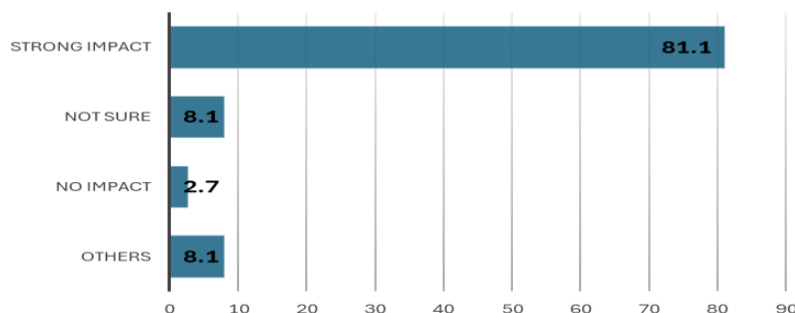


Figure 5:4 Impacts of Internal Environment on Organisation Performance

According to the responses, 81.1% of respondents believe the internal environment has a “strong impact” on OP, highlighting the importance of factors such as OC, leadership, and communication.

This demonstrates a consensus that the internal environment is the “strategic engine” of institutional performance, rather than merely a support for it. In the context of small and medium educational institutions, where resources are limited and competitive margins are narrow, managing the internal environment shifts from a routine administrative function to a “differentiating strategic capability.” A positive organisational culture, effective leadership, and clear communication not only improve operational efficiency but also create what can be

termed an “internal competitive advantage” that distinguishes the institution in the competitive education market.

This finding is supported by what Alharbi *et al.* (2023) indicated regarding the need for continuous evaluation of internal environments. This analysis expands to suggest that an effective internal environment is not limited to avoiding obstacles but acts as a “launching pad” for institutional excellence. It creates the fertile ground that enables the institution to achieve performance beyond its limited physical capabilities by maximising “human capital” and “organisational social capital”, thereby transforming internal challenges into opportunities for outstanding performance.

However, 8.1% of respondents are uncertain, and 2.7% see no impact, suggesting varied experiences depending on organisational context. Additionally, the 8.1% in the “Others” category point to other factors influencing performance. Alharbi *et al.* (2023) stress the need for ongoing assessment of internal environments to overcome performance barriers and drive improvement.

The interviewee responses underscore the pivotal role that internal factors, including OC, employee engagement, and resource management, play in shaping OP.

Interviewee No. 4 noted that:

“A culture of innovation and flexibility is the key driver of success”, yet warns that “a lack of formal structures can lead to inefficiency”.

This statement reveals the “Critical Organisational Equation” that combines innovation and structure. A culture of innovation and flexibility without clear formal structures creates what can be called “Creative Chaos”, which may generate innovative ideas but fails to translate them into tangible outcomes. Conversely, rigid structure without flexibility creates “Efficient Stagnation”, where tasks are completed accurately but without renewal or development. The real challenge is achieving “Dynamic Integration” between the two.

This aligns with what Iskamto (2023) pointed out regarding the importance of a strong internal framework. This analysis adds that balancing flexibility and structure requires developing “Flexible Structuring” an organisational model that combines clarity of roles and responsibilities on one hand, and flexibility of procedures and processes on the other. This model enables educational institutions to harness the energy of innovation while maintaining operational efficiency, creating “Ambidextrous Organisational Capability” for both innovation and efficiency simultaneously.

This is supported by Iskamto (2023), who argues that a robust internal framework characterised by well-defined roles and goals is crucial for enhancing performance outcomes. A balance

between flexibility and structure is essential, as a culture of innovation can drive success, but it must be complemented by adequate organisational structures to ensure efficiency and reduce potential inefficiencies.

Interviewee No. 9 highlights the importance of: “employee engagement” as a key factor influencing performance, though “high employee turnover is a challenge.”

This reflects a common challenge in many organisations where employee turnover can undermine efforts to foster a stable, motivated workforce.

This statement highlights the “Engagement Sustainability Dilemma” faced by educational institutions. Employee engagement, despite its importance, becomes fragile and prone to collapse amid high turnover rates. This creates what can be called an “Organizational Memory Gap,” where expertise and skills continuously leave the institution, leading to the breakdown of “Relational Capital” and undermining efforts to build a sustainable engagement culture.

This supports what Jamil and Rasheed (2023) and Mouazen *et al.* (2023) pointed out regarding the impact of internal culture on institutional outcomes. This analysis expands to suggest that addressing the turnover issue is not limited to improving employee retention policies but requires building “Engagement Immunity” the institution’s ability to maintain high levels of engagement even amid changes in human composition. This is achieved through developing an “Institutional Engagement System” that is independent of individuals and integrated into the culture and organisational structure.

Internal culture and employee involvement are critical to performance outcomes, a culture of engagement not only fosters employee satisfaction but also significantly enhances productivity and organisational success. However, when employee turnover is high, maintaining such engagement becomes challenging, impacting overall performance (Jamil and Rasheed, 2023; Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Huang, 2023).

Interviewee No. 22 discusses how:

“Internal dynamics, such as employee motivation, leadership style, and organisational structure, play a critical role in determining performance”.

He noted that:

“Organisations that foster a culture of collaboration and inclusion perform better”.

This statement presents an integrated vision of the internal environment as an “Integrated Dynamic System”. The internal dynamics of employee motivation, leadership style, and organisational structure do not operate in isolation but interact in what resembles an “Organisational Dance”, where each element influences the other and together shape overall performance. Within this framework, a culture of collaboration and inclusion becomes not

merely an ethical value but a “Performance Strategy” that creates the cohesion and harmony necessary to achieve objectives.

This aligns with what Inthavong *et al.* (2023) emphasised regarding how performance is driven through behavioural interventions. This analysis adds that the success of these interventions depends on “Strategic Cohesion” among all elements of the internal environment. Collaboration and inclusion only succeed in the presence of supportive leadership and an organisational structure that facilitates communication and rewards teamwork. This cohesion, as demonstrated by the application of the McKinsey 7S framework, transforms the internal environment from a collection of separate elements into an integrated system working harmoniously to achieve strategic goals.

This is supported by Inthavong *et al.* (2023), explore how internal motivations, such as a supportive culture and leadership style, can drive performance through behaviour change interventions. When employees are motivated and feel included, they are more likely to contribute meaningfully to the Organisation’s goals. Furthermore, the McKinsey 7S framework, as applied by Chmielewska *et al.* (2022), demonstrates that aligning internal resources with strategic priorities such as fostering a collaborative culture and ensuring a cohesive leadership style leads to improved performance metrics. Lauer (2010) also supports this view, noting that internal alignment with strategic goals is essential for enhancing performance, especially in dynamic environments.

In conclusion, organisations that align their internal resources, foster collaboration, and maintain clear strategic goals are better positioned to achieve sustained performance improvement.

## **5.9 Focus Areas of Inspirational Leadership in Educational SMEs**

Inspirational leadership in small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) emphasises establishing a clear vision aligned with institutional goals, inspiring staff, and stakeholders to work towards a unified purpose. It focuses on motivating and empowering staff by recognizing individual contributions, fostering collaboration, and encouraging shared decision-making to enhance organisational cohesion. Leaders also prioritize adaptability, developing strategies to navigate technological advancements, curriculum changes, and external pressures to maintain competitiveness. Additionally, promoting continuous learning through professional development and fostering resilience in the face of challenges, such as financial constraints or regulatory changes, ensures the institution’s sustainable success.

Table (5-4) shows the participants' responses focus areas of inspirational leadership on education institutions SMEs.

Table 5-4: Focus Areas of Inspirational Leadership on Education Institutions SMEs.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Improve Employees' performance	17	45.9
Employees Satisfaction	3	8.1
Employees motivation	17	45.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

The data on inspirational leadership within small and medium-sized educational institutions highlight two key priorities: improving employee performance and boosting motivation, both of which were identified by 45.9% of respondents. This suggests that leaders in educational SMEs are primarily focused on creating an environment that enhances engagement and productivity. Improving performance involves setting clear standards and fostering equal opportunities, while motivation is driven through appropriate incentives and professional development opportunities. This is supported by Alshammari *et al.* (2023) and Siregar and Putra, (2024) who emphasise the importance of clear expectations and a positive organisational climate in improving employee performance.

Additionally, while only 8.1% of respondents considered employee satisfaction a primary focus, it remains important, albeit seen as a secondary outcome of effective leadership. This reflects the view that engagement and motivation fostered by inspirational leadership are the main drivers of performance, which in turn leads to higher satisfaction. Shah (2016) and Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) confirm that motivation strategies lead to greater satisfaction and improved institutional performance. Overall, the data underscores that inspirational leadership in SMEs is crucial for enhancing both performance and motivation, with leaders focusing on setting clear standards, providing incentives, and supporting professional development.

## 5.10 The Impact of Inspirational Leadership on Change Implementation and Management in Educational SMEs

In small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs), inspirational leadership is a critical factor in driving successful CI and management. By cultivating a clear vision and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, inspirational leaders help navigate the complexities of change while aligning staff with institutional goals. This approach empowers employees, mitigates resistance, and enhances adaptability – qualities essential in the dynamic and resource-constrained environment of educational SMEs.

The data highlights that 48.6% of respondents identified strong leadership support for employee motivation as the primary way inspirational leadership impacts CI and management, while 21.6% emphasised improved communication, and 13.5% identified leading by example as significant (Table 5-5). Only 2.7% indicated no impact. These data reveal a “Symbiotic Inspirational Leadership” model, where three components interact reciprocally: Motivational Leadership forms the “Emotional Engine” generating the energy necessary for change; Communicative Leadership represents the nervous system conveying vision and aligning expectations; and Role Model Leadership provides credibility and embodies values. Together, they create an “Inspirational Leadership Ecosystem” within educational institutions (DeRue *et al.*, 2020; Moosa *et al.*, 2023).

Table 5-5: The Impact of Focusing on Inspirational Leadership on Change Implementation (CI) and Management, Specifically in Educational SMEs.

Category	Frequency	Percent
Others	5	13.5
No impact	1	2.7
Lead by example	5	13.5
Improve communication of Change Implementation (CI)	8	21.6
Strong support of change Implementation and management by leading employees' motivation	18	48.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>

Interviewee No. 4 highlighted the challenge of resistance:

“If you do not get acceptance of change at all levels, you are obviously going to face resistance”.

This reveals the concept of “Change Legitimacy” as a cornerstone in confronting resistance. Acceptance at all levels does not merely mean formal approval but refers to “Psychological Ownership” of change – where it shifts from an imposed administrative decision to a collectively owned initiative. Building this shared vision requires “Emotional Transparency”:

communication that not only explains the change but acknowledges the associated challenges and concerns, creating a space of vulnerability-based trust that transforms resistance from an obstacle into a catalyst for constructive dialogue (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023).

Interviewee No. 9 reinforced this:

“When leaders demonstrate their commitment to the transformation process, they inspire their teams”.

This highlights “Behavioural Credibility” as the foundation of leadership by example. Leaders’ commitment to transformation is demonstrated not in speeches alone but in the “Behavioural Consistency” between their words and actions, creating “Moral Capital” that enables the leader to drive change through influence rather than authority (Al Harahsheh, 2023).

Interviewee No. 22 further noted:

“Overcoming employee resistance is one of the biggest challenges in Change Management”.

The inspirational leader does not view resistance as rebellion but as a “natural response to perceived threat”. Empathy and transparency not only reduce fears but create a “Psychological Safe Space” where employees can freely express concerns, transforming resistance from a destructive covert phenomenon into constructive open dialogue through which the real roots of resistance can be addressed (Musaigwa, 2023).

On the strategic dimension, Interviewee No. 4 also observed:

“Your planning for change needs to be very specific because you can’t make a mistake when you’re making a product”.

This reflects a “Strategic Precision Philosophy” unique to educational change, where an error in the “educational product” does not mean material loss alone but risks distorted learning outcomes. Inspirational leaders therefore transform from change managers into “Educational Craftsmen” who design change with precision (Sabherwal *et al.*, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2021).

Interviewee No. 9 added:

“Inspirational leaders who understand the principles of Change Management are able to create a clear roadmap for their teams”.

This highlights “Shared Mental Maps” as a fundamental tool in educational change leadership – a “Mental-Emotional Roadmap” enabling the team to visualise the entire journey, reduce ambiguity, and establish a “Collective Sense of Direction”. Clarity of vision in educational institutions must extend beyond strategy to include “Value Clarity”, how the change preserves and reinforces the core values of education, creating a “Value Bridge” that allows the team to

navigate change without abandoning educational principles (Mouazen *et al.*, 2019; Moosa *et al.*, 2023).

Collectively, these findings reveal that inspirational leadership in educational SMEs is “The Art of Transforming Challenges into Growth Pathways”. In these resource-constrained institutions, inspirational leadership becomes not only a strategic choice but a “Survival and Excellence Mechanism”, turning the constraints of small institutions into flexible advantages and transforming limited team energy into effective, purpose-driven focus.

### 5.11 The Role of the Inspirational Leaders in Driving Change Implementation and Management in Educational SMEs

Inspirational leadership plays a key role in driving successful Change Implementation and management within small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs). By establishing a clear vision and fostering an environment of trust, empowerment, and collaboration, inspirational leaders guide organisations through change processes while motivating employees and reducing resistance. In SMEs, where resources may be limited, inspirational leaders inspire innovation, adaptability, and resilience, ensuring the smooth execution of change initiatives. Figure 5.6 highlights the crucial role of inspirational leaders in CI and management, with 81.1% of respondents identifying their primary contribution as improving effective implementation. This underscores the importance of inspirational leaders in driving successful change through a compelling vision, fostering a positive culture, and engaging employees throughout the process (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023). A further 10.8% noted managing change resistance as a key role, emphasising the importance of open communication, trust, and empathy. The “Others” category (8.1%) suggests additional roles such as enhancing team cohesion and promoting continuous improvement.

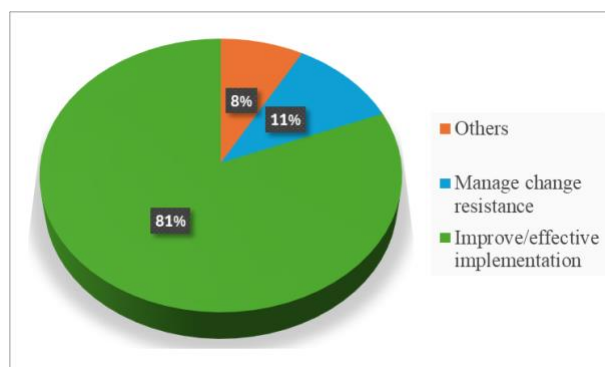


Figure 5:5 The Role of Inspirational Leaders in Driving Change Implementation and Management in Educational SMEs

The 81.1% majority demonstrates a clear awareness of the transformative role of inspirational leaders, where their contribution is not limited to leading the process but extends to creating “Proactive Change Readiness”. In SMEs, where structures are less complex and relationships more direct, the inspirational leader possesses a unique ability to transform change from an emergency event into a “Natural Organisational Trajectory” by integrating the values of innovation and resilience into the cultural fabric of the organisation. This effectiveness stems from “Adaptive Contextual Intelligence”, enabling the leader to design change strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of SMEs, turning resource limitations into catalysts for creativity and direct personal relationships into opportunities for rapid trust-building.

Interviewee No. 13 stated:

“Inspirational leadership has a direct and positive impact on our performance. When leaders inspire us, they create a sense of purpose and vision that motivates employees to do their best”.

This reveals the deep psychological mechanism through which inspirational leadership operates, creating a “Purpose Connection” between individuals and the organisation. In the context of change, this connection transforms into “Moral Armour” that protects employees from the temptation to resist and motivates them to embrace change as part of their professional identity, building “Collective Psychological Capital” composed of trust, resilience, optimism, and hope (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012).

Interviewee No. 19 highlighted the role of innovation:

“Inspirational leadership can foster a culture of innovation, which is critical to the success of SMEs in the education sector”.

This underscores the crucial role of inspirational leadership in transforming organisational culture from “status quo preservation” to “proactive innovation”. In resource-constrained educational SMEs, the inspirational leader designs an “Innovation Ecosystem” ensuring continuity and sustainability of innovation by reframing risk, where fear of failure is transformed into curiosity for experimentation, and anxiety about the unknown becomes enthusiasm for exploration (Mouazen et al., 2023).

Interviewee No. 21 further observed:

“The impact of inspirational leadership on performance is clear, especially with regard to employee morale and retention”.

This reveals the reciprocal relationship between inspirational leadership and job stability, where the former builds “Emotional Loyalty” that shields the organisation against staff turnover. During change, this loyalty becomes a “stabilisation tool” maintaining core

competencies and ensuring continuity of performance. Inspirational leadership thus works to “enrich social capital” by strengthening networks of trust and collaboration, guaranteeing continuity of performance and facilitating change implementation with minimal psychological and organisational cost (Cameron and Green, 2019; Aldabbas, 2021).

Collectively, these findings reveal that inspirational leadership in educational SMEs operates as a “Three-Dimensional Integrative Model”: a motivational dimension building the driving force for change; a cultural dimension creating an environment that nurtures innovation; and a stabilising dimension maintaining organisational balance throughout the journey. The dynamic interaction between these dimensions creates “Comprehensive Transformative Capacity”, enabling institutions not only to implement change successfully but to transform it into a platform for sustainable excellence in the rapidly evolving educational landscape.

### 5.12 The Role of Inspirational Leadership in Enhancing Value Creation in Educational SMEs

Inspirational leadership is crucial in enhancing Value Creation (VC) within educational SMEs by aligning organisational goals with the needs of staff and students. Through clear vision, motivation, and collaboration, these leaders foster innovation and continuous improvement in teaching and learning. This approach not only boosts OP but also drives sustainable growth, ensuring the delivery of high-quality education and creating long-term value for the institution and its stakeholders. Figure 5.7 illustrates the participants’ responses about The Role of Inspirational Leadership in Enhancing Value Creation (VC) in Educational SMEs.

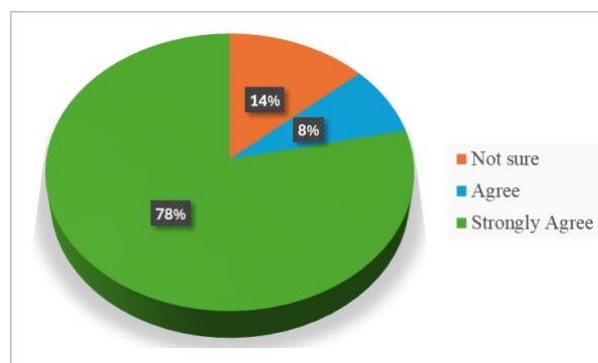


Figure 5:6 The Role of Inspirational Leadership in Enhancing Value Creation in Educational SMEs

Figure (5.7), illustrating the role of inspirational leaders in improving Value Creation (VC) at small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) reveals strong support, with 78.4% of respondents strongly agreeing that such leadership enhances Value Creation (VC).

Inspirational leaders are seen as essential in fostering innovation, engagement, and OP by motivating and empowering teams.

This result demonstrates a firm conviction that inspirational leadership represents the “intrinsic driver” for creating value in small and medium educational institutions. This role is not limited to enhancing operational efficiency alone but extends to creating what can be called “intrinsic value added,” manifested in improving the quality of educational outputs, consolidating institutional reputation, and building qualified human capital. The inspirational leader here does not merely manage resources but transforms them into sustainable values by linking the strategic vision with the real needs of students and the community.

This analysis delves deeper to reveal that value creation in this context is a “value multiplier” process that begins with inspiring individuals and ends with maximising societal impact. The inspirational leader, by empowering and motivating teachers, not only raises their professional performance but also creates a multiplying effect reflected in the quality of student learning, generating a connected chain of values that ultimately translates into a sustainable competitive advantage for the institution. This aligns with what Faridian *et al.* (2023) indicated regarding the role of transformational leadership in fostering a culture of trust and open communication. Faridian *et al.* (2023) supports this view, showing that transformational leadership fosters a culture of trust, open communication, and VC. However, 21.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty, which may reflect varying leadership effectiveness across different educational contexts.

This uncertainty rate (21.6%) reflects the phenomenon of “Contextual Disparity” in the effectiveness of inspirational leadership across different educational institutions. This disparity does not necessarily indicate a failure of inspirational leadership itself but may point to the presence of “Disruptive Mediating Factors” in the organisational or external environment. In some contexts, inspirational leadership may encounter structural or cultural barriers that prevent its potential from being translated into tangible value.

This finding is supported by what Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) and Al-Hadrawi (2023) noted regarding the dependence of leadership’s impact on value creation on institutional culture and external factors. This analysis extends to suggest that the success of inspirational leadership in creating value is conditional on the “Contextual Fit” between the leadership style and the nature of the institution’s internal and external environment. A leader who inspires in one context may not succeed in another, necessitating the development of “Leadership Agility” that enables adaptation of their style to varying contextual demands.

Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) and Al-Hadrawi, (2023), suggested that the impact of leadership on VC can depend on institutional culture and external factors. Overall, the data emphasises that inspirational leadership is crucial for promoting innovation, clear vision, and a culture of collaboration, which together drive sustainable improvements in performance.

These combined findings reveal that inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions is an “Integrated Value Creation Model” that combines strategic, cultural, and human dimensions. It creates value not only through innovation and a clear vision but also by building “Value Capital,” which integrates committed human capital, trust-based social capital, and cultural capital that supports continuous learning. This integration ensures not only the achievement of sustainable performance improvements but also the establishment of a “Value Ecosystem” that enables the institution to thrive in the complex and fast-paced educational landscape, thereby fulfilling its educational mission with the highest levels of quality and effectiveness.

### **5.13 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research highlights the transformative role of inspirational leadership in driving change and enhancing Organisational Performance (OP) within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Saudi Arabia educational sector. The research underscores the significant impact of both external factors, such as government policies, economic conditions, and societal expectations, and internal factors, including Organisational Culture (OC), resource allocation, and employee readiness. By addressing these factors, inspirational leaders can create a shared vision, foster collaboration, and motivate employees to embrace change and innovation. The findings reveal that inspirational leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach but must be tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities of each organisation, particularly in resource-constrained and flexible environments like educational SMEs.

The research emphasises the role of leaders in fostering a culture of trust, inclusivity, and innovation. Inspirational leadership aligns employees’ personal values with organisational goals, creating a sense of purpose that transcends individual tasks – an alignment especially critical in the education sector, where employees are deeply invested in delivering quality education. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that inspirational leadership serves as an intrinsic driver of Value Creation (VC), enabling institutions to maximise their human and social capital and translate leadership effectiveness into sustainable educational outcomes that benefit both the institution and its wider community. Moreover, effective Change Management (CM), supported by inspirational leadership, leads to better performance outcomes, including

higher employee satisfaction, organisational efficiency, and adaptability – vital qualities for navigating external pressures and ensuring that SMEs remain competitive and sustainable.

While offering valuable insights, the research acknowledges limitations such as its relatively small sample size and reliance on qualitative data, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future research could address these gaps by incorporating larger, more diverse samples and quantitative methods to explore the relationships between leadership, Change Management (CM), and performance more rigorously. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how leadership styles evolve and their long-term effects on organisational success. As the Saudi Arabia educational sector continues to evolve, the insights from this research contribute to the broader understanding of leadership's role in fostering innovation, resilience, and sustainable growth in SMEs.

## **Chapter Six: Discussion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This Chapter serves as the core of any research study, where the findings are analysed, interpreted, and contextualized considering the existing body of knowledge. In this Chapter, the research findings will be thoroughly examined in relation to the objectives of the study, the theoretical frameworks employed, and the research questions posed at the outset. This Chapter will also seek to establish connections between the empirical results and previous studies, while highlighting the implications of these findings in the context of educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

In this study, the focus was on exploring the Impact of Inspirational Leadership on Implementing and Managing Change. Furthermore, the study's insights into the challenges and successes faced by educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia will be addressed. These insights will provide a deeper understanding of the unique environment in which these institutions operate and the specific factors that either facilitate or hinder effective Change Management (CM).

The discussion will also reflect on the implications of these findings for both theory and Practice. By integrating Inspirational Leadership into CM strategies, educational SMEs can potentially enhance their ability to navigate the complexities of change while fostering a culture of innovation, commitment, and shared vision. Practical recommendations for leaders in educational SMEs will be provided, focusing on how they can leverage Inspirational Leadership to achieve sustainable transformation.

Finally, the limitations of the study will be discussed, along with directions for future research to further explore the intersection of leadership and CM in educational settings. The Chapter aims to contribute valuable insights into the field of educational leadership and CM, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabia Vision 2030, which emphasises the need for innovation and transformation in the country's education sector.

### **6.2 The Impact of Internal and External Environmental Factors on Leadership Ability in Inspiring and Implementing Change**

Environmental factors, both internal and external, form a complex fabric that directly affects the effectiveness of leadership in small and medium educational institutions. To achieve the first objective of the research, this section seeks to analyse this dynamic interaction and reveal how these factors shape leaders' ability to inspire and successfully lead change processes.

### **6.2.1 The Interaction Between External Factors and Leadership Effectiveness in Change Management and Implementation**

The study reveals that the external environment represents a real test of inspiring leadership effectiveness, with results showing that 59.5% of participants acknowledge its positive impact, while 73% indicated its direct influence on change implementation. Economic fluctuations as illustrated by (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023) test leaders' ability to maintain team resilience and focus on strategic goals amid limited resources. In the Saudi context, Vision 2030 represents a dynamic framework that inspiring leaders can transform from mere mandatory requirements into a platform for innovation and change leadership. Leadership in educational SMEs is significantly influenced by external factors such as economic conditions, government policies, technological advancements, and societal changes. Inspirational leadership, rooted in transformational approaches, is critical for addressing these challenges effectively.

The qualitative analysis reveals that the external environment plays a significant role in shaping inspirational leadership within small and medium-sized educational institutions in Saudi Arabia, with 59.5% of participants acknowledging its positive influence. External factors, such as government regulations, educational policies, market competition, and economic conditions, present both opportunities and challenges for leaders. While some participants highlighted the motivational impact of a supportive external environment, others noted that external constraints, such as regulatory changes and economic instability, can hinder leaders' ability to inspire and innovate. The findings align with existing literature, suggesting that leadership styles, including transformational leadership, must adapt to external demands while maintaining a focus on internal motivation and growth. Balancing these external influences with strong internal leadership capabilities is crucial for fostering an inspiring and innovative Organisational Culture (OC).

As evidenced in Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2, Economic fluctuations require leaders to make tough decisions regarding resources, staffing, and infrastructure, while maintaining team resilience and focus on long-term goals (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023). Similarly, transformational leadership is vital for sustaining morale and motivation during financial instability (Nguyen and Tran, 2023).

Government policies, including regulatory changes and funding adjustments, demand adaptability (Graves *et al.*, 2023). As evidenced in Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2, Leaders inspire teams to view such shifts as opportunities can drive innovation and alignment with institutional goals (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Arshad *et al.*, 2023). For example, policies promoting

digital learning tools can be leveraged by transformational leaders to enhance educational outcomes (Graves *et al.*, 2023). Also, policies significantly influence leadership in educational SMEs, shaping the strategies and practices leaders adopt to achieve organisational goals. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, Vision 2030 has introduced reforms prioritizing education, innovation, and private sector growth, compelling SME leaders to align their objectives with these national goals. Policies around funding, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance can either enable or constrain leadership effectiveness, as they dictate the operational environment and resources available (Ololube, 2013; Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018). Technological advancements are a vital external factor shaping leadership in educational SMEs. Leaders must not only stay informed about emerging technologies but also motivate their teams to embrace and implement these innovations effectively. As evidenced in Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.8, disruptions like e-learning platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) demand leaders can communicate the benefits of technology and inspire teams to integrate these tools into teaching and administrative processes. Additionally, inspirational leadership plays a critical role in addressing resistance to technology adoption, fostering a supportive and motivated environment during transitions (Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019; Busse and Weidner, 2020; Gallup, 2020). This approach ensures successful adaptation and enhances organisational outcomes. Also, Societal changes, including shifts in values related to inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability, also influence the leadership landscape. Savin-Baden and Major, (2023) found that Inspirational leaders recognise these societal shifts can guide their institutions to adopt more inclusive practices and policies. Graves *et al.* (2023) suggest that leaders foster a culture of inclusivity and sustainability can inspire their teams to align with these societal trends, thereby increasing employee satisfaction and student engagement.

The effectiveness of leadership in educational SMEs is influenced and mediated by external environmental factors, including economic trends, technological advancements, government policies, and societal shifts.

The qualitative analysis reveals that a disconnect between leadership approaches and external changes diminishes effectiveness, leading to disengagement and resistance to change, failure to address technological or societal shifts can negatively affect institutional performance and morale.

External pressures, such as abrupt policy changes or global trends, add complexity to leadership in SMEs. Leaders must navigate uncertainties with agility and innovation, balancing local and international influences to stay competitive (Graves *et al.*, 2023; Gachira and Ntara, 2024; Sung and Kim, 2021; Kim and Lee, 2021; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018). Without adequate preparation

for these challenges, leaders may struggle to implement inclusive and sustainable practices, reducing organisational success and satisfaction.

Educational SMEs face significant challenges in navigating a dynamic external environment that influences CI and management. Key external factors (economic conditions, technological advancements, government policies, and societal changes) shape the direction and effectiveness of organisational change processes.

The qualitative analysis reveals a strong consensus (73%) on its significant influence, particularly regarding regulatory changes, market demands, and technological advancements. Interviewees emphasised the need for adaptability, the pressure educational institutions in Saudi Arabia face due to these external factors. financial pressures require leaders to be more creative and inspiring, while legislative autonomy allows for innovation and effective leadership. These insights align with studies by Dempsey and Smith (2021) and Kivistö *et al.* (2020), which underscore the importance of responding quickly to external changes and fostering strong partnerships for sustained competitiveness. As evidenced in Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.4.4, Economic conditions play a critical role in determining the pace and nature of change. While economic downturns constrain budgets and hinder investments in new initiatives, periods of economic growth provide opportunities for transformational changes, such as expanding Programmes and upgrading facilities (Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Ouedraogo and Ouakouak, 2018; Caldwell and Liu, 2011).

Technological advancements demand substantial adjustments in leadership strategies and OC. The integration of tools like e-learning platforms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) necessitates curriculum updates, staff training, and resistance management (Huang, 2023; Self and Schraeder, 2009; Schultz, 2007).

Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.8 evidenced that Inspirational leadership is vital in overcoming resistance to technology adoption by fostering a culture of innovation and aligning technological changes with organisational goals (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021).

Government policies significantly impact CM through curriculum reforms, accreditation requirements, and funding shifts. Educational SMEs must adapt quickly to new regulatory frameworks while maintaining compliance and leveraging growth opportunities (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023). literature evidenced that Inspirational leaders guide teams through these transitions, ensuring alignment with policy changes and sustaining morale during periods of uncertainty (Graves *et al.*, 2023; Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021).

Societal changes, such as evolving expectations for diversity, inclusion, and sustainability, also drive change in educational SMEs. Literature emphasises that, Institutions face external pressures to address social justice, environmental responsibility, and inclusivity (Dempsey and Smith, 2021; Nässén and Rambaree, 2021). Inspirational leaders play a crucial role in motivating teams to embrace these shifts, fostering inclusive cultures, and steering institutions toward sustainable practices.

Accordingly, effective CM in educational SMEs requires leaders to adapt to external influences while maintaining focus on institutional goals. Inspirational leadership emerges as a pivotal factor in navigating these complexities, fostering resilience, innovation, and alignment with broader societal and environmental values.

### **6.2.2 The Interaction Between Internal Factors and Inspiring Leadership**

On the other hand, the internal environment emerges as a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness of inspiring leadership. An organisational culture supportive of innovation as noted by (Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019) provides fertile ground for the flourishing of inspiring leadership, whereas a rigid hierarchical culture according to (Graves *et al.*, 2023) turns the leader from a source of inspiration into a guardian of the status quo. The study showed that 10.8% of participants view the internal environment as an obstacle to inspiring leadership, emphasising the need for a supportive internal environment .

The internal environment of Educational Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) plays a crucial role in shaping the success of CI, leadership strategies, and organisational development. The effectiveness of inspirational leadership within these institutions is profoundly influenced by factors such as OC, communication structures, leadership styles, and staff engagement. Understanding the relationship between the internal environment and leadership effectiveness is essential for educational leaders aim to foster a thriving learning environment, promote continuous improvement, and ensure sustainable growth.

Organisational Culture is one of the most influential internal factors affecting inspirational leadership in educational SMEs. A culture that supports innovation, collaboration, and open communication provides a fertile ground for leaders to inspire and motivate their teams. As evidenced in the literature, when the culture is aligned with the core values of the institution, leaders can more effectively articulate and implement their vision, engaging their staff and students in the change process. Inspirational leaders in such environments foster a sense of ownership and purpose, making it easier to gain buy-in for new initiatives and ideas (Anderson

and Hoogerhuis, 2019; Conforto *et al.*, 2014; Busse and Weidner, 2020). On the other hand, Graves *et al.* (2023) emphasise that a rigid, hierarchical culture can stifle creativity and impede the flow of communication, making it challenging for leaders to inspire their teams. In such environments, leadership becomes less about motivation and more about maintaining control and enforcing rules.

Accordingly in educational SMEs with a strong emphasis on top-down decision-making, leaders often face resistance to change because staff members may feel disengaged or disconnected from the institution's broader mission. Therefore, creating a supportive OC where staff members feel valued and empowered is crucial for fostering inspiration and commitment to organisational goals.

The alignment of OC with inspirational leadership principles allows for the creation of a work environment where individuals are more likely to be motivated by shared goals and vision (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023; Shennar's, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014).

Effective communication within the internal environment is another key determinant of inspirational leadership in educational SMEs. Leaders foster clear, open communication channels are better equipped to engage their teams, create a shared vision, and promote a culture of transparency and trust. Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2.1, emphasise the importance of two-way communication in educational organisations, where leaders actively listen to the concerns, ideas, and feedback of staff members, thereby creating a collaborative and inclusive environment. This type of communication not only motivates employees but also enhances their sense of ownership and involvement in the institution's goals (Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Goleman, 2013; Zenger and Folkman, 2014).

So, lack of effective communication can lead to misunderstandings, misalignments, and frustration within teams, which in turn undermines the leadership's ability to inspire and drive change. In organisations where communication is top-down and does not encourage feedback or input from lower-level staff, leaders struggle to establish a sense of shared responsibility, and the potential for motivational leadership is reduced. Therefore, it is crucial for leaders in educational SMEs to create and maintain an open line of communication, which helps in translating inspirational leadership into action.

The synthesis of these perspectives reveals a dynamic interplay between leadership style, staff engagement, and organisational outcomes in educational SMEs. Inspirational leadership emerges as a key driver for engaging employees, fostering motivation, and overcoming challenges posed by disengagement. For leaders in such settings, adopting an empathetic, inclusive, and growth-oriented approach not only enhances staff engagement but also ensures

smoother implementation of change processes, ultimately contributing to the achievement of strategic objectives.

Leadership styles are deeply influenced by the internal environment, and they play a critical role in the effectiveness of inspirational leadership. In educational SMEs, transformational leadership is often the most effective in inspiring teams to embrace change. Literature review Chapter 2, Section 2.6, emphasise that transformational leaders, can articulate a compelling vision and building strong emotional connections with their staff, can effectively inspire action and foster organisational commitment. Such leaders are seen as role models motivate and encourage their staff to transcend self-interest for the greater good of the organisation (Mansaray, 2019; Chow, *et al*, 2017). However, Othman and Abdurrahman (2023) found that the internal environment often determines whether transformational leadership is possible. For example, in environments where staff feel unsupported or overburdened, leaders may struggle to maintain an inspirational and transformative approach. Instead, they may adopt more transactional leadership styles, focusing on rewards and punishments, which may not effectively drive organisational change.

In contrast, educational SMEs with a flexible and supportive internal environment enable leaders to leverage transformational leadership techniques more successfully. According to Graves *et al.* (2023), in such environments, leaders are better able to communicate their vision clearly, gain the trust of their staff, and inspire a sense of purpose and commitment toward achieving institutional goals.

Finally, the internal environment of educational SMEs plays a pivotal role in shaping the ability of inspirational leaders to drive change and foster organisational growth. Organisational Culture (OC), communication structures, staff engagement, and leadership styles all significantly impact the effectiveness of leadership in educational settings. Mouazen *et al.* (2023) and Graves *et al.* (2023) emphasise that a positive and supportive internal environment enables leaders to leverage their inspirational leadership skills to motivate staff, align organisational goals, and implement change effectively. Conversely, a restrictive internal environment can undermine leadership efforts, making it difficult to inspire teams and drive progress. Therefore, it is essential for leaders in educational SMEs to create and nurture an internal environment that supports collaboration, communication, and engagement, ensuring that inspirational leadership can flourish and effectively lead the organisation toward success. The findings of the qualitative analysis align closely with existing literature, which underscores the importance of the internal environment in shaping the effectiveness of inspirational leadership (Sacavem *et al.*, 2017; Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019). The majority of

respondents see the internal environment as supportive of leadership reflect the views of Huang (2023), Graves *et al.* (2023), and Mouazen *et al.* (2023), argue that a supportive Organisational Culture (OC) and clear communication structures are key to enabling transformational leadership.

However, the minority perspectives in the current study (10.8%) viewing the internal environment as an obstacle) also echo the challenges highlighted in the literature. Rigid, hierarchical cultures and poor communication can hinder leadership effectiveness, leading to disengagement and resistance to change. This finding supports the arguments of literature which discussed how organisational structures that do not prioritize communication, and empowerment can limit the potential of leadership styles to inspire and motivate (Sacavem *et al.*, 2017; Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019).

In summary, the study's results are consistent with the literature, suggesting that a positive Organisational Culture (OC), effective communication, staff engagement, and the alignment of leadership styles with the internal environment are crucial factors for the success of inspirational leadership in educational SMEs.

The internal environment of Educational Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) plays a pivotal role in the success or failure of Change Implementation (CI) and management. In these organisations, the ability to effectively adapt to and manage change hinges significantly on various internal factors, such as Organisational Culture (OC), leadership styles, communication channels, staff engagement, and resource availability.

Organisational Culture (OC) plays a pivotal role in the success of Change Implementation (CI). A culture that fosters flexibility, openness, and continuous learning tends to facilitate change by reducing resistance and encouraging adaptation to new processes. According to (Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.4.4.2), a culture that embraces innovation and encourages collaboration is vital for successful Change Management (CM), and adaptive Organisational Culture (OC) aligned with the broader goals of change is essential for sustainability. On the contrary, rigid, and traditional Organisational Culture (OC)s create resistance to change and hinder progress (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Huang, 2023; Schein, 2019).

The interviews echoed this dynamic, particularly in educational SMEs. Interviewee No. 10 pointed out that Organisational Culture (OC) in some institutions fosters resistance to change, with employees displaying insecurity about their roles. This resistance, according to the interviewees, stems from an established culture that resists shifting away from traditional ways of working.

This finding supports the literature as, Arshad *et al.* (2023) and Chen *et al.* (2021) emphasised that rigid cultures function as a significant barrier to Change Implementation (CI). Interviewees also expressed that fostering a flexible and supportive culture could alleviate these challenges. As Mouazen *et al.* (2023) suggest, organisations that encourage adaptability are better equipped to embrace and implement changes successfully.

Leadership style is critical in determining the success of Change Management (CM). Inspirational and transformational leadership, which focuses on providing a clear vision, fostering trust, and empowering staff, is often more effective during periods of organisational change (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023). as Graves *et al.* (2023) highlight that transformational leaders can inspire commitment and engagement, essential for overcoming resistance and ensuring smooth change processes. In contrast, transactional leadership, which focuses more on rewards and punishments, may be less effective, especially in environments requiring innovation and change.

This aligns with literature as discussed in (Chapter 3, Sub-Section 3.2.1), Litz and Scott (2017), Bott, (2015), and Bass and Riggio (2006) assertion that transformational leaders thrive when the internal culture is supportive and conducive to their vision, as such an environment fosters trust, creativity, and motivation among team members. However, the same interviewee also notes the challenges posed by internal pressures, such as deadlines and budget constraints, which can impede the ability to maintain an inspirational leadership style.

The qualitative analysis reinforced the importance of leadership in driving change, noting that leaders provide clear guidance and inspire confidence can positively impact the change process. They also highlighted that leaders must communicate the vision for change and motivate staff to align their efforts with organisational goals.

This finding aligns with the views expressed by Mouazen *et al.* (2023) and Graves *et al.* (2023), argue that transformational leadership is crucial in educational SMEs. By fostering trust and empowering staff, transformational leaders can enhance engagement and create a collaborative environment, thus supporting change efforts as discussed in Chapter 3, Sub-Section 3.2.1. This approach contrasts with transactional leadership, which may not effectively engage employees or foster the emotional commitment needed for successful change implementation (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023).

Employee engagement is another critical factor in Change Management (CM). As discussed in (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.9.1), Graves *et al.* (2023) suggest, engaged employees are more likely to adopt new practices and contribute positively to change initiatives. Empowerment, particularly through providing opportunities for decision-making and professional

development, enhances morale and job satisfaction, thus increasing engagement. Conversely, Dempsey and Smith (2021) argue that disengaged employees are more likely to resist change, making it harder to implement new initiatives effectively.

The interview results align with Graves *et al.* (2023), stress that engaged employees are key to the success of change initiatives. Empowerment fosters innovation and reduces resistance, as staff members feel valued and motivated to contribute to organisational goals. This finding underscores the importance of leadership in creating opportunities for staff involvement and professional growth, which can significantly enhance engagement and reduce resistance to change.

Clear and transparent communication is vital for the success of Change Implementation (CI). As evidenced in the literature (Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.1), lack of effective communication can result in misunderstandings, confusion, and resistance. A two-way communication model, where feedback from staff is actively sought and addressed, is crucial for building trust and fostering collaboration, involving stakeholders, including staff and students, early in the change process ensures that their perspectives are considered, which increases the likelihood of successful implementation (Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Sung and Kim, 2021; Kim and Lee, 2021; Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2018; Pasmore *et al.*, 2019).

Interviewees repeatedly mentioned that effective communication is key to overcoming resistance and ensuring that staff understand the rationale behind changes. Interviewees noted that when leaders communicated the benefits and reasoning behind changes, staff were more receptive. Moreover, several participants emphasised the importance of involving all stakeholders in the change process to gain their support.

This finding is supported literature as Involving staff in the planning stages of change initiatives is crucial. Transparent communication plays a vital role in reducing confusion and fostering trust, which are essential for creating a sense of ownership and commitment to the change process. Engaging key stakeholders early ensures that the change strategy aligns with the needs and expectations of those impacted (Huang, 2023; Arshad *et al.*, 2023).

Interviewees pointed out that a lack of resources often hinders the change process, this aligns with discussion in (Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.4.4.2), as the availability of resources, including financial, human, and technological, is crucial for the success of Change Management (CM), also resource constraints can create significant barriers to successful change. Without sufficient resources, even the best-planned change initiatives may fail (Huang, 2023; Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Bryson, 2018).

The interview findings closely mirror key themes identified in the literature on the impact of the internal environment on Change Management (CM) in educational SMEs. Organisational Culture (OC), leadership, employee engagement, communication, and resource availability all emerged as critical factors influencing the success of Change Implementation (CI). The findings highlight the importance of creating a flexible, adaptive culture, empowering and engaging employees, ensuring clear communication, and providing adequate resources. These insights underscore the need for educational SMEs to cultivate a supportive internal environment to effectively manage and implement change, as evidenced by both the literature and the interview results.

### **6.2.3 The Integration of Internal and External Factors and Inspirational Leadership in Implementing Change**

The study reveals that internal and external environmental factors do not operate in isolation from one another but interact dynamically to form an integrated fabric that affects the effectiveness and success of inspirational leadership in driving change. The inspirational leader in small and medium educational institutions does not face these factors as separate entities but deals with them as an integrated system requiring comprehensive understanding and balanced response.

This integration is clearly evident in the interaction between external government policies and internal organisational culture. Academic accreditation requirements and organisational changes as noted by (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023) represent external pressures, but the institution's response to these requirements is primarily determined by the flexibility of the internal organisational culture and its readiness to adapt. Institutions with a culture that supports innovation and collaboration according to (Anderson and Hoogerhuis, 2019) can transform these external demands into opportunities for improvement and development, whereas the same demands increase rigidity in institutions with a traditional hierarchical culture.

This integration is also manifested in the relationship between external technological advancement and internal human competencies. Emerging technologies such as e-learning platforms and artificial intelligence as explained by (Huang, 2023) represent external challenges that require an internal response embodied in the development of competencies and adjustment of organisational structures. The success of adopting these technologies depends not only on the technology itself but on the leadership's ability to prepare the organisational culture and human competencies to absorb this transformation, as highlighted by (Graves *et*

*al.*, 2023) in the necessity of creating a supportive environment for employees during transition periods.

The integration between external economic pressures and the organisation's internal resources represents another model of dynamic interaction. Economic fluctuations as highlighted by (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023) impose constraints on available resources, but inspirational leadership can compensate for this shortfall by optimising the use of internal human resources and fostering a culture of innovation and resilience. This aligns with the findings of (Nguyen and Tran, 2023) regarding the role of transformational leadership in maintaining morale during periods of financial hardship.

The analysis reveals that external societal changes and internal organisational values form an integrated duality affecting leadership effectiveness. Increasing societal expectations around inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability as observed by (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023) create a need for response, but the success of this response depends on the degree to which internal organisational values align with these external demands.

Finally, organisational resilience emerges as a vital bridge linking internal and external factors. The most successful organisations in leading change are those that develop organisational resilience enabling them to absorb external shocks while maintaining internal dynamism. This resilience is only achieved through inspirational leadership capable of interpreting external signals and transforming them into effective internal responses, as noted by (Arshad *et al.*, 2023) in emphasising the importance of balancing external influences with internal leadership capabilities.

Thus, it becomes clear that success in leading change does not rely on separating internal and external factors, but on understanding their complex interactions and building integrated strategies that leverage internal strengths to confront external challenges and transform them into opportunities for growth and development.

These results clearly confirm the achievement of the first objective of the study, as the analysis reveals that environmental factors (both internal and external) are not merely a fixed backdrop against which leadership operates, but rather active and interactive components that directly shape the scope of leaders' actions and determine the extent of their effectiveness in inspiring and leading change. The ability to motivate subordinates and successfully lead transformation processes, which the first objective seeks to evaluate, is fundamentally influenced by this complex interaction between external demands and internal capabilities.

The integration of these factors emerges as a central truth in understanding leadership effectiveness, showing that a leader's success in inspiring and leading change depends not only

on their personal skills but also on their capacity to manage this dynamic interaction. An effective inspirational leader is one who can transform external challenges into inspiring opportunities by leveraging internal strengths and building bridges of organisational resilience that enable them to lead change amid changing environmental conditions, thereby fulfilling the essence of the first objective by demonstrating that the assessment of leaders' capabilities must be based on an understanding of this integrated interactive system.

Finally, the study proves that environmental factors, in their various components, form an ecologically integrated system, where the success of leadership in inspiring and leading change is determined by its ability to comprehend and stimulate this ongoing interaction. This lays a solid foundation for the first objective, affirming that a comprehensive evaluation of the environment's impact on leadership must be based on an integrative perspective linking all these elements within a unified framework, proving that effective leadership is the result of proactive interaction with this complex ecosystem rather than merely a separate reaction to its challenges.

### **6.3 Focus Areas of Inspirational Leadership and Its Change-Driving Behaviours in Educational Institutions**

Inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions represents a fundamental driver of successful change processes, concentrating on a set of key areas and behaviours aimed at stimulating positive transformation. In pursuit of the study's second objective, this section seeks to identify these areas and uncover the mechanisms employed by inspirational leadership to encourage change, with an emphasis on crafting inspiring visions, empowering staff, and fostering a spirit of commitment and belonging.

The study reveals that motivation is the cornerstone of inspiring leadership strategies for driving change, with results showing that 45.9% of participants consider employee motivation the most important factor in ensuring successful change. This aligns with the literature (Cummings and Worley, 2023; Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023) regarding the role of transformational leadership in enhancing employee motivation and linking it to organisational goals. In line with the second objective, motivation emerges as one of the key behaviours emphasised by inspiring leadership, where leaders use various tools such as recognition, setting clear goals, and providing opportunities for professional growth to encourage their teams to embrace change.

Alongside motivation, leading by example stands out as a crucial behaviour in driving change, with 24.3% of participants highlighting its importance in gaining employees' trust and

encouraging their adoption of change. This corresponds with the findings of (Chen *et al.*, 2021) on the role of leading by example in enhancing credibility and building trust, thereby creating a supportive environment for transformation processes. In accordance with the second objective, leading by example represents a practical behaviour through which inspiring leadership translates its vision into exemplary practices.

Effective communication emerges as a fundamental implementation mechanism, with 18.9% of participants emphasising its critical role in facilitating change processes. This supports the literature (Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014) on the importance of transparent communication in building trust and reducing uncertainty during periods of transformation. Consistent with the second objective, effective communication serves as a practical tool for crafting inspiring visions and disseminating them among members of the organisation.

The study reveals an organic integration between these fields, where motivation, leading by example, and effective communication function as an integrated system to achieve change. An inspiring leader does not focus on a single area but strategically combines these fields, using motivation to create drive, leading by example to build credibility, and communication to ensure clarity and transparency. This reflects a comprehensive achievement of the second objective by uncovering the nature of the interaction between these fields and behaviours.

Formulating inspiring visions represents the strategic framework under which all other fields fall, as inspirational leadership uses a clear and motivating vision as a roadmap to guide change efforts. This aligns with what Battilana and Casciaro (2021) noted regarding the role of vision in directing change efforts and linking them to the organisation's values and strategic goals.

Empowering employees emerges as a vital executive mechanism, where inspirational leadership delegates authority, provides necessary resources, and creates a supportive environment for creativity and innovation. This supports what the literature has emphasised about the role of empowerment in enhancing commitment, belonging, and increasing the effectiveness of change processes.

Inspirational leadership is pivotal for the success of small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs). Leaders in these settings not only influence operational efficiency but also shape the culture, vision, and overall educational quality. This leadership style encourages innovation, adaptability, and commitment to excellence, all of which are essential for addressing the unique challenges faced by educational SMEs.

As discussed in the literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.6), Inspirational leadership is crucial for enhancing employee performance in small and medium-sized educational institutions. The literature suggests that leaders exhibit transformational Behaviours such as setting clear goals,

providing feedback, and encouraging professional growth are more likely to see improvements in employee performance (Bonau, 2017; Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014; Shennar's, 2015). Also, Alkahtani *et al.* (2023) and Battilana and Casciaro (2021), support this notion by demonstrating that effective leadership directly influences how employees meet organisational expectations and achieve goals.

The qualitative analysis aligns with these findings, showing that 45.9% of respondents consider improving employee performance a top priority. Leaders in educational SMEs are focused on providing the resources and support needed for employees to excel in their roles. This may include offering training opportunities, implementing performance evaluations, and creating a culture of accountability. The data confirms that performance improvement is central to leadership strategies in these institutions, consistent with the literature's emphasis on the importance of leadership in shaping organisational outcomes.

Employee satisfaction, although important, does not appear to be the primary focus of inspirational leadership in educational SMEs, according to the literature (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2), Inspirational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement within organisations, as transformational leaders boost motivation and create an environment of trust and innovation. Effective leadership contributes to improved OP by motivating employees and fostering a supportive work environment. Studies also emphasise the significance of transformational leadership in managing change, as it helps improve employee satisfaction by enhancing workplace culture and encouraging collaboration. Additionally, leadership plays a vital role in shaping OC, with supportive leadership raising morale and job satisfaction among employees (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023; Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Gifford and Bury, 2021).

The qualitative analysis reveals that only 8.1% of respondents prioritize employee satisfaction as the main goal of leadership. This contrast may be since leaders in SMEs tend to focus on performance and motivation as immediate outcomes, with satisfaction being a secondary effect. Burch and Guarana (2022) suggest that satisfaction often follows from a work environment where employees feel motivated and supported. In this sense, it may be that leaders in SMEs view satisfaction as a natural by-product of improving performance and motivation, rather than a standalone objective.

Employee motivation is a central theme in both the literature and the study results. As evidenced in (Chapter 2 Sub\_Section 2.9.1), The relationship between inspirational leadership and motivation is well-documented, with leaders inspire and empower their employees tending to foster higher levels of engagement and motivation (Cummings and Worley, 2023; Othman

and Abdurrahman, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Chen *et al.*, 2021; Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014).

The qualitative analysis strongly supports this view, with 45.9% of respondents emphasizing motivation as a key objective for leadership. Leaders in educational SMEs seem to prioritize motivating their employees by offering clear goals, recognition, and professional growth opportunities. This finding aligns with the broader understanding in the literature that motivation plays a critical role in achieving both high performance and organisational success. In conclusion, while employee satisfaction is important, the findings from the study suggest that improving performance and motivation are the primary concerns for inspirational leadership in SMEs.

Inspirational leadership plays a critical role in guiding organisations through times of change, especially in complex and dynamic environments. In the realm of Change Management (CM), inspirational leaders are those who motivate, empower, and guide their teams with a shared vision, fostering an atmosphere conducive to embracing change (Oreg and Berson, 2022). Inspirational leadership goes beyond transactional leadership, focusing on the emotional and motivational aspects of leadership to increase employee engagement and reduce resistance to change. Transformational leadership, a closely related concept, involves inspiring employees to achieve higher performance by appealing to their values and aspirations (Battilana and Casciaro, 2021). One key element of inspirational leadership is motivation. As evidenced in (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.9.1), Leaders inspire their teams can help employees feel more connected to the organisational goals and the changes required to achieve them. This motivational influence not only drives performance but also reduces resistance to change, as employees are more likely to trust leaders genuinely engage with their concerns (Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014). Additionally, leaders lead by example are seen as credible and trustworthy, which plays a crucial role in creating an environment where change is more likely to succeed (Chen *et al.*, 2021).

Communication is also vital in Change Management. Effective leaders communicate openly about the reasons for change, the processes involved, and the anticipated outcomes. Transparent communication fosters trust and reduce uncertainty, which is especially crucial during periods of organisational transformation (Shenhar, 2015; Zenger and Folkman, 2014). Furthermore, leaders are committed to the change process themselves set the tone for the rest of the organisation, encouraging employees to stay engaged and committed to the transformation journey (Cummings and Worley, 2023).

Successful leadership requires effective communication, emotional connection with followers, and a clear vision. Emotional Intelligence (EI), particularly self-awareness and empathy, enables leaders to inspire and guide followers toward organisational goals. When followers resonate with the leader's vision and future possibilities, their motivation significantly increases (Goleman, 2013; Zenger and Folkman, 2014; Nazim *et al.*, 2014; Holten, Hancock and Bøllingtoft, 2019).

According to the qualitative analysis most respondents (45.9%) emphasise that leadership's role in motivating employees is the most crucial factor in ensuring successful change. Additionally, 24.3% of respondents highlighted the importance of leaders "leading by example". This suggests that employees are more likely to accept and support changes when they observe their leaders practicing the Behaviours and attitudes that align with the desired transformation. Effective communication, noted by 18.9% of respondents, also plays a crucial role in facilitating change. Lastly, the "Others" category, accounting for 10.8% of responses, points to other contextual factors, such as Organisational Culture, external pressures, and the nature of the change, which may influence the effectiveness of inspirational leadership during times of transformation.

The findings of the qualitative analysis align closely with existing literature (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2) as leadership is a fundamental driver of organisational change, with leaders inspire their employees helping them overcome resistance and engage with the transformation process. When leaders lead by example, as it enhances trust and credibility, making employees more likely to embrace change, also transparent communication as a critical element of successful CM. Leaders can clearly articulate the reasons behind the change and provide consistent updates help reduce the anxiety and uncertainty that employees often experience during periods of organisational transformation (Cummings and Worley's, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Battilana and Casciaro, 2021).

Finally, the role of motivation in successful change implementation, highlighted by 45.9% of respondents in this study, echoes the findings of (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.9.1), as Chen *et al.* (2021), discuss the importance of transformational leaders in motivating employees to engage with and support change. Leaders inspire their teams to go beyond their self-interests and align their actions with the organisation's goals create a motivated workforce that is more likely to embrace change.

## **6.4 Practical Manifestations of the Impact of Inspirational Leadership on the Implementation and Management**

This section aims to achieve the third research objective through a comprehensive analysis of how the effects of inspirational leadership practically manifest during the stages of implementing and managing change, and by monitoring the tangible outcomes of this impact. By integrating the analyses presented in the previous sections, behavioural patterns and practical mechanisms that translate leadership inspiration into concrete results in the environment of small and medium educational institutions can be identified.

The study reveals that the practical impact of inspirational leadership is manifested through three interconnected loops: the motivational loop, which generates the driving energy for change; the communication loop, which ensures smooth execution; and the modelling loop, which embodies values and principles in a practical manner. This integration forms a dynamic system that guarantees the transformation of abstract vision into measurable and developable practices. Cummings and Worley (2023) also affirm that the effectiveness of leadership in change management depends on its ability to create this integration among the various behavioural components. The impact of inspirational leadership on CI and management in educational SMEs is profound, influencing various dimensions of organisational dynamics. Inspirational leaders play a pivotal role in driving change by motivating employees, facilitating clear and effective communication, and leading by example. Employee motivation serves as a core driver of change, with leaders inspire and engage their teams creating an environment that fosters adaptability and commitment. Effective communication is another critical factor, as it ensures that all members of the organisation are aligned with the vision for change, facilitating smoother transitions. Furthermore, leading by example, though supplementary, is significant in reinforcing the desired behaviours and attitudes within the organisation, ensuring that change is not only accepted but embraced. Together, these elements contribute to the successful management and implementation of change in educational SMEs.

### **Employee Motivation: A Core Driver of Change**

One of the most significant findings of the study is the dominant role of employee motivation in Change Management (CM), with 48.6% of respondents identifying it as the primary impact of inspirational leadership. This aligns with the broader leadership literature, where employee motivation is frequently identified as a crucial factor in successful change initiatives. According to (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2), leaders inspire and engage their teams foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the change process. In the context of educational SMEs,

where resources are often limited and external pressures may be high, inspirational leaders are able to cultivate an environment where employees feel invested in the success of the institution. This emotional commitment not only mitigates resistance to change but also encourages employees to go beyond their basic responsibilities, contributing to the overall success of the change initiative (Cummings and Worley, 2023; Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; DeRue *et al.*, 2020; Zenger and Folkman, 2014).

The motivational impact of inspirational leadership in SMEs can be particularly transformative. In the constrained environments typical of these institutions, where time and resources for professional development or large-scale initiatives are limited, employees may feel overwhelmed by the prospect of change. Inspirational leaders, however, can make change feel like an achievable goal by fostering a shared vision and reinforcing the value of the changes being implemented. This sense of collective purpose becomes a powerful tool for overcoming the natural resistance that often accompanies change (Mouazen *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the motivational influence of inspirational leadership is not just about encouraging staff to embrace change but about building a sustainable commitment to continuous improvement.

The study shows that motivation is not limited to the emotional aspect alone but transforms into a strategic tool to enhance organisational resilience one of the tangible outcomes that the third research objective seeks to monitor. In educational institutions facing resource constraints, inspirational leaders can turn challenges into opportunities for innovation by designing innovative motivational programmes based on moral appreciation and providing opportunities for professional growth. This is confirmed by Othman and Abdurrahman (2023), who state that resource-limited environments often produce creative patterns of motivation that surpass the impact of traditional material incentives.

### **Communication: A Key Facilitator of Change**

Another significant finding from the study is the importance of communication during the change process, with 21.6% of respondents highlighting improved communication as a crucial factor in successful change implementation. In educational SMEs, where multiple stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, and support staff engage in the change process, effective communication is vital for ensuring that everyone is on the same page. (Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.1), emphasise that transparent and consistent communication reduces uncertainty and helps stakeholders understand the rationale behind the changes. This understanding not only fosters a sense of inclusion but also makes it easier for employees to adapt to new systems, processes, and expectations (Moosa *et al.*, 2023; Arshad *et al.*, 2023; Huang, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021; Goleman, 2013; Zenger and Folkman, 2014).

For inspirational leaders, the ability to communicate a clear and compelling vision of change is essential. As highlighted in the interviews, leaders understand the principles of Change Management (CM) can create a roadmap that guides teams through the transition. By ensuring that employees are well-informed and have a clear understanding of how the changes will benefit both the institution and them, leaders can reduce the fear of the unknown and minimize resistance. Furthermore, clear communication helps to manage any anxieties that may arise, particularly when change involves restructuring, new technologies, or shifts in leadership styles.

In educational SMEs, where budgets for Training and Development (T&D) may be limited, ensuring that communication channels are open and effective becomes even more important. Leaders should actively seek feedback from staff, be transparent about the challenges involved in implementing change, and celebrate small successes along the way. This approach not only enhances the sense of collaboration but also strengthens the commitment to the overall change process.

Effective communication represents a practical mechanism to enhance acceptance of change a key indicator that the third research objective aims to analyse. By improving communication, the change process shifts from an imposed administrative decision to a collective, owned initiative. The study reveals that transparency in communication is not limited to conveying information but extends to creating safe dialogue spaces that enable employees to express their concerns and propose solutions. This approach aligns with what Moosa *et al.* (2023) indicated regarding the role of communication in building trust and reducing resistance, where employees become active partners in the change journey rather than passive recipients.

#### **Leading by Example: A Supplementary, yet Significant Factor**

While “leading by example” was mentioned by only 13.5% of the respondents as a direct impact of inspirational leadership on Change Management, its significance should not be overlooked. Leading by example is a cornerstone of transformational leadership theory and is considered by many scholars to be a vital element of successful leadership in times of change (Musaigwa, 2023). When leaders demonstrate adaptive Behaviours, willingness to learn, and an initiative-taking approach to overcoming obstacles, they set a powerful example for their teams.

In educational SMEs, where resources may be constrained, leaders take the initiative to demonstrate resilience and flexibility during change can inspire similar Behaviours in their employees. As noted by qualitative analysis, the importance of strategic planning in change processes cannot be overstated. Inspirational leaders plan meticulously and remain steadfast in

their vision can serve as role models for employees, showing them how to approach challenges with a solution-oriented mindset. The concept of “leading by example” also extends beyond work-related Behaviours to include values such as trust, respect, and a commitment to organisational goals. This comprehensive approach helps build a culture of accountability and shared responsibility, which is crucial for the successful implementation of change (Moosa *et al.*, 2023).

A leading by example model becomes a practical example to enhance the capacity for innovation one of the tangible indicators focused on in the third research objective. A leader who embodies the values of change becomes a catalyst for creativity and innovation among employees. The study shows that institutions led by inspiring figures record higher levels of adoption of innovative educational practices and the development of creative curricula. This is supported by Musaigwa (2023), who states that leadership by example is not limited to mimicking behaviours but extends to igniting the spirit of innovation and creating an organisational culture that encourages experimentation and calculated risk-taking.

### **The Role of Inspirational Leadership in Shaping the Change Process**

The overall role of inspirational leadership in shaping the change process in educational SMEs can be seen through its focus on fostering an adaptive culture, encouraging emotional engagement, and aligning strategic goals with operational realities. The qualitative analysis reveals that inspirational leadership not only motivates employees but also provides them with the tools to navigate change effectively. By creating a roadmap for change and engaging employees emotionally, leaders help ensure that the change process is not seen as an external imposition but as an opportunity for growth and innovation.

The ability of inspirational leaders to engage their teams emotionally and provide them with a sense of purpose is vital in the context of educational SMEs, where challenges such as limited financial resources and high staff turnover may otherwise impede progress. As noted by qualitative analysis, having a clear direction and a well-articulated vision for the future is essential in guiding teams through change. Inspirational leaders provide this clarity, making it easier for employees to understand their role in the broader organisational transformation.

Moreover, the study suggests that the impact of inspirational leadership is not confined to individual motivation or communication but extends to creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This focus on growth and development is especially critical in the educational sector, where the success of the institution depends not only on administrative leadership but also on the willingness of faculty and staff to embrace new methods, technologies, and educational paradigms.

The findings reveal that the cumulative impact of inspirational leadership manifests in building sustainable organisational capacities that go beyond the success of the current change process to establish an infrastructure for continuous transformation. Institutions with inspirational leadership develop organisational resilience against future resistance to change, becoming more capable of anticipating changes rather than merely responding to them. This practical embodiment of the capacity for innovation reflects a tangible achievement of one of the key indicators in the third research objective.

The outcome of the impact of inspirational leadership on CI and management in SMEs is evident in the organisation's ability to effectively navigate and sustain transformation. Inspirational leaders facilitate effective CI by fostering a culture of trust, commitment, and resilience among employees, ensuring that the change process is smooth and well-received. By addressing challenges proactively and guiding their teams through uncertain times, these leaders can reduce resistance to change. Managing resistance becomes a crucial aspect of the change process, as inspirational leaders inspire confidence and promote a positive outlook toward the future. Through their actions, leaders mitigate apprehension, engage employees in the process, and ultimately lead the organisation toward successful change outcomes.

### **Effective Change Implementation**

Effective Change Implementation (CI) refers to the process of successfully executing change initiatives, ensuring that organisational goals are achieved, and the transformation is fully integrated into the Organisational Culture (OC). As evidenced in (Chapter 2, Section 2.11), Inspirational leaders play a critical role in this area by motivating and guiding their teams through the complexities of the change process (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Cummings and Worley, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Oreg and Berson, 2022; Battilana and Casciaro, 2021; Gifford and Bury, 2021).

Effective CI is the most significant outcome, as indicated in the qualitative analysis by 73% of respondents, is the enhancement of effective CI through inspirational leadership. This outcome highlights the pivotal role that leaders play in ensuring the success of organisational transformations. Inspirational leadership helps drive successful change by fostering a clear vision, motivating employees, and aligning their efforts with organisational goals.

This aligns with the literature (Chapter 2, Section 2.11), as Inspirational Leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering effective change within SMEs. Transformational leaders, inspire and motivate employees, are particularly effective in driving organisational change. And the role of leadership is critical in shaping the OC and aligning it with change efforts. Inspirational leaders facilitate a shared vision, making the change process more coherent and accepted by

the workforce, also transformational leaders enhance employee motivation, which in turn boosts OP during periods of change (Mouazen *et al.*, 2023; Cummings and Worley, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Oreg and Berson, 2022; Battilana and Casciaro, 2021; Gifford and Bury, 2021).

In the context of SMEs, where resources are often limited and organisational structures can be less formal, the impact of leadership on the change process is particularly pronounced. Inspirational leaders set the tone for the organisation, demonstrating how change can be managed constructively and effectively. Battilana and Casciaro (2021) support this finding, suggesting that leaders inspire their teams help enhance both performance and adaptability. In educational SMEs, effective implementation is crucial as the organisation must balance the demands of change with its educational mission. Inspirational leaders guide the transition by providing clarity, setting realistic goals, and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to support the change process.

By focusing on effective Change Implementation, leaders in educational SMEs can create an environment where employees are motivated to contribute to the change process, thus improving OP. The clear communication of goals and the involvement of staff in the decision-making process are key strategies that help to ensure smooth and successful change implementation. Leaders inspire their teams can mitigate challenges during transitions and minimize disruptions, leading to long-term organisational stability.

### **Managing Resistance to Change**

As evidenced in (Chapter 2, Section 2.11), Resistance to change is one of the most significant challenges that leaders face in SMEs. However, inspirational leaders can turn this challenge into an opportunity by addressing the underlying causes of resistance and creating an environment that encourages collaboration and trust (Garman, 2010; Maire and Collerette, 2011; Gilley *et al.*, 2009; Winch *et al.*, 2012).

Managing resistance to change is another key benefit of inspirational leadership, as reported by 16.2% of respondents. Resistance to change is a common challenge that organisations face during periods of transformation. Employees may resist change due to fear of the unknown, concerns about job security, or a perceived lack of support. Inspirational leaders are particularly adept at addressing these concerns by fostering open communication, building trust, and providing emotional support.

For educational SMEs, managing resistance is especially important, as faculty and staff may have deeply entrenched beliefs about how education should be delivered. Inspirational leaders help employees understand the rationale behind change, engage them in the process, and

provide the necessary support to make the transition smoother. By addressing resistance early and maintaining a focus on collaboration, leaders can increase the likelihood of successful change adoption.

To overcome resistance to change Literature emphasised that, leaders inspire trust and offer a clear vision can significantly reduce resistance. They engage employees in the change process, making them feel like active participants rather than passive recipients of change. Moreover, Inspirational leaders foster an innovative Organisational Culture (OC) where employees are encouraged to contribute ideas and feel valued in the change process. This inclusion reduces fear and uncertainty, two primary sources of resistance (Oreg and Berson, 2022; Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023).

Training and Development (T&D), as emphasised in Literature by Huang (2023), are also critical tools for leaders to manage resistance. By equipping employees with the necessary skills and knowledge, leaders empower them to navigate the changes more effectively. Furthermore, leadership in educational SMEs, for instance, requires the strategic application of Change Management (CM) principles that reduce resistance by addressing concerns and providing support (Huang, 2023; Dempsey and Smith, 2021).

Accordingly, Resistance to change in educational SMEs is a significant challenge, but inspirational leaders can effectively manage this by addressing its root causes and fostering an environment of trust, collaboration, and support. These leaders engage employees in the change process, alleviating fears related to the unknown, job security, and perceived lack of support. By creating a clear vision for the future, building an innovative culture, and involving employees in the transition, inspirational leaders reduce uncertainty and transform resistance into active participation. Additionally, offering Training and Development (T&D) opportunities equips employees with the necessary skills to navigate changes, further reducing resistance and promoting smoother adoption of new practices.

It can be said that the practical manifestations of inspirational leadership in implementing and managing change constitute an integrated system of interconnected influences that comprehensively achieve the third research objective. Motivation generates the driving energy, communication ensures smoothness, and role modelling embodies practical application, resulting in tangible improvements in organisational resilience, increased acceptance of change, and enhanced innovative capacity. These outcomes not only demonstrate the effectiveness of inspirational leadership but also provide a practical framework upon which leaders in small and medium educational institutions can rely to transform challenges into opportunities for growth and excellence.

## 6.5 The Role of Environmental Factors in the Relationship Between Inspirational Leadership and Change Implementation

The relationship between inspirational leadership practices and the success of change implementation in small and medium educational institutions is not straightforward but appears to be shaped by a complex set of internal and external environmental factors. Rather than operating as a fixed background, these factors seem to play distinct and influential roles in conditioning how leadership translates into outcomes – a pattern that emerged consistently across the qualitative findings and is explored further in light of the theoretical literature. It is important to note that, given the qualitative nature of this study, the following discussion identifies and explores possible conditioning and facilitative mechanisms rather than confirming causal mediation or moderation in a statistical sense.

**External Environmental Factors as Conditioning Variables.** The findings suggest that external factors, such as government policies, economic fluctuations, technological developments, and societal changes, appear to shape the conditions under which inspirational leadership operates, either strengthening or limiting its effectiveness during change processes.

**Supportive legislation and policies.** When the external environment is supportive, as illustrated by Saudi Vision 2030, with its focus on innovation and educational transformation, it appears to create an enabling framework within which inspirational leadership can operate more effectively. Leaders who are able to harness this national vision and apply it practically within their institutions find a more receptive environment for inspiring their teams and driving change. Participants' responses reflected this pattern, with 59.5% acknowledging the positive influence of the external environment on their change efforts. In this context, government policy does not itself drive change but appears to create conditions in which the effectiveness of inspirational leadership may be enhanced.

**External Constraints and Pressures.** Conversely, a turbulent or restrictive external environment appears to place practical and psychological obstacles on leaders. Sudden regulatory constraints or economic instability (Othman and Abdurrahman, 2023) may make it harder for even highly inspiring leaders to maintain team motivation and focus on a long-term vision, as immediate operational pressures take precedence. This pattern was reflected in the 10.8% of participants who identified the external environment as an obstacle to change, suggesting that the nature and severity of external pressures may influence the degree to which inspirational leadership succeeds during change processes.

**Internal Environmental Factors as Facilitative Variables.** While external factors appear to shape the broader conditions of leadership, internal factors seem to play a facilitative role - that is, they appear to represent the organisational mechanisms through which leadership efforts may or may not reach successful outcomes. These are explored below as possible facilitative pathways rather than confirmed mediating variables.

**Organisational culture as a facilitative mechanism.** The findings suggest that OC may represent one of the most significant internal factors. Inspirational leadership that promotes vision and creativity appears to face greater difficulty in institutions with rigid hierarchical cultures that resist change (Graves et al., 2023), as such cultures may impede the translation of leadership intent into action. Conversely, a flexible culture that supports collaboration and continuous learning, as discussed in change management literature (Schein, 2019), appears to facilitate the realisation of leadership efforts, providing an environment in which change can take root. Participants' accounts of employee resistance rooted in stable, entrenched cultures lend support to the significance of this internal factor.

**Communication Structures and Employee Engagement.** Similarly, effective communication channels and employee engagement appear to play a significant facilitative role. Inspirational leadership unsupported by transparent, two-way communication (Arshad et al., 2023; Goleman, 2013) may lose much of its effectiveness, as vision goes misunderstood, concerns go unaddressed, and change is resisted due to ambiguity and mistrust. The finding that 18.9% of participants regarded communication as a critical success factor supports the significance of this pathway. Furthermore, employee engagement, built through empowerment and participation in decision-making, appears to be the mechanism through which leadership motivation may translate into genuine commitment to change, though the precise nature of this process warrants further quantitative investigation.

**The Dynamic Interaction Between External and Internal Factors.** The findings suggest that these conditioning and facilitative roles do not operate independently but interact in complex ways. Some factors appear to operate in both capacities simultaneously. Technological advancement, for example, may create external competitive pressure that increases the urgency for inspirational leadership, while also requiring facilitation through internal factors, such as a culture that supports innovation, adequate resources for training, and effective communication to reduce resistance, before change can be successfully implemented (Huang, 2023). This complexity illustrates why the relationship between leadership and change outcomes in educational SMEs cannot be reduced to a simple linear model.

These findings contribute to the fourth research objective by presenting an exploratory account of how environmental factors – both internal and external – appear to shape the conditions under which inspirational leadership may translate into successful change in small and medium educational institutions in Saudi Arabia. Externally, contextual factors appear to define the conditions and constraints within which leadership operates; internally, organisational factors appear to represent the pathways through which leadership efforts may reach successful outcomes. Together, these insights suggest that developing inspiring leadership skills alone may be insufficient, and that proactive attention to the internal environment, including culture and communication, alongside responsiveness to external conditions, may be important for ensuring that inspirational leadership contributes to sustainable change aligned with the objectives of Vision 2030. These findings are exploratory in nature and point towards avenues for future quantitative research to test these relationships more rigorously.

## **6.6 Inspirational Leadership as a Catalyst for Creating Holistic Value in Small and Medium Educational Institutions**

The contribution of inspirational leadership in educational institutions is not limited to effectively leading the change process; it extends to being the primary driver for creating comprehensive and sustainable value. The success of an inspirational leader in implementing and managing change as highlighted by qualitative results were 81.1% of participants saw the most important contribution as improving the effective implementation of change is not an end in itself, but a strategic means to achieve deeper forms of value. The inspiring vision and positive culture fostered by the leader, which motivates employees to embrace transformation, are the very foundations for creating value that goes beyond direct financial profit.

Inspirational leadership plays a critical role in the successful implementation and management of change, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which face unique challenges in adapting to evolving market and organisational demands. Two essential aspects of this leadership role are effective Change Implementation (CI) and managing resistance to change.

The qualitative analysis found that 81.1% of respondents identifying their main contribution as improving effective CI. Inspirational leaders drive success through a compelling vision, fostering a positive culture, and engaging employees. Also emphasised that Inspirational leadership has a direct and positive impact on our performance, when leaders inspire us, they create a sense of purpose and vision that motivates employees to do their best. Additionally, 10.8% of respondents highlighted managing resistance to change, pointing to the importance

of communication, trust, and empathy. The remaining 8.1% mentioned roles such as enhancing team cohesion and promoting continuous improvement. Interviewee opinions further stressed the tangible effects of inspirational leadership on performance, stating, “The impact of inspirational leadership on performance is clear, especially with regard to employee morale and retention”. Overall, inspirational leadership not only boosts employee motivation and engagement but also fosters innovation, helping SMEs navigate change effectively, sustain morale, and maintain high performance, particularly in the educational sector.

The mechanism through which inspirational leadership translates success in change management into tangible value lies in enhancing job engagement and empowerment. When a leader creates a sense of purpose and involves employees in shaping the vision, as noted in the literature (Chen *et al.*, 2021), they not only improve the institution’s resilience to change but also unleash creativity and innovation. This innovation is the fuel that drives the creation of educational value through the development of innovative educational programmes and the improvement of learning outcomes, which in turn positively impacts the institutional reputation.

According to Chapter 2, Section 2.11, Inspirational leaders in SMEs are instrumental in driving effective Change Implementation. By setting a compelling vision, they align the OC and goals with the necessary changes, motivating employees to embrace the transformation. Innovation in OC is key to the success of change initiatives, and inspirational leaders are pivotal in fostering this innovation by encouraging a forward-thinking environment. Furthermore, transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and support, enhances the effectiveness of Change Implementation (CI) by cultivating commitment and engagement among employees (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Battilana and Casciaro, 2021).

An effective CI process in SMEs often involves leaders empower employees and foster an open communication culture as evidenced in Chapter 2, Section 2.11 (Self and Schraeder, 2009, Carter *et al.*, 2021). For instance, Chen *et al.* (2021) stress that transformational leadership enhances employee engagement, which is a critical factor for change success. When employees are motivated and committed to the leader’s vision, the organisation is more likely to experience smoother transitions during change processes.

One of the key challenges during change initiatives is overcoming resistance, which can hinder progress and create disruption. Inspirational leaders, however, play a crucial role in managing this resistance. Their ability to build trust, communicate transparently, and show empathy helps in alleviating concerns and reducing uncertainty among employees (Maire and Collette,

2011; Winch *et al.*, 2012; Choi and Ruona, 2011; Garcia-Cabrera and Garcia-Barba Hernández, 2014). Oreg and Berson (2022) highlight that inspirational leaders foster an environment of psychological safety, which encourages employees to express concerns and engage with the change process rather than resist it.

Additionally, Cummings and Worley (2023) emphasise that managing resistance involves addressing both emotional and practical concerns. Inspirational leaders can mitigate resistance by actively involving employees in the decision-making process, as well as providing continuous support and reassurance. This approach fosters a sense of ownership among employees, which is essential in securing their buy-in for the change.

The prominent role of inspirational leadership in managing resistance to change (as highlighted by 10.8% of participants) is a direct investment in the social value of the organisation. By building trust, communicating transparently, and demonstrating empathy, it is not merely about overcoming a temporary organisational hurdle but about building social capital based on mutual respect and trust. This psychologically safe environment, emphasised by Oreg and Berson (2022), enhances the sense of belonging and workplace well-being, reducing staff turnover an important indicator of internal value and making the organisation an attractive environment for talent, thereby enhancing its reputation in the labour market.

Accordingly Inspirational leadership plays a vital role in the success of change initiatives in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially within the educational sector. These leaders are key to driving effective change by setting a clear vision and fostering a positive OC that motivates employees to embrace transformation. By creating a sense of purpose, inspirational leaders enhance employee engagement and performance. Additionally, they are adept at managing resistance to change, which is common during periods of organisational transformation. Their ability to communicate openly, build trust, and demonstrate empathy helps address concerns and reduce uncertainty. Inspirational leaders also involve employees in the change process, making them feel valued and empowered, which not only mitigates resistance but also fosters innovation. This inclusive approach strengthens employee commitment, ensuring smoother transitions and contributing to the long-term success of change initiatives.

The role of inspirational leadership in enhancing Value Creation (VC) at small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs) has an importance in driving organisational success through innovation, employee engagement, and high performance. As highlighted by Faridian *et al.* (2023), transformational leadership fosters a culture of trust and open communication, which are essential for VC. Inspirational leaders, by articulating a compelling vision and

empowering teams, motivate employees to take ownership of their work, leading to innovation and improved OP. These findings are further supported by qualitative analysis which reveals that Inspirational leadership not only drives innovation but also empowers teams to take ownership of their work, creating a sense of purpose that leads to higher engagement and improved outcomes.

The qualitative opinions of participants clearly support this linkage. participant No. 21, stated: the impact of inspirational leadership on performance is clear, especially regarding employee morale and retention, they were directly referring to non-financial dimensions of value. High employee morale is reflected in the quality of educational service provided to students (educational value), while improved retention rates reduce the costs associated with training new staff and preserve institutional memory (organisational value).

In line with these views, the qualitative analysis illustrates that 78.4% of respondents strongly agree that inspirational leadership enhances VC. This underscores the significant role of such leadership in driving the continuous development and performance improvement of educational institutions.

The ultimate result of this cumulative effect is the creation of comprehensive and integrated value. The success of inspirational leadership in effectively driving change leads to a more resilient and innovative institution. This institution offers higher educational value to students, thereby enhancing its reputation within the community (reputational value). The improved reputation attracts more students and partners, which strengthens financial sustainability (financial value). At the same time, a healthy and trust-based internal environment creates strong social value for employees and stakeholders. This is strongly supported by qualitative findings, with 78.4% agreeing that inspirational leadership enhances value creation.

However, the 21.6% of respondents expressed uncertainty indicate that the impact of inspirational leadership may not be uniform across all contexts.

Despite this clear consensus, the uncertainty rate (21.6%) reminds us that value creation is not an automatic process. The effectiveness of inspirational leadership in maximising value creation depends on the context. In institutions with a participatory culture that supports innovation, the impact of inspirational leadership peaks in creating multidimensional value. Meanwhile, in environments with centralised structures or scarce resources, inspirational leadership may face challenges in fully translating its success in change into sustainable institutional value, necessitating the adoption of leadership strategies tailored to this specific context.

Mintzberg *et al.* (2021) and Al-Hadrawi (2023) suggest that the effectiveness of leadership in creating value depends on various factors, such as institutional culture and the external environment. For instance, some educational institutions may face challenges such as resource constraints or resistance to change, which can impede the full potential of inspirational leadership. Furthermore, differing leadership styles or personal characteristics of leaders across institutions may contribute to varying levels of success in Value Creation (VC).

The uncertainty expressed by some respondents may also be linked to institutional factors, such as leadership approaches or varying support for innovation. In institutions where top-down leadership styles prevail, inspirational leadership may struggle to foster the collaborative environment necessary for Value Creation (VC). Conversely, in more participative institutions, inspirational leadership may have a greater impact as it aligns with the institutional culture and encourages employee involvement. As Aldabbas (2021) notes, leadership is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and its effectiveness is highly context-dependent.

The qualitative analysis insights confirm that inspirational leadership is crucial for driving Value Creation (VC) in SMEs. However, the varying responses also emphasise the importance of context-specific leadership strategies. As highlighted in the literature, leadership success in SMEs depends on the ability to adapt to the institution's unique challenges and needs, fostering trust, collaboration, and innovation to ensure sustainable Value Creation (VC).

With this integration between the two concepts, it becomes clear that inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions is a strategic investment that drives a virtuous circle of success, where success in leading change fuels the process of creating comprehensive value that benefits all stakeholders, ensuring the institution's competitive position and sustainability considering the ambitious Vision 2030.

### **6.7 The Interplay and Mutual Influence of Internal and External Environments in Shaping Organisational Performance of Small and Medium Educational Institutions**

While the previous sections analysed the effects of the internal and external environments separately, the sixth objective highlights the need for a more dynamic understanding of their reciprocal relationship. The organisational performance of educational institutions is not shaped by isolated external forces or separate internal factors; rather, it is the result of the complex and ongoing interaction between them. This discussion aims to analyse this interplay and demonstrate how the internal environment can serve as either a barrier or an aid in facing

external pressures, and how effective leadership acts as the bridge connecting these two dimensions to achieve distinguished and sustainable performance.

The external environment significantly influences the performance of small and medium-sized educational institutions (SMEs), especially in the context of organisational change. A dynamic and complex external environment, including factors like regulatory changes, technological advancements, economic shifts, and social expectations, can either drive or hinder institutional performance.

This finding of the qualitative analysis highlights the critical role of external factors, such as economic conditions, technological advancements, and competitive pressures, in shaping the strategies and outcomes of these institutions. This aligns with literature Chapter 2, (Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.8), including Kotter (2020), which demonstrated that external factors, such as economic crises and regulatory changes, are pivotal in determining the success or failure of educational institutions. However, the study also revealed some uncertainty, with 13.5% of participants unsure about the external impact and 10.8% stating that there is “no impact.” This divergence suggests that the external environment’s influence may vary depending on the institution’s unique context, resources, and adaptability. the degree of impact from external factors varies across institutions, particularly those with robust internal capabilities or in stable environments (Marginson, 2022; Self and Schraeder, 2009; Carter *et al.*, 2021).

A significant finding of the study is the identification of the economic environment as a direct and impactful factor on the performance of educational SMEs. Respondents emphasised that economic downturns create financial challenges, limiting investments in crucial areas such as curriculum development and technological advancements. This finding supports the work of previous researchers, such as Porter (1985), argued that economic fluctuations force institutions to prioritize immediate financial survival over long-term strategic goals, including innovation. Additionally, the financial constraints imposed by economic challenges often lead to stagnation in institutional development. This aligns with Kotter (2020), noted that during financial crises, many educational institutions reduce spending on non-essential resources, which negatively impacts the quality of education and institutional sustainability.

Technological advancements emerged as a prominent factor influencing the performance of SMEs in the educational sector. The qualitative analysis found that 54.3% of respondents highlighted the challenges institutions face in adapting to new technologies due to limited financial and human resources (HR). This supports the findings of Literature Chapter 2, ( Sub-Section 2.13.3), as Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2022), emphasised that technological changes could provide both opportunities and obstacles for SMEs, particularly in sectors like education,

where constant innovation is required. However, 35.2% of respondents suggested that communities that prioritize education tend to provide the necessary support, facilitating the adaptation of educational SMEs to technological changes. This finding resonates with Green and Williams (2021), study which argued that external support, including government policies and community engagement, plays a critical role in helping institutions overcome technological barriers. The contrast between these findings and those of Harrison and Hauser (2021), found limited technological adaptation in some educational SMEs despite external support, suggests that the effectiveness of support systems may vary based on institutional readiness and the specific technological challenges they face.

Economic and technological challenges should not be viewed solely as threats, but rather as compelling incentives for adaptation and innovation. Here, the importance of organisational resilience emerges as a crucial internal attribute. An organisation with a culture that supports learning and a flexible technological infrastructure (internal environment) can transform economic challenges into opportunities to restructure operations more efficiently and leverage technological advancements to develop innovative educational models that grant it a competitive edge. In other words, a strong internal environment acts to “filter” the negative impact of the external environment, even turning it into a catalyst for performance improvement.

The competitive environment was identified as a crucial factor in determining the performance of educational SMEs. The qualitative analysis revealed that 61.7% of respondents emphasised the need for educational institutions to differentiate themselves by offering high-quality education and superior student services. This finding aligns with literature which suggests that institutions must establish a unique value proposition to remain competitive. Additionally, the study confirmed that quality education, brand image, and student services are key drivers of competitive advantage (Allmnakrah and Evers, 2020; Salameh, 2016; Mosaad, 2016).

Leadership, particularly transformational leadership, was identified as a key driver of success in educational SMEs, especially in the face of external challenges. The qualitative analysis found that 65.2% of participants believed that transformational leadership, which fosters innovation and motivates teams, was critical in navigating external pressures such as competition and economic challenges. This finding was emphasised in Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.6.2, as transformational leaders are particularly effective in guiding organisations through periods of change by fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability (Sheninger, 2019; Nazim *et al.*, 2014; Li *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, leadership alone may not be sufficient to overcome external challenges without the necessary organisational infrastructure and support

systems in place. This divergence highlights the importance of a balanced approach that combines strong leadership with robust organisational capabilities.

The brilliance of transformational leadership in this context lies in being the active mediator between the two environments. An inspiring leader not only motivates the team internally but also interprets external signals and pressures (such as organisational changes or societal expectations) and translates them into a clear vision and strategic objectives that the entire team can embrace and work towards achieving. It is leadership that turns external ambiguity and threat into a shared goal and internal drive, ensuring the organisation remains balanced and effective amid external storms.

The qualitative analysis found that 53.3% of respondents highlighted the role of community support and societal expectations in enhancing the performance of educational SMEs. Educational institutions that operate in communities that prioritize education are better equipped to navigate external challenges. literature supports that strong community engagement can provide a supportive environment for educational SMEs, helping them to thrive despite external pressures (Tripathi, 2019; Bin-Hezam *et al.*, 2018). accordingly societal expectations can place undue pressure on educational institutions, leading to unrealistic demands that hinder rather than help institutional performance.

The pursuit of excellence and quality (responding to external competitive pressure) cannot be achieved in isolation from a supportive internal environment. An institution aiming to provide outstanding education (external response) requires an organisational culture that encourages educational excellence, enthusiastic teachers (human resources), and leadership that fosters creativity (internal environment). Thus, the true competitive advantage lies in the institution's ability to create a state of strategic alignment between the demands of the external market and its internal capabilities and resources.

The qualitative analysis underscores the critical role of the external environment in shaping the performance of educational SMEs. Economic conditions, technological advancements, and competitive pressures are the primary external factors that influence these institutions, in line with existing literature. However, the study also highlights the complexity and variability of these influences, suggesting that the impact of the external environment may depend on institutional context, leadership, and community support. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the role of external factors, the current study adds a nuanced perspective, demonstrating that the relationship between the external environment and institutional performance is not one-size-fits-all and varies depending on a range of internal and external conditions.

The internal environment plays a crucial role in shaping the performance of educational SMEs. As highlighted in the literature, factors such as OC, leadership styles, Human Resources (HR), communication, and technological resources are key determinants of organisational success. These elements work together to influence how well an organisation adapts to changes, drives performance, and achieves its goals.

As evidenced in the literature OC is fundamental to the performance of educational SMEs. A positive culture fosters collaboration, trust, and shared values, which are vital for effective teamwork and productivity (Luscher and Lewis, 2008; Nazim *et al.*, 2014; Carvalho, 2019). Also, Studies by Mouazen *et al.* (2023) and Graves *et al.* (2023) emphasise that cultures promoting innovation and learning lead to improved employee satisfaction and OP. Educational SMEs that align their culture with the institution's vision and mission see better outcomes, particularly in student success, operational efficiency, and innovation.

The qualitative analysis revealed similar sentiments were expressed, which highlighted that “a culture of innovation and flexibility is the key driver of success”, underscoring the value of a positive internal culture. However, they also pointed out that a lack of formal structures can lead to inefficiencies. This finding suggests that a balance between innovation and structure is crucial for avoiding performance barriers, The importance of culture was also emphasised by qualitative analysis, which reveals employee engagement, which is closely tied to OC, plays a significant role in OP. However, high employee turnover, as mentioned, can disrupt this positive culture, and reduce OE.

Transformational leadership being identified as a critical factor for organisational success. As evidenced in the literature (Chapter 3, Sub-Section 3.2.1), transformational leaders inspire and motivate their staff, creating a supportive environment that fosters engagement, job satisfaction, and performance. In educational SMEs, such leadership not only drives operational success but also ensures that staff members are committed to creating a supportive learning environment for students (Lamb, 2013; Nawaz and Khan, 2016; Mansaray, 2019; Lord *et al.*, 2017; Chow *et al.*, 2017).

Effective communication within an organisation ensures smooth functioning and contributes significantly to performance. (Chapter 2, Sub-Sub-Section 2.6.2.1), emphasises that open communication enhances transparency, reduces misunderstandings, and improves decision-making. In educational SMEs, communication between leadership and staff, as well as between staff and students, directly impacts operational efficiency and the quality of the educational experience (Dempsey and Smith, 2021; Huang, 2023; Arshad *et al.*, 2023).

In a rapidly changing external environment, effective internal communication shifts from being merely a tool to improve efficiency to an early warning system and rapid response mechanism. A culture that encourages open communication and information sharing enables the organisation to sense external changes more quickly (through employees' connection with students and the community) and then respond collectively and systematically. This prevents small challenges from turning into major crises and makes the organisation, like a living organism, capable of intelligently adapting to its surroundings.

This was reflected in the qualitative analysis, where participants highlighted the role of communication in shaping organisational outcomes. As Interviewees noted that effective communication is a key factor influencing OP, aligning with the literature's assertion that clear communication fosters employee engagement and supports decision-making processes. The absence of effective communication can hinder OP and lead to inefficiencies.

The role of technology in OP is increasingly important, especially in the educational sector. (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.9.2), emphasises that, educational SMEs that effectively integrate technology into their operations tend to see improvements in administrative efficiency, learning experiences, and accessibility. The literature stresses that technology, when coupled with proper training and a culture that embraces innovation, can enhance OP (Alkahtani *et al.*, 2023; Cummings and Worley, 2023; Tagscherer and Carbon, 2023; Burch and Guarana, 2022; Kim and lee, 2021).

This was reflected in the interview responses, where participants acknowledged the importance of technological resources in driving performance. However, Interviewees cautioned that the mere presence of technology is not enough to guarantee success; it must be complemented by the proper training and integration into the organisation's culture. This aligns with the findings in the literature (Chapter 2, Sub-Section 2.9.2), which emphasise that technology must be adopted strategically to have a meaningful impact on performance.

Finally, the internal environment of educational SMEs plays a critical role in shaping OP. The findings from the interviews and the literature are consistent in highlighting the importance of OC, leadership styles, communication, HR, and technological resources in driving performance. By fostering a positive culture, empowering leaders, investing in HR, and integrating technology effectively, educational SMEs can enhance their performance and achieve long-term success.

The interaction model between the two environments can explain the variation in study results. Institutions reporting a limited impact of the external environment (10.8%) are likely those with strong internal resilience (wise leadership, flexible culture, capable human resources).

Conversely, institutions experiencing severe external pressures may be those suffering from an internal gap, where a culture resistant to change or weak communication prevents them from exploiting opportunities or mitigating threats. This explains why performance varies even among institutions operating in the same external environment.

Based on this analysis, the fundamental recommendation for educational institutions is the necessity to adopt an integrated approach to strategic planning. Improvement plans should focus not only on enhancing internal capabilities (such as training and culture improvement) or solely monitoring the external environment but on managing the intersection between the two. This means developing systems to continuously monitor external trends and assess internal readiness to deal with them, empowering middle management to act as communication bridges, transforming the institution from a reactive entity to one that is proactive and initiative-taking in shaping its future, thereby achieving optimal performance within the context of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

## **6.8 Validation of the Framework**

The focus of this Section is to investigate how the theoretical Framework developed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6 based on the findings of the literature has changed considering the empirical study. Consequently, the Researcher performed an in-depth gap analysis that led to the verification of key elements of the framework.

The Researcher identifies significant gaps between various CM models and the application of transformational leadership. As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.5, These gaps arise from the mismatch between the structured, linear approaches of change models and the dynamic, people-focused nature of transformational leadership. Lewin's model, for example, oversimplifies change with its linear process and lacks an emphasis on employee engagement, which is crucial in educational SMEs. Similarly, Nudge Theory relies on external cues, conflicting with the intrinsic motivation central to transformational leadership. ADKAR, with its focus on individual change, contrasts with transformational leadership's holistic, collective vision. The Kübler-Ross Curve focuses on individual emotions, while transformational leadership seeks to inspire and engage teams in a shared vision. Kotter's 8-Step Model is effective for large-scale transformations but is less suited for SMEs due to its complexity. The Researcher concludes that the McKinsey 7S Model, when combined with transformational leadership, offers a more balanced approach for managing change in educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia, aligning both organisational dynamics and individual motivation.

The framework represented in Chapter 3, Figure 3.6 was derived from the key findings of academic and industry research contributions (both theoretical and empirical). Its main aim was to address the existing literature gap Chapter 2, Section 2.14 that has evidenced the need for a strategic framework to align inspirational leadership, Change Management (CM) and Value Creation (VC) with key internal and external factors across the enterprise.

Therefore, the Researcher first defined key organisational factors fundamental to inspirational leadership, Change Management (CM) and Value Creation (VC) with key internal and external factors (Chapter 2), then validated their importance via empirical research (Chapter 5).

The final step is to provide practical guidance on the implementation of the framework to education industry professionals and academics.

The theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 3, Section 3.6, was developed around six key elements which are:

- **External Environment:** What external factors (e.g., industry trends, economic conditions) influence leadership focus.
- **Internal Environment:** How the Organisational Culture (OC), structure, and internal factors shape leadership effectiveness.
- **Inspirational Leadership Focus:** Investigating the specific Behaviours and attributes of leaders that inspire followers.
- **Change Implementation (CI):** Assessing how leadership contributes to the successful management of change.
- **Organisational Performance (OP):** Evaluating the outcomes in terms of performance metrics (e.g., efficiency, employee engagement).
- **Value Creation (VC):** Understanding the long-term impact on organisational value.

Having outlined the key theoretical pillars drawn from literature supporting the Framework, the Researcher sought to validate the importance of key factors affecting its implementation through empirical qualitative investigation.

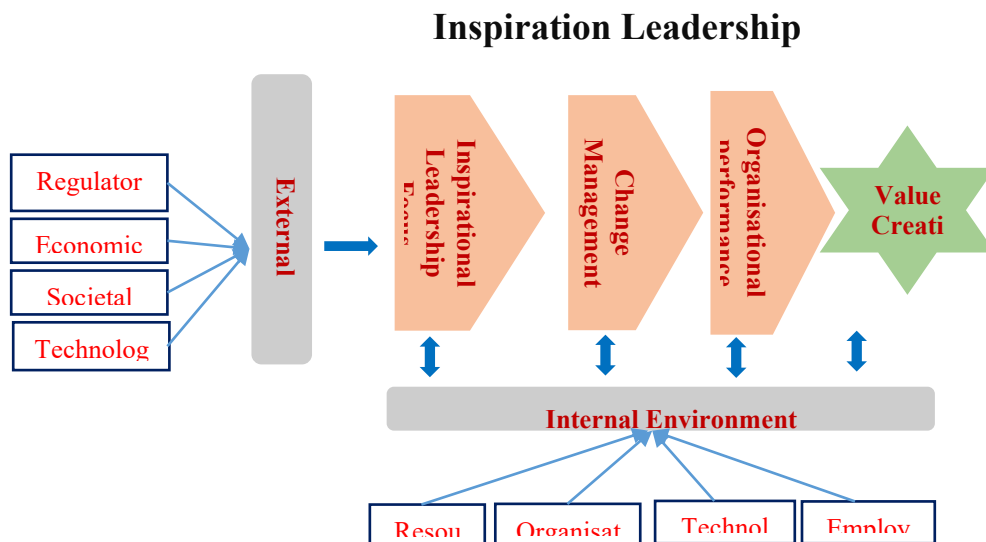


Figure 6:1: Final Framework

Source: The Researcher

Figure 6.1 shows the final Framework, reflecting some essential empirical findings that had an impact on the evaluation of the theoretical version of the framework shown in Chapter 3, Figure 3.6. It also shows which external and internal environment factors have been re-aligned because of the empirical investigation; all significant changes to the theoretical framework are highlighted in green cells.

Comparison of the two Frameworks, Figures 3.6 and Figure 6.1 shows that there are no main elements were added as variables, but rather external and internal environmental factors (in red colour), were added that influence the role of inspirational leadership in managing change and improving the performance of small and medium educational organisations in a way that contributes to creating value. The most important external environmental factors were represented in: Regulatory and Policy, Economic Conditions, Societal Expectations, and Technological Advances. While the most important internal environmental factors were represented in: Organisational Culture (OC), Resource Allocation, Technological Adoption, and Employee Readiness. These factors are the most significant because of the qualitative data analysis discussed in Chapter 5. The External Environment which was added, plays a critical role in shaping the direction and effectiveness of leadership in organisations, especially within educational institutions. Key factors such as Regulatory and Policy frameworks, Economic Conditions, Societal Expectations, and Technological Advances directly impact how leaders approach CM and inspire their teams. For example, changes in government policies or new regulations can impose new requirements on educational institutions, requiring leaders to motivate and guide their teams through compliance while maintaining operational efficiency.

Economic conditions, such as recessions or market instability, may force leaders to shift from inspiring innovation to focusing on survival strategies, often reducing the resources available for innovation and change. Societal expectations around educational outcomes and community involvement place additional pressures on leaders to align their strategies with public values, creating the need for inspirational leadership that can address these demands while navigating economic or policy constraints. Furthermore, technological advances bring opportunities and challenges, requiring leaders to inspire their teams to adopt new tools and approaches to remain competitive and deliver high-quality education in an ever-evolving environment.

The Internal Environment is equally crucial in determining the success of leadership efforts in implementing change and achieving organisational goals. Factors such as OC, Resource Allocation, Technological Adoption, and Employee Readiness influence how well leaders can inspire and manage change. A positive OC that promotes collaboration, openness, and trust fosters an environment where inspirational leadership can thrive, motivating employees to embrace new challenges and contribute to the organisation's success. In contrast, a culture resistant to change can hinder leadership efforts and create obstacles to innovation. Resource Allocation plays a significant role, as adequate resources allow leaders to implement new initiatives, support CM processes, and invest in growth opportunities. Limited resources, however, may force leaders to make difficult choices, potentially stifling innovation and morale. The Adoption of Technology within the organisation also affects the ability to innovate and stay competitive. Leaders who can successfully guide their teams in adopting new technological solutions enable the organisation to remain agile and responsive to external challenges. Finally, Employee Readiness is critical; employees must be prepared to engage with and adapt to changes. Leaders who inspire trust and communicate the benefits of change can help employees become more receptive, improving the likelihood of successful change implementation.

Framework Figure 6.1 relevance to the Saudi Arabia's education sector, particularly in the context of Vision 2030, is another key strength. Vision 2030 emphasises innovation, leadership, and organisational efficiency, all of which are directly addressed by the components of the framework. Alghamdi *et al.* (2022) highlight the importance of leadership in managing organisational change within the Saudi educational context. As Saudi Arabia seeks to modernise its education system and enhance its global competitiveness, the role of inspirational leadership and effective CM becomes even more critical. Figure 6.1's focus on SMEs within this sector aligns with the growing emphasis on developing SMEs in the Kingdom, which are

seen as key drivers of economic growth under Vision 2030. Therefore, the framework's applicability to the Saudi context is theoretically and practically relevant.

Figure 6.1 contributes to existing literature by synthesising insights from multiple domains, including leadership theory, CM, and OP, and applying them to the specific context of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. While prior studies have examined these constructs in isolation, few have explored their integration in the context of educational institutions in the Kingdom. By doing so, this framework offers a novel perspective on how leadership, environmental factors, and CM practices interact to influence performance outcomes. This contribution represents an advancement in the field, particularly in understanding how these variables function in a rapidly developing economy like Saudi Arabia.

## **6.9 Limitation of the Framework (Figure 6.1)**

Although the framework (Figure 6.1) has yielded useful results in the contexts in which it was evaluated, several limitations specific to its design and application must be acknowledged. These relate to the framework itself rather than to the broader research study; general research limitations, including sample size, data scope, and generalisability, are discussed separately in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

### **1- Limited Generalisability Across Institutional Contexts**

Although the framework has been evaluated and produced useful results in certain contexts, generalising these results to all educational institutions or different sectors may prove difficult. Local conditions, such as cultural environment or institutional structure, may have played a significant role in its effectiveness in the study setting, and these conditions may not be present with the same intensity in other organisations. Some institutions may therefore require modifications or adaptations to the framework to suit their unique cultural or structural characteristics. For example, results may differ when applying the framework in small institutions compared to large ones, or in private institutions versus public ones.

### **2- Focus on Specific Variables**

The framework concentrates on inspirational leadership and CM as key drivers of OP. However, other potentially significant factors, such as funding, technological infrastructure, and government policies, may not have been sufficiently addressed, which could limit the framework's explanatory scope in contexts where these factors are particularly influential.

### **3- Complexity in Implementation**

Real-world implementation of the framework may require resources, including leadership training, staff development, and institutional support, that are not readily available in all

contexts. Where the framework necessitates significant changes to operational practices or leadership approaches, resistance and resource constraints may present challenges to successful application.

#### **4- Dependence on Leadership Competencies**

The framework relies heavily on inspirational leadership as a central driver of performance improvement. In institutions where the existing workforce lacks the necessary leadership competencies, or where cultural values do not readily support this leadership approach, the framework's effectiveness may be limited. Recruiting or developing leaders with the requisite skills may itself present a significant challenge.

#### **5- Dependence on a Particular Organisational Culture**

The framework assumes a culture receptive to continuous change and innovation. In more conservative or traditional institutional cultures, where stability and routine are prioritised, applying the framework without cultural adaptation may prove more challenging, and the desired performance outcomes may not be fully realised.

For broader research limitations, including sample size, data scope, and generalisability, see Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

### **6.10 Practical Implementation Guidelines for the Framework**

To ensure the successful implementation of the framework, it is essential to follow a set of practical guidelines. These guidelines provide a structured approach for adapting the framework to the institution's context, overcoming barriers, and ensuring its sustainability. Below are key practical guidelines for the implementation of the framework:

#### **1- Understand the Context and Environment**

A foundational step in the implementation of any framework is understanding the institution's unique context, including Organisational Culture (OC), leadership style, and operational needs (Higgs and Rowland, 2018). Contextual analysis ensures that the framework is tailored to the specific challenges faced by the institution. This ensures that the framework aligns with the organisation's goals and values, which are crucial for its successful integration (Aldabbas, 2021).

#### **2- Tailor the Framework to Institutional Needs**

The framework must be adapted to the institution's unique environment, acknowledging its size, available resources, and specific challenges (Mouazen *et al.*, 2019). This customisation enhances the relevance and applicability of the framework. Customisation ensures the

framework addresses the institution's particular context and challenges, making it more likely to be successfully implemented (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023; Musaigwa, 2023).

### **3- Develop Leadership Competencies**

Effective leadership is central to the successful implementation of the framework, especially in environments focused on change and innovation (Bass, 1990). Developing leadership competencies can drive motivation, foster change, and enhance Organisational Performance (OP) (Northouse, 2021). Strong leadership is crucial for motivating teams and ensuring the framework is successfully applied and sustained (Kotter, 1996).

### **4- Promote Stakeholder Engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is critical for gaining buy-in and ensuring the framework is supported across all levels of the institution. Active participation from leadership, staff, and external stakeholders promotes a sense of ownership and commitment to the framework (DeRue *et al.*, 2020). This increases the likelihood of successful implementation by fostering a sense of ownership and reducing resistance to change (Musaigwa, 2023).

### **5- Establish Clear Metrics and Performance Indicators**

To assess the effectiveness of the framework, institutions should establish clear performance metrics and regularly evaluate progress. Monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) allows for ongoing adjustments and ensures that the framework remains aligned with organisational goals. Metrics allow for continuous evaluation and provide a basis for adjusting the framework as needed, ensuring its relevance over time (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023; Musaigwa, 2023).

### **6- Create a Detailed Implementation Plan**

A well-structured implementation plan is essential for guiding the process and ensuring that all necessary steps are followed (DeRue *et al.*, 2020). The plan should outline specific tasks, deadlines, responsibilities, and resource requirements. A detailed plan ensures that the framework is implemented systematically, helping to prevent confusion and delays (Al Harahsheh, 2023).

### **7- Provide Ongoing Training and Support**

To ensure that the framework is effectively implemented, it is essential to provide continuous training and support to all stakeholders. This training should be ongoing, as the framework's components may evolve over time. Ongoing training helps to sustain momentum and ensures that the framework is effectively integrated into the institution's daily operations (Al Harahsheh, 2023).

### **8- Address Resistance to Change**

Resistance to change is a common challenge when implementing new frameworks. Proactively addressing potential sources of resistance is critical to the framework's success, and embraced by stakeholders (Oreg and Berson, 2023).

### **9- Monitor Progress and Adjust as Needed**

Continuous monitoring is crucial to ensure the framework remains effective and relevant over time. It provides an opportunity to adjust and ensure alignment with institutional goals. Continuous monitoring ensures that the framework remains adaptable and can evolve to meet changing organisational needs (Parmenter, 2015).

### **10- Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement**

The successful implementation of the framework should be part of an ongoing process of continuous improvement. A culture that values learning and adaptation can help ensure the framework's long-term success and sustained relevance (Ramaswami et al., 2021).

The successful implementation of the framework requires careful planning, engagement, and ongoing support. By following these practical guidelines, institutions can effectively adapt the framework to their specific needs, overcome challenges, and achieve sustainable success. The framework's impact can be maximised through leadership development, stakeholder engagement, continuous training, and regular performance evaluation.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This Chapter draws together the findings of the research to demonstrate that the aim and objectives have been met and the research questions answered. It shows how this research responds to the need for further inquiry into the impact of Inspirational Leadership on Change Implementation and Management in small and medium-sized educational institutions, and how it addresses the research gap identified in Chapter 2 (Section 2.14, Table 2-2).

Section 7.2 reviews the aims, objectives, and research questions in light of the main findings. Section 7.3 presents the research contributions to knowledge and practice. Section 7.4 discusses the limitations of the research, and Section 7.5 offers recommendations for theory, practice, and future research.

### **7.2 Revisiting the Research Aim, Objectives and Questions: Summary of Findings**

This Section reviews the aim, objectives and research questions presented in Chapter 1, Sections 1.5 and 1.6, to demonstrate that they have been achieved.

The research aim presented in Chapter 1, Section 1.5, has been achieved. The literature review (Chapter 2) identified a plethora of academic and industry-based contributions that provided several key elements within the education industry. This allowed a discussion of published research on Inspirational Leadership and Implementing and Managing Change and provided a good theoretical and empirical foundation for the framework developed in Chapter 3. The development of the Theoretical Framework (Figure 3.6) builds on the literature gap, showing an understanding of various Leadership styles and Implementing and Managing Change themes and drivers that directly influence its design, adoption, and implementation. Additionally, Figure 6.1 presented in Chapter 6 reflects the findings of the empirical study.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 provided an in-depth review of existing knowledge, theories and key research contributions related to the research area. A variety of Leadership Theories and Change Management (CM) Models were analysed, and the applicable elements were reflected in the development of the Theoretical Framework.

The Framework (Chapter 3, Figure 3.6) was developed through the theoretical phase of the research (Chapters 2 and 3). The Framework evolved through the empirical field study, as reported in Chapter 6, concentrating on identifying and validating key internal and external factors that affect leadership and Change Management (CM). The Framework has transformed

into a validated strategic management tool for practical application in the educational sector (Figure 6.1).

The aim and objectives of the research have been pursued by addressing the six research objectives (RO1-RO6) and five research questions (RQ1-RQ5) stated in Chapter 1, Sections 1.5 and 1.6. These are now discussed in detail in the following sections.

**The first question** addresses the effectiveness of Inspirational Leadership in facilitating the implementation and management of change within Saudi Arabia SMEs in the education sector. It seeks to evaluate how inspirational leadership practices influence the success of change initiatives, focusing on their ability to motivate teams, align organisational goals with change strategies, and address challenges unique to the education sector. Additionally, it considers the cultural and organisational dynamics that may enhance or hinder the impact of such leadership in achieving sustainable transformation, particularly within the context of Saudi Vision 2030. To address this first question (Chapter 1, Section 1.6), the Researcher first reviewed the existing literature, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3. Transformational leadership, as described by Bass and Avolio (1994), aligns team goals with organisational objectives, creating a foundation for effective change. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and positive reinforcement, as emphasised by Jensen and Luthans (2006), enhance employee engagement critical in resource-constrained SMEs. Change Management (CM) models like Kotter's Eight-Step Model (1996) and tailored approaches suggested by Cameron and Green (2019) further underscore the need for urgency, vision, and empowerment in navigating challenges such as technological advancements and regulatory shifts. In Saudi Arabia, studies by Alharbi (2021) and Alsamawi (2022) stress the importance of leadership in implementing Vision 2030 reforms, where inspirational leaders play a crucial role in overcoming socio-cultural resistance and aligning SME objectives with national goals.

Cultural and organisational dynamics significantly influence leadership effectiveness in Saudi Arabia SMEs. High power-distance cultural traits, as outlined by Hofstede (1980), necessitate leadership styles that balance authority with inspiration to foster commitment. Research by Al-Qahtani et al. (2020) highlights how inspirational leadership bridges communication gaps and promotes continuous improvement in SMEs, particularly in education. Visionary leaders, as described by Al-Fawzan and Al-Mutairi (2022), embed innovation and adaptability in educational institutions to align with Vision 2030's objectives, facilitating transformations in technology adoption and regulatory compliance. However, the interplay between inspirational leadership and change outcomes within Saudi education-focused SMEs remains underexplored. This research question addresses the gap identified in Chapter 2 (Section 2.14,

Table 2-2), focusing on how Inspirational Leadership drives change and enhances performance in this unique socio-economic and cultural context.

The qualitative analysis reveals that 48.6% of respondents emphasised the importance of strong support for Change Implementation (CI) and management through leading employees' motivation, highlighting that leaders who actively engage with their teams and inspire motivation are crucial to overcoming resistance. A significant portion (21.6%) indicated that improving communication about the change process is essential for successful implementation, reflecting the need for transparency and clear messaging from leadership. The “Lead by example” category also received attention (13.5%), suggesting that leaders who model the desired behaviours can inspire acceptance and commitment to change. The remaining 13.5% of responses fall under the “Others” category, while only a small proportion (2.7%) stated that there was no impact of leadership on change.

**The second question** examines the impact of Inspirational Leadership on the attitudes of educational leaders and followers in Saudi Arabia SMEs toward change. It focuses on understanding how inspirational leadership styles influence the acceptance or resistance to change among leaders and employees, considering the cultural and social factors that shape their responses. Additionally, it seeks to highlight the role of Inspirational Leadership in fostering adaptability, commitment to change, and support for achieving transformation and development goals aligned with Saudi Vision 2030.

To address the second question (Chapter 1, Section 1.6), the Researcher first reviewed the existing literature, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3. Inspirational Leadership plays a critical role in shaping attitudes toward change, particularly in the context of small and medium-sized educational enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia. Transformational leaders inspire their teams by fostering a shared vision, building trust, and aligning individual and organisational goals, which are essential for navigating change effectively. Bass and Riggio (2006) argue that such leaders promote openness to change by enhancing morale and creating a sense of purpose. Kotter's (1996) model emphasises the importance of leadership in articulating a vision and empowering employees to embrace new practices. In the education sector, where SMEs often face resource constraints and resistance to new initiatives, inspirational leadership becomes a driving force in encouraging leaders and followers to view change positively and engage with it meaningfully.

In Saudi Arabia, cultural and organisational dynamics further underscore the need for inspirational leadership to influence attitudes toward change. Hofstede's (1980) cultural framework identifies the high power-distance nature of Saudi society, where leaders' authority

must be balanced with empathy to foster trust and engagement. Al-Qahtani *et al.* (2020) highlight that inspirational leaders are particularly effective in overcoming resistance rooted in traditional values and scepticism toward innovation. Moreover, Saudi Vision 2030 has intensified the demand for adaptable and visionary leaders in SMEs, particularly in education, as they align organisational goals with national development objectives. Studies by Alharbi (2021) and Al-Fawzan and Al-Mutairi (2022) emphasise that Inspirational Leadership directly impacts the willingness of educational leaders and staff to engage with transformative changes, fostering motivation and collaboration toward achieving shared goals.

The qualitative analysis reveals that Inspirational Leadership significantly influences the attitudes of both educational leaders and their followers towards change in Saudi Arabia SMEs. When leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to the transformation process, they set an example that inspires their teams to embrace change rather than resist it. This leadership approach is essential, as resistance is a natural reaction to change, particularly in environments with hierarchical structures and traditional practices. By actively engaging followers and showing dedication, inspirational leaders can overcome the common challenges of resistance, which is often rooted in fear of the unknown or disruption of established routines.

Moreover, inspirational leaders who connect with employees on an emotional level play a crucial role in shifting attitudes. They create a sense of trust and emotional investment in the change process, making followers feel more secure and motivated to participate in transformation efforts. Additionally, inspirational leaders who possess a deep understanding of Change Management (CM) principles can provide a clear and structured roadmap for their teams, which helps demystify the change process. By carefully planning and communicating the change strategy, these leaders address concerns and reduce uncertainty, fostering a positive attitude towards change. In the context of Saudi Arabia educational SMEs, where cultural and organisational dynamics can hinder the change process, Inspirational Leadership becomes a vital factor in aligning employees with the goals of transformation and ensuring the successful implementation of change initiatives.

**The third question** investigates the key barriers to the successful implementation and management of organisational change within SMEs in the education sector of Saudi Arabia. It aims to identify the challenges and obstacles that hinder effective change, such as resistance to change, limited resources, lack of leadership commitment, and cultural or organisational factors. The question also explores how these barriers impact the ability of educational institutions to adopt new strategies, technologies, and practices, particularly in alignment with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. By understanding these barriers, this question seeks to

provide insights into overcoming them to facilitate smoother transitions and better outcomes for change initiatives.

To address the third question (Chapter 1, Section 1.6), the Researcher first reviewed the existing literature, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3. In the education sector of Saudi Arabia, several barriers hinder the successful implementation and management of organisational change within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Resistance to change, deeply rooted in the traditional culture of educational institutions, is a significant challenge. Employees, especially those in leadership positions, often resist adopting new practices due to fear of uncertainty or disruption of established routines. As noted by Hofstede (1980), the hierarchical structure prevalent in many educational organisations limits the fluid exchange of ideas and staff involvement in decision-making, exacerbating the resistance. Additionally, Alharbi (2021) suggests that a lack of familiarity with Change Management (CM) processes and inadequate communication from leadership about the benefits of change further intensify this resistance. Furthermore, resource constraints in SMEs, such as financial limitations and the absence of dedicated Change Management (CM) teams, hinder the adoption of necessary technologies, training, and professional development (Al-Fawzan and Al-Mutairi, 2022). The lack of leadership commitment to long-term change, coupled with pressure for immediate results, often leads to short-term decision-making that undermines the sustainability of change initiatives (Kotter, 1996).

The literature on barriers to Change Management (CM) in Saudi Arabia educational SMEs remains limited, particularly in relation to Inspirational Leadership. While existing studies focus on organisational change in larger institutions or broadly within educational settings, there is a lack of targeted research on the unique challenges faced by SMEs in Saudi Arabia's evolving educational landscape. Existing research also overlooks the critical role of inspirational leadership in overcoming resistance, resource limitations, and hierarchical barriers. While leadership models such as those by Bass (1985) and Kotter (1996) discuss the general impact of leadership on change, there is limited exploration of how inspirational leadership specifically addresses these barriers in the context of educational SMEs. Therefore, further research is needed to understand how Inspirational Leadership can effectively drive change in Saudi Arabia educational SMEs and help align these institutions with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

The qualitative analysis highlighted several key barriers to the successful implementation and management of organisational change within SMEs in the Saudi Arabia education sector, particularly focusing on external and internal factors. Externally, government regulations,

changes in educational policies, and economic instability present significant challenges. For instance, fluctuations in market conditions and government funding can cause leaders to shift from an inspirational approach to a more cautious, survival-focused leadership style. Additionally, the growth of educational startups and competition within the market forces educational institutions to differentiate themselves, often placing pressure on leaders to maintain quality and innovation despite these external challenges. These external barriers can create an environment where change initiatives struggle, as leaders may feel constrained by regulations and financial limitations, impacting their ability to inspire and lead effectively. Internally, Organisational Culture (OC) plays a pivotal role in either facilitating or hindering change. Responses indicate that internal resistance to change, particularly in the form of employee insecurity and a lack of flexibility, is a major barrier. When an organisation's culture is not conducive to change, whether due to hierarchical structures, lack of collaboration, or resistance to new ideas, leaders find it difficult to inspire and engage their teams. However, a flexible and collaborative culture that values employee input and encourages innovation can help overcome these barriers and motivate staff to embrace change. Furthermore, the skills and experience of employees play a crucial role in facilitating change; when employees are not equipped to adapt, it significantly hampers the change process. Therefore, a combination of external challenges, such as economic factors and regulations, and internal cultural resistance, particularly around employee insecurity and a lack of support for innovation, creates substantial barriers to successful organisational change in SMEs within the Saudi Arabia education sector. **The fourth question** explores the differences among various types or categories of employees in terms of their responsiveness to leadership-inspired initiatives aimed at managing changes in the workplace. It seeks to understand how factors such as job roles, experience, personality traits, or organisational position influence employees' reactions to change efforts driven by inspirational leadership. The question also examines whether certain groups, such as senior leaders, middle management, or front-line employees, exhibit different levels of engagement, motivation, or resistance when responding to leadership's vision and strategies for change. By identifying these differences, the study aims to offer a deeper understanding of how to tailor leadership approaches to different employee groups to enhance the success of Change Management (CM) initiatives.

To address the fourth question (Chapter 1, Section 1.6), the Researcher first reviewed the existing literature, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3. Different types or categories of employees within an organisation respond differently to leadership-inspired initiatives, particularly in the context of managing change. These differences are often shaped by various factors, including

their roles, experiences, and personal attributes. For instance, employees in senior positions, such as department heads or managers, might respond more positively to Inspirational Leadership due to their greater involvement in decision-making processes and their personal stake in the success of organisational changes (Bass, 1985). Their higher level of authority often enables them to embrace and implement change more effectively. In contrast, employees in lower-level positions may exhibit resistance due to concerns about job security, fear of the unknown, or lack of understanding about the change initiatives (Kotter, 1996). This resistance is often driven by the perception that changes may disrupt their established routines or that they have little influence in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that employees' attitudes toward leadership and organisational change are influenced by their personal values and attitudes toward change itself. For example, employees with a higher level of adaptability and a positive outlook on change may be more responsive to Inspirational Leadership, particularly when they perceive the leader as supportive, transparent, and motivating (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). On the other hand, employees with a more fixed mindset or those who have experienced past organisational changes that were poorly managed may be more sceptical and resistant. In Saudi Arabia educational SMEs, these differences can be amplified by cultural factors, such as respect for authority, which can influence how leadership-inspired initiatives are received by different employees. Understanding these differences is crucial for tailoring leadership strategies that effectively address the needs and concerns of diverse employee groups, ensuring a smoother implementation of organisational change.

The responses reveal notable differences in how various categories of employees respond to leadership-inspired initiatives for managing changes at work, particularly in Saudi Arabia educational SMEs. These differences are influenced by both the external environment and the internal Organisational Culture (OC).

The qualitative analysis revealed that, in terms of external factors, employees in organisations experiencing favourable conditions, such as supportive government policies and a stable economy, tend to be more responsive to leadership initiatives that focus on innovation and growth. These conditions provide leaders with the flexibility to adopt an inspirational leadership style, thereby motivating employees to embrace change through shared vision and purpose. However, when external conditions are challenging, such as economic instability or increased competition from educational startups, employees may shift from being motivated by inspiration to focusing on job security and survival. In such environments, leaders may be forced to adopt a more cautious, survival-oriented approach, which could dampen employee

responsiveness to change initiatives. Internally, employees in organisations with a collaborative and flexible culture are more likely to embrace change. When leaders create an environment that values openness, inclusivity, and employee input, employees feel more motivated and engaged, thus becoming more receptive to change efforts. Conversely, in organisations with a more competitive and rigid culture, where employee well-being and growth are not prioritised, resistance to change tends to be higher. Employees in such environments may feel insecure about their roles and may be less responsive to inspirational leadership. Additionally, employees with greater skills and experience are more adaptable to change, as they have the necessary capabilities to manage new initiatives. This contrasts with employees in organisations where Change Management (CM) is poorly communicated or lacks the appropriate structure, which may hinder their ability to engage with the transformation process.

Overall, the responsiveness of employees to leadership-inspired change initiatives is shaped by the interplay between the external environment and the internal culture of the organisation. While external factors such as government policies and economic conditions can either enhance or restrict employees' willingness to engage with change, the Organisational Culture (OC), particularly one that fosters openness, collaboration, and innovation, plays a critical role in encouraging employees to be receptive to leadership-driven transformations.

**The fifth question** explores the strategies that educational leaders can employ to effectively inspire their teams during periods of organisational change within their institutions. It seeks to identify leadership practices and approaches that motivate employees, foster a sense of purpose, and promote a positive attitude toward change. The question examines methods such as clear communication, emotional support, empowerment, building trust, and aligning organisational goals with personal values. Additionally, it considers how leaders can create a vision for the future, provide opportunities for employee involvement, and address potential resistance to ensure the successful implementation of change. The focus is on how these strategies can be adapted to the unique challenges of the education sector in Saudi Arabia SMEs.

To address the fifth question (Chapter 1, Section 1.6), the Researcher first reviewed the existing literature, as reported in Chapters 2 and 3. Effective strategies for inspiring teams during organisational changes within educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia require a combination of leadership styles, communication approaches, and Emotional Intelligence (EI). One of the most effective strategies is transformational leadership, where leaders motivate and inspire their followers by creating a shared vision, fostering trust, and encouraging personal development

(Bass, 1985). In this context, educational leaders can inspire their teams by articulating a clear, compelling vision of the change and its potential benefits for both the organisation and the individual. By aligning the goals of the change with employees' values and aspirations, leaders can enhance motivation and commitment to the change process. Moreover, leaders should adopt a participative approach to decision-making, encouraging employee involvement in the planning and implementation phases. This approach not only empowers employees but also fosters a sense of ownership and reduces resistance to change.

Additionally, educational leaders can implement strategies that prioritise open communication and emotional support. Providing clear, transparent information about the change process helps to alleviate uncertainties and build trust. Regular updates, feedback sessions, and one-on-one meetings can further support employees by addressing concerns and allowing them to feel heard and understood (Kotter, 1996). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is also crucial during times of change, as leaders who demonstrate empathy and emotional awareness can better navigate the challenges employees face and help manage any negative emotions related to the transition. By recognising and addressing emotional responses, leaders can maintain morale and motivation, ensuring that teams remain engaged and resilient. Ultimately, employing these strategies can create a positive environment for change and increase the likelihood of successful implementation within educational SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

The qualitative analysis revealed that, to effectively inspire teams during times of organisational change, educational leaders need to demonstrate adaptability to external conditions. For example, in response to shifting government regulations, market fluctuations, or economic downturns, leaders may need to adjust their approach. When external conditions are uncertain or unfavourable, leadership might need to shift from an inspirational style to one that focuses more on survival and stability. However, during periods of growth or favourable conditions, leaders can focus on inspiring their teams by aligning them with a shared vision for innovation and growth. This adaptability enables leaders to guide their teams through change while maintaining motivation and commitment.

Another key strategy for inspiring teams during organisational changes is fostering creativity and innovation. During times of resource scarcity or financial constraints, leaders must demonstrate creativity to inspire their teams. By finding innovative ways to continue supporting learning and growth despite financial pressures, leaders can encourage their teams to stay motivated and engaged. This requires an inspirational leadership style that not only prioritises optimism but also promotes a resourceful mindset. When leaders show that they can navigate difficult circumstances with creativity, employees are more likely to feel encouraged

to contribute their own ideas and solutions. Leaders can also utilise external legislative support and organisational autonomy to inspire their teams. When regulations allow greater flexibility for decision-making, leaders are empowered to make choices that can positively impact their teams. Autonomy enables leaders to make decisions that inspire and innovate, which in turn fosters a sense of ownership among employees. This sense of freedom can motivate employees to embrace change, as they see that their leaders can make bold, effective decisions that benefit the organisation. Moreover, cultivating a flexible organisational culture allows employees to view challenges as opportunities rather than threats, which helps them adapt to and embrace change more willingly.

The qualitative analysis revealed that building an inclusive and collaborative internal culture is another crucial strategy for inspiring employees during times of change. When employees feel that their voices are heard and their contributions are valued, they are more likely to engage with leadership and the organisation's goals. Leaders who prioritise collaboration and inclusivity create an environment where employees feel safe to express their ideas and concerns. This inclusivity helps reduce resistance to change and makes employees more willing to support leadership's decisions. Additionally, a collaborative culture promotes a sense of unity and shared purpose, which can be particularly motivating during periods of transition.

Clear communication and the development of actionable plans are also essential strategies for inspiring teams. Inspirational leaders who understand Change Management (CM) principles can create and communicate clear roadmaps for their teams. Providing employees with a structured plan during periods of change alleviates uncertainty and helps them understand the specific steps required for success. When leaders demonstrate commitment to the transformation process through effective communication, employees are more likely to accept and support the changes being implemented. This transparency fosters trust and encourages employees to invest their energy and effort into achieving the organisation's goals. Addressing employee resistance is another critical aspect of leading change. During times of organisational transformation, employees often feel insecure about their roles, which can lead to resistance. Leaders can overcome this challenge by providing reassurance, offering necessary training, and fostering a sense of security within the team. When employees feel that they are supported and that their positions are stable, they are more likely to embrace change. Effective leaders actively listen to their employees' concerns and ensure that adequate resources are available to help them adapt to new circumstances.

Lastly, engaging employees emotionally is a powerful strategy for inspiring them during change. Inspirational leaders are skilled at connecting with their teams on an emotional level,

creating a sense of purpose and meaning in the work that employees do. When employees are emotionally invested in the organisation's vision, they are more likely to put in extra effort and adapt positively to changes. Emotional engagement also contributes to higher morale, retention, and overall performance. Leaders who connect with employees' values and aspirations are more likely to inspire them to embrace organisational changes and contribute to the success of the transformation.

In sum, educational leaders can inspire their teams during times of change by demonstrating adaptability, fostering creativity, utilising autonomy, building inclusive cultures, developing clear plans, addressing resistance, and engaging emotionally with employees. These strategies help maintain motivation, reduce resistance, and ensure that employees remain committed to the organisation's goals during periods of organisational change.

**The sixth question** investigates the existing frameworks for driving change through inspirational leadership, focusing on the models, theories, and approaches that guide leaders in effectively managing organisational transformation. It examines leadership frameworks such as transformational leadership, which emphasises vision, motivation, and individual consideration, as well as other relevant Change Management (CM) models. The question also explores how these frameworks can be applied in practice to inspire teams, foster commitment, and navigate challenges during change initiatives. Additionally, it considers how these frameworks align with the specific needs of educational institutions in Saudi Arabia SMEs, particularly in the context of cultural and organisational dynamics. To effectively drive change through inspirational leadership, leaders must integrate both external and internal environmental factors into their leadership strategies. These factors shape how change is perceived and executed within an organisation, influencing the overall success of Change Management (CM) initiatives, and contributing to Value Creation (VC). The framework provided emphasises a systematic approach, where Inspirational Leadership, Change Management (CM), performance outcomes, and Value Creation (VC) are interconnected.

The external environment plays a significant role in shaping an organisation's strategies and actions. Changes in regulatory policies and government regulations often have a direct impact on how educational leaders guide their teams. Leaders must stay informed about policy shifts and regulations that may affect the organisation. When leaders align their team's goals with these external changes, they inspire a sense of purpose and direction. Through clear communication, they help their teams navigate new regulations as opportunities for growth and innovation, turning regulatory challenges into motivations for improvement.

Similarly, economic conditions are crucial factors that can either motivate or hinder the success of change initiatives. During times of economic instability, such as recessions, leaders must be adaptable. Inspirational leadership in these situations involves fostering resilience and a shared vision of overcoming financial adversity. Leaders should emphasise long-term goals and motivate employees to stay committed, even when faced with uncertainty. By framing the economic challenges as temporary setbacks, leaders can inspire their teams to maintain focus and drive progress despite external pressures.

Societal expectations also significantly influence leadership practices. In today's world, the educational sector is often expected to align with societal values and goals. Leaders who communicate the larger societal impact of their organisation's work can inspire employees to feel more connected to the mission. By making employees see how their contributions affect society, leaders encourage a sense of pride and collective purpose, which in turn drives change initiatives. Inspirational leadership helps employees understand their role within the broader social context, thus enhancing motivation and commitment.

Finally, technological advances present both challenges and opportunities for leaders. As technology continues to evolve, educational leaders must inspire their teams to embrace new tools and approaches. This requires clear communication about the benefits of technological adoption and providing the necessary support for employees to feel comfortable with new technologies. Inspirational leaders can guide their teams through the transition, empowering them with the confidence to use technology to improve processes and enhance performance.

On the internal side, an organisation's culture plays a critical role in facilitating or hindering change. Leaders must foster an Organisational Culture (OC) that encourages openness, collaboration, and flexibility. Inspirational leadership within such a culture focuses on empowering employees to share ideas, voice concerns, and participate actively in the change process. When employees feel their contributions are valued, they are more likely to embrace change and work collaboratively toward achieving organisational goals. Leaders can inspire teams by creating an inclusive environment where innovation is celebrated, and employees feel supported in their professional growth.

Another key factor in internal Change Management (CM) is resource allocation. Effective change requires adequate resources, including time, money, and personnel. Inspirational leaders are those who ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and that employees have the tools they need to succeed. In times of change, leaders can inspire creativity and resourcefulness, motivating teams to achieve goals even when resources are limited. By

demonstrating trust and belief in their teams' ability to make the most of available resources, leaders can maintain momentum and drive progress.

Technological adoption within the internal environment is equally important. Leaders must inspire their teams to adopt new technologies that will streamline processes and improve efficiency. This requires not only providing the necessary training but also fostering an attitude of openness to innovation. Inspirational leaders should highlight the benefits of adopting new technologies, showing their teams how these tools can help them meet goals more effectively and increase their contribution to organisational success.

Finally, employee readiness is a crucial factor that influences the success of Change Management (CM). Leaders must ensure that employees are ready to embrace change by providing the necessary support and training. Inspirational leadership involves assessing the readiness of the workforce, addressing concerns, and building the confidence necessary for employees to adopt new practices. Leaders can inspire readiness by framing change as an opportunity for personal and professional growth, helping employees see how change benefits not only the organisation but also their own development.

At the core of this framework is Inspirational Leadership, which plays a pivotal role in guiding the organisation through change. Inspirational leaders effectively communicate the vision for change, motivate their teams, and maintain enthusiasm during times of uncertainty. Their ability to inspire confidence and maintain morale is essential in overcoming challenges and ensuring that employees remain engaged throughout the transformation process.

Change Management (CM) is the process through which leaders translate their inspirational vision into action. Inspirational leaders manage change by fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and collaboration. They lead by example, demonstrating their commitment to the transformation process. By engaging employees in the change process and aligning them with the organisation's vision, inspirational leaders ensure that the change is successfully implemented.

The goal of Inspirational Leadership and effective Change Management (CM) is to achieve performance outcomes that drive Value Creation (VC). Inspirational leadership enhances employee morale, engagement, and productivity, which leads to improved Organisational Performance (OP). When leaders inspire their teams to embrace change, align with the organisational vision, and collaborate effectively, the organisation is more likely to achieve its objectives. These performance outcomes, in turn, contribute to long-term Value Creation (VC), both in terms of financial performance and organisational sustainability.

In conclusion, to drive change through inspirational leadership, leaders must integrate both external and internal environmental factors. By understanding and addressing these factors, leaders can effectively inspire their teams, manage change, and create significant value for their organisations. Through this integrated approach, leaders can navigate challenges, foster innovation, and maintain high performance, ensuring the long-term success of their organisations.

### **7.3 Contributions**

This research, which investigates the impact of Inspirational Leadership on the implementation and management of change in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), case study Saudi Arabia education sector, offers valuable contributions to both academic knowledge and practical applications. By examining the intricate relationship between leadership styles, external and internal environmental factors, and Change Management (CM), this research provides critical insights into how inspirational leadership can influence performance outcomes and Value Creation (VC) in a dynamic and competitive sector. The following Sections outline the main contributions this study makes to the existing body of knowledge and contribution to Practice.

#### **7.3.1 Contribution to Knowledge**

This research offers a valuable contribution to the academic understanding of Inspirational Leadership and its influence on the implementation and management of change within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia educational sector. One of the key contributions is the expansion of the understanding of Inspirational Leadership, particularly in the context of SMEs. While much of the existing literature primarily focuses on larger organisations, this study explores how inspirational leadership functions in SMEs, where there are fewer resources and greater exposure to market fluctuations. The research emphasises that Inspirational Leadership in SMEs goes beyond just motivating employees. It involves adapting to the unique challenges of these organisations while fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and resilience. By providing deeper insights into Inspirational Leadership within this specific context, the study contributes new knowledge on how leaders can leverage their influence to drive Value Creation (VC) despite the constraints typically faced by SMEs.

Another significant contribution of the study is its exploration of the role that external and internal environmental factors play in shaping leadership behaviours and CM practices in educational SMEs. The research underscores the impact of external factors such as government regulations, economic conditions, and societal expectations, which have long been recognised

in leadership studies but are specifically examined here in the context of Saudi SMEs. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of internal factors such as OC and employee readiness for change. By showing how these factors influence leadership approaches, the research provides a framework that links Inspirational Leadership with effective CM and OP. This nuanced approach offers a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics and their direct implications for SMEs' success, especially in the face of a rapidly changing environment.

The study also provides important insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with managing change in SMEs. One of the critical findings is the recognition that leaders often face resistance when attempting to implement change, especially in environments where employees feel insecure or threatened by new ideas. Inspirational leadership is shown to be a key factor in overcoming this resistance. Effective leaders not only motivate their employees but also address their concerns, build trust, and foster commitment to the change process. This research contributes to the literature on CM by highlighting the need for a leadership style that balances inspiration with practical strategies for overcoming resistance. Additionally, the study demonstrates how Inspirational Leadership directly contributes to performance outcomes, leading to higher employee morale, improved retention rates, and organisational success. This finding expands the current understanding of the role of Inspirational Leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement, which is crucial for SMEs striving to remain competitive in a dynamic and fast-changing environment.

### **7.3.2 Contribution to Practice**

From a practical perspective, the study provides important implications for leadership practices in educational SMEs. The findings suggest that leadership development programs in Saudi SMEs should prioritize training in inspirational Leadership Quotient (LQ) such as vision-setting, empathy, and resilience. These qualities are essential for navigating the challenges of a competitive educational sector and for fostering a shared sense of purpose within organisations. By cultivating these qualities, leaders can inspire their employees, encourage collaboration, and create an OC that supports innovation and adaptability. Additionally, the study offers insights that can help policymakers design more supportive policies for SMEs in the education sector. Understanding how external factors, such as economic conditions and government regulations, influence leadership's ability to manage change can guide the development of policies that enable educational SMEs to navigate challenges more effectively and seize opportunities for growth.

The research also emphasises the importance of inspirational leadership in driving sustainable Value Creation (VC) within educational SMEs. By positioning leadership as a transformative process rather than just a managerial function, the study challenges traditional views of leadership. It presents Inspirational Leadership as a critical factor in unlocking new levels of performance and innovation, which is essential for the long-term success of SMEs. This perspective encourages leaders to focus on building a culture of continuous improvement and innovation that not only addresses immediate challenges but also positions the organisation for sustainable growth in the future.

Lastly, the study contributes to practice by offering a practical framework (Figure 6.1) that links Inspirational Leadership with CM and OP. By understanding the interplay between external and internal factors, this framework (Figure 6.1) provides leaders in educational SMEs with the tools to navigate the complexities of change. It also helps them align their leadership practices with the evolving needs of both the external environment and their internal OC. The framework (Figure 6.1) can serve as a practical guide for leaders, enabling them to make informed decisions that enhance OP and create long-term value. In conclusion, this study significantly enriches the literature on leadership, CM, and performance outcomes in SMEs. By focusing on Saudi Arabia educational SMEs, it offers both theoretical insights and practical recommendations that can improve OE and support sustainable growth in a rapidly changing environment. Table 7-1 summarizes the key contributions of this research.

Table 7-1: Summary of Research Contributions

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Chapter / figure</b>
Development of theoretical framework	Leadership Theories	Chapter 3, Section 3.2
	Change Management Models	Chapter 3, Section 3.4
	Gaps of discussed models/frameworks	Chapter 3, Section 3.5, Table 3-1 and Section 3.6, Figure 3.6
Validated Framework	Final Framework	Chapter 6, Section 6.8, Figure 6.1
Practical guidelines	Practical guidelines for implementation of the framework	Chapter 6, Section 6.10

## 7.4 Limitations of the Research

This section consolidates all research limitations identified across this thesis, including those signposted in Chapter 1 (Section 1.9). Limitations specific to the framework (Figure 6.1) are discussed separately in Chapter 6, Section 6.9.

While this research has generated meaningful findings regarding the impact of inspirational leadership on Change Implementation (CI) and Change Management (CM) in educational SMEs in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, several limitations must be acknowledged in order to ensure accurate interpretation of the results and to guide future research.

**1. Sample Size and Generalisability.** The study is based on a qualitative sample of 37 participants drawn from SMEs in the KSA education sector. While this sample was purposively selected to ensure relevance and depth, its size and scope may limit the generalisability of findings to other sectors, regions, or institutional types. Readers should exercise caution in applying these findings beyond the specific context studied.

**2. Reliance on Self-Reported Data.** Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which rely on participants' self-reporting of their experiences and perceptions. This introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, whereby participants may have presented their leadership practices or institutional cultures in a more favourable light than the reality. While steps were taken to mitigate this risk through anonymity and reflexive research practices, it cannot be eliminated entirely.

**3. Homogeneity of the Sample.** The sample was drawn from a single national and cultural context (the KSA) and from a specific institutional type (educational SMEs). This homogeneity, while allowing for contextual depth, may not fully capture the diversity of leadership styles, organisational cultures, and change management approaches present across different types of institutions or in other national contexts.

**4. Subjective Nature of Inspirational Leadership.** Inspirational leadership is a multidimensional and inherently subjective concept, which presents challenges for standardised measurement and comparison. The qualitative approach adopted in this study captures participants' interpretations and experiences of inspirational leadership, but these perceptions may vary significantly between individuals and institutions, making objective cross-case comparison difficult.

**5. Limited Availability of Contextual Data.** There remains a relative scarcity of prior research specifically addressing the challenges faced by SMEs in implementing and managing change within the KSA educational institutions. This limited existing literature base both justified the

need for this study and constrained the depth of comparative analysis possible within the literature review and discussion chapters.

**6. Cultural Sensitivity and Access Constraints.** The cultural context of the KSA, characterised by high power-distance norms and the sensitive nature of organisational change, may have influenced participants' willingness to discuss certain challenges or limitations openly. Despite the ethical safeguards employed, some degree of self-censorship by participants cannot be ruled out.

**7. Absence of Longitudinal Data.** This study represents a cross-sectional snapshot of leadership and change management practices at a particular point in time. The absence of longitudinal data means that the long-term sustainability of the identified leadership practices and change outcomes cannot be confirmed. Future research employing longitudinal designs would strengthen the validity and durability of these findings.

**8. Sensitivity to Temporal and Contextual Changes.** The research was conducted within a specific temporal window aligned with the ongoing implementation of Saudi Vision 2030. The rapid pace of policy, technological, and economic change in the KSA means that some findings may require updating as the external environment continues to evolve.

These limitations do not undermine the validity of the study's contributions but rather define the boundaries within which the findings should be interpreted. They also point towards important avenues for future research, as outlined in Section 7.5.3.

## **7.5 Recommendations**

This Section presents key recommendations derived from the findings of the study on the impact of Inspirational Leadership on implementing and managing change in SMEs within the Saudi Arabia educational sector. The recommendations are aimed at theoretical development and practical application, with a primary focus on guiding practitioners and managers in the education sector followed by recommendations for future research. By addressing the theoretical gaps and practical needs identified in the research, these recommendations aim to enhance leadership effectiveness, improve Change Management (CM) processes, and ultimately drive performance and Value Creation (VC) in educational SMEs.

### **7.5.1 Recommendations for Theory**

**1. Expanding Inspirational Leadership Models.** The current theoretical frameworks on Inspirational Leadership primarily focus on broader organisational contexts. However, there is a need for more research to develop context-specific models of inspirational leadership that consider the unique characteristics and challenges faced by SMEs in the education sector.

Future theoretical work should focus on how inspirational leadership can be adapted to smaller, more flexible organisational structures, accounting for the interplay between internal culture and external influences such as government policies and economic conditions.

**2. Integrating Leadership with Change Management Theory (CM) Theory.** While Inspirational Leadership is often examined in isolation, this study highlights the critical interconnection between leadership and Change Management (CM). Theories in both domains should be further integrated to offer a holistic understanding of how leadership drives change within SMEs, especially in the education sector. This could involve developing models that bridge leadership theories with established CM frameworks, focusing on employee engagement, readiness for change, and performance outcomes.

**3. Contextualising Leadership in SMEs.** A key takeaway from this research is the need to contextualise leadership theories within the unique organisational environments of SMEs. Traditional leadership theories often assume a more structured and formalised environment, which may not always apply to smaller institutions with limited resources. Future theoretical work should explore how leadership dynamics and inspirational strategies differ in smaller, less formalised organisational structures and how these differences impact employee motivation and organisational outcomes.

### **7.5.2 Recommendations for Practice**

The following recommendations are directed at educational leaders, institutional policymakers, and government bodies in the KSA. They are intentionally distinguished from the operational implementation guidelines for the framework, which are presented in Chapter 6, Section 6.10, and are concerned here instead with broader systemic and strategic implications.

**1. Embed Inspirational Leadership in National Leadership Development Policy.** The findings demonstrate that inspirational leadership is a significant driver of successful Change Implementation (CI) in educational SMEs in the KSA. Policymakers at the Ministry of Education and Monsha'at (the SME Authority) should incorporate inspirational leadership competencies, including vision communication, emotional intelligence, and empowerment, into national leadership development frameworks for the education sector. This would ensure that leadership capacity-building is treated as a strategic national priority, not merely an institutional one, and would directly support the human capital objectives of Vision 2030.

**2. Establish Institutional Support Structures for Change-Oriented Leadership.** Educational SMEs in the KSA often operate with limited human and financial resources, which constrains leaders' ability to implement change effectively. Government bodies and sector

associations should establish dedicated support structures, such as mentoring networks, peer-learning communities, and subsidised leadership coaching programmes, specifically tailored to the unique constraints of small and medium educational institutions. These structures would complement institutional efforts and provide leaders with the external support necessary to sustain change momentum.

**3. Align Regulatory and Accreditation Frameworks with Change Management Imperatives.** The study found that external regulatory frameworks significantly influence the conditions under which inspirational leadership operates. It is recommended that accreditation bodies and regulatory agencies in the KSA review their standards to ensure they actively incentivise, rather than inadvertently obstruct, the adoption of innovative leadership and organisational change practices. Regulatory frameworks that reward institutional adaptability, collaboration, and continuous improvement would create a more enabling environment for inspirational leadership to translate into sustainable change.

**4. Develop Culturally Contextualised Leadership Assessment Tools.** Given the high power-distance cultural context of the KSA and the subjective nature of inspirational leadership, there is a need for culturally sensitive, context-specific tools for assessing and developing leadership effectiveness in Saudi educational SMEs. Academic institutions and research bodies are encouraged to collaborate with practitioners to develop validated assessment instruments that reflect local cultural norms, organisational structures, and the specific demands of the KSA education sector.

**5. Institutionalise Knowledge Sharing Between Educational SMEs.** The qualitative findings suggest that many institutions face similar barriers to change, including cultural resistance, resource constraints, and leadership skill gaps, yet operate in relative isolation from one another. A national or regional platform for knowledge exchange between educational SMEs would enable leaders to share effective practices, learn from one another's experiences, and collectively build change management capacity. This could take the form of annual forums, digital knowledge repositories, or sector-specific professional associations under the auspices of the Ministry of Education or Monsha'at.

### **7.5.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on the impact of Inspirational Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly within the education sector in Saudi Arabia, can benefit from expanding the scope, integrating technological considerations, and focusing on longitudinal studies. One key recommendation is to broaden the study's sample by including a larger and more diverse

set of SMEs from different regions of Saudi Arabia. This will allow for more comprehensive findings that can be generalised across the nation's educational institutions. Since Saudi Arabia's education sector is undergoing substantial reforms in line with Vision 2030, a regional comparison of leadership practices in SMEs could provide valuable insights into how different areas experience leadership challenges and opportunities.

Diverse geographical contexts may present distinct external challenges, such as varying levels of government support, societal expectations, or access to resources, all of which could influence the effectiveness of leadership in driving change. A study that considers regional diversity would therefore add depth to our understanding of how Inspirational Leadership can be tailored to meet the specific needs of different educational SMEs, fostering more effective Change Management (CM) strategies.

Additionally, it would be valuable to consider longitudinal research that tracks the impact of Inspirational Leadership over an extended period. A cross-sectional study, as conducted in the current research, provides a snapshot of how leadership impacts change at a specific moment in time. However, a longitudinal approach would allow researchers to observe how Inspirational Leadership and its effects evolve over time. This method would also help to capture the long-term outcomes of inspirational leadership on OP and employee morale. For example, a longitudinal study could track the influence of inspirational leadership practices on employee engagement, retention, and job satisfaction over several years, offering more robust evidence of the sustainability of leadership effects. Moreover, this type of research could help in identifying whether certain leadership styles are more effective in fostering long-term change or if adaptations in leadership are required as the organisational context evolves.

Another important avenue for future research is the exploration of how technological advancements impact Inspirational Leadership and CM processes within SMEs in the education sector. As digitalisation continues to reshape education globally, including in Saudi Arabia, it is essential to examine the role of technology in facilitating or hindering leadership efforts. The rapid adoption of technology in education, particularly in the form of online learning, digital classrooms, and data analytics, presents both opportunities and challenges for leaders. Inspirational leaders may leverage these technological tools to enhance communication, streamline decision-making, and create more flexible, innovative learning environments. However, the integration of new technologies also requires significant changes in the OC and employee readiness.

Research could explore how leaders in SMEs manage this digital transformation and whether technological tools support or detract from their ability to inspire and lead change. Furthermore,

future research could investigate the role of digital leadership (DL), where leaders utilise technology to maintain engagement and motivation among remote or hybrid teams, especially in the context of educational SMEs.

Additionally, studies could focus on the intersection of Inspirational Leadership with organisational resilience and adaptability, particularly during times of economic downturn or political instability. The external environment, including changes in government funding, societal expectations, and regulatory shifts, heavily influences the ability of educational SMEs to thrive. Understanding how Inspirational Leadership interacts with organisational resilience, especially during challenging periods, could offer valuable insights for leaders looking to maintain motivation and performance in adverse conditions.

For example, during economic recessions, SMEs may face financial pressures that limit their resources for innovation. Investigating how leaders inspire their teams to maintain performance and creativity despite such constraints would be crucial in understanding the full scope of leadership's impact on Change Management (CM) in the education sector. Exploring this relationship could also lead to practical recommendations for leadership strategies that help SMEs remain resilient in times of crisis.

Furthermore, future research could adopt an ethnographic or in-depth interpretive approach by examining the lived experiences of employees within SMEs in the education sector. While quantitative studies provide valuable insights into the general trends and impacts of Inspirational Leadership, qualitative research could offer a deeper understanding of how employees perceive leadership and how these perceptions influence their engagement with change initiatives. Interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic studies could provide rich narratives about how employees experience leadership and CM on a personal level.

Such studies could highlight the emotional and psychological aspects of Inspirational Leadership, which are often difficult to quantify but are crucial to understanding the full impact of leadership on employees. By gathering first-hand accounts of employee experiences with leadership, researchers could uncover the nuances of how inspiration leads to behaviour change, increased motivation, and greater organisational commitment. This qualitative perspective could also shed light on any challenges or barriers employees face in fully embracing leadership-driven change initiatives.

In conclusion, future research in Inspirational Leadership and Change Management (CM) in SMEs, particularly in Saudi Arabia education sector, can benefit from expanding the scope of the study to include a broader sample, adopting longitudinal research designs, and exploring the role of technology and organisational resilience. By focusing on employee experiences and

examining how leadership interacts with external and internal factors, future studies can deepen our understanding of the dynamic relationship between leadership, change, and performance outcomes in SMEs. These directions will provide practical insights for leaders seeking to foster innovation and adapt to a rapidly changing educational landscape.

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# Appendix A: BREO Approval Letter



College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
 Brunel University London  
 Kingston Lane  
 Uxbridge  
 UB8 3PH  
 United Kingdom  
 www.brunel.ac.uk

14 October 2024

## LETTER OF APPROVAL

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 14/10/2024 AND 21/11/2024

Applicant (s): Mr Mohammed Alkhalid

Project Title: Investigating the Impact of Leadership Inspiration on Implementing and Managing 'Change Icons: The Case of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia's Education Institutions.

Reference: 44916-LR-Oct2024- 53022-4

Dear Mr Mohammed Alkhalid

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- A15 - Please ensure you have prior permission before arranging to meet interviewees on an organisation's premises.
- Consent:
  - The witness statement is not necessary and should be removed.
  - Given that the participants are not receiving care from the researcher it may be more appropriate to say "Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your rights" (or choose another ending to that statement that is appropriate to your relationship).
- **The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.**

### Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to any conditions that may appear above.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- If your project has been approved to run for a duration longer than 12 months, you will be required to submit an annual progress report to the Research Ethics Committee. You will be contacted about submission of this report before it becomes due.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Dr Katja Sarmiento-Mirwald

Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Brunel University London

## Appendix B: Consent Form

### Doctor of Philosophy

Mohammed Dhahi H Alkhaldi

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT  
BETWEEN 15/10/2023 AND 30/11/2023

**The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.**

	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Where relevant] Who have you spoken to about the study?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that: yes		
• You are free to withdraw from this study at any time.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your future care?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• You can withdraw your data any time up to 15/10/2023		
[Where relevant] I agree to my interview being audio recorded	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- [Where relevant] I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published
- The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me
- I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.
- I agree to take part in this study.
- 

Signature of research participant: Mohammed Alkhaldi

Print name: Mohammed Dhahi H Alkhaldi      Date: 21-09-2023

Witness Statement

I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent.

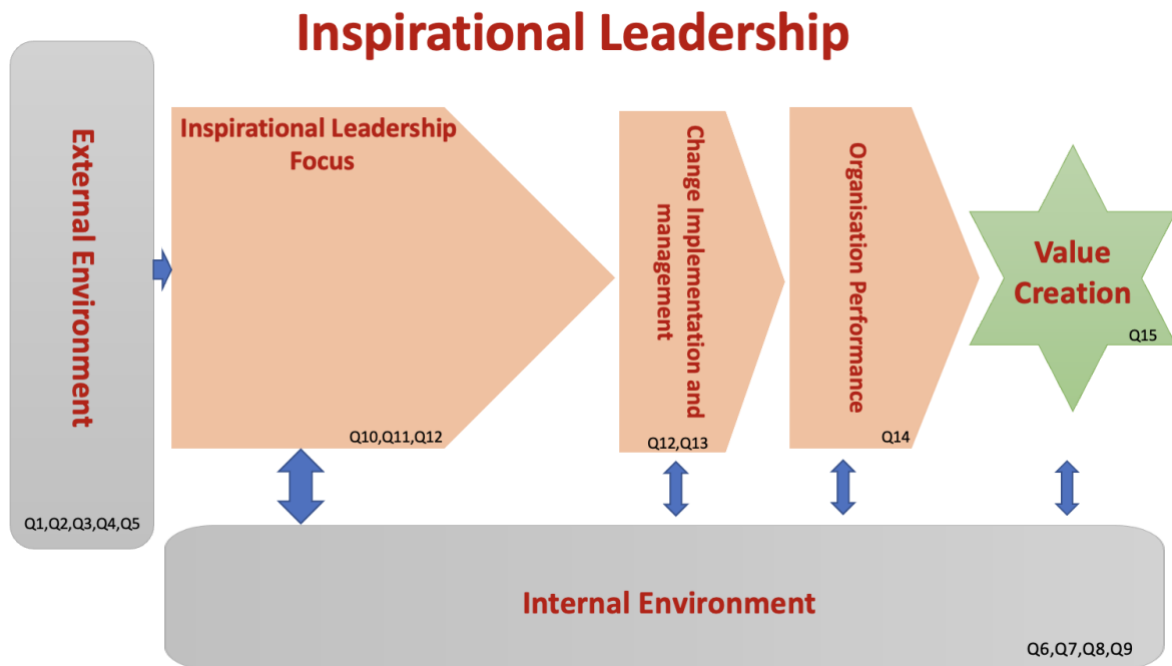
Witness signature:

Print name:

Date:

## Appendix C: Theoretical Framework (Figure 3.6)

The following figure illustrates the theoretical framework (Figure 3.6) alongside the corresponding interview questions assigned to each component, demonstrating how the data collection instrument was aligned with the theoretical constructs of this research.



## **Appendix D: PhD Research Interview Questions**

### **“English Version”**

#### **Interview protocol**

#### **Investigating the Impact of Inspirational Leadership on Implementing and Managing Change: The Case of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia Education Institutions.**

**Dear Honourable Director/Leader,**

**Greetings,**

I am pleased to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for your kind agreement to participate in this interview, which is conducted as part of a research study aimed at understanding the impact of inspirational leadership on the implementation and management of change in small and medium educational institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

#### **Main Objectives of the Study:**

This study aims to achieve a set of objectives, the most important of which are:

1. To evaluate the impact of both internal and external environmental factors on leaders' ability to inspire their subordinates and successfully lead change implementation in within small and medium-sized educational institutions.
2. To identify the key areas and behaviours that inspirational leadership focuses on to stimulate change, such as formulating an inspiring vision, empowering employees, and enhancing a spirit of commitment and belonging.
3. To analyse how the impact of inspirational leadership practically manifests during the stages of implementing and managing change, and to monitor the tangible outcomes of this impact (such as increased organisational flexibility, higher acceptance of change, and strengthened capacity for innovation).

4. To examine and test the mediating or moderating role of environmental factors (internal and external) in the relationship between inspirational leadership practices and the success of the change implementation process.
5. Exploring the contribution of inspirational leadership in maximising value creation for the educational institution, through effective change leadership, going beyond financial indicators to include educational value, social value, and institutional reputation.
6. Analysis of the interaction and joint influence of internal and external environments in shaping the organisational performance of small and medium educational institutions.

### **Importance of Your Participation:**

Your valued participation, as leaders and practitioners in this sector, is invaluable to the success of this study. Your insights and practical experience will provide rich and deep data that contribute to understanding the reality of leadership practices and change management in our educational institutions and will assist in producing practical recommendations with real impact.

### **Participation Guarantees:**

- A. **Complete confidentiality:** All information you provide will be treated with complete confidentiality, and your name or any other identifying information will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the research.
- B. **Privacy:** You may withdraw from the interview at any time without the need to provide any justification.
- C. **Privacy:** You may withdraw from the interview at any time without the need to provide any justification.
- D. **Consent:** This interview will be audio recorded (if you agree) to facilitate the analysis process, and the recording will not be used for any purpose other than this academic research.

### **Interview Structure:**

The interview will include a set of questions divided into three main sections:

- 1- **Demographic Questions:** To collect some basic demographic information.
- 2- **Core Questions:** Focusing on your experience with inspirational leadership, the impact of the internal and external environment, and the change management process.
- 3- **Conclusion:** To gather any additional thoughts or comments you consider important.
- 4- **Interview Duration:** The interview is expected to take approximately 30-45 minutes.

We thank you for your kind cooperation and valuable time, which we hope will make a significant contribution to enriching knowledge in this vital field and support the development of education in our beloved homeland in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

With highest respect and appreciation,

[Mohammed Alkhalidi]

### Interview Questions:

1- Demographic characteristics of study population:

Variables	Category	Answer
<b>Gender</b>	Female	
	Male	
<b>Organisation size</b>	Micro enterprises (1-5 employees)	
	Small enterprises (6-49 employees)	
	Medium enterprises (50-249 employees)	
<b>Organisation age</b>	Less than 5 years	
	5 – 10 years	
	More than 10 years	
<b>Organisation category</b>	Vocational training	
	Technical education	
	Rehabilitation programs	
<b>Location</b>		
<b>Experience</b>	less than 5 years	
	5 -9 years	
	10 -14 years	

- 2- What is / are the impacts of external environment on inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions?
- Motivate/support inspirational leadership
  - No impact
  - Obstacle on inspirational leadership
  - Others, please specify ....
- 3- What is / are the Impact of external environment on change Implementation and management?

- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 4- What is / are Impacts of external environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 5- What is / are Impacts of external environment on organisation performance?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 6- What is / are Impacts of external environment on organisation performance specifically on education institutions SMEs?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 7- What is / are Impact internal environment on inspirational leadership at education institutions SMEs?
- A. Motivate/support inspirational leadership
  - B. No impact
  - C. Obstacle on inspirational leadership
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 8- What is / are Impacts of internal environment on change Implementation and management?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 9- What is / are Impact internal environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 10- What is / are Impacts of internal environment on organisation performance?
- A. Strong impact
  - B. No impact
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Others, please specify ....

- 11- What is / are Focus areas of Inspirational leadership on education institutions SMEs?
- E. Employee motivation
  - F. Employee satisfaction
  - A. Improve employee performance
  - B. No impact
  - C. Others, please specify ....
- 12- What is / are impact of focusing on inspirational leadership on change Implementation and management?
- A. Strong support of change implementation and management by leading employee motivation.
  - B. Improve communication of change implementation
  - C. Lead by example
  - D. No impact
  - E. Others, please specify ....
- 13- What is / are impact of focusing on inspirational leadership on Change Implementation (CI) and management, specifically in educational SMEs?
- A. Strong support of change implementation and management by leading employee motivation.
  - B. Improve communication of change implementation
  - C. Lead by example
  - D. No impact
  - E. Others, please specify ....
- 14- What is / are Outcome of the impact of inspirational leaders on change Implementation and management? SMEs:
- A. Improve / effective communication.
  - B. Manage change resistance
  - C. No impact
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 15- What is / are Role of inspirational leaders on change Implementation and management on change Implementation and management SMEs?
- A. Improve / effective communication.
  - B. Manage change resistance
  - C. No impact
  - D. Others, please specify ....
- 16- Inspirational Leaders improve Value Creation (VC) in Educational SMEs.
- A. Strongly agree
  - B. Agree
  - C. Not sure
  - D. Disagree
  - E. Strongly disagree

## بروتوكول المقابلة

### “النسخة العربية”

دراسة أثر القيادة الإلهامية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير: حالة المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة في المملكة العربية السعودية

السيد/السيدة القائد/المدير المحترم،

تحية طيبة،

يسعدني أن أتقدم لكم بجزيل الشكر والتقدير على موافقتكم الكريمة بالمشاركة في هذه المقابلة، والتي تُجرى ضمن إطار دراسة بحثية تهدف إلى فهم أثر القيادة الإلهامية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

### الأهداف الرئيسية للدراسة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق مجموعة من الأهداف، من أهمها:

- أ. تقييم أثر العوامل البيئية الداخلية والخارجية على قدرة القادة في إلهام المرؤوسين وقيادة تنفيذ التغيير بنجاح داخل المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة.
- ب. تحديد المجالات والسلوكيات الرئيسية التي تركز عليها القيادة الإلهامية لتحفيز التغيير، مثل صياغة رؤية ملهمة، وتمكين الموظفين، وتعزيز روح الالتزام والانتماء.
- ت. تحليل كيفية تجلي أثر القيادة الإلهامية عملياً خلال مراحل تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير، ورصد النتائج الملموسة لهذا الأثر (مثل زيادة المرونة التنظيمية، وارتفاع قبول التغيير، وتعزيز القدرة على الابتكار).
- ث. دراسة واختبار الدور الوسيط أو المعدل للعوامل البيئية (الداخلية والخارجية) في العلاقة بين ممارسات القيادة الإلهامية ونجاح عملية تنفيذ التغيير.

ج. استكشاف مساهمة القيادة الإلهامية في تعظيم خلق القيمة للمؤسسة التعليمية من خلال قيادة التغيير بفاعلية، بما يتجاوز المؤشرات المالية ليشمل القيمة التعليمية والقيمة الاجتماعية والسمعة المؤسسية.

ح. تحليل التفاعل والتأثير المشترك للبيئتين الداخلية والخارجية في تشكيل الأداء التنظيمي للمؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة.

#### أهمية مشاركتكم:

تمثل مشاركتكم القيمة، كقيادة وممارسين في هذا القطاع، عنصراً أساسياً في نجاح هذه الدراسة. فخبراتكم العملية ورؤاكم المهنية ستوفر بيانات غنية وعميقة تسهم في فهم واقع الممارسات القيادية وإدارة التغيير في مؤسساتنا التعليمية، وستساعد في تقديم توصيات عملية ذات أثر حقيقي.

#### ضمانات المشاركة:

- أ. السرية التامة: ستُعامل جميع المعلومات التي تقدمونها بسرية تامة، ولن يُستخدم اسمكم أو أي بيانات تعريفية في أي تقرير أو نشر علمي
- ب. الخصوصية: يمكنكم الانسحاب من المقابلة في أي وقت دون الحاجة لإبداء أي مبرر.
- ت. الخصوصية: يمكنكم الانسحاب من المقابلة في أي وقت دون الحاجة لإبداء أي مبرر.
- ث. الموافقة: قد يتم تسجيل المقابلة صوتياً (في حال موافقتكم) لتسهيل التحليل.

#### هيكل المقابلة:

- 1- الأسئلة الديموغرافية
- 2- الأسئلة الجوهرية
- 3- الخاتمة
- 4- مدة المقابلة 30-45 دقيقة تقريباً

#### أسئلة المقابلة

- 1- الخصائص الديموغرافية لعينة الدراسة

• الجنس:

أ- أنثى

ب- ذكر

• حجم المنظمة:

أ- منشآت متناهية الصغر (1-5 موظفين)

ب- منشآت صغيرة (6-49 موظفًا)

ج- منشآت متوسطة (50-249 موظفًا)

• عمر المنظمة:

أ- أقل من 5 سنوات

ب- 5-10 سنوات

ج- أكثر من 10 سنوات

• نوع المنظمة:

أ- تدريب مهني

ب- تعليم تقني

ج- برامج تأهيل

• الموقع: - \_\_\_\_\_

• الخبرة:

أ- أقل من 5 سنوات

ب- 5-9 سنوات

ج- 10-14 سنة

**ثانيًا: الأسئلة الجوهرية**

2- ما تأثيرات البيئة الخارجية على القيادة الإلهامية؟

أ- تحفز/تدعم القيادة الإلهامية

ب- لا تأثير

ج- عائق أمام القيادة الإلهامية

- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 3- ما تأثير البيئة الخارجية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير؟
- أ- تأثير قوي
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- غير متأكد
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 4- ما تأثير البيئة الخارجية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة؟
- أ- تأثير قوي
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- غير متأكد
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 5- ما تأثير البيئة الخارجية على الأداء المؤسسي؟
- أ- تأثير قوي
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- غير متأكد
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 6- ما تأثير البيئة الخارجية على الأداء المؤسسي في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة؟
- أ- تأثير قوي
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- غير متأكد
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 7- ما تأثير البيئة الداخلية على القيادة الإلهامية؟
- أ- تحفز/تدعم القيادة الإلهامية
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- عائق أمام القيادة الإلهامية
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)
- 8- ما تأثير البيئة الداخلية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير؟
- أ- تأثير قوي
- ب- لا تأثير
- ج- غير متأكد
- د- أخرى (اذكر...)

9- ما تأثير البيئة الداخلية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة؟

أ- تأثير قوي

ب- لا تأثير

ج- غير متأكد

د- أخرى (اذكر...)

10- ما تأثير البيئة الداخلية على الأداء المؤسسي؟

أ- تأثير قوي

ب- لا تأثير

ج- غير متأكد

د- أخرى (اذكر...)

11- ما مجالات تركيز القيادة الإلهامية؟

أ- تحفيز الموظفين

ب- رضا الموظفين

ج- تحسين أداء الموظفين

د- لا تأثير

هـ- أخرى (اذكر...)

12- ما أثر التركيز على القيادة الإلهامية في تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير؟

أ- دعم قوي لتنفيذ وإدارة التغيير عبر تحفيز الموظفين

ب- تحسين التواصل أثناء تنفيذ التغيير

ج- القيادة بالقدوة

د- لا تأثير

هـ- أخرى (اذكر...)

13- ما أثر القيادة الإلهامية في تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة؟

أ- دعم قوي لتنفيذ وإدارة التغيير عبر تحفيز الموظفين

ب- تحسين التواصل

ج- القيادة بالقدوة

د- لا تأثير

هـ- أخرى (اذكر...)

14- ما نتائج تأثير القيادة الإلهامية على تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير؟

أ- تحسين فعالية الاتصال

ب- إدارة مقاومة التغيير

ج- لا تأثير

د- أخرى (اذكر...)

15- ما دور القادة الإلهاميين في تنفيذ وإدارة التغيير؟

أ- تحسين فعالية الاتصال

ب- إدارة مقاومة التغيير

ج- لا تأثير

د- أخرى (اذكر...)

16- القادة الإلهاميون يعززون خلق القيمة في المؤسسات التعليمية الصغيرة والمتوسطة.

أ- أوافق بشدة

ب- أوافق

ج- غير متأكد

د- لا أوافق

هـ- لا أوافق بشد

## Appendix D: Sample interview

### What is the Impact of external environmental factors on inspirational leadership in small and medium educational institutions?

R2: The external environment, particularly government regulations and changes in educational policies, greatly impacts our ability to lead with inspiration.

R10: We can focus on inspiring employees with a shared vision for growth and innovation when external conditions are favourable.

R12: The competitive nature of the external market, especially with the rapid growth of educational startups, affects how I lead my team.

R 21: External economic factors, such as volatile market conditions and changes in government funding. When the economy is unstable, leadership shifts from being inspirational to being more cautious and focused on survival.

### What are the Impacts of external environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?

R4: From my perspective, the external environment affects how SMEs and educational institutions interact, and Society's expectations of the educational institution influence how a leader approach it.

R8: Legislation that supports the autonomy of educational institutions and gives them greater flexibility allows leaders to innovate and make decisions that inspire the team.

R10: The external environment has a significant impact on change management for SMEs, especially in the education sector in Saudi Arabia.

R11: When resources are scarce, leaders need to be more creative and inspiring to motivate staff and find new ways to support learning despite financial pressures.

**What are the Impacts of external environment on organisation performance specifically on education institutions SMEs?**

R3: In a competitive environment, small and medium-sized enterprises have to differentiate themselves through the quality of their education and student services.

R6: During economic downturns, these institutions face financial challenges in providing equipment and developing curricula, which can negatively impact overall performance.

R9: The performance and survival of an Organisation depend largely on its external environment as Technological developments have a significant impact on the performance of small and medium-sized educational institutions, and Communities that place a high value on education tend to support educational institutions.

**What is the Impact internal environment on inspirational leadership at education institutions SMEs?**

R4: If the internal environment is competitive, with little focus on employee well-being or growth, leaders find it difficult to adopt an inspirational style.

R9: In my SME, the Organisational Culture (OC) is based on openness and collaboration, which allows me to lead in a way that inspires my team. When people feel that their voice is heard and their ideas are valued, they become more motivated and willing to put in more effort.

R26: Inspirational leaders can achieve success by adapting to the influences of the internal environment and developing strategies that fit the size and structure of their organisations.

**What is the Impact internal environment on change Implementation and management of education institutions SMEs?**

R3: Change management requires employees to be able to adapt... and this depends largely on the skills and experiences they have available.

R10: The Organisational Culture (OC) in SMEs, especially in the education sector in Saudi Arabia, is resistant to change. Internal resistance to change often comes from employees feeling insecure about their roles.

R20: A flexible Organisational Culture (OC) contributes to encouraging employees to embrace change.

**What are the Impacts of internal environment on organisation performance?**

R4: A culture of innovation and flexibility is the key driver of success,” yet warns that “a lack of formal structures can lead to inefficiency.

R22: Internal dynamics, such as employee motivation, leadership style, and organisational structure, play a critical role in determining performance.”

**What is The impact of focusing on inspirational leadership on change Implementation and management?**

R4: If you do not get acceptance of change at all levels, you are obviously going to face resistance.

R9: When leaders demonstrate their commitment to the transformation process, they inspire their teams.

R22: Overcoming employee resistance is one of the biggest challenges in change management.”

**What is The impact of focusing on inspirational leadership on Change Implementation (CI) and management, specifically in educational SMEs?**

R4: Your planning for change needs to be very specific because you can’t make a mistake when you’re making a product, Inspirational leaders are often successful in engaging employees on an emotional level.

R5: Inspirational leaders who understand the principles of change management are able to create a clear roadmap for their teams.

**What is the Role of inspirational leaders on change Implementation and management on change Implementation and management SMEs?**

R13: Inspirational leadership has a direct and positive impact on our performance. When leaders inspire us, they create a sense of purpose and vision that motivates employees to do their best.

R19: Inspirational leadership can foster a culture of innovation, which is critical to the success of SMEs in the education sector.

R21: The impact of inspirational leadership on performance is clear, especially with regard to employee morale and retention.