

Perceptions of Change Management Among Filipino Leaders in Multinational Educational Institutions: A Multiple Case Study

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Abstract

Perceptions of change management strategies were explored among Filipino educational leaders working in multinational institutions in Thailand and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The views of three leaders were examined through a multiple case study approach. A participant from Thailand emphasized resilience and strict adherence to policy within a challenging cultural context. Contrastingly, another Thailand participant spoke of the need for empathetic leadership and proactive acceptance of change, while the participant from the UAE viewed change management as a comprehensive framework necessitating leadership as its driving force. The findings revealed that while a leader may focus on maintaining consistency amid policy changes, leaders may also advocate for an adaptive and supportive environment. This research indicated the critical need for culturally sensitive leadership and adaptive strategies in managing change, offering new insights into the interplay between leadership styles and change management in diverse educational settings. Furthermore, the findings challenge existing theories by highlighting the success of varied approaches to change management in different cultural contexts. The importance of empathy and flexibility in effective leadership was also accentuated.

Keywords: *Change management, Filipino educational leadership, multinational institutions*

Introduction

Globalization has reshaped the modern world, influencing economies, cultures, and institutions on a global scale. It has created interconnected systems that transcend national borders, encouraging the flow of ideas, innovations, and talent across countries (Jin, 2023; Zalli, 2024). These rapid exchanges have not only impacted businesses and governments, but they have also transformed the educational sector. de Wit et al. (2017) contend that educational institutions, in particular, have become key players in this global landscape as they respond to the demands of internationalization by becoming multinational environments that reflect and engage with the complexities of a globalized society.

Literature (e.g., de Wit et al., 2017) indicates that multinational educational institutions could be characterized by their operations across multiple countries and their integration of diverse cultural perspectives within their frameworks. For example, institutions could have campuses, branches, or partnerships in more than one nation, or offer education through global online platforms (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Furthermore, these institutions have also engaged in extensive global collaboration, including partnerships with other educational entities, research projects, and exchange programs. They have also adapted their curricula and policies to align with international educational standards, accommodating their global stakeholders' diverse backgrounds and expectations (Lemana et al., 2024).

In addition to these characteristics, multinational educational institutions are distinguished by their diverse workforces, which encompass an eclectic range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Research (e.g., Alsharari, 2018; Lemana et al., 2024; Sipe et al., 2024) has indicated that this diversity among faculty and staff significantly enhances academic environments by integrating varied cultural perspectives and professional experiences. It can be opined that the presence of a heterogeneous team contributes to a more inclusive and enriching educational setting, where multiple viewpoints and pedagogical approaches are engaged actively. This view is supported by Gay (2015), who posited

that diversity not only supports an institution's mission to foster global competencies among students, but also facilitates the development of a culturally responsive curriculum.

As evidenced by multiple studies (e.g., Lemana, 2022; Sumalinog, 2022; Ulla, 2021; Uytico & Abadiano, 2020), Filipino educators hold a significant presence among the different nationalities represented in multinational educational settings. The experiences of these educators has been explored, documenting how they have perceived and adapted to the demands of working in these environments. Nevertheless, beyond such challenges, Rogayan's (2018) study has highlighted that Filipino educators are often valued for their strong work ethic, adaptability, and collaborative approach. Moreover, the recent study of Macapagong et al. (2023) conducted in the United States of America expounded on how Filipino teachers are known for their resilience and ability to adapt quickly to new cultural contexts, which enables them to integrate effectively into diverse educational settings. Additionally, the same research study emphasized that Filipino educators place importance on building strong interpersonal relationships and fostering a supportive work environment, which helps them navigate the complexities of working in a foreign country, such as the USA.

Previous studies have delineated how Filipino educators have encountered significant challenges in cross-cultural environments, including cultural differences, language barriers, and variations in educational philosophy. A study by Lemana (2022) revealed that Filipino teachers in the United Arab Emirates have often faced difficulties adapting to different cultural norms and practices, which can impact their effectiveness and job satisfaction. Language barriers further complicate their communication ability and engagement with students and colleagues (Macapagong et al., 2023; Ulla, 2021).

In spite of these challenges, Filipino educators have navigated their roles abroad through a combination of resilience and resourcefulness. Uytico and Abadiano (2020) found that Filipino educators employ various strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as seeking more professional development opportunities, building stronger support networks, and constantly adapting their teaching methods to fit the local context better. Modesto (2020) opined that Filipinos' ability to overcome challenges and thrive in diverse educational settings speaks to their significant contributions as global educators.

Despite extensive research on Filipino educators' experiences teaching abroad—including their adjustments, challenges, and coping mechanisms (Lemana, 2022; Sereni & Yanto, 2021; Sumalinog, 2022; Ulla, 2021; Uytico & Abadiano, 2020)—a gap in the literature remains regarding Filipino educational leaders who work in multinational contexts. One recent such study was that of Adams and Velarde (2021), who examined leadership in culturally diverse international schools in Malaysia, focusing on how leaders navigated this environment. This qualitative study identified key leadership styles, such as instructional and transformational leadership, using data from interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Nevertheless, a notable gap exists in understanding how change management is perceived by educational leaders operating in environments characterized by multiple nationalities and cultural diversity. As Robert and Maher (2015) have pointed out, perception shapes how leaders understand, interpret, and approach organizational situations that may encompass change management.

In the words of Phillips and Klein (2023, p. 1), "change management is ...planning, developing, leading, evaluating, assessing, supporting, and sustaining a change implementation." Contextualized in educational parlance, change management refers to the methods and approaches used to guide educational institutions and organizations through periods of change, whether those changes are in response to internal developments, external pressures, or broader societal shifts (Tang, 2019). The importance of change management in the current state of multinational educational settings cannot be overstated. As educational institutions continually face new challenges—ranging from technological advancements to shifts in educational policies and global trends—effective change management has become crucial for maintaining organizational stability and ensuring the successful implementation of new initiatives (Cameron & Green, 2019; Tang, 2019). A study by Moşteanu (2024) emphasized the crucial role of leadership in guiding organizations through crises, as well as the

importance of collaborative efforts and continuous adaptation. She also advocated for ongoing monitoring and dynamic risk management to ensure that businesses remain stable and resilient, since adaptability plays a crucial role in ensuring organizational continuity and stability amidst constant change.

The multiple-case study approach used by Stake (2013) was adopted in the present study, in order to explore the perceptions of three Filipino educational leaders outside of the Philippines regarding change management. Pursuing this study is vital because educational leaders in such diverse environments have change management perceptions that are not adequately described by current research. The findings will contribute to the academic discourse on leadership and change management and have practical implications for educational institutions striving to navigate the complexities of internationalization and cultural diversity. Thus, the current study was pursued to address the following question: How do Filipino educational leaders abroad perceive change management in their roles within multinational educational institutions?

Methodology

Design

This study employed a qualitative research design focused on exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A multiple-case design approach was utilized. According to Stake (2013), a multiple-case study approach allows researchers to delve into a phenomenon and to uncover commonalities and differences among several cases.

Participants and Contexts

Participants were chosen through purposive voluntary sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where individuals self-select to participate in a study based on their interests and willingness (Murairwa, 2015). The main author posted a call for participants on various social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and X over the course of one month (i.e., June 2024). To qualify, prospective participants of any age or gender must meet the following eligibility criteria: Currently holds a leadership or management position in any educational institution (kindergarten, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, postgraduate) outside of the Philippines; has been in this position for at least one year; and willing to participate in a series of onsite or online interviews. After one month, three volunteers responded and were verified to be eligible participants.

Instrument

A researcher-constructed semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data needed for the study, and this instrument was reviewed and validated by three external qualitative experts. The interview guide was structured into two parts: In the first part background information collected on the participants, including their educational and professional experiences, in order to provide context for their responses. The second part focused on exploring how Filipino educational leaders understood the concept of change management within their institutions. This section included questions to uncover their interpretations and views on what change management entails in a multinational context.

Data Collection

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data. The main author conducted face-to-face interviews with participants based in Thailand, while the participant from UAE was interviewed via the Google Meet platform. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in English. Additional correspondence was conducted as needed through Google Meet and email in order for the participants to clarify and elaborate on their responses in certain areas.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to in this study. Participants were provided with a consent form detailing the study's purpose, their rights as participants, and assurances of

confidentiality. They were told that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences. Moreover, to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data, respondent validation was employed; after the interviews, transcripts were sent to participants for verification. This allowed them to review their responses and make any necessary corrections or additions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was guided by Stake's (2013) multiple case study framework, which facilitated a thorough examination of both the unique aspects of individual cases and common themes that emerge across cases. A detailed within-case analysis was conducted initially for each participant. This step involved coding the interview transcripts, identifying significant statements, and organizing these statements into thematic categories relevant to the research question. By treating each case as a comprehensive entity, the study captured specific contexts of the participants to provide a deep understanding of their individual perspectives on change management. Following within-case analysis, cross-case analysis was performed to identify patterns and themes that emerged across all cases. This comparative analysis was instrumental in uncovering broader insights and commonalities that might not have been apparent when examining each case in isolation. This helped to surface thematic connections and divergences of how Filipino educational leaders perceive change management in cross-cultural settings.

Results and Discussion

Case A: Filipino Educational Leader in Thailand 1 (FilEdLTh1)

Background and Character

The first participant, referred to as FilEdLTh1, was a 50-year-old male from Iloilo, Philippines. He held a Bachelor of Arts in Theology and History, a Master's in Ministry (Intercultural Studies), and a Master's in School Management. He currently is enrolled in a doctoral program in Educational Governance, and he heads the English Language Department at a Thai university. He is responsible for overseeing the progress of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) during their first and second years when English courses are mandatory. He cares for the needs and monitors the progress of about 3,000 students per semester and manages almost 50 multinational EFL lecturers within the department. His duties include curriculum oversight, faculty management, and ensuring the quality of language education within the department.

Change Management Perceptions

Theme 1: Adaptation to Organizational Culture. Participant FilEdLTh1 perceived change management in a foreign environment as a task dealing with organizational cultural differences. He noted that as a middle manager, he was not a decision-maker, but needed to adjust to the university management's goals and processes, which were influenced by local cultural norms. Hence, to him, cultural adaptation played a significant role in change management, driving him to align his actions with the specific cultural context of Thailand.

Number one is in terms of culture, but that is one of the main things here because you are working in a foreign environment, where you are not actually the 'implementer' or the policy maker, but you are just a middle manager, that whatever is the goal and aspiration of the one that you are working with in terms of the culture, you have to adjust with it, the way they do things, the way they run things, so there are some cultural differences, that is number one.

Theme 2: Adjustment to Academic Standards and Practices. Participant FilEdLTh1 also described change management as a key to addressing differences in academic expectations and standards. He

compared the grading systems and academic achievements from his previous experiences with his current workplace, noting the need for adaptation in measuring academic success.

Number two is in terms of academics because there might be similarities between doing. For example, previously, there were some students who were aiming for a Bachelor's Degree, and now, we still have students who are aiming for a Bachelor's Degree, but in terms of academic pursuit, there are differences.

To illustrate these differences in academic pursuit more concretely, FilEdLTh1 provided an example.

We are used to having the concept that if you are an A1 student, basically, you get a score of 90, but here, you only get a score of 80, then you got an A1 student, you will be called an A1 student. So you see the difference between that one, in doing so, you have to adjust; passing is 75, here passing is 50.

He took the time to observe and understand the grading practices in the host country, including how academic performance is evaluated and categorized. Rather than resisting or imposing familiar standards, FilEdLTh1 adjusted his mindset to align with the host institution's criteria for academic excellence and passing thresholds.

Theme 3: Guidance of Cultural Values in Navigating Policy Shifts and Organizational Changes.

Another prominent theme in his response was the challenge of dealing with sudden or unexpected policy changes. He discussed how policies, especially those related to promotion and compensation, could shift without prior notice, causing uncertainty for staff. He said,

"There are differences and changes in policies. Sometimes, you will be surprised that new policies are coming up. Surprisingly, you don't know, it seems that they are after the teachers or whatever."

Further, he opined, "my cultural values emphasize fairness and equality, which guide me to uphold policies and ensure that everyone is treated impartially, regardless of any personal biases." For him, this commitment to fairness and adherence to established policies is central to effective change management practices, as it helps to create a structured and consistent environment for implementing change.

Theme 4: Inevitable Curriculum Transformation. Participant FilEdLTh1 described change management as being characterized as an openness to inevitable transformation of the curriculum, recognizing that educational systems must continually evolve in response to shifting societal, technological, and cultural demands. He recalled a moment when the university he worked for decided to overhaul its curriculum to incorporate more technology and digital tools, something that was long overdue, but also met with some resistance from faculty members.

I remember when we were first introduced to the idea of integrating more technology into our teaching methods. But as a leader, I believed change was not only necessary, but it was also an opportunity to enhance our curriculum and better prepare students for the future. I had to embrace the idea that change is inevitable. I encouraged my colleagues to see it not as a threat but as a chance for growth...Students became more engaged, and the curriculum felt more relevant to their needs...being open to change and transformation was crucial for the sustainability of the institution and the success of our students.

Theme 5: Facing Teacher Resistance to Change. Another key theme was facing teacher resistance to change, which FilEdLTh1 attributed to factors such as comfort zones, differing teaching backgrounds, and personal teaching values. He noted that change management involves understanding that some teachers resisted changes in the curriculum and system due to reluctance to leave familiar practices, or an inability to quickly adapt to new methods.

The comfort zone of teachers is one of the factors of resistance in terms of change... some teachers are just comfortable implementing what they are used to... we come from different backgrounds and different perspectives, and we have our own teaching values and strategies.

Theme 6: Resilience and Responsibility. Participant FilEdLTh1 emphasized that his Filipino background contributed to his resilience and strong sense of responsibility. He felt that being Filipino had instilled in him a robust work ethic and the ability to handle challenging situations with perseverance. Despite facing skepticism or criticism, he believed that his cultural values of resilience and dedication enabled him to manage change effectively and lead with a sense of duty.

In terms of being a leader, it doesn't mean that it is by nationalities in my own perspective. It doesn't mean that we are Filipinos, then we are not capable of leading out. As I see, we are more resilient in terms of responsibilities in whatever context that we are brought into. What I told him is that I am in this position; because I am in this position, I have the responsibility that is given to me and mandated for me to do accordingly. So, whatever is given to me, I will do. Whatever I give to you, you need to follow.

These findings carry significant implications for the field of educational leadership, particularly within multinational contexts. This goes beyond superficial adjustments, requiring a profound engagement with and adaptation to local cultural norms and practices. Moreover, the findings highlight the necessity for skill in adapting to policy changes—an essential quality for leaders navigating the often unpredictable landscape of international education systems. The ability to adapt to policies in response to unforeseen changes is vital for maintaining organizational stability (Boylan, & Turner, 2017).

Furthermore, the study revealed the complexities of curriculum management and resistance, emphasizing the need for strategic approaches to managing both curriculum transformations and resistance from staff. The findings also aligned with contemporary literature on change management and educational leadership, which explains how one leader's view of change shapes directions for change management implementation (Cameron & Green, 2019; Phillips & Klein, 2023; Tang, 2019).

Case B: Filipino Educational Leader in Thailand 2 (FilEdLTh2)

Background and Character

The second participant, referred to as FilEdLTh2, was a 39-year-old Bisaya-Filipino from Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, who identified as queer. He held a Bachelor of Arts in English, a Master of Arts in English Language Teaching, and a Doctor of Communication, and was currently pursuing a PhD in Language Education. For the past four years, FilEdLTh2 has been the head of research at a Thai university, managing the research publications and output of around 90 faculty members. His primary responsibility was ensuring that each faculty member publishes at least one research article. To support this, his office provided a range of research-related activities, including training sessions, workshops, conferences, webinars, and mentorship programs, offering comprehensive support for research publications.

Change Management Perceptions

Theme 1: Remaining Steadfast in One's Role. This participant perceived change management as the ability to remain steadfast in one's roles and responsibilities while adapting to shifts in institutional leadership and policies. He emphasized that change is constant and inevitable, and as a leader, one must be prepared to accept and navigate these changes while ensuring the continuity of their tasks. Furthermore, FilEdLTh2 believed that regardless of external changes, such as shifts in leadership, it is crucial to maintain a consistent focus on one's role and responsibilities. His perception of change management involves aligning personal duties with institutional goals, even amid transitions.

Change management for me has something to do with how you adapt with the changes in your institution or your organization. For instance, I am the head of research; I have to make sure that even if there is a change in leadership, whether it's the president or the dean of the school, my task remains the same. My task is to ensure that all the goals attributed to my position are achieved by the end of the year, regardless of who is in charge at the top.

Theme 2: Acceptance and Proactivity Toward Change. Participant FiEdLTh2 also viewed change management not as something to resist, but to accept and embrace. He emphasized the importance of fostering a positive mindset toward change, understanding that it is the only constant factor within an organization, and that leaders should support this process. He perceives change as an essential part of organizational growth and development. Instead of resisting it, FiEdLTh2 encourages proactive acceptance of change and believes in guiding his team through the transition.

Change management is something we should not resist but instead accept, because change is the only thing in the world that is constant. It's important for leaders to help their teams see this, to help them understand that change is part of the process, and it's not something to be afraid of. We must accept it and adapt quickly so that we can keep moving forward and achieving our goals, even if the environment around us is shifting.

Theme 3: Empathetic Leadership and Cultural Understanding. Respondant FiEdLTh2 attributed his effectiveness in change management to his empathetic approach and cultural understanding. He believes that his ability to sympathize with and understand the challenges faced by his faculty members is enhanced by his Filipino background, which values empathy and support. This empathetic leadership style, rooted in his cultural upbringing, helped him connect with his team and address their needs effectively.

I am an emphatic leader, I am able to sympathize and I understand, because this is my culture. Because this is how we were raised back in the Philippines. We should be able to learn to feel what the people are also feeling, we have to understand them and I think these are the things, the qualities that I also have and that makes me a good leader for my faculty members.

When asked if he had ever faced discrimination as a Filipino educational leader in Thailand, FiEdLTh2 responded unequivocally, "I have never." He further explained, "I think it's not about me being a Filipino, I don't believe there is an issue there." He emphasized that his nationality had not hindered his effectiveness, asserting, "I think they follow me regardless of my nationality. I think I would also believe that if you are a leader, you should also be a model." This response highlighted FiEdLTh2's belief that his leadership qualities and actions, rather than his cultural identity, were the key factors in his positive reception and effectiveness in his role.

His perspective on change management highlights the importance of adaptability to institutional changes and maintaining focus on core duties despite external shifts. Studies have shown that adaptability has been considered crucial for ensuring continuity and stability within the organization amidst constant change (Moşteanu, 2024). Additionally, FiEdLTh2 viewed change as an inevitable and integral part of organizational growth, advocating for acceptance and proactivity toward change. This was aligned with contemporary views on change management that posit change as a catalyst for development rather than a disruptive force (Skarin & Nilsson, 2022). Likewise, the emphasis on empathy and support reflects a broader trend in leadership research that recognizes the importance of emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity in managing diverse teams (Phillips & Klein, 2023).

This participant asserted that his nationality had not impeded his effectiveness challenges the notion that nationality (i.e., Filipino) alone determines leadership success. Instead, his experience suggests that leadership qualities, such as empathy and adaptability, are more influential in shaping leadership outcomes. These insights align with existing literature on change management and educational leadership, and provide a nuanced understanding that challenges traditional views on the role of cultural identity in leadership (Tang, 2019).

Case C: Filipino Educational Leader in UAE (FiEdLUAE)

Background and Character

The third participant, FiEdLUAE, was a 31-year-old male Ilonggo-Filipino from Sultan Kudarat, Philippines. He held a Bachelor's degree in elementary education, as well as a Master's and a PhD in curriculum design, development, and supervision. He occupied three key roles at his school in the United Arab Emirates, which offers a British curriculum. First, as Head of the Primary School since 2020, he was responsible for implementing the curriculum and ensuring that it aligned with the British Curriculum. His duties included overseeing the curriculum's execution, ensuring that their multinational teachers adhered to the framework, and he has also addressed teacher and student behavioral issues. Additionally, he collaborated closely with other school leaders for inspections. Since 2021, he served as the Head of Assessments, overseeing the implementation of assessment policies, and ensuring that teachers are properly guided and compliant. He also analyzed internal and external data, ensuring that teachers were informed about their own and their students' performance, subsequently informing their teaching practices. Lastly, he was the Head of School Activities, responsible for managing all school events and overseeing their planning and execution within the institution.

Change Management Perceptions

Theme 1: Change Management as a Comprehensive Framework. Participant FiEdLUAE conceptualized change management as an overarching guide for a manager's functions within institutional operations. He viewed change as an integrative process across various domains, including teaching, assessments, and administrative procedures, thereby ensuring coherence and alignment with organizational objectives. He said:

"So, I think it's the process that describes the changes in implementation in the internal and external processes. So, anything that you do internally and externally are considered as change management."

Theme 2: Resistance as an Inherent Challenge in Change Implementation. Participant FiEdLUAE identified resistance as a pervasive challenge inherent in the process of change management. He acknowledged that resistance may manifest among different stakeholders, including teachers, staff, and administrators, and that resistance poses significant obstacles to the successful implementation of change initiatives. He said:

"The challenges could be the resistance of the teachers, of the staff to changes... Some are open, some are not and this is also a challenge..."

When asked to provide specific examples of resistance, he described how the transition from paper-based to online assessments and the revision of the admission process faced considerable pushback from various stakeholders within the school. According to him, this resistance stemmed from concerns about the financial implications, data redundancy, and the reliability of the new methods.

We used to have our paper-based assessment/admission assessment, and that changed to online... there's resistance because the school administration has to pay for the fees... which data will I be using; will it be the old data, will it be the admission data? Many people... are resistant to the changes because they think that this change will be difficult or will not be effective until proven.

Theme 3: Innovative Leadership as the Catalyst for Change. Participant FiEdLUAE perceived innovative leadership as the primary catalyst in driving and managing change within the institution. He emphasized that the introduction of innovations by leaders, particularly those who disrupted established practices, could be met with resistance. However, he also underscored the critical role of leadership in aligning change initiatives with the school's vision and ensuring their effective implementation.

There comes in a new principal, a new leader whom we are under with and then this leader introduces a new change... many people... are resistant to the changes because they think that this change will be difficult or will not be effective until proven.

Theme 4: Cultural Sensitivity and Respectful Engagement. This leader (FilEdLUAЕ) emphasized the importance of respect and cultural sensitivity in his leadership approach. As a Filipino leader working in a multicultural environment, he practiced cultural sensitivity by acknowledging and valuing the opinions of others, regardless of their background. This respectful engagement fosters an open and supportive environment for change, allowing for constructive discussions and feedback.

I think that being a Filipino, we always have to think about the pros and cons when making decisions and we always listen to the people... Respect. I respect their opinions and I respect their suggestions. That is why I always welcome people in my office, staffs in my office to have a discourse with me.

For him, cultural sensitivity helps in managing change by fostering an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. When leaders practice cultural sensitivity, they create a space where individuals feel comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns, which is essential during periods of transition. By acknowledging and understanding the cultural differences within their teams, leaders can anticipate potential challenges, avoid misunderstandings, and adapt their communication and leadership styles accordingly.

Theme 5: Empathetic Leadership and Supportive Environment. Furthermore, FilEdLUAЕ's approach to change management was marked by empathy and support for his staff. He understood the difficulties associated with change and made efforts to empathize with the teachers' struggles. His open-door policy and willingness to engage in friendly discussions with staff created a supportive atmosphere where employees felt valued and heard.

I always tell the teachers that 'I know, I understand and I know your struggles because I was also once a teacher'...What happens is they follow, but they are welcome to come to the office and have a friendly conversation about what they think. As observed, this openness reduces resistance to change, as staff members are more engaged and feel that their opinions and concerns are acknowledged, making it easier for the organization to implement new strategies or processes.

In his view of change management as a guiding framework, he stressed the importance of a unified approach that aligns curriculum implementation, assessments, and administrative processes with the institution's broader goals towards promoting smooth transitions and effective change management. This perspective is aligned with Cameron and Green's (2019) argument that change management requires a holistic approach across all operational areas.

Participant FilEdLUAЕ identified resistance as a key challenge in the change management process, particularly during transitions such as shifting from paper-based to online assessments. This resistance, driven by concerns over financial costs and the reliability of new methods, underscores a common barrier to implementing change initiatives. This finding supported Warrick's (2023) emphasis on the necessity of addressing and managing resistance to achieve successful change implementation.

A critical implication of these results is the role of innovative leadership as a driver of change. Participant FilEdLUAЕ's experience indicates that effective leadership is crucial for aligning change initiatives with institutional goals and overcoming resistance, reinforcing Tang's (2019) view that leadership is central to managing change and ensuring successful execution of new strategies. A brief summary of similarities in the three cases is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Cross-Case Analysis: Similarities*

Theme	Case A	Case B	Case C
Adaptability to Change	Leaders must adapt to changing institutional contexts.	Adaptability to shifts in leadership and policies.	Change management as an overarching framework, requiring adaptability.
Role of Leadership	Leadership is crucial to guide change, align policies.	Leadership is viewed as a key driver of change.	Leadership is the primary catalyst for managing change.
Cultural Sensitivity	Essential for effective change management.	Empathetic leadership enhanced by cultural understanding.	Cultural sensitivity is critical in a multicultural environment.
Empathetic Leadership	Empathetic leadership facilitates effective change management.	Leadership effectiveness attributed to empathy and cultural understanding.	Demonstrated empathy and supportive leadership.

The analysis revealed a consistent emphasis on the importance of adaptability to change, the role of leadership, and cultural sensitivity across all the cases. All three leaders recognized that effective change management required flexibility in adapting to institutional changes, whether they pertained to leadership, policies, or operational frameworks. This agrees with literature findings that leaders need to be both strong and adaptable to navigate transitions and align with organizational goals (Boylan & Turner, 2017; Moşteanu, 2024). Additionally, cultural sensitivity and empathetic leadership are common threads, with all cases highlighting that understanding and respecting diverse cultural contexts enhances change management effectiveness. Mun et al. (2020, p. 1) even claimed that “teacher deficit views, inequitable identification of policies and practices, and differential access to resources to explain the dearth of traditionally underserved learners in gifted programs across the nation.” Such deficits can be remedied by culturally relevant leadership. A brief summary of differences in the three cases is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *Cross-Case Analysis: Differences*

Theme	Case A	Case B	Case C
Change Management Framework	Emphasis on cultural understanding and policy flexibility.	Change management viewed as dynamic and structured.	Change management seen as an overarching framework integrating various domains.
Resistance to Change	Not explicitly discussed.	Significant challenge, particularly with new assessment methods.	Resistance is recognized but is part of a broader framework.
Focus on Specific Areas	Focused on curriculum and policy alignment.	Focused on adapting to institutional changes, guiding teams through transitions.	Emphasized management of curriculum, assessments, and activities.
Personal Experience of Discrimination	Not applicable.	No discrimination reported, focus on leadership qualities.	Not explicitly addressed; focus is on empathy, cultural sensitivity.

The differences highlighted variations in how change management is perceived across cases. The Case A participant focused on the role of cultural understanding and flexibility in policy, without explicitly addressing resistance or the framework for managing change. Case Bs participant emphasized the dynamic nature of change and the structured approach to managing it, with a notable focus on the challenge of resistance, particularly in transitioning to new methods. In contrast, Case C participant viewed change management as a comprehensive framework that integrates various aspects of institutional operations, with a broader focus on managing curriculum, assessments, and activities.

The personal experience of discrimination was also notably absent in Case C, unlike in Case B, where it was explicitly addressed in terms of the leader's perception. This indicated that while personal experiences of discrimination or perceived barriers may impact some leaders, the focus in Case C was more on empathetic and culturally sensitive leadership practices rather than personal challenges. These differences highlight diverse perceptions of change management among educational leaders. While there is a shared emphasis on adaptability, leadership, and cultural sensitivity, the specific focus areas and experiences of resistance or discrimination vary, reflecting the unique contexts and challenges faced by each leader.

Conclusion

In this study, perceptions were explored regarding change management strategies among Filipino educational leaders in multinational contexts, specifically focusing on two cases in Thailand and one in the United Arab Emirates. These leaders consistently highlighted the importance of aligning their management practices with local cultural norms and values and they suggested that effective change management was deeply intertwined with understanding and respecting the cultural context. Another shared theme was the challenge of managing resistance to change. All leaders noted that resistance is an inherent aspect of implementing change, whether it stems from discomfort with new policies or changes in academic or assessment practices. In terms of differences, Participant F1EdLTh1 focused on resilience and policy adherence, while both participants in Thailand emphasized empathetic leadership and proactive change management, with the participant in the United Arab Emirates viewing change as a comprehensive framework driven by leadership.

These findings contribute to the broader discourse on change management in multinational educational institutions by demonstrating that while cultural adaptation and resistance management are universal challenges, the approaches to addressing them can vary significantly. The insights obtained in the study have practical implications for educational leadership, suggesting that leaders in multinational settings must develop a deep cultural understanding, embrace change proactively, and address resistance effectively. Future research could explore how these themes apply in other contexts, and further refine strategies for managing change in diverse educational environments.

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