DRIVING ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY THROUGH STRUCTURED CHANGE MANAGEMENT APPROACH (Case Study of Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti)

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the influence of structured change management approach specifically leadership support and employee readiness on successful implementation of organizational strategy in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. Anchored in Contingency Theory and Structural Contingency Theory, the study explores how internal organizational capabilities align with strategic objectives to drive performance. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 168 academic and non-academic staff. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression were employed to analyze the data using SPSS Version 25. Results revealed a significant and positive relationship between leadership support and strategy implementation ($\beta = 0.445$, $p < 0.001$), as well as between employee readiness and strategy implementation ($\beta = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 40.5% of the variance in strategic outcomes ($R^2 = 0.405$). These findings underscore the importance of leadership commitment and employee preparedness in achieving strategic goals during organizational change. The study concludes that institutions seeking effective strategy execution must adopt structured change frameworks that prioritize both top-level support and grassroots engagement. The study recommends that Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti should strengthen change leadership capabilities, institutionalize change readiness programs, and adopt formal change management models to enhance strategic performance.*

Keywords: Change Management, Employee Readiness, Leadership Support, Strategy Implementation.

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and complex business environment, the ability of organizations to execute strategy effectively has become a major determinant of long-term success. While many institutions dedicate significant time and resources to strategic planning, the failure to translate those strategies into actionable and sustainable outcomes remains a recurring challenge. According to Adetunji and Nwankwo (2023), one of the critical factors influencing the success of strategy implementation is how organizations manage change. Change management involves the application of a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state, with the aim of achieving expected business outcomes (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012).

Structured change management provides a disciplined framework for facilitating transitions, minimizing resistance, and aligning the workforce with new strategic directions. Models such as Kotter's 8-Step Process, Lewin's Change Model, and the ADKAR Model offer actionable strategies for managing organizational transformation effectively. In the Nigerian public and private sectors, failure to apply structured change frameworks often leads to poor strategy execution, organizational resistance, and disengaged employees (Uche & Emeka, 2023). Despite this reality, many institutions continue to implement strategies without deliberate consideration of the human, cultural, and leadership dimensions of change.

Leadership support and employee readiness are particularly important for successful change implementation. Leaders play a central role in communicating vision, allocating resources, and setting the tone for transformation. Meanwhile, employees' psychological and behavioral readiness to embrace change determines the speed and success of implementation efforts (Burnes, 2021; Okoroafor & Aluko, 2023). Without alignment across these levels, strategy execution becomes fragmented, and performance targets are missed.

Statement of the Problem

Although strategic planning has become institutionalized in many Nigerian organizations, the persistent failure of strategic initiatives highlights a recurring disconnect between formulation and execution. The root cause often lies not in the strategy itself, but in the absence of a structured change management process to support implementation. Empirical studies (Uche & Emeka, 2023) have shown that organizations that do not adopt structured change models frequently face resistance, confusion, and disengagement among employees. Moreover, change efforts that lack leadership support or fail to assess employee readiness are more likely to collapse before achieving intended outcomes. Leadership inertia, poor communication, and lack of stakeholder involvement in the change process continue to plague strategy

execution efforts across both public and private institutions. Despite awareness of these challenges, many organizations in Nigeria implement change reactively and without a formal framework. This contributes to widespread implementation failure, low productivity, and wasted resources. There is a clear empirical gap in understanding the role of specific change management components particularly leadership support and employee readiness in enabling or hindering strategic execution within the Nigerian context. This study addresses that gap by investigating the influence of structured change management on strategy implementation in selected institutions in Ado Ekiti.

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: Leadership support has no significant effect on the implementation of organizational strategy in selected institutions in Ado Ekiti.

Ho2: Employee readiness has no significant effect on the execution of organizational strategy in selected institutions in Ado Ekiti.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Structured Change Management

Structured change management refers to the deliberate, systematic application of principles, tools, and processes to guide organizations through transformation in a planned and effective manner (Obasi & Fashina, 2021). Unlike ad hoc or reactive change, structured change management adopts established models such as Kotter's 8-Step Process, Lewin's Change Model, or the ADKAR framework to anticipate challenges, manage resistance, and align stakeholders (Ishola & Umeh, 2022). It ensures that change efforts are not only technically sound but also socially and culturally accepted within the organization. Structured approaches enhance transparency, communication, and control over the pace and scope of change. In the Nigerian context, structured change management is especially vital due to institutional inertia, resource constraints, and low employee engagement in many public-sector organizations. Research by Lawal and Okeke (2023) found that public institutions that adopted structured models such as incorporating readiness assessments, phased implementation, and feedback loops were more successful in achieving strategic transformation than those that relied on spontaneous managerial directives. Additionally, Adebayo and Ayoola (2022) highlight that structured change improves clarity of roles, reduces ambiguity, and ensures accountability at each phase of the transition. These attributes are particularly relevant in complex organizations like Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti, where departmental interdependencies require coordinated reform efforts.

Structured change management also integrates people, processes, and performance metrics to ensure alignment between transformation efforts and strategic goals. It promotes change leadership, employee participation, continuous communication, and

evidence-based decision-making (Ogunlade & Fakolade, 2021). Furthermore, structured models help organizations evaluate change progress using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), thereby fostering institutional learning and adaptability. In sum, structured change is not just a project management exercise but a holistic approach to reconfiguring organizational systems, behavior, and culture in support of long-term strategic success.

Leadership Support

Leadership support is widely recognized as a critical driver of successful strategy implementation, particularly during organizational change. It refers to the proactive role of leaders in facilitating, guiding, and sustaining change through vision setting, open communication, and resource provision (Alkahtani & Ameen, 2023). Modern change literature emphasizes that beyond formal authority, leaders must exhibit emotional intelligence and adaptability to mobilize collective action (Adegbite & Ojo, 2021). Effective leadership provides not only direction but also reassurance in uncertain transition phases, reinforcing psychological safety and boosting staff morale. Empirical studies affirm that leadership commitment significantly shapes how employees interpret and respond to change mandates. For instance, Musa and Bakare (2022) found that transformational leadership behaviors such as inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration enhanced employee engagement and reduced implementation barriers in Nigerian federal agencies. Similarly, Owoyemi and Fatoki (2023) observed that visible leadership support during reforms improved cooperation, mitigated resistance, and aligned departmental efforts with institutional goals. These findings underscore the importance of strategic involvement by leaders at every level of implementation. In addition, supportive leadership is essential in overcoming systemic constraints in public institutions where bureaucratic inertia and resource scarcity are prevalent. Akomolafe and Ayeni (2020) argue that strategic change initiatives often stall in Nigerian organizations due to leadership deficits rather than policy gaps. Leaders who demonstrate consistency, transparency, and accessibility create a cultural climate conducive to change. As such, leadership support must be institutionalized not just through titles, but through behaviors that reinforce credibility, foster trust, and enable effective follow-through on strategic initiatives.

Employee Readiness

Employee readiness for change refers to the degree to which staff possess the psychological and behavioral willingness to accept, adopt, and contribute to organizational transformation (Obamiro & Ajayi, 2021). This construct is increasingly viewed as a precondition for strategy implementation, particularly in institutions experiencing structural shifts. Readiness is influenced by factors such as communication quality, training exposure, change history, and individual perceptions of benefit and risk (Nwachukwu & Adeola, 2022). When employees understand the

"why" behind a change, believe in their capacity to adapt, and trust the process, they are more likely to participate actively in implementation.

Readiness is also a dynamic, multi-layered concept that evolves over the life cycle of the change process. It can be cognitive (awareness), emotional (desire), and behavioral (action-oriented). Studies like Ahmed and Bello (2023) have shown that staff who received pre-implementation orientation, access to mentoring, and feedback mechanisms demonstrated greater alignment with institutional change goals. Additionally, Oluwole and Adebayo (2022) emphasized that readiness is stronger in environments where employees are consulted, their concerns are addressed, and they are seen as stakeholders rather than passive recipients of reform. Furthermore, readiness reduces resistance and enhances strategic agility in public organizations. According to Salawu and Ibrahim (2021), high levels of change readiness were associated with faster decision-making, fewer conflicts, and better service delivery outcomes during a reorganization in a Nigerian public university. Institutions that ignore readiness risk superficial compliance and long-term failure. Therefore, enhancing readiness through continuous dialogue, capacity building, and participatory change design is essential for translating strategic plans into meaningful organizational outcomes.

Organizational Strategy
Organizational strategy refers to the long-term direction and scope of an organization designed to achieve competitive advantage and fulfill stakeholder expectations through the effective alignment of resources and capabilities (Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, 2021). It serves as a roadmap for decision-making and goal prioritization, particularly in environments marked by complexity and change. In public institutions, strategy implementation involves translating broad policy intentions into concrete, measurable actions aligned with institutional vision and mission (Ogunyemi & Bello, 2023). A coherent strategy helps coordinate departments, optimize resource use, and track progress toward institutional transformation.

The success of any organizational strategy, however, depends not only on its formulation but also on the effectiveness of its implementation. Many scholars have observed that implementation failure is more common than formulation failure, particularly in bureaucratic organizations (Eze & Okonkwo, 2022). Poor communication, lack of ownership, and structural rigidity are common barriers that disrupt execution. To mitigate this, strategy must be implemented through integrated systems that include leadership alignment, performance monitoring, employee involvement, and change facilitation (Akintayo & Abubakar, 2021). A strategic plan without operational follow-through often results in disjointed activities, wasted resources, and low morale among staff. In dynamic environments such as Nigeria's public sector, strategic success is increasingly linked to flexibility, adaptability, and

responsiveness. Okafor and Adeoye (2024) argue that rigid adherence to static plans undermines institutional performance in rapidly changing policy contexts.

Theoretical Review
Below is a focused theoretical review linking classic and contemporary theories of change and strategy to the study's core proposition: structured change management drives successful organizational strategy implementation in Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti.

i. **Lewin's Three-Stage Model (Unfreeze   Change   Refreeze) — Kurt Lewin (1947)**
Core idea: Successful change requires (1) creating readiness and dismantling the status quo (unfreeze), (2) implementing new behaviours/processes (change), and (3) institutionalizing those changes (refreeze).

Relevance to the polytechnic: Accreditation, curriculum reform or ICT adoption require unfreezing entrenched routines (convincing academic staff of benefits), implementing training and new procedures, then embedding them in policy and appraisal systems. Lewin's model underlines the necessity of deliberate sequencing—an important pillar of any structured change approach in a public tertiary institution.

ii. **Kotter's 8-Step Change Model by John Kotter (1995/1996)**
Core idea: Change success follows a sequence (create urgency, form guiding coalition, develop vision, communicate, empower action, generate short-term wins, consolidate gains, anchor changes).

Relevance: The polytechnic's leadership (DG/RECTOR, Deans, Heads) must act as the guiding coalition; visible short-term wins (e.g., improved registration turnaround time after process redesign) build momentum and reduce resistance. Kotter's model supplies operational steps that map directly onto structured change activities (leadership sponsorship, communication plans, quick wins, reinforcement).

iii. **ADKAR Model — Prosci / Jeffrey Hiatt (2006)**
Core idea: Individual change occurs when people have Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement.

Relevance: In a polytechnic, top-down structural changes only succeed if lecturers, administrators and support staff individually progress through ADKAR stages. ADKAR complements organizational models by diagnosing people-level barriers (e.g., insufficient knowledge or lack of ability due to training gaps).

Empirical Review
Uche and Emeka (2023) investigated how centralized decision-making affects operational efficiency in Nigerian public agencies. The study used a quantitative design and surveyed 200 employees across four federal ministries in Abuja. Using

multiple regression analysis, the researchers found that centralization had a negative and significant effect on responsiveness and goal achievement ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.01$). Employees reported delays in decision-making, unclear communication channels, and low morale due to exclusion from operational decisions. The study concluded that excessive centralization undermines organizational effectiveness, especially in bureaucratic environments. It recommended gradual decentralization of routine functions and empowerment of mid-level managers.

Okoroafor and Aluko (2023) examined structural rigidity and its impact on employee engagement in selected Nigerian manufacturing firms. A sample of 157 employees across three firms in Lagos and Ogun States was surveyed. The results showed that high levels of centralization negatively correlated with job satisfaction and proactive behavior ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.05$). Employees in highly centralized organizations were found to lack autonomy and initiative. Anchored in Structural Contingency Theory, the study emphasized that flexibility in structure especially in decision-making leads to better organizational adaptability and performance. It recommended reconfiguring organizational hierarchies to support more participatory leadership styles.

Wang and Rowley (2022) conducted a comparative study across five Sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria, to assess how organizational structure influences adaptability. Their findings revealed that moderately decentralized structures were more successful in responding to market and policy changes. Organizations that allowed lower-tier managers some autonomy in decision-making exhibited stronger performance metrics. In Nigeria, centralization was commonly practiced but often misaligned with the complex realities of modern work environments. The study concluded that context-specific decentralization is key to improving effectiveness in volatile economies.

Onyekachi and Musa (2021) explored how centralized governance affected service delivery in state-owned hospitals in South-West Nigeria. The mixed-methods study combined survey data from 142 healthcare workers with interviews from six hospital administrators. The findings showed that top-heavy decision-making slowed the procurement of critical supplies and demotivated frontline staff. Regression analysis revealed that centralization negatively influenced efficiency ($\beta = -0.417$, $p < 0.01$), especially in resource-constrained settings. The study called for decentralization of non-critical decisions and better communication flow to frontline workers.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the influence of structured change management practices on the implementation of organizational strategy. This design allows for the collection of numerical data from a large number of respondents within a defined period and supports statistical analysis

to test hypothesized relationships between variables such as leadership support, employee readiness, and strategy execution outcomes.

Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique
The population for this study comprised academic and non-academic staff of Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti, a tertiary institution located in Ado Ekiti, Nigeria. The institution was selected purposively due to its recent strategic initiatives involving administrative reforms, digital transformation, and policy implementation efforts that necessitate structured change management.

A total population of 397 staff was obtained from the institution's human resources department, encompassing departments such as administration, registry, bursary, ICT, and various academic schools. Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample size of 199 respondents was determined. After the administration and cleaning of responses, 168 valid questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis, representing an 84% response rate adequate for regression analysis.

Sampling Technique
A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representativeness across different units (e.g., administrative, academic, and technical departments) and staff levels (junior, senior, and management). This technique was adopted to capture diverse perspectives on leadership support, change readiness, and strategic goal alignment.

Research Instrument
Data were collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire designed in four sections. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Validity and Reliability
To ensure instrument accuracy, a pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents from a neighboring institution in Ado Ekiti. Based on feedback, slight modifications were made for clarity. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test internal consistency

Table 1: *Reliability Coefficients from Pilot Study*

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership Support (LS)	0.83
Employee Readiness (ER)	0.85
Strategy Implementation (SI)	0.88

Source: Pilot Test Output, 2025

Note: Values exceeded the 0.70 thresholds (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming high reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables*

Variable	Mean (̄)	Std. Deviation
Leadership Support	3.84	0.71
Employee Readiness	3.65	0.68
Strategy Implementation	3.77	0.74

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Note: The high mean scores indicate that respondents perceive a moderate to high presence of structured change practices and effectiveness in strategy implementation within the institution.

Table 3: *Pearson Correlation Matrix among Key Variables*

Variables	1	2	3
1. Leadership Support	1		
2. Employee Readiness	0.512	1	
3. Strategy Implementation	0.571	0.498	1

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Note: $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed). Both leadership support and employee readiness are significantly and positively correlated with strategy implementation, justifying further regression analysis.

Table 4: *Model Summary of the regression analysis*

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	Std. Error
1	.636	.405	.397	0.572

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

$R^2 = 0.405$ implies that approximately 40.5% of the variance in strategy implementation is explained by leadership support and employee readiness.

Table 5: *ANOVA Summary for the Regression Model*

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	56.241	2	28.121	85.75	0.000**
Residual	82.536	165	0.500		
Total	138.777	167			

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Note: $p < 0.01$, indicating that the model is statistically significant.

Table 6: *Multiple Regression Coefficients Predicting Strategy Implementation Success*

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	1.214	0.263	—	4.616	0.000
Leadership Support	0.431	0.079	0.445	5.456	0.000**
Employee Readiness	0.358	0.084	0.326	4.261	0.000**

Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Note.$p< .01$ (indicated by **).

Interpretation: Leadership support (β = 0.445, $p < 0.001$) has the strongest positive effect on strategy implementation, Employee readiness (β = 0.326, $p < 0.001$) is also a significant predictor, though slightly weaker than leadership support.

Discussion of Findings
The results show that structured change management practices, specifically leadership support and employee readiness, play a statistically significant role in shaping the success of strategic initiatives at Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti. This aligns with prior empirical studies (e.g., Uche & Emeka, 2023; Wang & Rowley, 2022) that emphasize the importance of participatory leadership and workforce alignment in executing change. The high predictive value of leadership support reflects Kotter's (2012) model, which identifies leadership as a catalyst for transformation. Likewise, the importance of employee readiness echoes the ADKAR model, which stresses awareness, desire, and ability as prerequisites for change adoption.

CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusion
The study concludes that structured change management approaches anchored on strong leadership support and high employee readiness are fundamental to the successful implementation of organizational strategy. In the context of Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti, the findings confirm that transformational initiatives can yield positive outcomes when guided by committed leadership and supported by a change-ready workforce. This supports the Contingency and Structural Contingency Theories, which emphasize that strategic effectiveness is influenced by the alignment between internal capabilities (like structure and leadership) and the demands of the external and institutional environment. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on strategic change in public tertiary institutions and highlights the importance of internal preparedness for reform-driven transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

i. Strengthen Leadership Commitment and Support: Top management and departmental heads should actively champion change initiatives by articulating clear strategic goals, modeling adaptive leadership behaviors, and consistently providing the human and material resources required for strategy execution. Leadership training programs focusing on transformational and participatory leadership styles should be organized to enhance leaders' capacity to motivate staff toward strategic alignment.

ii. Institutionalize Change Readiness Development Programs: The Polytechnic should implement continuous change-readiness initiatives such as awareness workshops, pre-implementation orientation sessions, and psychological readiness assessments. These programs will help assess staff's preparedness for change, identify potential resistance points, and foster a proactive attitude toward new strategic directions.

iii. Adopt a Formalized Structured Change Management Framework: A documented and standardized change management model such as Kotter's 8-Step Process or the ADKAR model should be integrated into all strategic planning and execution cycles. This framework should include clearly defined steps for initiating, communicating, executing, and sustaining change to ensure consistent and coordinated strategic implementation across all departments.

iv. Enhance Communication and Feedback Mechanisms: A two-way communication system should be established to facilitate transparent information flow between management and staff. Regular town-hall meetings, digital feedback portals, and quarterly progress briefings should be introduced to ensure that challenges, concerns, and innovative suggestions from employees are promptly addressed during change implementation.

v. Implement Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: The Polytechnic should establish a performance-tracking dashboard to monitor strategic initiatives and evaluate the effects of leadership support, staff readiness, and communication quality on implementation outcomes. This mechanism should include key performance indicators (KPIs), timelines, and responsibility matrices to enable timely adjustments and sustained strategic effectiveness.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies could adopt a longitudinal design to track change processes over time and capture evolving dynamics. Comparative studies across multiple public and private institutions may provide broader insights into how organizational type moderates the relationship between change management and strategy execution. Qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could offer deeper understanding of emotional and cultural factors influencing change readiness.

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