

Organizational Culture in Schools: Overcoming Digital Policy Resistance Through a Coaching Approach

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation in schools often encounters resistance arising from limited technological competencies, increased workloads, and uncertainty about organizational change. This study explored how school organizational culture and coaching-related leadership practices contribute to addressing resistance to digital policy implementation. A qualitative case study was conducted in a school within the administrative area of the Branch of the Education Office, Region I, West Java Province, Indonesia. Participants included school principals, teachers, and educational personnel selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Analysis followed the interactive model of Miles et al., involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Credibility was supported through source and methodological triangulation and member checking. Resistance to digital policies was associated with concerns about additional workloads, limited digital competencies, and difficulties adapting to unfamiliar technologies. Collaborative organizational practices, including peer support and shared learning, appeared to facilitate adaptation. Coaching-related leadership practices involving reflective discussions, mentoring, and practical assistance were perceived as helping teachers develop confidence and navigate technological challenges. The findings suggest that collaborative organizational culture and supportive leadership practices can facilitate school personnel's adaptation to digital policies. Integrating reflective dialogue and professional support into school leadership may help address resistance to organizational change. However, the case study design does not establish causal effectiveness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in various sectors of life, including in the field of education. Digital transformation in schools is an unavoidable need because information technology is able to increase learning effectiveness, education management efficiency, and expand access to learning resources. Various digital policies such as the use of the Learning Management System (LMS), digital-based administrative systems, and the integration of technology in the learning process are part of efforts to modernize the education system. This transformation not only requires the readiness of infrastructure, but also the readiness of human resources and organizational culture in the school environment. Research shows that digital transformation in education is a complex organizational change process that involves aspects of leadership, organizational culture, and individual readiness to adopt new technologies (Bond et al., 2018). Digital transformation has become a key factor for the development of education because it involves not only the integration of disruptive technologies but also the restructuring of processes and cultural adaptations to respond to changes in society (Aquino et al., 2025).

Although digital policies have been introduced in many schools, their implementation often faces the challenge of resistance to change. This resistance can arise from teachers and education personnel who have long been accustomed to the conventional work system. Adapting to the digital world does not create meaningful value for organizations even though their needs have been recognized (Porfirio et al., 2024). Factors such as limited technological competence, concerns about increased workload, and lack of understanding of the benefits of technology can trigger a rejection of digital policies. According to Oreg (2006), resistance to change is an individual's psychological response to organizational change that can hinder the process of innovation and institutional transformation.

In addition to individual factors, organizational culture in schools also has an important role in determining the success of digital policy implementation. Organizational culture reflects the values, norms, and practices that develop within an institution and influence the behavior of its members. An organizational culture that is open to innovation, collaborative, and adaptive will facilitate the process of adopting new policies, including digital policies. Conversely, an organizational culture that is rigid and less supportive of change can reinforce resistance to innovation. The main obstacles in the implementation of digital transformation in higher education in Indonesia, include eight contextual issues, one technical issue, and two cultural issues with different levels of importance and difficulty (Aditya et al., 2022).

In the face of resistance to change, educational organizations need a human resource development strategy that is able to increase individual readiness for innovation. One of the approaches that is widely used in modern organizational development is the coaching approach. Coaching is an individual development process that focuses on increasing self-awareness, reflection, and problem-solving skills through constructive dialogue between coaches and coachees (Grant, 2017). In the context of education, the coaching approach can help teachers understand the goals of digital policies, improve digital competence, and build confidence in integrating technology in the learning process.

The coaching approach also plays a role in building a more collaborative and reflective organizational culture in schools. Through coaching, the process of change is not only carried out through instructions from leaders, but through a process of dialogue and empowerment that encourages the active participation of organizational members. Research shows that coaching in educational organizations can increase teacher involvement, strengthen organizational learning culture, and support the implementation of educational innovation in a sustainable manner (Bamford et al., 2012).

However, most research on digital transformation in education focuses more on technology aspects and teachers' digital competencies, while studies on the relationship between organizational culture, resistance to digital policies, and coaching approaches are still relatively limited, especially in the context of school organizations. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to understand how organizational culture in schools can play a role in overcoming resistance to digital policies through a coaching approach.

Based on this description, this research is important to examine the role of school organizational culture in overcoming resistance to digital policies through a coaching approach. The results of this

research are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of education management studies and organizational change, as well as provide practical recommendations for schools in managing digital transformation more effectively and sustainably.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to explore how school organizational culture and coaching practices were involved in addressing resistance to digital policy implementation. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the research focused on understanding organizational processes, participants' experiences, and interactions within their institutional context rather than measuring causal relationships between predetermined variables.

The study examined three interconnected aspects: organizational responses to digital policies, manifestations of resistance among school personnel, and coaching-related practices used by school leaders to facilitate adaptation. Particular attention was given to how organizational values, collaborative relationships, and leadership practices shaped participants' experiences of digital transformation.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was situated within the administrative area of the Branch of the Education Office, Region I, West Java Province, Indonesia, and focused on a school implementing digital policies in instructional and administrative activities. The school context was selected because the implementation of digital systems provided an opportunity to investigate organizational adaptation and resistance to policy-related changes.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in or experience with digital policy implementation. The informants comprised school principals, teachers, and educational personnel representing different organizational responsibilities. School principals provided perspectives on leadership practices, policy implementation, and organizational support. Teachers contributed accounts of their experiences adapting instructional practices to digital systems, while educational personnel provided information concerning changes in administrative procedures.

The inclusion of these participant groups was intended to capture different perspectives on organizational culture, resistance to change, and coaching-related support within the school environment.

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. These complementary techniques were employed to examine participants' accounts alongside organizational practices and documentary evidence.

Semi-structured interviews explored participants' experiences with digital policy implementation, perceived barriers to technology adoption, organizational support, and leadership practices associated with coaching. The interview topics included perceptions of digital transformation, concerns about changing work procedures, collaborative problem-solving, reflective discussions, and assistance provided during the adaptation process. The semi-structured format allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences and enabled follow-up questions to clarify emerging issues.

Observations focused on digital policy implementation and interactions among school personnel. Attention was directed toward the use of digital systems in instructional and administrative activities, collaborative practices, and forms of assistance provided when personnel encountered difficulties adapting to technological changes. Observational evidence was used to contextualize participants' interview accounts.

Document analysis involved examining relevant institutional materials, including school digital policy documents, digitalization program records, training reports, and other available documents associated with technology implementation. Documentary evidence was used to identify organizational arrangements and compare formal policy provisions with participants' reported experiences and observed practices.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model of Miles et al. (2014), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analytical process was conducted iteratively to identify patterns and relationships across the collected evidence.

During data reduction, information relevant to the research objectives was selected, organized, and grouped according to emerging patterns. Particular attention was given to experiences of digital policy implementation, forms of resistance, organizational support, and coaching-related leadership practices.

During data display, the organized information was examined through descriptive accounts and comparisons across participant groups and data sources. This process facilitated the identification of similarities, differences, and relationships among organizational culture, resistance to digital policies, and coaching practices.

During conclusion drawing and verification, interpretations were developed by examining recurring patterns and checking their consistency with the available interview, observation, and documentary evidence. The analysis sought to explain how organizational and leadership practices were experienced within the digital transformation process, without assuming that coaching independently caused changes in teachers' attitudes or behaviors.

2.5 Trustworthiness of the Findings

The credibility of the findings was addressed through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from school principals, teachers, and educational personnel to identify convergent and differing perspectives. Methodological triangulation involved examining the consistency of information derived from interviews, observations, and institutional documents.

Member checking was undertaken by seeking participants' confirmation of the researchers' interpretations. This procedure was intended to identify potential misunderstandings and strengthen the correspondence between participants' experiences and the reported findings.

Together, these procedures supported a more comprehensive interpretation of the case and reduced reliance on a single participant perspective or data collection method.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. School Organizational Culture in the Face of Digital Policy

The results show that organizational culture in schools has an important role in determining how organizational members respond to the digital policies implemented. Based on the results of interviews with school principals, information was obtained that the implementation of digital policies in schools initially faced various challenges, especially related to teachers' readiness to use digital technology in the learning process.

One of the informants, the principal, stated:

"At the beginning of the implementation of the digital policy, some teachers found it difficult because they were not used to using technology-based learning platforms. But we try to build a culture of mutual learning between teachers so that they don't feel alone in facing these changes."

The principal's statement indicates that an organizational culture characterized by collaboration, mutual support, and shared learning may facilitate teachers' adaptation to digital policy changes.

Rather than relying solely on formal instructions, such a culture provides opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences, share technological knowledge, and collectively address challenges associated with digital transformation. These collaborative practices appear to create a supportive organizational environment in which teachers can gradually develop familiarity and confidence in using digital technologies.

This finding is consistent with Bond et al. (2018), who emphasized that digital transformation in education involves not only technological integration but also organizational and institutional changes that shape technology adoption. Similarly, Witthöft et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of an open innovation mindset among school leaders in fostering knowledge exchange and collaborative practices that support digital innovation. From this perspective, organizational culture serves as an important contextual factor influencing how school members interpret and respond to digital policy implementation.

Teachers' accounts further reinforced the significance of leadership support and collegial collaboration in facilitating adaptation to technological changes. Supportive leadership may encourage teachers to experiment with unfamiliar digital tools while providing opportunities for discussion, assistance, and shared problem-solving. This interpretation is consistent with Laufer et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of organizational trust and leadership support in fostering educational technology innovation. One teacher described the adaptation process as follows:

"When schools started using digital systems for learning and administration, we did have difficulties at the beginning. But with regular discussions and mutual help between teachers, we started to get used to using the technology."

The teacher's account illustrates how collaborative discussions and peer assistance were perceived as helping school personnel navigate the initial difficulties of digital policy implementation. These experiences suggest that adaptation was supported not merely by individual technological competence but also by interpersonal relationships and opportunities for collective learning. Accordingly, a collaborative organizational culture may provide an enabling environment for reducing perceived barriers to technological change and supporting the gradual integration of digital practices into school activities.

3.2. Forms of Resistance to Digital Policies in Schools

The results of the study also show that resistance to digital policies emerges in various forms, both individually and organizationally. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, the resistance that emerged at the beginning of the implementation of digital policies included concerns about increased workload, limited technological skills, and uncertainty about the effectiveness of the use of technology in learning.

One of the teachers said:

"At first, we felt that the use of digital systems actually added work because we had to learn new applications. Some teachers also feel afraid of making mistakes when using technology."

The findings suggest that resistance to digital policy implementation is associated with both psychological concerns and limitations in technological competence. Teachers' apprehension about unfamiliar digital systems, increased workloads, and potential difficulties in adapting established teaching practices reflects the complexity of organizational change. This interpretation is consistent with Oreg (2006), who emphasized that resistance to organizational change is influenced by individual dispositions and contextual factors, particularly when proposed changes are perceived as challenging established routines and working conditions. Similarly, Syah (2024) identified limited technological competence, uncertainty regarding the benefits of digital innovation, and increased professional demands as potential barriers to technology adoption in schools.

Nevertheless, the findings suggest that resistance may evolve as teachers gain greater familiarity with digital technologies and develop a clearer understanding of their potential educational benefits. This indicates that resistance should not necessarily be understood as a fixed or permanent attitude but rather as a context-dependent response that may change through experience, organizational support, and professional learning opportunities. Accordingly, sustained professional development, collaborative learning, and supportive leadership practices may help teachers navigate technological uncertainty and gradually develop greater readiness to implement digital policies.

3.3. The Role of the Coaching Approach in Overcoming Digital Policy Resistance

The coaching approach can be used as a leadership strategy to help teachers deal with organizational changes, including digital transformation in schools. Coaching and mentoring help increase teacher motivation, strengthen organizational communication, and reduce resistance to change (Dofinsa et al., 2024). The coaching approach is one of the strategies used by school leaders to help teachers adapt to digital policies. Based on the results of interviews with school principals, coaching is carried out through informal discussions, assistance in the use of technology, and joint reflection on the experience of using technology in learning.

The Principal said:

"We do not directly demand that all teachers must be able to use technology perfectly. We do more mentoring and discussions so that they feel comfortable learning to use technology."

The coaching approach helps teachers to be more confident in using technology and reduce anxiety about digital policy changes. A teacher also revealed that the coaching approach makes the change process feel easier.

"With the assistance from the principal and fellow teachers who understand technology better, we feel more helped. We can ask directly when we have difficulties."

These findings suggest that coaching-related leadership practices may contribute to creating a supportive and reflective professional learning environment in which teachers feel encouraged to address the challenges associated with organizational change. Through reflective dialogue, constructive feedback, and individualized support, school leaders can provide opportunities for teachers to examine their concerns, identify potential solutions, and develop greater confidence in adapting to digital policies. This interpretation is consistent with Grant (2017), who emphasized the importance of coaching-oriented conversations in fostering self-awareness, reflection, and constructive responses to workplace challenges.

Similarly, van Nieuwerburgh (2012) highlighted the potential of coaching in educational settings to support professional learning, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and encourage collaborative approaches to school improvement. In the context of digital transformation, these perspectives suggest that coaching-related practices may complement technical assistance by addressing the psychological and organizational dimensions of teachers' adaptation to technological change. Furthermore, Khofi (2025) discussed the importance of change management in addressing teachers' resistance to educational digitalization, reinforcing the need for school leaders to provide appropriate support during technology-related transitions. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that coaching-related leadership practices may help foster an organizational climate characterized by trust, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving, thereby supporting teachers' gradual adaptation to digital policy implementation.

3.4. Integration of Organizational Culture and Coaching in Supporting School Digital Transformation

The findings suggest that the implementation of digital policies in schools is shaped not only by technological infrastructure and individual digital competencies but also by organizational culture and

leadership practices. A collaborative organizational culture, characterized by mutual support, knowledge sharing, and openness to change, appears to provide an enabling environment for teachers to navigate the challenges associated with digital transformation. Within this context, coaching-related leadership practices may complement organizational support by encouraging reflection, facilitating problem-solving, and addressing teachers' concerns about unfamiliar technologies. This interpretation aligns with Zimmer and Matthews (2022), who examined the role of coaching-based professional development in supporting teachers' digital learning competencies.

The relationship between organizational culture and leadership is particularly relevant to understanding how schools respond to technological change. Clifton et al. (2024) highlighted the significance of strategic leadership in organizational culture transformation within educational institutions, while Lukito et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of organizational values and cultural characteristics in facilitating digital transformation. These perspectives suggest that technological innovation requires more than the introduction of digital systems; it also involves developing organizational conditions that encourage participation, experimentation, and collaborative learning. In the present study, participants' accounts of collegial assistance and supportive leadership illustrate how such organizational conditions were perceived to facilitate adaptation to digital policies.

Coaching-related practices may further support this process by addressing teachers' professional learning needs and providing opportunities for individualized assistance. Lewis and DeSantis (2024) discussed the relevance of instructional coaching in helping teachers respond to changing classroom technologies. Similarly, Liao et al. (2021) examined coaching as a form of support for technology integration, highlighting the importance of context-sensitive guidance and interactions between teachers and those providing assistance. These studies offer a useful perspective for interpreting the present findings, particularly teachers' accounts of reflective discussions, practical assistance, and collaborative problem-solving. However, the activities identified in this study should be understood as coaching-related practices rather than evidence of a formally structured coaching intervention.

Beyond individual professional development, coaching-oriented leadership may also contribute to broader organizational learning processes. Solowati et al. (2026) examined coaching-based academic supervision as an approach to supporting teachers' professional performance through reflective and collaborative practices. Collins et al. (2025) further explored coaching in the professional learning and development of school leaders, suggesting its relevance to leadership reflection and organizational improvement. These perspectives indicate that coaching can be considered within a broader framework of professional support in which school leaders facilitate dialogue, encourage participation, and create opportunities for shared learning. Such practices may be particularly relevant when digital policy implementation requires changes in established instructional and administrative routines.

The integration of organizational culture and leadership support also has implications for institutional adaptability. Awad and Martín-Rojas (2024) examined the relationships among digital transformation, organizational learning, innovation, and organizational resilience, while Zakiyyah and Abidin (2025) addressed the relevance of innovative organizational culture and digital transformation readiness to educational institution performance. Although these studies differ in their institutional contexts and research approaches, they provide conceptual support for considering digital transformation as an organizational process rather than a purely technological initiative. From this perspective, teachers' adaptation to digital policies may depend partly on whether schools establish supportive relationships, promote collective learning, and provide appropriate professional assistance. The importance of managing resistance during educational digitalization is also reflected in Khofi (2025), who discussed change management in relation to senior teachers' resistance to digital initiatives.

Taken together, the findings indicate that organizational culture and coaching-related leadership practices may function as complementary dimensions of school digital transformation. Collaborative organizational practices provide opportunities for knowledge exchange and mutual assistance, while coaching-related support may help teachers reflect on challenges and develop greater confidence in navigating technological change. The contribution of this study lies in illustrating how these

dimensions are perceived to interact within the school context, particularly in relation to teachers' experiences of resistance and adaptation. Nevertheless, the qualitative case study design does not establish the causal effectiveness of coaching in reducing resistance or improving digital competencies. Further research involving multiple school contexts and longitudinal evidence would be valuable for examining how organizational culture and coaching practices influence the sustainability of digital policy implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the important role of school organizational culture and coaching-related leadership practices in supporting teachers' adaptation to digital policy implementation. The findings indicate that resistance to digital transformation is associated with limited technological competencies, concerns about increased workloads, and uncertainty regarding changes in established professional practices. A collaborative organizational culture characterized by mutual support, open communication, and shared learning was perceived as facilitating teachers' adaptation to digital policies, while coaching-related practices, including reflective discussions, mentoring, and practical assistance, provided opportunities for teachers to address technological challenges and develop greater confidence. These findings suggest that digital transformation in schools should be understood not merely as a technological initiative but also as an organizational change process requiring supportive leadership and continuous professional learning. However, this study is limited by its qualitative case study design and context-specific findings, which restrict their transferability to other educational settings. Furthermore, the study did not systematically measure changes in teachers' digital competencies or resistance over time, preventing conclusions about the causal effectiveness of coaching practices. Future research should involve multiple schools with diverse organizational characteristics, employ longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches, and examine how structured coaching interventions interact with organizational culture to influence teachers' digital readiness, resistance to change, and the sustainability of digital policy implementation.

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