

## Shaping Organisational Culture through Digital Communication: A Case Study from a School Setting

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### Abstract

This study examines how informal digital communication contributes to the construction and negotiation of organisational culture in a professional setting. Drawing on a case study of a bilingual Spanish-English primary school in Uruguay, it analyses how staff interactions via WhatsApp and a school-specific app shape collaboration, professional identity and shared values. The findings highlight the importance of relational dynamics—such as humour, emotional support and expressions of appreciation—in reinforcing team cohesion and a sense of belonging. These everyday exchanges play a central role in maintaining institutional adaptability and professional learning. To explore these processes in depth, the study draws on Adrian Holliday's (1999, 2018) concept of *small cultures*, which emphasises how localised practices define culture in context. In addition, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 2000) is used as a lens to interpret digital exchanges in terms of social, cognitive and teaching presences. This analysis reveals how leadership is distributed, decision-making is shared and reflective dialogue is encouraged through informal channels. The study offers practical insights for school leaders and organisational managers seeking to foster inclusive, adaptive cultures in digitally mediated environments. While rooted in an educational context, its relevance extends to a wide range of organisations navigating hybrid and informal communication landscapes.

**Keywords:** Digital communication; organisational culture; Small Cultures; Community of Inquiry; educational leadership