

# Organisation culture

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



Introduction Social scientists and researchers delved into the idea of organisational culture as an important component of organisational theory in the past. Brown (1998) identified four different sources of organisational culture which stems from climate research, national cultures, human resources management, and from conviction approaches. This piece of work critically evaluates organisational cultures in the Early Years settings.

The first part looks at the theoretical background to the evolution of organisational culture its importance and types. The second part examines the link between leadership, organisation culture and change management with analysis from experience as an EYP. It also looks at key factors that influence change, problems with change and techniques for implementing change in Early Years settings. The final part is a conclusion and a suggestion of possible measures to effect change in Early Years settings.

What is organisational Culture? It is important for one to understand what culture means. The elementary definition is by (Martins and Martins 2003) who defined culture as ‘ a system of shared meaning held by members, distinguishing the organisation from other organisations’ Again Arnold (2005, p 625) explains that ‘ organisational culture is the distinctive norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that combines to give each organisation its distinct character’.

From the above two definitions culture therefore refers to the underlying values, beliefs and codes of practice that makes an organisation what it is. The way of life of that organisation, the self-image of its members, the things that make it different from others, are its culture. Importance of Organisational Culture The main reason for organisational cultures is to <https://assignbuster.com/organisation-culture/>

stipulate the way of doing things in order to give meaning to organisational life (Arnold 2005). This is important because the staff members need to benefit from lessons of previous members.

Organisational culture also determines organisational behaviour by identifying principal goals, work methods, how members should interact and address each other; and how to conduct personal relationships (Harrison 1993) Furthermore, (Brown 1998 p. 89-91) states the functions of organisational culture s follow: \* Conflict reduction- A common culture promotes consistency of perception, problem definition, evaluation of issues and opinions, and preferences for action. coordination and control- Because culture promotes consistency of outlook it also facilitates organisational processes of coordination and control \* Reduction of uncertainty- Cultural mindset reduces anxiety which makes the work place a simple, choices easier and rational actions possible \* Motivation- An appropriate and cohesive culture offers workers a focus of identification and loyalty foster belief and values that encourages workers to perform. Types of Organisational Culture Organisational culture has been classified into different categories by researchers of which the most commonly used one is Handy (1993).

He noted four main category of organisational culture namely, power culture, role culture, task culture and person culture. Power culture There are some organizations where the power remains in the hands of only few people and only they are authorized to take decisions. They are the ones who enjoy special privileges at the workplace. They are the most important people at the workplace and are the major decision makers. These individuals further delegate responsibilities to the other employees. In such a culture the

subordinates have no option but to strictly follow their superior's instructions.

The employees do not have the liberty to express their views or share their ideas on an open forum and have to follow what their superior says. The managers in such a type of culture sometimes can be partial to someone or the other leading to major unrest among others. Task Culture Organizations where teams are formed to achieve the targets or solve critical problems follow the task culture. In such organizations individuals with common interests and specializations come together to form a team. There are generally four to five members in each team.

In such a culture every team member has to contribute equally and accomplish tasks in the most innovative way. Person Culture There are certain organizations where the employees feel that they are more important than their organization. Such organizations follow a culture known as person culture. In a person culture, individuals are more concerned about their own self rather than the organization. The organization in such a culture takes a back seat and eventually suffers. Employees just come to the office for the sake of money and never get attached to it.

They are seldom loyal towards the management and never decide in favour of the organization. One should always remember that organization comes first and everything else later. Role culture Role culture is a culture where every employee is delegated roles and responsibilities according to his specialization, educational qualification and interest to extract the best out of him. In such a culture employees decide what best they can do and willingly accept the challenge. Every individual is accountable for something

or the other and has to take ownership of the work assigned to him. Power comes with responsibility in such a work culture.

Organisation Culture as evidenced in Early Years Setting From the above discussions so far it is eminent that organisation culture is inevitable way of life that can be found in every institution. This section focuses on how organisation culture influences the effective running of nurseries and infant schools in other words, how successful these types of culture mentioned in our earlier discussion positively or negatively affects the day to day running of nurseries. From experience working in Early Years settings each setting has its own culture and way of doing things that enables them to successfully achieve their goals.

Research reveals that there is relationship between culture and an organisation's success. Relating this idea in the context of Early Years Settings one can say that there is a definite relationship between culture and a setting's success. Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that culture is the single most important factor that determines the success or failure in an organisation. They identified four key dimensions of culture: \* Values – the beliefs that lie at the heart of the corporate culture. \* Heroes – the people who embody values. \* Rites and rituals – routines of interaction that have strong symbolic qualities. The culture network – the informal communications system or hidden hierarchy of power in the organization. Again Peters and Waterman (1982) emphasise on the importance of organisational intangibles such as values and heroes. They suggest a psychological theory of the link between organizational culture and performance. According to them ' culture can be looked upon as a

reward of work; we sacrifice much to the organization and culture is a form of return on effort'. From the above researches so far it is evident that culture exists in every organisation including Early Years Settings.

The next paragraph describes observation from two organisations I worked as part of my placement. A particular focus is an evaluation of the merits and demerits of these cultures as noticed in these organisations. Organisation 1 Features \* Routine planning is done by leader for the next day \* Staff follows strictly what has been planned \* Staff needs to consult leader at each stage of daily routine there7 \* No flexibility \* Leader style is autocratic \* There is no hierarchy \* There are informal groups within who are often friends that “get on well” with each other therefore sees any new staff as threat.

Evaluation Organisation1 exhibits power culture, part of the reason perhaps been the fact that the leader is the only highly qualified member with the subordinates possessing basic qualification. The merits of this type of culture are it unifies the each one's effort behind the vision of the leader as everyone strives hard to please the leader. Again it can provide certainty and focus and reduces conflicts and confusion since the leader is the absolute decision maker. The demerits are that, staff turn to give the bosses wishes a priority even if it interferes with a vital decision on individual level.

People do not question the leader even if he or she is wrong. Leaders also could break rules and take personal privileges thereby restricting the flow of information to only friends and allies. Furthermore, people are promoted by been loyal to the leader even when they are not competent. Finally because there are informal groups within the organisation with personal interest there is a tendency of rivalry ‘set up each other” attitude among staff in an

attempt to please the leader. Organisation 2 Features \* Planning and preparation is done as a team \* There is some flexibility in routine Leadership style exhibits both democratic and autocratic \* There is hierarchy of job roles and specialisation by each member \* There is bureaucracy in decision making \* Work is controlled by procedures and rules that spells out each member's role Evaluation A close study of organisation 2 show a role culture one merit of which is the fact that there are clear rules and guidelines that protects each staff member from exploitation, abusive use of power and position. This in turn provides a sense of security and confidence to staff to carry on their daily duty without any fear or intimidation.

Secondly, there are well designed structures in place this enable new staff members to know quickly what to do at what time and when to do this. This further help new members to “ fit well” among existing staff which motivates them to freely interact with everybody. Again staff members do not hold back information but share freely among staff which is necessary for any good teamwork. On the contrary, this type of organisation culture has some demerits. Job roles are strictly defined that it does not enable staff members with special abilities to flourish.

In other words, members stick to their job roles as prescribed by the rules. The problem with this practice is that it turns to generate a blame culture among staff. It could lead to individualism depending on the size and spectrum of the setting in that, each department only share among themselves and no one else. Finally it can be difficult for staff to get approval for changes because of bureaucracy and procedures. Staff may give up and stick to their normal roles. As noted by Harrison (1993 p. 34) that ‘ it is a sin

to exceed one's authority or deviate from accepted procedures. From the above discussion so far one can say that both cultures have their merits and demerits but overall role culture shows an example of healthy organisational culture as compared to power culture. It is again notable from the evaluation that both of the organisations discussed so far have leaders to direct the affairs. This leads to one important question that needs consideration – do leaders mould the shape of Early Years Settings or do the settings mould the leaders? The next section critically examines this. Does leadership influence organisational culture?

From ordinary point of view and experience as workers we all worked under some form of leadership and most often we end up following leadership directives and procedures. Again we often hear that some leaders are competent and perform brilliantly in one organisation but struggle to make impact when they are moved into another organisation to perform the same level of duty. Similarly we also function effectively when placed into one team but when moved to another team we struggle to understand the routines. The question of whether leadership influence organisational culture would be two sided answer in that both influence each other. As much as good leadership is vital for the success of any organisation so is effective organisational culture essential in putting necessary structures in place for staff members to operate effectively. To support the above notion early research shows that leadership affects organizational form, culture, and practices. Founders of organizations establish the initial culture of their organizations (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995), and founders and



subsequent leaders continue to influence the organizational culture (Schein, 1992).

It is therefore notable that in most organisations new leaders try to follow the practices and culture laid down by their predecessors with some improvements. Another dimension of influence can be linked to leader effectiveness and acceptance by staff members. One can therefore say that leader acceptance influences leader effectiveness and leader effectiveness influence leader acceptance. In fact they are interdependent. Furthermore societal cultural values and practices also affect organizational culture and practices.

Societal culture has a direct influence on organizational culture, as the shared meaning that results from the dominant cultural values, beliefs, assumptions, and implicit motives endorsed by culture (House, Wright, and Aditya, 1997). Thus, the attributes and behaviours of leaders are, in part, a reflection of the organizational practices, which in turn are a reflection of societal cultures (Kopelman, Brief, & Guzzo, 1990). The next paragraphs looks at organisational culture, leadership and how to handle change in Early Years settings.

Organisational Culture and Change management in Early Year Settings This part delves into the principles of change management, the key factors that influence change, problems with change and techniques for implementing change in Early Years settings. Organisational change can be a complex process and therefore needs to be handled carefully as pointed out by (Frenkel, 2003) that Organisational change is a process that affects employees at all level in an organisation. Any new policies or changes to

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introduce could have both positive as well as negative effect. (Schneider & Rentsch 1988) also re-iterated that in dealing with the management of organisational culture, it is firstly necessary to identify as fully as possible the attributes of the existing or new target culture — the myths, symbols, rituals, values and assumptions that underpin the culture'. Early Years settings have their own cultures in place as discussed earlier and any attempt to introduce a change or an improvement to the existing cultures could lead to resistance in many forms including overt comments such as 'we are ok with how we do things' or 'Oh here we go again we have been through a lot of changes already which never worked'.

In view of this there are a number of factors that influence the process of change. Key influences on the change process One important factor that counts towards the success of change is commitment to change. This is true because change is most likely to be successful if staffs understand the reason for the change and show willingness and commitment. Another factor that influences change can be found in a model by (Herscovitch and Meyer 2002). According to the model commitment to organisational change comprises of three construct: Affective, Normative and Continuance to change.

Affective commitment to change is based on the realisation of the benefits associated to change. Normative commitment to change is the sense of obligation an employee feels towards the organisation. Continuance commitment to change is based on the realisation of the fact that there are costs associated to the failure to support the change. All or a combination of these types play are vital factors that influence a change. Furthermore,

timing and pace of change can be a crucial influence in making a change successful.

This is true when a change agent introduces one thing at a time and takes time to make sure that all recipients embrace the idea and gradually tried and test it. Finally resistance to change is a major factor that influences change. It is important to understand the people who will be involved in the process ie those engaged in it and those who will feel the consequence of it. Resistance to change could happen as a result of breakdown in communication between the change agent and recipient of change or a failure on the part of the change agent to legitimise the change after it has successfully been put in place.

Techniques to implementing and managing change as EYP From the earlier discussions it is found out that organisational culture, leadership and change management are interrelated. This section outlines the role of EYP in implementing a successful change to a perceived organisational culture in Early Years settings. The techniques for change below are among numerous suggestions which is adapted from the work of John P. Kotter's: The 8 steps process of leading Change. Although he explains this in the context of profit making business organisationsI believethis can be very useful in the context of leading a change in Early Years Settings.

Establishing a sense of urgency This involves discussing crisis and identifying potential threats and opportunities. EYPs as a leader of change should not allow too much complacency from staff – This happens when complacency levels are high for example comments like “ yes we have our problems, but they aren't that terrible and we're doing our job just fine” This kind of

comments reflects the mind-set of some staff members which might not necessarily be their fault but rather the organisational culture that existed long before some members were employed.

The role of an EYP is to always look out for ways of improvement and create a sense of urgency among subordinates. Creating a powerful guiding coalition It is vital for EYP's to collaborate with key members of staff to lead the change and encourage them to work as a team. This is where leadership plays an important role. A leader of change cannot work in isolation but mobilise specific skilled personnel within to work on aspects of the culture that needs changing. Developing a change vision One of the most common errors in leading a change is underestimating the power of vision.

Vision plays a useful role in bringing about successful change by helping to direct, align and inspire actions on the part of large number of people. As a new EYP, it can be challenging when you find yourself among experienced staff that have been on the job for many years. This is where resilience and confidence play a part in getting the vision across. The most important thing is to believe that your vision is accomplishable if you put the necessary procedures in place. Communicating the vision for buy-in Communication is essential for the ideal EYP if any vision is perceived.

This problem is what John Kotter described as 'under-communicating the vision by a factor of 10 (100 or even 1000)'. There are a number of good ideas and that never materialise as a result of poor communication. Communication in this context is not just a matter of assembling staff to announce the vision. It is a matter of seeking opinions and engaging in a dialogue with the recipients of the change in a calm and sensible manner.

Occasionally those who resist the change would pretend not to be aware of the vision have no knowledge about it.

Your role as a professional should focus on getting the message once again to them and ensure that they understand it. Empowering Broad-based Action Actions should be based on building a sense of community that understands that there is a need for change. This would minimise hindrances to the progress of the vision. As an EYP it is advisable to prevent obstacles to block your efforts in making a contribution to change. New initiatives fail when employees, even though they embrace a new vision feels disempowered by huge obstacles in their paths.

Occasionally the obstacles are in people's head and the challenge is to convince them that no external obstacles exist. One well-placed blocker can stop an entire change process. Generate Short-term wins Failing to create short-term wins will act as a disincentive to some people. Some people will not carry on unless they see a compelling evidence of success. Without this some may give up and join the resistance. As the change takes off, there should be plans in place to track changes in performance then recognise and reward employees involved in the improvement accordingly.

Consolidate improvement and produce more change Sometimes we get too excited when a vision takes off and we start hearing success stories such that we end up with declaration of premature victory. As a leader of change it is vital to build on present victory or consolidate the change so that not attempt in any form will collapse it. This is not to say that EYPs should not celebrate success if they achieve their vision, it brings a positive change in

their setting which is of course vital as a motivating tool in that it helps achieve self-actualisation.

However they should use the early wins to further change systems and structures that would support the vision for good. Institutionalise new approaches Finally when the change has occurred, it is the role of the leader to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture- two important approaches in anchoring new changes in organisational culture firstly, is a conscious attempt to show people how specific behaviours and attitudes have helped improve performance. When people are left to make their own connections they can easily create wrong links. e. g.

Our nursery is rated the first and oversubscribed by parents last year when Irene Attrams was the leader so it must be as a result of her ' flamboyant and zero tolerance or no nonsense behaviour', rather than the new ' every child matters' strategy that had in fact, made the difference. It is therefore necessary to lay down policies and legitimise them so that all staffs can see which actions lead to success instead rather than the leader. Conclusion What constitutes organisational culture and its perceived role in organisational success are challenged to originate from perceptions of culture.

This could be historically-based rooted from the founder's initial ideas, society of environment in which the setting operate, or a pure influence from the past and present leaders. Change management is one of the challenging aspects of EYPs role couple with the fact that the EYP qualification is still at the stage of full recognition. Nevertheless the role of EYP as a leader of change has become laudable especially with the government's decision to

shift from just a babysitting era into early year professionalism with a set of directives detailing what is seen as best practice.

In the current era more emphasis is laid on a set of qualifications as well as personal attributes necessary for leadership in Early Years setting. Researchers however fear that this will make the work of the EYP more mechanistic. For instance (Rike and Sharp, 2008) stated that 'We prefer to think more in terms of the qualities and 'professional dispositions' that can be seen in practice, such as having a caring attitude, valuing early education, reflecting carefully on the way children learn, gaining relevant qualifications and showing a desire to change practice'. Moss, 2010) therefore suggest that they should be seen as dispositions that may be refined and developed by a considered exploration of values, beliefs, attributes, professional and personal heritage and professional competencies. This moves away from the notion of practitioners being seen as 'implementers' of policies, competencies and technical skills. There is however an evidence of bright future for the EYPs as leaders and managers of change. In July 2009 a survey was commissioned by CWDC to undertake the longitudinal study of the role and impact of Early Years Professional Status.

The research was a three-year investigation of the role and impact of Early Years Professionals on their settings and on practitioners' career development and aspirations through two national surveys of EYPs and case studies based in 30 early years settings across England. The survey asked practitioners to rate the impact of gaining EYPS across a number of skills, dispositions and understandings drawn from the EYPS standards. These range from developing their own knowledge and skills and those of colleagues through

to working with children and parents and their use of observations to assess children's cognitive and social development.

The overall responses are extremely positive across all six areas of the standards. The highest level of agreement (92 per cent) is in the area of their own knowledge and skills development, with lower levels of impact reported in the areas of observing children's learning (74 per cent) and social development (73 per cent). (Hadfield M. , Waller T. 2011) In view of the above there is remarkable evidence that the EYPs have acquired the highest skills in their own development which is necessary to become a leader of change in any setting they find themselves.

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