**Organizational Culture-a few theories**

**The Nature of Organizational Culture:** Definition: all the beliefs, feelings, behaviors and symbols that are characteristic of an organization (including observed behavioral regularities, norms, dominant values, philosophy, rules and feelings)

* **Observed behaviors**: When organizational members interact-they use a common language, terminology, rituals and ceremonies related to deference and demeanor.
* **Norms**: Standards of behavior evolve within groups. Group norms serve as yardsticks in measuring what is “acceptable” behavior in the organization.
* **Dominant values:** An organization expects its members to share majorvalues. Typical examples: high students and teacher performance levels, low absence rates and dropout rates for students.
* **Philosophy:** often found in a district or school mission statement. Often about how students are to be treated and expectations for success.
* **Rules**: Guidelines for “getting along” in the organization. The “ropes” that a newcomer must learn to become an accepted member.
* **Feelings**: The overall atmosphere that is conveyed in an organization. Often exemplified by the physical layout and how members interact with each other and outsiders.

**Subcultures**: may be more than one culture in an organization (informal cultures plus cultures created by functional groups, such as departments or grade levels).

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In their 1982 book, "Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life," **Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy** proposed one of the first models of corporate culture.

Deal and Kennedy identified **4 dimensions of organizational culture:**

**1.** **Values**: General criteria, standards or principles that guide the behavior of organization members.

**Schools are only able to achieve success when shared values exist among group members.**

**There are 2 types of values:**

* **Terminal values**: a desired outcome that organization members seek to achieve. Schools typically adopt any of the following as terminal values: quality, excellence And success.
* **Instrumental values**: a desired mode of behavior. Most schools advocate hard work, providing excellent teaching, respecting students, creativity, teamwork, maintaining high standards.

The organization’s culture consists of outcomes that the organization seeks to achieve (terminal values) and the modes of behavior the organization encourages (instrumental values). **Ideally, instrumental values help the organization achieve its terminal values.**

**2. Heroes**: Most successful organizations have heroes. Some from the past. Some in the present. They perpetuate the organization’s underlying values, provide a role model of what everyone should be striving for. They are exemplars of core values.

**3. Rites and Rituals**: Activities and celebrations that characterize the organization. Through rites and rituals, recognition of achievement is possible. Norms of connection, collegiality and improvement reinforce and symbolize what the school or district is about.

**4. Communications networks**: Stories or myths of heroes are transmitted by means of the communication network. Various individuals play a role here. There are:

* **storytellers:** they interpret what is going on in the organization. This influences others perception of the organization.
* **priests**: worriers and guardians of the culture’s values. They always have time to listen and offer advice.
* **whisperers**: the powers behind the throne because they have the boss’s ear. Want something done? See a whisperer.
* **gossips**: carry the trivial day to day activities of the organization through the communications network. They embellish heroes’ past feats and exaggerate their latest accomplishments.
* **spies**: they keep everyone well informed about what is going on in the organization.

How do strong cultures come about? School leaders (principals, teachers, parents) develop and maintain positive values and a shared vision. Principals communicate the core values in their buildings.

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Thoughts:

**Changing organizational culture** includes precipitating external and internal conditions; pressure and triggering events; visioning; strategies and interventions; reformulation.