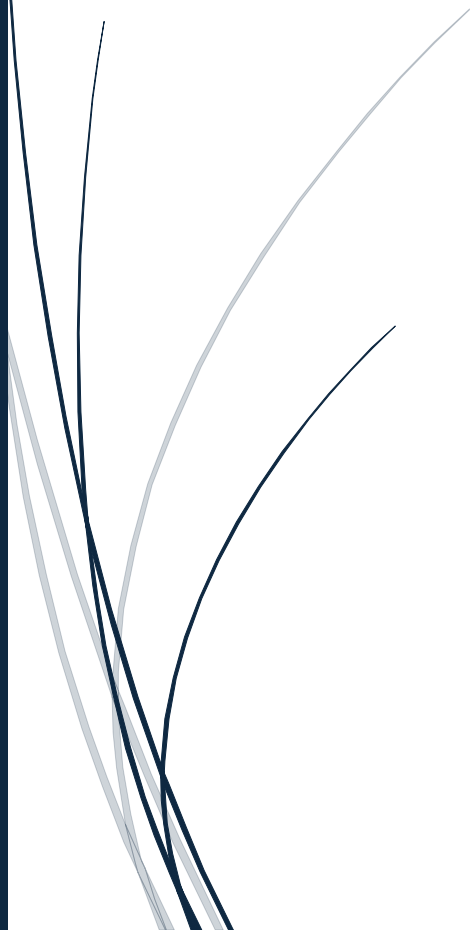10/12/2025

Initials and Surname: EC Terblanche

Student Number: 3020408

Course Code: FAMH4017A

Assignment 1: Organisational Culture

Ethan Terblanche

3020408

Part 1: Understanding Organisational Culture

Organisational culture can be defined as the collection of shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape how people behave and work together within an organisation (Schein, 2017). It reflects "how things are done around here" (Deal and Kennedy, 2000) and forms the social glue that binds members of an organisation. In a university environment, organisational culture influences how staff collaborate, communicate, and align their efforts towards student engagement and institutional goals.

A positive culture can significantly enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and staff retention (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). When employees understand and internalise the organisation's values, they are more motivated and committed. Conversely, a weak or toxic culture can lead to disengagement, conflict, and inefficiency. For example, a culture that values open communication encourages innovation and creativity, while one dominated by rigid hierarchies may discourage initiative.

Organisational culture develops over time through leadership behaviour, organisational history, and shared experiences (Schein, 2017). Leaders play a crucial role in shaping culture by modelling desired behaviours and reinforcing institutional values through decision-making and communication. Storytelling, traditions, and rituals, such as recognition ceremonies or team-building sessions, also embed shared meaning.

Changing or shaping organisational culture requires deliberate strategy. Kotter (2012) suggests that successful cultural change starts with a clear vision, consistent leadership, and visible actions that reinforce new norms. Strategies include promoting two-way communication, recognising desired behaviours, and aligning policies with values. In higher education, for instance, encouraging cross-departmental collaboration and celebrating innovation can strengthen a culture of inclusivity and learning.

Organisational culture is both a driver and reflection of institutional success. It determines not only how employees feel about their work but also how effectively the organisation meets its strategic goals.

Part 2: Evaluating the workplace culture

I currently work as a **Project Coordinator in the Marketing and Student Recruitment Unit** of a large South African university. From my observations, the department's culture aligns closely with **Task Culture** and elements of **Role Culture**, as described by Handy

(Management Study Guide, n.d.). Task culture thrives where teamwork and problem-solving are essential, while role culture relies on defined structures and procedures.

Personal Reflection on the Department's Culture

On a daily basis, my work involves coordinating multiple campaigns, managing timelines, and collaborating with both creative and academic teams. The atmosphere is largely collaborative colleagues are open to sharing ideas and taking initiative, particularly during campaign planning or student recruitment drives. This reflects a task-oriented culture that values competence and adaptability. I find that this environment fosters creativity and professional growth, as there is space to contribute meaningfully to the department's projects.

However, certain aspects also reflect a **role culture**, particularly when it comes to formal approvals and reporting lines. While structure ensures accountability, it can sometimes slow down project delivery. For instance, campaign proposals may go through several layers of approval before implementation. Personally, I have learned to adapt by being proactive and communicating clearly with stakeholders to prevent delays. These experiences have helped me appreciate how organisational culture influences workflow, motivation, and interpersonal dynamics.

Fit with the Higher Education Sector

In the higher education sector, where accountability and creativity must coexist, this hybrid culture is a good fit. Marketing and recruitment depend on innovation to attract prospective students, but the sector's regulatory nature demands structure. The department balances these priorities well, innovation is encouraged, but always aligned with institutional branding and compliance requirements.

Employee Response and Cultural Health

From my observation, employees respond positively to the culture. There is mutual respect, professional camaraderie, and a shared sense of purpose. However, as with many large organisations, feedback and recognition are not always consistent. This can sometimes leave staff feeling undervalued, especially after demanding campaign periods. I've also noticed that communication between central marketing and faculty teams could be strengthened to avoid duplication of work. According to Deal and Kennedy (2000), strong cultures depend on both recognition and shared feedback, areas that could be improved in our context.

Alignment with Vision and Mission

The university's mission to "empower diverse communities through transformative education" is supported by a culture that values collaboration, service, and accountability. However, further empowerment of project teams, through greater autonomy and decentralised decision-making, would enhance alignment between everyday practices and strategic objectives. In my view, a slightly more flexible culture would strengthen morale and responsiveness during high-pressure recruitment cycles.

Part 3: Reflection as a future leader

If I were to lead this department, my primary goal would be to strengthen the culture of empowerment and recognition. I would introduce the following three initiatives:

1. **Empowered Teams and Distributed Leadership**
   By delegating decision-making authority to project teams, staff would feel trusted and accountable. This approach supports transformational leadership, which inspires ownership and innovation (Bass and Riggio, 2006).
2. **Structured Recognition and Feedback Systems**
   Regular, transparent recognition, such as "Campaign of the Month" highlights or staff appreciation.
3. **Improved Cross-Departmental Communication**
   Implementing regular inter-departmental meetings and collaborative digital platforms would promote cohesion, reducing duplication and miscommunication. This aligns with Edmondson's (2019) concept of psychological safety, where open dialogue enhances performance.

Reference List

Bass, B.M. and Riggio, R.E. (2006) *Transformational Leadership.* 2nd edn. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617095

Cameron, K.S. and Quinn, R.E. (2011) *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework.* 3rd edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Available at: https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Diagnosing+and+Changing+Organizational+Culture%3A+Based+on+the+Competing+Values+Framework%2C+3rd+Edition-p-9780470650264

Deal, T.E. and Kennedy, A.A. (2000) *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life.* 2nd edn. New York: Perseus Books. Available at: https://archive.org/details/corporateculture00deal

Edmondson, A.C. (2019) *The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth.* Hoboken: Wiley. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119477242

Herzberg, F. (1968) 'One more time: How do you motivate employees?', *Harvard Business Review,* 46(1), pp. 53–62. Available at: https://hbr.org/2003/01/one-more-time-how-do-you-motivate-employees

Kotter, J.P. (2012) *Leading Change.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. Available at: https://hbr.org/book/leading-change

Management Study Guide (n.d.) *Types of Organisational Culture.* Available at: https://www.managementstudyguide.com/types-of-organization-culture.htm (Accessed: 12 October 2025).

Schein, E.H. (2017) *Organizational Culture and Leadership.* 5th edn. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119438250