



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

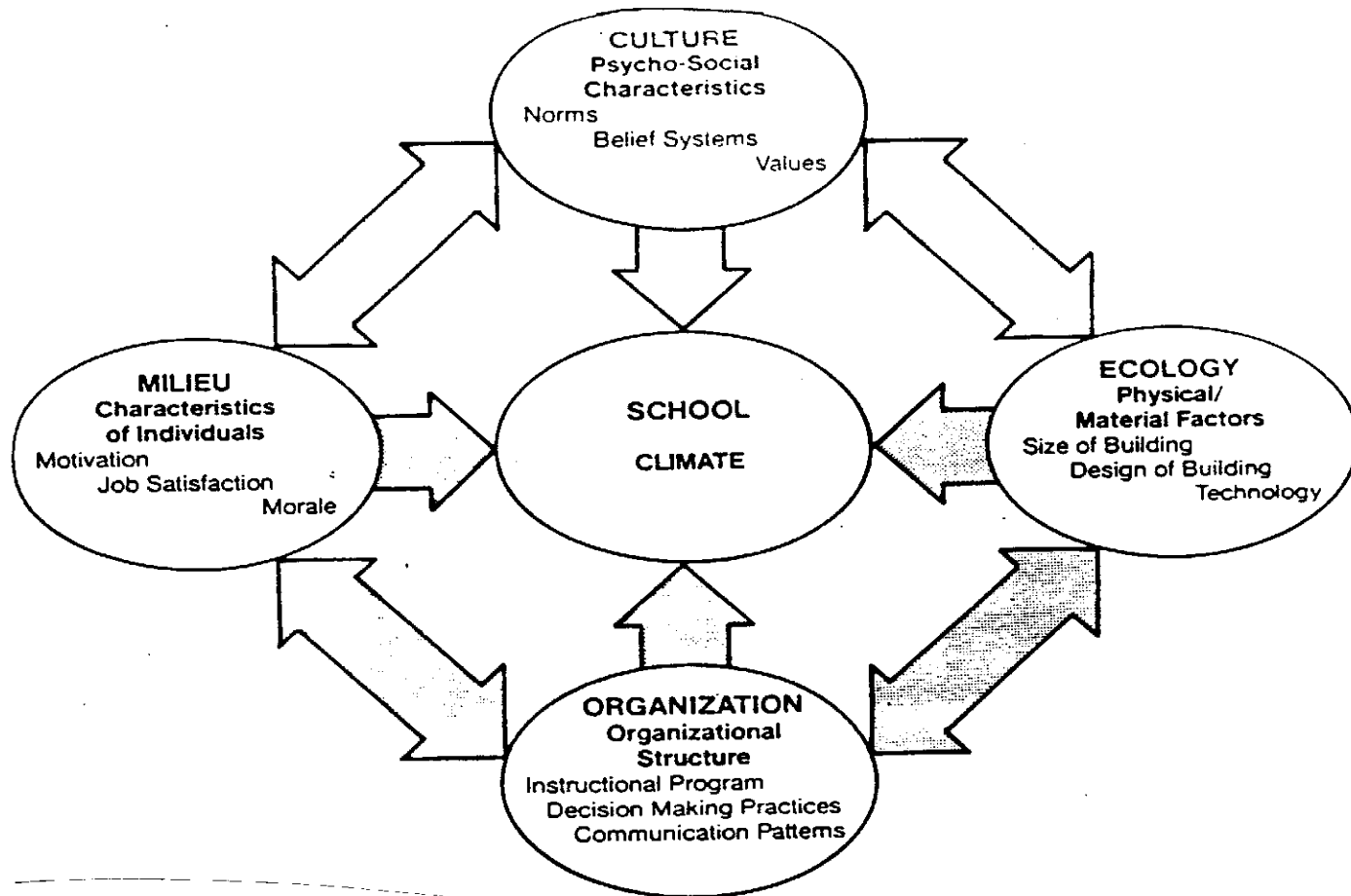
# Educational Leadership

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Creating Collaborative Cultures

Elaine Sharplin

# Climate and culture



Source: Owens 1996

# CULTURE



**“The Way We Do Things Around Here”**

# CULTURE: DEFINITIONS

- "symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of that organisation to its employees" (Ouchi, 1981, p. 41).
- "norms that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in organisation(s)" (Schwartz and Davis, 1981, p. 33).

- **"the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic take it for granted fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Schein, 1985, p. 6).**
- **The term culture therefore incorporates the beliefs, values and norms of the organisation.**

# ASPECTS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

## ■ 1. Beliefs

- those things which are held to be true.
- based on tacit assumptions such as human beings are basically good
- identifying tacit assumptions is very difficult.

## ■ 2. Values

- those things which are most important.
- Shared values are those things which the organisation believes to be most desirable.
- often espoused in mission statements and goals.
- there can be a gap between espoused and enacted values.

## ■ Norms

- unwritten rules of organisations.
- They delineate behaviours and actions which are acceptable and expected.
- enforced through the use of rewards and encouragement, imposition of sanctions, confrontation or isolation
- The symbols and rituals of the organisation communicate Norms (language, stories, myths, rituals, rites and ceremonies).

# Types of school cultures

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## ■ 1. Isolated culture

- Individuals working on their own.
- Professional autonomy is highly valued
- norms of non-interference prevail.

## ■ 2. "Balkanised" Culture

- common in secondary schools as a result of faculty structures.
- collaboration occurs within departmental groups,
- little collaboration occurs between departments to create a whole school culture.

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## ■ Collaborative Culture

- coherence between and within subjects and year group
- a common approach to teaching and learning.

# **Strong cultures are created through:**

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- **1. shared values and consensus concerning the way things are done**
- **2. the principal acting as hero/ine, embodying core values**
- **3. distinctive rituals that embody widely shared beliefs**
- **4. employees acting as situational hero/ines**

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- **5. rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal**
  - **6. significant rituals to celebrate and transform core values**
  - **7. balance between innovation and tradition and between autonomy and control and**
  - **8. widespread participation in cultural rituals (Deal, 1985).**

# THE ROLE OF THE LEADER IN ACHIEVING COLLABORATIVE CULTURES

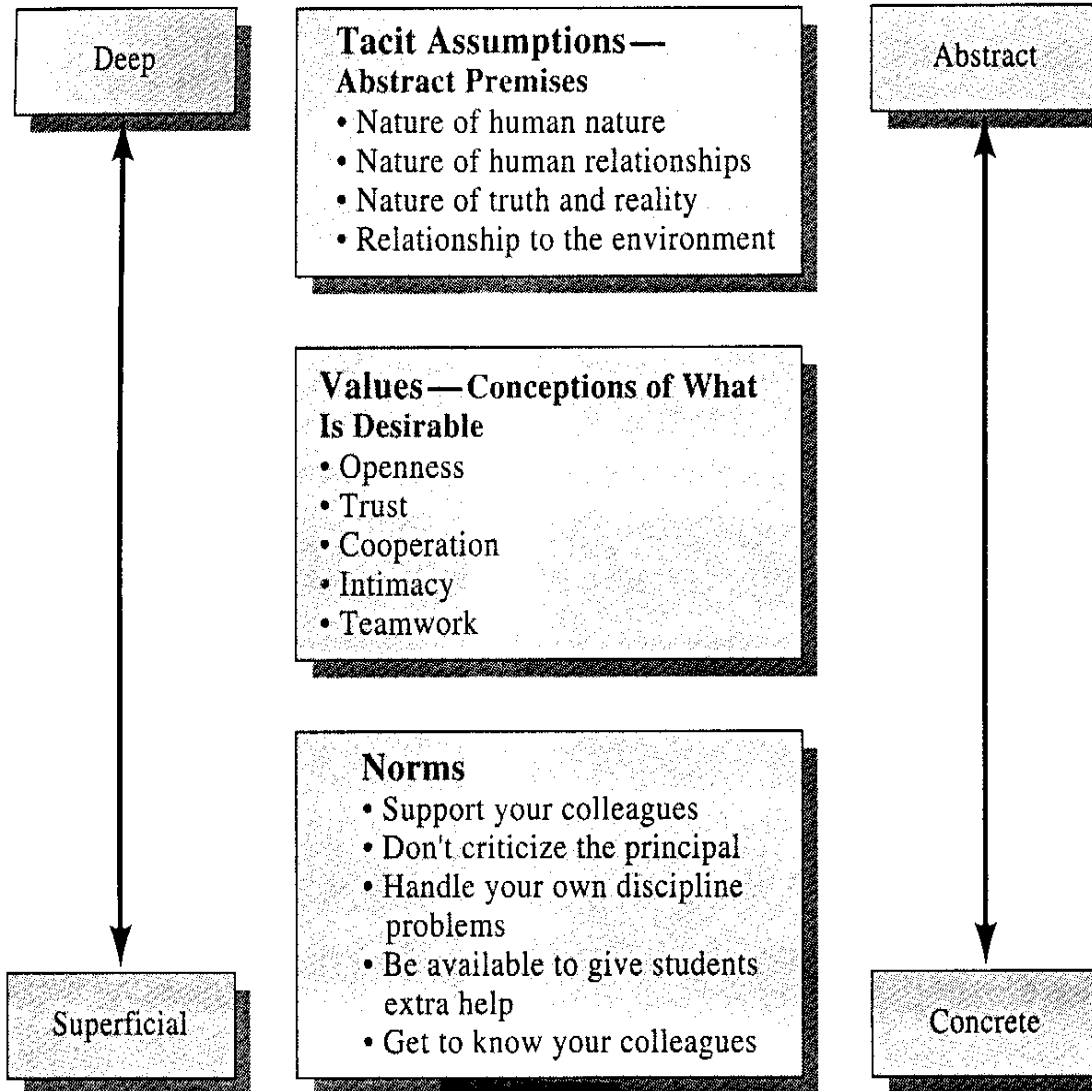
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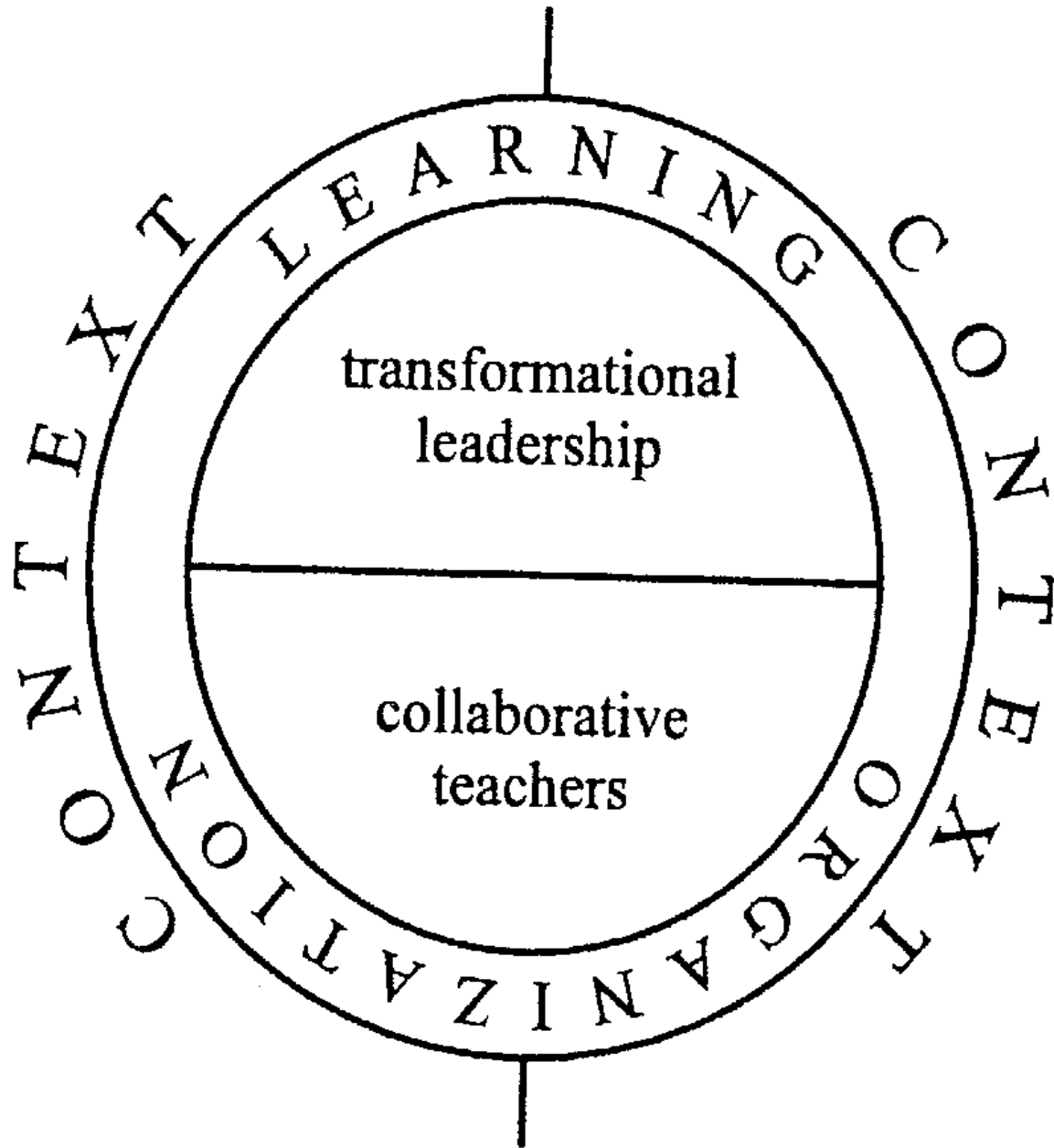
- School leaders can influence culture by:
  - 1. strengthening the school culture. Involve school staff in a process of goal setting, block competing priorities, orientate new staff to goals, establish collaborative decision making, create opportunities for collaboration e.g. planning/meeting time, staff selection and retention based on orientation to school goals;

- 2. using a variety of bureaucratic mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce cultural change.
- Eg. the allocation of financial resources, planning and scheduling, decision-making structures, staffing procedures, evaluation;
- 3. fostering staff development;

- 4. engaging in direct and frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs;
- 5. sharing power and responsibility with others; establishing teams; and
- 6. using symbols to express cultural values. Celebrate and publicly recognise the work of staff and students e.g. private thank you notes  
(Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990).

# Levels of Culture





Source: van den Berg & Slegers, 1996