

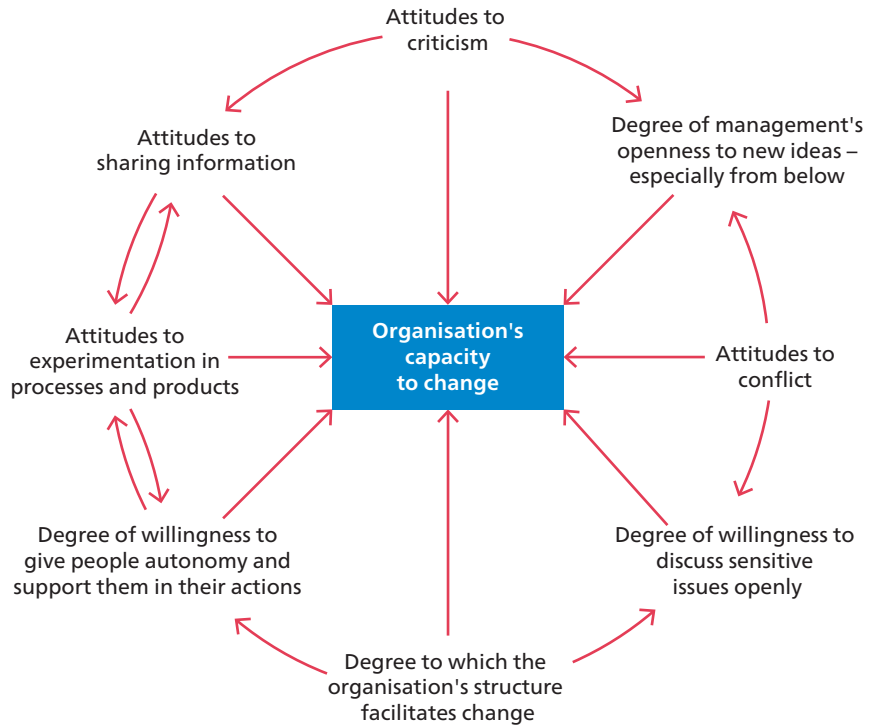


Figure 15.1 Organisational culture and change

Source: Senior, B. and Swailes, S. *Organizational Change*, fourth edition, Financial Times Prentice Hall (2010), p. 161, Reprinted and Electronically reproduced by permission from Pearson Education, Inc., New York.

A similar view is held by *Naylor*, who points out that 'In the holistic system, any change will affect the culture and the culture will affect or constrain the change . . . Cultural change is intimately bound up with the process of organisational change.'²

However, in practice, organisations usually appear to alter their underlying ethos only on a gradual basis and the complexity of environmental pressures may itself hinder rapid change. Culture is often deep-rooted and commitment to the objectives and policies of the organisation, people's cognitive limitations and their uncertainties and fears, may mean a reluctance to accept a change in behaviour. Culture is reinforced through the system of rites and rituals, patterns of communication, the informal organisation, expected patterns of behaviour and perceptions of the psychological contract. **(Organisational change is discussed later in this chapter.)**

A depiction of the way elements of culture can support and/or defend against change is given in **Figure 15.1**.

What is organisational culture?

Although people may not be aware consciously of culture, it still has a pervasive influence over their behaviour and actions. There is, however, no consensus on its meaning or applications to the analysis of work organisations. There is also sometimes confusion over the difference between the interpretation of organisational culture and organisational climate **(discussed later in this chapter)**.

Organisational culture is a general concept with different meanings and difficult to explain precisely. A popular and simple way of defining culture is 'how things are done around here'. For example, *Atkinson* explains organisational culture as reflecting the underlying assumptions about the way work is performed; what is 'acceptable and not acceptable'; and what behaviour and actions are encouraged and discouraged.³ *Rachel Johnson*, the Editor of *Governance & Compliance* magazine suggests that our understanding of culture in the workplace is that it is the embodiment of the ethos of a whole organisation which finds expression through the operation and practices that the organisation undertakes^{3A}. If the ethos of an organisation is deemed to be incorrect, then the culture is the root of the problem and needs to be addressed for these issues to be resolved. Changing the ethos without changing the culture would be purely superficial and not have any long term impact.

The culture of an organisation is also often likened to the personality of an individual⁴ (see the group discussion activity at the end of this chapter).

A summary of organisational culture is set out in Figure 15.2.

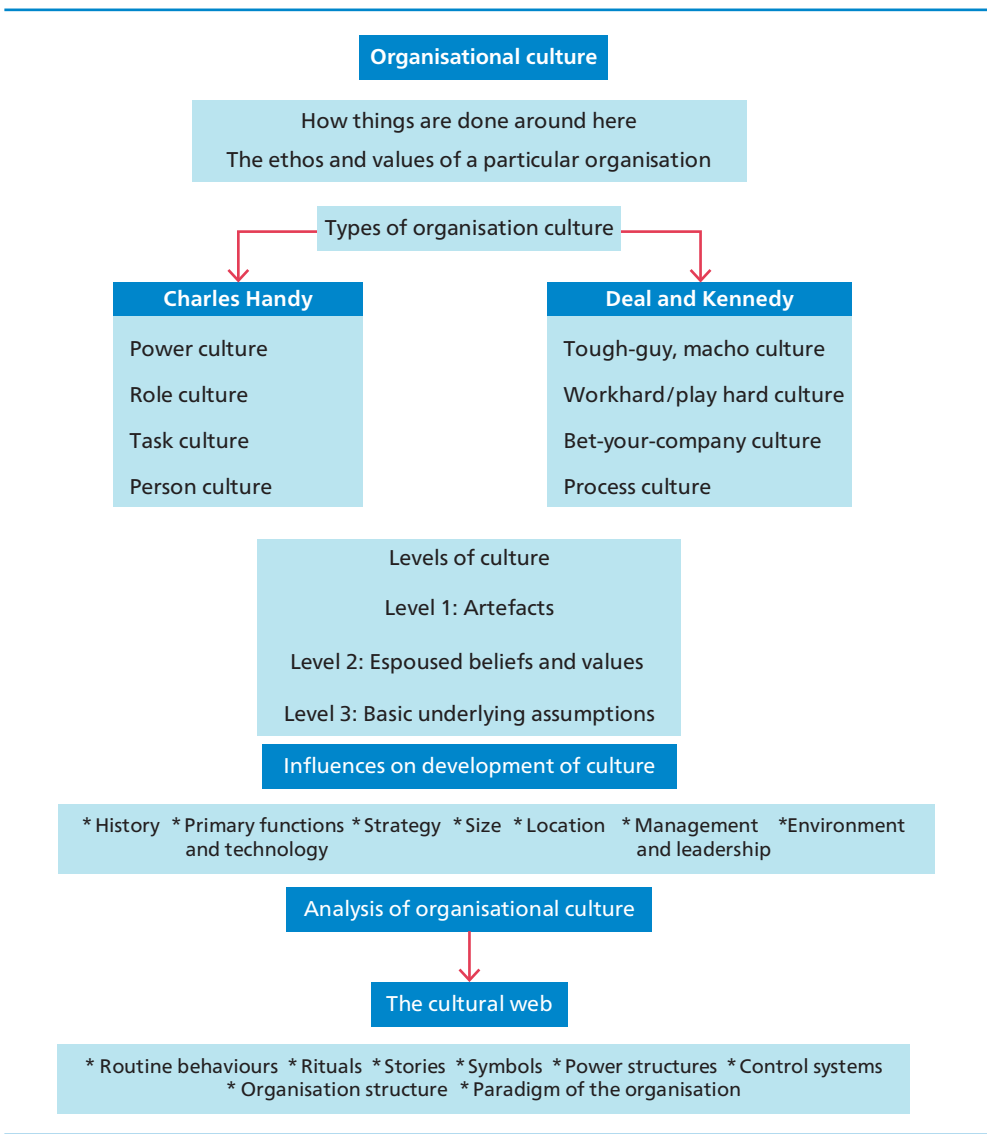


Figure 15.2 Summary of organisational culture