

Managing Modern Youth Work

First published in 2009 by Learning Matters Ltd
Reprinted in 2010

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 84445 206 4

Cover and text design by Code 5 Design Associates Ltd
Project management by Swales & Willis
Typeset by Swales & Willis, Exeter, Devon
Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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Chapter 3

Managing in organisations

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Achieving your Youth and Community Work degree

This chapter is about understanding the organisational context of your work and its impact on you and your colleagues. It has some relevance to the following National Occupational Standard (February 2008).

- 3.3.2 Develop productive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders

Introduction

This chapter places you and your work in the context of organisational life and encourages you to be a critical thinker about your work surroundings. Using the vehicle analogy applied in Chapter 2, we consider your position in your vehicle (your work) and in the local traffic (your organisation) and provide some maps and satellite photographs to help this process. You are introduced to two key organisational concepts, structure and culture, and you apply them in order to help you understand better your own and other organisations. Additionally you will become familiar with the 7-S framework and the learning organisation concept. The chapter will help you analyse your organisation and contribute to improving how it works, therefore enhancing the quality of its youth work.

Thinking about organisation

When we are considering management of our own work (whether it includes managing others or not), we are considering it in a context, the context of an organisation or several organisations. This organisation will influence the effectiveness of our work and vice versa since they are interlinked. Therefore it is imperative that you understand the organisation you work for and to a lesser extent those organisations that you work with and are in partnership with. This understanding will inform many actions you take in relation to both your own work and the work of others with whom you liaise or others whose work you manage. This can best be done by building a collection of perspectives (or specs) and concepts with which to view your organisation which, between them, will provide a rounded and complex picture to inform your work and the decisions you make.

To develop your understanding of organisations and to illustrate this notion of perspectives, we will introduce some common organisational concepts such as structure, culture and learning organisations that these perspectives emphasise, and apply them to our settings. These concepts demonstrate how different perspectives have contributed to our theorising and can help you to be a critical thinker about management in the same way that you are a critical thinker about work with young people. Some of these concepts may well be ones you have taken for granted. The theoretical perspectives from which these concepts originated have become popular at different times but remain so influential in our thinking that we do not necessarily recognise them for what they are. We consider two such perspectives very briefly to illustrate this.

The scientific management or classical perspective developed from the work of FW Taylor early in the last century (see, for instance, Mullins, 2007; Doherty and Horne, 2002). He was concerned with detailed scientific design of the various tasks needed to make the organisation's product and close supervision of people trained to carry them out. Typical concepts and language associated with this perspective include hierarchy, job descriptions, line management, quality and performance indicators. This way of thinking emphasised efficiency and assumed it was possible to develop the principles and to find the right formula for successful work and organisations. It led, for instance, to the development of Henry Ford's first car assembly line in 1913 (Mullins, 2007) and other mechanised work which we see today, for instance, in the highly structured work style of call centres. This may have been efficient for producing a physical product, the design of which did not change much. However, such production principles were applied to the design of the then relatively new public sector organisations delivering services to people such as medical care and social services. People were batched and processed (James, 1994, p48) and the public bureaucracies that were established grew vastly bigger after the Second World War with the development of the welfare state. This has had both pros and cons. While this approach may have achieved important efficiency and consistency in public services, it also has led to procedural hassles, 'red tape', inflexibility and practice divorced from user need.

The open systems perspective (mentioned in Chapter 1) which was developed in the 1960s and 1970s, originally by biologists and later by engineers, emphasised how an organisation can be seen as similar to an organism reacting to its environment and that each part of the organism is interconnected so that change in one part influences another. Organisations were also likened to machines undertaking a set of activities with the inputs they receive from their wider environment, such as students or raw materials such as oil, and transforming them into outputs such as vocationally qualified graduates or petrol. The perspective argued for the importance of organisational strategy, the organisation knowing what it intends to achieve and how, which is regularly updated based on monitoring changes in its environment such as the health of the economy. It also emphasised language such as inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes (Doherty and Horne, 2002; Quinn et al., 2007), terms which are now familiar to us in youth work and are discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7.

This approach to explaining organisations and work has its benefits in helping us identify links between our work, our organisations and wider society, and connections between different parts of the organisation, but this is only part of the story. For instance, significantly for youth work and its value base, the open systems perspective and, equally, the

scientific management perspective gave little explicit recognition to power or its potentially oppressive nature in the workplace. Consider, for instance, the impact of institutionalised racism in the police force as reported by the Macpherson inquiry (1999) into the tragic death of Stephen Lawrence, a Black teenager killed in a racist murder in south London. This racism affected not only the way Black people were dealt with by the police but also Black staff in the force.

The classical/scientific management, the open systems perspectives and other *positivist* (scientific) perspectives all see organisations as objects and they set out to find the best ways to organise the work based on some key assumptions about the importance of, for example, stability, developing staff, or maximising output. In practice there will generally be several alternatives which are suitable and often we may not set out to follow a clear path because humans are not as methodical and rational as some perspectives tend to assume. The contrasting *interpretivist* perspectives recognise that organisations are made of individuals and groups of people with all their complex motivations, emotions, interests groups, power and game playing and in that sense organisations are social constructs, constructed by those involved, rather than objects. Each person may have a view on ways forward based on their interpretation of the organisation from their position in it, their experience and values and, for instance, their gender or race. Each of these subjective views is valid. Such perspectives are interested in understanding organisations and the people in them per se and not necessarily with any agenda about improving their efficiency. For further reading on the major organisational perspectives see the end of this chapter.

Using both types of perspectives and the concepts they have generated can enable us to appreciate the complexity of organisations. A number of the later chapters will draw on some common organisation theories. It is important at this stage to understand their origins in the positivist and, to a lesser extent, the interpretivist perspectives and so therefore to be aware of how we should use such theories with a critical awareness about their assumptions and intentions.

Structure

ACTIVITY 3.1

Find an up-to-date organisation chart of your current or recent workplace showing the relationships between the different jobs and teams, or if you don't have one try to draw one up from what you know.

- *Why are people grouped in the way that they are and what is the rationale for the way you are line managed?*
- *Are there people who seem to belong in more than one place?*
- *What happens when you ask two or three different people why the structures are the way they are?*
- *How clear is the boundary between your organisation and others it works with?*

Undertaking this activity is likely to show you that both the positivist and the interpretivist perspectives explained above have played a part in your reflection and any answers to these questions. For instance, in some cases it is clear that people are grouped because together they provide a service to a particular group of people. More than one colleague will explain a structure in this way. Indeed, organisation charts are intended to demonstrate that formal structure. In other cases you may find that nobody is sure why people are grouped as they are, that the grouping may be described in varied ways and that all may have different stories about why the current structures are in place.

Commonly the explanations for the varied kinds of organisational structures where youth work can be found include:

- the history of the organisation, which may involve key individuals;
- its aims and values;
- the impact of government policy (for instance the development of integrated youth support services);
- its size;
- the geographical spread of the organisation's area of responsibility;
- the nature of the kinds of activities it offers.

Some hypothetical case studies of organisations follow. As you read them think about a) the ways each organisation's structure illustrates some of the above factors, and b) the ways in which day-to-day work practice and its line management can vary in these different structures. You could imagine asking some people within these structures the same questions you answered above about your own organisation.

CASE STUDY

Morrells Place

Morells Place is a small voluntary youth organisation in a racially and culturally diverse neighbourhood. It is run by a committee of local people and it employs two full-time youth workers and some part-time staff. There are several volunteers too who help run various daytime and evening activities for young people and other community groups. One of the full-time workers, who was the only employee until the committee recently gained new funding, takes all responsibility for the day-to-day finances. Both of them provide advice to the part-time staff who work with the young people. Responsibility is shared for popping out to the cash and carry for supplies, remembering to put the bins out on collection day and transporting some of the young people, for instance, to the city arts events. Most of the applications for funds are prepared by a couple of the committee members. Everyone in the organisation knows each other. The structure is simple, most people have several responsibilities and many roles overlap.

CASE STUDY

Grantshire Sexual Health Team

The Sexual Health Team (GSHT) in the small county of Grantshire comprises staff employed by various parts of the local authority and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) including nurses, doctors, teachers, youth workers, administrative and multi-media staff – a total of 33 people. There are two offices, one in a hospital in the county town and the other smaller one some distance away in a shop front in a small market town. Each office houses staff from a mix but not all the professional groups. Like all the other professional groups, the youth workers are office based, mainly in the market town, and are managed as a small team by a youth work manager who is part of the management team based in the hospital reporting to the coordinator of the GSHT. This person in turn is a member of a senior management team in the PCT. One youth worker is seconded for 50 per cent of their time to a project in the main seaside town which works with teenage parents and is run by a national voluntary organisation. This worker is managed for that 50 per cent by the manager of that project who reports to their regional executive. This structure is complex. Some staff rarely meet while others work in the same office but have limited shared work, and some plan and work together on a variety of project teams. Most staff are located and managed in teams with others who share the same professional training and outlook.

CASE STUDY

East Lorchester Integrated Youth Support Service

East Lorchester Borough has a new Integrated Children and Young People's Service. It has organised its services into four geographical localities like most other council services. In each locality there is an Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) made up of three or four full-time youth workers and the part-time staff they manage, a teenage pregnancy worker and also several Youth Offending Services staff, Drugs and Alcohol workers, Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs), an education welfare officer (EWO), a part-time Parenting Support worker and administrators. Each locality has an IYSS manager and two or more deputy managers with a variety of professional backgrounds. Staff are each line managed by one of these managers who may or may not share their professional background and training. Some of those managers have borough-wide responsibilities too for work such as youth engagement, youth work, support for young people not in education, employment or training, the teenage pregnancy strategy and drugs and alcohol work. The youth workers are mostly based individually or in pairs in youth projects and each one is a member of a borough-wide group too, such as PAYP. For this borough-wide work they report to another manager often based in another area. So in this case there is a complex matrix structure with staff reporting to locality line managers for some of their work and to other line managers for other aspects of their work, a structure developed specifically in response to Every Child Matters and more recent policy such as Youth Matters and Aiming High for Young People (see Chapter 8 for more information). History and chance may play a part in whether a particular worker is managed by a fellow professional or one from another profession.

The reasons for different structures are not always as rational or practical as you might assume. As you reflect on what you know about some of these factors, you are already theorising about organisations. Several of these explanations may be relevant and any can be legitimate if they present the organisation in the way members perceive them. Organisations are socially constructed realities that are as much in people's minds as they are represented in organisational charts. This theorising provides you with ways of explaining what happens in your organisation and this in turn influences the way you operate in it and make decisions.

Culture

You will know that each place you may have worked (whether in youth work or not) has a different feel about it and different ways of doing everyday things such as greeting each other at the start of a working session. This is the culture, the informal aspects of the organisation, the daily practice which reflects the organisation's otherwise largely invisible values or ethos.

Organisational culture has been described in many ways. Morgan (1989, p157) calls it the 'social glue' that holds everything together, some of which is apparent such as how we celebrate a colleague's birthday and some of which is more subtle such as how far we follow organisational procedures. Other images Morgan uses that help us think about the concept of organisational culture, and its complexity and significance, include an iceberg (Morgan, 1997, p169; Mullins, 2007, p30) and an umbrella. We only see the formal aspects of the organisation such as policies and buildings, the parts of an iceberg above the surface of the sea. Culture is based on a much larger and deeper reality of attitudes, behaviour and communications, much of which is below the surface. Culture as an image of an umbrella illustrates how it can also be seen as the overarching values and visions which can link people all working for the same organisation.

The culture is the aspect of workplaces which can be positive enough to retain you through difficult times, or negative enough to drive you away even if the work is what you are keen to do. Each youth work team or inter-disciplinary children and young person's team may have a different culture from its neighbouring one. The culture of a team of

ACTIVITY 3.2

Think about your current or recent workplace again.

- *What aspects of this culture are largely under the water as in the iceberg image?*
- *Can you identify a common culture? Do you feel you share in it?*
- *Is your team's culture in conflict with those of other teams, and if so, in what ways and what kinds of difficulty does this create?*
- *What could you do about this as a manager in such circumstances?*
- *In what ways might an informal style of some youth work teams work in their favour or not alongside cultures of other teams influenced differently by their particular work style and organisational role such as health and safety or marketing and promotions?*

youth workers may be very different from a team of teachers or youth offending staff for example, even though they all work with the same young people in the same neighbourhood and/or in the same organisation.

You could find that the culture of the organisation you begin work in is more suited to the kind of small stable organisation it used to be. Perhaps long-standing youth work staff are resistant to regularly changing their working week which they are now expected to do as the organisation develops more frequently changing responsive projects. As a manager you play a part in creating, influencing and changing the culture simply through the impact of your style and personality and as a role model. If you set out purposely to influence the culture, you need to know where you are going, be open and ethical in your approach and be realistic about what you can achieve. Ideally you are aiming for more inclusive relationships and practice. It can be tricky to make change and it takes time but it can also be achieved in more significant ways such as reducing the length of a planned youth work session or staff meeting and expecting colleagues to drink a cup of tea together to conclude it while reflecting on how it went, removing the 'winner stays on' rule about the pool table in the youth project, or removing the table altogether and replacing it with comfy sofas.

Handy (1999) has developed Harrison's categories of culture into four types – power, role, task and person – which often prove useful in analysing the cultures you experience. Power cultures generally have a few powerful people at the centre who control much of what happens. This kind of culture is more common in small organisations with limited procedures in which individuals can have significant influence. In contrast a role culture depends substantially on people knowing their place and responsibilities and following the rules. Job descriptions are especially important and these and hierarchical position are key sources of power. In a task culture, emphasis is on achieving tasks by bringing suitably experienced people together in often-changing project groups – a 'get things done' culture. Power is associated with expertise. The person culture is probably the least common. This is a culture about individual autonomy where any organisational structure only exists because a group of workers will gain some mutual benefit. For example, a chamber of barristers need an organisation so that they can share administrative support, but each works independently and is not controlled by the other barristers. If you work in a large and diverse organisation, you may be able to identify all those cultures in different parts of the organisation.

CASE STUDY

Pratima's first meeting

Pratima has started in her first post at East Lorchester after qualifying as a youth worker. She goes to her first borough-wide youth work meeting with other local professional colleagues soon after settling in and getting to know some young people in the neighbourhood. Most people arrive literally as the meeting begins and some are late. The agenda is lengthy and much of it concerns targets, funding, inspection and the recent restructuring. Discussion is limited as much of the meeting is taken up with managers explaining aspects of these topics. People are friendly to their new colleague but mostly rush off as soon as the meeting finishes. Pratima leaves disappointed as she has had little opportunity to meet colleagues or learn about their work.

ACTIVITY 3.3

- If you were Pratima, how might you respond after the meeting?
- What might this experience say about Pratima's expectations, the culture of the organisation she has joined and the impact of the world beyond the organisation?

Earlier in the chapter when explaining the open systems perspective, we likened the organisation to a machine and organism. Culture is another such metaphor (Morgan, 2006), another way of seeing organisations which emphasises the everyday and how this has meaning and power so that, for instance, regularly using language such as targets, performance management and outcomes influences our perception of the organisation's purpose. This machine-like and managerialist culture means that we are accustomed now to discussing our work as a question of meeting targets as much as we discuss it as working creatively, informally and educationally with young people.

Structure, culture and organisational analysis

At this stage, having considered structure and culture to help you develop your understanding of organisations, you may find it helpful to look at the McKinsey 7-S framework (Mullins, 2007, p758). This is a model developed in Peters and Waterman's study in the early 1980s which was attempting to identify the features of a number of companies successful at that time. Although the model, developed from the open systems perspective, has now been around sometime, it is still popular and useful. In fact it forms the basis of the National Youth Agency's Hear By Right standards framework for the active involvement of children and young people used across the statutory and voluntary sector (Badham and Wade, 2008). It indicates how seemingly relatively unrelated aspects of the organisation are interlinked and it emphasises how changes in any one of these aspects, as identified in Figure 3.1, can have effects on other aspects of the organisation. The top three Ss in the diagram are seen to be the 'harder' aspects and the lower three the 'softer' ones. The 'harder' aspects are more structural and can be more easily influenced by managers, while the 'softer' features are more cultural and are more resistant to change. Structural and cultural aspects influence each other and all are influenced by and influence any shared values.

This model can be used to take stock of your organisation in its current form. Consider whether the different aspects are consistent with each other, and reflect on what aspects need to change to achieve a different result. Try now, using aspects of this model, to undertake some organisational reflection and analysis. The two following activities use two case studies of the organisations presented earlier in the chapter to help you do so.

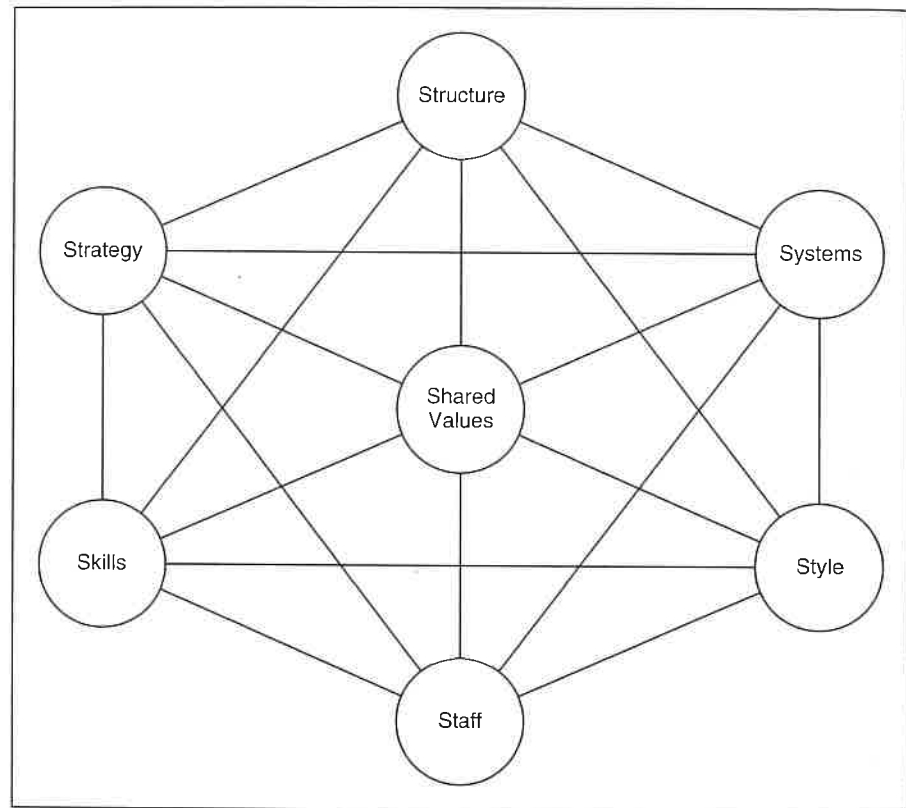


Figure 3.1 The McKinsey 7-S Framework

ACTIVITY 3.4

The Morrells Place case study

- Does the structure appear to be a suitable one for its current purpose?
- What if the committee tender successfully to deliver all the youth work provision in their neighbourhood? This could mean that their budget and workload doubles and the project will need to collect far more monitoring data on their work. What might be the implications for their current systems? What kinds of changes might be needed?
- How would you describe the current culture at Morrells Place?
- In what ways, if any, might the culture change if the organisation grows as discussed?

ACTIVITY 3.5*The Grantshire Sexual Health Team case study*

- *In what ways might the skills of their immediate colleagues, their line management structure, or the style associated with the shop front or hospital office base lead to different organisational circumstances for different youth workers working for GSHT?*
- *What impact could some aspects of these circumstances have on the ability of youth workers to work to their particular strengths?*

Consider these and your earlier reflections on different organisation structures. Did each one seem to be the best structure for achieving that organisation's purposes? Do you think your own organisation has the right structure to achieve its purpose? Consider how one change in the organisation can lead to another. If your organisation gives all youth workers a Blackberry so they can communicate anywhere with one another by email and on all the social networks as well as phone and text, does everyone have the *skills* to manage this technology? How may this change contact making with young people? What impact could this have on holding boundaries between work and non-work life? Could such a change in *systems* and technology potentially have a detrimental effect on the *shared values* which concern not just overall expectations of enabling better lives for young people but also valuing the health of staff and not disturbing them in their personal time?

Maybe you and colleagues in your organisation, or teams within it, are encouraged to engage in substantial discussion and consultation about your work, its style and, for instance, how the organisation is structured. If so you are likely to be more open to change and improvements; indeed, you may make such decisions. In such circumstances a learning organisation develops.

The concept of a learning organisation, like the McKinsey's 7-S framework, was derived substantially from the open systems perspective. It is a concept that makes sense to youth work and its approach, that mirrors where you may wish your organisation to be, and that helps with understanding related popular management concepts such as quality and performance indicators.

A learning organisation is one which encourages its members to learn, and is regularly making changes to what it does and how it does it. It is an organisation which engages in what Argyris and Schon (1978, in Ranson and Stewart, 1994, p169) called double loop learning. Single loop learning involves considering whether the activities were carried out, whether they were done efficiently, and whether they had the planned effect – conventional evaluation (see Chapter 6 on how to do this well, and discussion about economy, efficiency and effectiveness and demonstrating value in Chapter 7). Double loop learning involves considering whether the activities *should* be carried out, whether different and new types of activities should be used instead and questions basic principles. A learning organisation treats this process of evaluation as a tin opening process rather than one

about reading the dials (Everitt and Hardiker, 1996). Or to use our vehicle analogy again, the successful learning organisation is not just recording the miles, journey speeds and fuel consumption but is lifting the bonnet and examining the engine and, for instance, asking whether an engine designed to run on a more environmentally friendly fuel would be better for everyone. Both types of learning are needed. Single loop learning is part of maintaining the organisation, but in order for an organisation to survive in changing circumstances, it also needs to undertake double loop learning and engage in change.

ACTIVITY 3.6

- What kinds of single loop learning does your organisation engage you in?
- How much double loop learning happens?
- What kinds of key questions do you think your organisation would benefit from debating and why?
- How much do you involve young people in debate about the purpose of your organisation and how it is doing?

Handy describes learning organisations as those 'which relish curiosity, questions and ideas, which allow space for experiment and reflection, which forgive mistakes and promote self-confidence' (1990, p199). They are those which value and use the expertise and experience of their staff to engage in improving the work and achievements of the organisation. Learning organisations are open to learning about their patterns, cultures and work in order to improve what they do and keep up with changes around them and impacting on them. In fact they are the kinds of organisations that are like ideal youth workers – open, responsive, inclusive, effective and reflective. You can see that this style of organisation is not only needed to survive in a competitive commercial world but also in the equally complex public and voluntary sector world of most youth work which is also increasingly competitive (see Chapter 7 on commissioning).

ACTIVITY 3.7

Look back at the East Lorchester Integrated Youth Support Service case study and Activity 3.3 about Pratima's first borough-wide youth work meeting there.

- What could Pratima do to influence the style of the meetings?
- If you were a senior youth work manager in East Lorchester what kinds of steps might you take to develop a learning culture in the IYSS?

To keep focused on improvement, organisational members (key decision makers as well as front-line staff) need to be open to some fundamental questioning of what tends to be taken for granted. In the case of youth work this could be, for instance, debate about which groups your organisation works with in order that it can respond to those in most

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need as the population changes in an area where new migrants are settling. You may need to decide whether your work needs its own building bases or not and, if so, where they should be and what their purpose should be. You may even need to consider whether full-time youth workers will achieve more if they work mainly to recruit, train and support volunteers and reduce their face-to-face work with young people. This kind of double loop learning enables innovation, which should be a hallmark of good youth work (see Chapter 7 for detailed discussion on innovation).

Those who believe in learning organisations argue that they will be more successful because they engage in significant reflection and critiquing of what they do so they make important and appropriate changes to ensure they remain relevant. They are also better equipped to ensure their practice is anti-oppressive. So if you work in this kind of organisation, you will access learning opportunities and be debating with colleagues and young people about the purpose of some of your projects. You will also, for instance, be reviewing any change of focus driven by funding changes as opposed to the needs and concerns of the young people you know.

You can use the 7–5 framework and the learning organisation concept to increase your understanding of both the structural (harder) and the cultural (softer) and how they are inextricably linked. Is the tail wagging the dog? For instance, does the management information system (MIS) demand a very particular approach to evaluating your youth work, such as identifying all the aspects of the curriculum you have covered in your youth work so they can be ticked for inputting on the system? In what ways does this approach and the way it has been introduced both help with and hinder your project from a focus on whether you are attracting and working successfully with sufficient young women or young disabled people for instance? Do you receive copies of the organisation wide performance data from the MIS that you input data into? Are you encouraged to use this system data to discuss with colleagues and help you with your planning or is it mainly seen as an input task to be done?

You can also use the 7–5 framework and the learning organisation concept to help the organisation to adapt and respond to changes in the external environment. Chapters 7 and 8 explore youth work's external environment and the changes that youth workers and their managers need to respond to, while the chapters preceding it mainly help you with improving the management of the internal environment.

C H A P T E R R E V I E W

This chapter has argued for the need for a critical understanding of your organisational setting. It has explored topics on:

- the benefit of using both positivist and interpretivist perspectives of organisations to develop a sufficiently complex picture;
- the need to be able to identify the structure of your organisation and the reasons for this structure as well as its suitability and impact on youth work;
- how to recognise the various cultures in your organisation displayed in different aspects of its work and in what ways you can influence them;

- using the McKinsey 7-S framework to take stock, and to understand the interplay between different facets of your organisation;
- applying both single and double loop learning, aspects of the concept of the learning organisation, to develop your own and your colleagues' evaluation of the way you all work and its suitability for your current circumstances.

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