

## Culture

Culture is a term that comes up often in this week's readings. Culture generally means the same thing (values, beliefs, customs, shared stories, and so on), yet it has different connotations and impact depending on the context in which it is used. In "The Teacher as Designer" and in "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies" we encounter the term culture many times, referencing different contexts and having multiple impacts. Yet, even though these articles use the term many times, there is still under-representation and under-appreciation of culture.

For instance, we can "...extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context of our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalized societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate" (NLG, 1996, p. 61). In this context, we look to the many cultures from around the world as nations and religions create a diverse learning environment. We live in a global village, we can easily migrate, and the internet has further shrunk the world and made it easier to connect and collaborate across cultures. The readings also go on to ask "...what are the cultural conditions of learning" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010, p. 205)? And also, how can we "Foster a culture of professional collaboration" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010, p. 220)?

We can also look at culture as it relates to organizations. The New London Group highlights that education and literacy changes "...with the development of postFordism or fast capitalism, more and more workspaces are opting for a flattened hierarchy. Commitment, responsibility, and motivation are won by developing a workplace culture in which the members of an organization identify with its vision, mission, and corporate values." (NLG, 1996, p.66). We could further view discussions about society as also being connected to culture:

A series of related social changes are occurring, encapsulated in part by the idea of an emerging 'knowledge society'. In this sort of economy, value is increasingly located in the intangibles of human capacity, organizational flexibility, business processes, customer relationships, brand identity, social networks, technological know-how, product aesthetics and service values. This represents a shift away from the old grounding of value primarily in fixed capital and basic skills" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010, p.201).

There are many interesting design ideas introduced in "The Teacher as Designer", ideas that touch upon reuse, documentation, the role and responsibility of both the educator and students. However, there is little discussion about the culture of the learning organization itself. How can we help new practices, roles and responsibilities to gain traction in learning organizations? As leaders in these organizations, we have a responsibility to shape the culture of the organization. Yet, as leaders, it is impossible to tell others what to believe or to have a shared vision or values. Instead, we need to create and design<sup>1</sup> an organization that encourages and supports the development and adoption of behaviors and in turn culture (Galbraith, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Design is another term that shows up frequently and in many contexts!

In designing organizations, Galbraith offers the Star Model that includes strategy, structure, processes, people and rewards/metrics. A change to one of the aspects needs to be aligned with the other aspects in the model. If the role of the teacher changes, we also need to consider:

- How will success be measured? For instance, reuse will not happen by accident or just by having positive thoughts.
- When looking at structure and processes, we also need to think about authority and decision making. As new practices and approaches are introduced, who decides what changes can be introduced?
- When looking at assessment of the students, can a teacher decide to make assessments based on portfolios when the rest of the organization is driven based on tests and other approaches?

The “Learning Element” also needs to be considered in light of culture and modern software development and software driven organizations. For instance, AltSchool, an educational organization that is software driven sees that “...software is updated every day....‘We encourage staff members to express their pain points, step up with their ideas, take a risk, fail forward, and fail fast, because we know we are going to iterate quickly. Other schools tend to move in geologic time’” (Mead, 2016, p.5). Will all educational stakeholders value and appreciate a fail forward / fail fast mentality? Or is that currently something that only is valued in software and startup cultures?

There are many interesting concepts brought up in this week’s readings. However, design as it relates to learning also needs to include thinking about design as it relates to organizations and the culture that results. The risk of success diminishes if we overlook these other views on design and culture.

## References

Galbraith, J. R. (2014). *Designing organizations: Strategy, structure, and process at the business unit and enterprise levels* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard educational review*, 66(1), 60-93.