Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1  Research background

When we are talking of culture we often tend to reflect on values, myths, traditions, rituals, ceremonies or "the way we do things around here". The word culture has many meanings and connotations. The way academics or practitioners invariably define culture differs from that of an employee and the members of organisations and this will be reflected in the foregoing thesis. Employees and members of organisations use everyday language and their definition of culture are dependent on the business they know.

Organisation culture is a very broad area. Chapman (1992a: 9) points out that

The literature on management and culture is rich in assertions of the need to define culture. If it is not defined, how can it be operationalized? If it not operationalized, how can it be measured? If it is not measured, how can it take its place in the scientific literature, with its multiple regression, its pattern of causation, and its ambition of rigour?

Many articles and books have been written on organisation culture; however, at the outset I would like to state my view that there are too many definitions and focus on the generalities of business and organisations. There is little focus on values, and how culture and cultural values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis? While there is a substantial amount of information out there, one asks oneself constantly: To who does one listen? How does one pick up which is right and which is wrong?

The research reported here is highly practical in intent, covering the following: How is organisation culture defined? How are the values of culture disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis? What is the employee’s contribution to culture and change? The thesis examines these questions via reporting research carried out in two local councils, specifically focussing on their handling of tourism in their area: Wollondilly Shire Council and Wingecarribee Shire Council.
I believe that the research is practical as it goes to the heart of studying culture, and more so as it tries to solve some of the problems found to exist in the literature. The purpose of the research was not to solve those problems in their entirety (as this would be difficult if not impossible to do); however, it attempts to discover principles and underlying truths which may be a way of addressing the problem of organisation culture or solving at least some aspects of it.

Irrespective of how much one talk about organisation culture, their will some degree of inconsistency in arriving at the proper definition. Several research approaches to defining the concept of culture have been advocated but the concept still remains elusive.

Given the quality of today’s literature, it is possible to specify a framework for a definition of culture rather than a mere general conceptualisation of culture. To do this we need to understand, first and foremost, that culture begins at the surface. Artefacts, behaviours, logos all allow us to probe deeper for cultural values. An organisational study needs to be carried out, with a working definition of culture, which takes into consideration both the practical and the theory underpinning it.

This thesis adopts a working definition, which will be introduced in the latter part of the chapter. This working definition will incorporate all the elements that shape the culture, including practical day-to-day issues. The working definition is useful in that it is operational and highlights the cultural attributes and elements that are present in both organisation and the department of an organisation. What are the common elements in terms of organisation and departments and its perspective? The working definition describes organisation as an entity and subjected to empirical investigation and the culture is subject to change. It is empirical in the sense that we will be able to draw upon research on the nature of belief, attitude and value formation so that we are able to understand culture more precisely rather than accepting generalities.

The limitations of the research will be identified in this chapter. Despite obvious limitations, the study represents a significant bodies of knowledge, as we the entire society, are partakers in the business world. The problems of the literature will be addressed in Chapter 2, which will also provide a detailed coverage of the issues thrown up by the research; these will be revisited in later chapters.
The data examined are interviews, a questionnaire survey, secondary sources, norms, behaviours, and artefacts, all of which invariably provide clues to the study of culture.

1.2 Structure of the report

The research will be based on detailed analysis of the two councils in the area of tourism; itself based on interviews, direct observation, and other primary and secondary sources. Along with the introduction the report will include other sections which describe the aims and objectives of the research. The report concludes with an overview of areas for further research. The structure of the report is as follows:

- **Introduction.** This chapter provides an overview of the research, the area of study, the research objectives, the limitations of the research, the significance of the research, concluding with a summary of analysis and findings. The research is practical and covers issues occurring on a day-to-day basis. The chapter summarises the key ideas presented throughout the thesis and sets the stage of the remaining chapters.

- **Literature review.** This chapter discusses my reading of published popular and academic literature on organisation culture. Gaining an understanding of others’ view of organisation culture was necessary for me to devise a methodology for developing a working definition of organisation culture. These chapters will emphasise the following questions: What is known about the subject, why is it important, what is not known, what are the major problems, and how can these problems be solved?

- **Methodology.** This chapter discusses the research methods and procedures were used to gather information in two municipal councils in New South Wales (NSW), one a developed tourist destination and the other a developing one. The chapter discusses both primary and secondary sources in some detail, eg. Semi-standardised and open interviews.

- **Organisation study of two councils.** Two chapters, one for each council, serve as data chapters, reporting on my study of their Department of Tourism. The main thrust of these chapters is to discuss an organisation study of these two organisations.

- **Analysis.** This chapter compares the two cases, examining their similarities and differences.

- **Conclusion and implications.** This chapter presents the conclusions reached, discusses the implications of the study in relation to the research question asked, and makes recommendations for further study.
1.3 Research objectives

The research will identify, analyse and report on the results. Specifically, the research reports on the following:

- How organisation culture is defined and shaped in an organisation.
- Values and how are they disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis.
- What contribution employees make to culture change?

The thesis will examine these questions via analysis of data collected in the two Shire Councils of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee, in particular, in their respective Departments of Tourism.

Moreover, the thesis will examine the organisational members own definition of culture as a way of examining some of the definition in the literature.

1.4 Problems with the literature

Firstly, there are many definitions of organisation culture in the literature; however, they do not explain precisely what is culture – they miss the integrated nature of the concept. This seems to suggest that the concept is taken from several other disciplines and then combined. The concept is too general and not practical in nature. While the definitions found in the literature are useful, they do not specify in a precise form what they mean by culture.

Secondly, the research on cultural values and how they are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, and what contribution employees make to their organisation’s culture is limited. Dobson, William and Walters (1993) have emphasised these in detail; however, their approach in solving these problems is rather general and they placed more emphasis on the viewpoints of managers. Furthermore, any emphasis on employee contributions to culture and change is focussed more on strategies than on actual contributions. In a search for excellence, there is a lot of emphasis on the strategic values that underpin the activities of US companies; however, information on how these values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day to basis is not emphasised. These practical aspects are important. Alvesson and Berg (1992: 182) state
... that despite the massive offering of specialised literature in the field, much of which is clearly intended to be practically oriented, there is little evidence today that anyone has had any real success of applying the culture concept at a practical level.

As for employee contribution, the degree to which an organisation develops human assets are unique to a particular organisation; Ouchi (1984), in an interesting variation on the human resource theme, has argued that a firm’s performance can be predicted by the level of “human asset specificity”. While this is an interesting argument, given that he recognises the value of human assets, he never talks about the contribution employee’s make. Authors like Dobson, William and Walters, Angela, Walters and many others have emphasised this; however, they do not go far enough.

Thirdly, regarding analysis I would argue that there is simply not enough – most of the authors looked at the organisation as a whole and identified the values that are present. Each organisation has departments, and each department perpetuates culture, which may or may not be same for every department. Unless and until each department is studied, one has not fully uncovered the culture. Edgar H. Schein (1992) states that one has to really consider what it is that those people are trying to do and what assumptions they are making, and then explain from their point of view whether their behaviour makes sense or not. In larger companies there are numerous departments and professionals and they all form part of a whole organisation. Though they are working under the umbrella of the one organisation, they may not necessarily be reflecting on its culture. In essence, culture varies and we can not propose a clear-cut definition of culture.

Fourthly, most of the studies carried out are U.S. and UK-based and are not reflective of the situation in other Western countries, let alone non-Western countries. Each country has its own levels of respect, with some oriented to a traditional way of life while others take a different approach altogether. In retrospect, organisation culture is very much a matter of values and beliefs, and it is impossible for academics and practitioners to use the one line of thinking when studying culture.
1.5 Research limitations and comments

In discussing the limitation of this research the more general methodological problems were considered before the research was undertaken are discussed first and some of the specific problems that emerged in the course of conducting these research are dealt with.

First of all, it is useful to consider the viability of organisation culture given the fact that it is an abstract term. In the research reported here it may appear to be implied that organisation culture is quantifiable. However, I feel that I could not prove organisation culture via measurements. Clearly the measurement of organisation culture begs questions regarding its internal construct and the validity of its content, i.e. Do surveys truly measure the concepts that they are intended to measure? Moreover, survey is limited in terms of their ability to tap the levels of culture. I can not interact with the respondent to probe issues to get more information and also the use of survey method presupposes that the investigator is already familiar enough with the culture to know what questions and issues need to be investigated. However, surveys are useful in that it provides substantial information and provide a relatively simple straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives. It allows anonymity, which can encourage frankness when sensitive areas are involved.

This research is entirely based on the viewpoints of managers and the employees of the two councils, and it is highly likely that there will be some degree of bias. The self-completed questionnaires had little or no check on honesty of responses. Responses have to be squeezed into the spaces provided which was not appropriate. However, the research highlights definitions, values and practices of these organisations, and as such may contribute to a more robust theory of organisation culture.

A related issue is critical change. No attempt was made to explore various techniques in order to change a particular organisation culture with the aim of increasing the level of commitment of members of the organisation. Respondents were not asked their opinion on such matters. Beyond the ethical issues, time and financial constraints limited the ability of the research to explore this issue. The research objective was specifically to determine how organisation culture is defined in
the two organisations, how their cultural values were disseminated and reinforced, and what was their employees' contribution to cultural change.

Culture change is not only necessary but also inevitable, whether on an organisational or societal level. On an organisational level, cultural change plays an important role in the evolution of a company. While cultural change can be useful, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of what it is that needs to be changed. The research is limited to the extent that it does not focus more on the process of cultural change.

However, despite such a limitation, I hope that this research may lead people to appreciate the importance of an organisation's culture. Furthermore, it may help them reach a better understanding of the culture of their own organisation, and encourage them to explore ways in which they may alter it for the better. Lastly, I trust that the research makes a contribution to our knowledge of organisation culture.

Validity of the sample size is a concern because it makes it difficult to determine if the results are an accurate reflection of the types of organisation culture that exist in the organisations studied. Tourism Wollondilly don't have a tourism department while Tourism Southern Highlands which runs under the auspicious of Wingecarribee council\(^1\) has a department of its own. Most of the responses from Tourism Wollondilly were from the General Manager and his opinions may well be biased. The absence of other workers may have resulted in a failure to capture the true nature of the organisation culture of Tourism Wollondilly. However, many organisations, both public and private, are small. Thus while the two organisations may not necessarily be representative of organisations of their kind, they certainly provided important insights.

Another limitation encountered was the result of my choice of methodology. By choosing to study only tourism, the research was somewhat limited in how to compare and contrast the results. While it is useful to see how the culture differed between the department it would have been useful to study at least two or more department within

\(^1\) Tourism Southern Highland comes under the auspices of Wingecarribee Council. I hereby for the purpose of clarity wish to advise that the tourism arm of the shire is referred to as Tourism Southern Highland.
the Shire. This would have allowed a far closer look at the similarities and differences in each of the department of the council.

1.6 Significance of the research

Despite the problems identified in the literature and the limitations of the research carried out in this area, the study of organisation culture is important. Organisation culture is such a pervasive fact of our social life, in fact, the foundation of social life as we know it, that it follows naturally – it is not something that did not exist at some stage (of organisational development) or that can be eliminated.2

There has been much research carried out on organisation culture. However, very little research has been conducted into municipal councils, and my purpose was to critically evaluate it. Furthermore, I had a personal interest in researching this area since I had worked in local government for more than ten years. I took pride in researching where I had prior experience, knowing that there were many departments in local government which could be fruitfully examined and about which appropriate findings could be formulated.

One of the remarkable features of local government work is that it is both a challenge and exciting. The manager must work continuously in the “swim of community life” with its shifting standards, values, ideas and ideals. The manager must then nurture his relationship with the community with great care – not only the success or failure of his policies hinges on it, but his or her survival as manager depends on it.3

Local government managers share at least one characteristic: deep enduring dependence on as well as interdependence with the community in which they work. Unlike the private executive whose primary mission is turn a profit for the shareholders; local government managers must serve everyone (Anderson, Newland and Stillman, 1983: 13).

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2 Others might have different viewpoints; however, I consider the concept very important and this is in line with the members of the organisation studied.

3 My experience dates back to 1983-1994 when I was employed in local government.
If we are to understand local government and what contributes to its success, we must look first at what the local council strives to achieve. And what councils strive to achieve are found in values and traditions.

Although many local government organisations, whether large or small, have a mission statement and a written expression of values, what really makes the organisation live up to its ideals is its culture. People in the organisation develop cultures and share ways of managing and coping with the day-to-day activities of their business and their life. Not a day goes by in local government without some aspect of shared values being brought to assist one in making decisions.

Understanding the culture of local government helps us to respond to the social agendas and issues of the next century. At the same time such understanding has a strong impact on how users and others view the local authority and how it functions. Cultural change is a complex process encompassing all levels of an organisation. It is an organisation-wide phenomenon. Whether it is expressed via the company’s architecture, its logo or its work practices, an organisation needs to be considered for cultural intervention (Newman, 1996).

In a period of turbulence when so many businesses are moving from hierarchies to networks, and from treating people as a cost to valuing them as assets, it is vitally important that an organisation in general and its senior management in particular learn to work effectively with culture as a important dynamic force. Authors such as Blennerhassett and Gavin (1993) also shared the same line of thinking.

1.7 Why tourism?

I decided to carry out my research in the tourism departments of local government to demonstrate that the ways in which researchers have defined culture in their studies of organisation culture is not as easily applicable as one might expect. The way one defines culture will differ from one organisation to another. We can not say in isolation that this is how culture is defined. Organisation culture will differ from department to department. In the tourism departments of local government there is a change of culture taking place, with the employees now moving from a bureaucratic culture to an open and entrepreneurial culture. The employees of the department are in
contact with many different types of people and because of their social interactions the way in which they define their organisation culture is different from other departments. The accounts and administration departments are based on greater formalities and have a type of culture that is more closed. Also to fully understand the culture of any organisation we need to study the environment in which the culture is embedded, and what are its cultural elements such as values, beliefs, assumptions that exist.

And lastly, and not the least, I decided to carry out research in the area of tourism because the tourism industry in NSW in particular is fast growing (Tourism Commission of NSW, 1993: 4).

Local government has a critical role to play in the development of tourism. Previously local government has played an entrepreneurial role in attracting tourism through the establishment of tourist bureaux or the promotion of tourist attractions (Green, Tonge and Seats, 1980). Tourism is a mechanism to provide employment opportunities and local economic growth.

1.8 Conclusion

We all experience organisation culture as we do business with an organisation. People have different perceptions of such culture, and as customers we are all influenced by our perceptions of an organisation culture.

Any organisation may be viewed as a culture in its own right, as sets of sub-cultures or as artefacts through which culture writ large is expressed. Now what is organisation culture? This thesis aims to demonstrate that there is no definition of organisation culture possible that serves all organisations, which is certainly implied by the definitions proposed by scholarly authors. We can not define culture in advance. The thesis emphasises that culture is a complex issue, and in order to understand in any detail needs a conceptualised definition.

The thesis emphasises that a working definition should incorporate both broad and narrow meanings. In the narrow sense culture will be regarded as a system which contains values which are common to everybody and everybody attributes these in one form or another. And in the broader sense culture will be considered to be an
entire organisation, with all its different elements needing to be examined. Each element of culture is important, whether immediately obvious or not. For example, values are something we can not see - but when we create people we call heroes and heroines, it is cultural values that they represent.

The working definition of organisation culture adopted here identifies culture as "something" that clearly impacts upon organisational effectiveness. The culture is related to behaviour and as a result has practical relevance. It is useful in that it will highlight the elements of culture such as artefacts, patterns, values, beliefs and they all owe significance in distinguishing one society from the others. The working definition will also identify sub-cultures and visible elements.

To fully appreciate the power and value of a cultural perspective in studying an organisation, one has to do an empirical study of the organisation. And these includes exploring behaviours and practices, surfacing values and attitudes via diagnostic questions, observations, reading symbols and listening to the interpretations of the employees and the organisational members. It is difficult if not impossible to listen to others. When you depend on others to study your culture for you, you will miss the opportunity to broaden your experience of your own organisation, and you will not be able to express your ideas and understand the organisation and how the culture is shaped in the organisation.

Having said that, the research in its entirety seeks to present a very practical demonstration of all the issues and this will be a major issue in the following chapters.
Chapter 2  Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The intent of this review of the literature is to gain specific knowledge and insight into current understanding of the concept of organisation culture. This is necessary in order to determine the methodology for developing a working definition of organisation culture and for interpreting the aggregate research data and the results of the survey.

This chapter will present an overview of the relevant literature. The literature on organisation culture is critically reviewed with the following emphases: what is known about organisation culture, why organisation culture is important, what are the major problems in current understanding, what are some of the research problems, possibilities and solutions.

Moreover, the chapter is intended to offer the reader a guide to the question of what is organisation culture. Following a discussion of the ways in which culture has been defined, I will explore the issue of values, and what the literature has to say on the dissemination and reinforcement of values, as well employees’ contribution to cultural change.

While the research is exploratory in nature, this chapter will identify in general and specific terms the research problems in the area of the research question as outlined in Chapter 1, and how we can solve these problems. Organisation culture is a complex term, difficult to pin down and to manage. The concept embraces values, attitudes, symbols, assumptions and beliefs. An organisation’s culture is formed over time through positive reinforcement, and from one generation of employees to the next, and is deeply embedded in the organisation.

And finally a conclusion will sum up the literature and review the proposed research.
2.2 What is known about organisation culture?

Twenty years ago the concept of a management of culture was viewed with some scepticism; however, today the concept is seen as being important to the success and the development of an organisation. Alvesson and Berg (1992: 20) stated that the success of an organisation is contingent upon broad economics, and technological and socio-cultural changes that make culture appear as critical, vital and uncertain in current Western business.

Research on organisation culture is being published in the leading organisational journals and continues to retain its prominence. Countless publications have been written and no doubt there will be more in the future. In order to produce an up-to-date count of publications, Alvesson and Berg (1992) carried out an ABI data base search in December 1990, using “organisation culture” as search words. Their search resulted in no fewer than 2550 studies and this is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 shows the cumulative growth of publications dealing with corporate or organisation culture or organisational symbolism since the early 1980s. In fact, almost half of the items listed as using these concepts were published between 1988 and 1990, ie. 1174 out of a total of 2550 (Alvesson and Berg, 1992: 10). Alvesson and Berg stated that organisation culture today constitutes a distinct, densely populated and particularly institutionalised field of research.

![The emergence of the culture concept](image)

**Figure 2.1 The emergence of the culture concept**  
(Source: Alvesson and Berg, 1992)

Note: Year 0-11 indicates years from 1980 to 1990. It starts from 1980, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89 and 90
In local government there are series of management handbooks published by Pitman publishing in association with the Institute of Local Government Studies in the School of Public Policy at the University of Birmingham (Janet Newman, 1996). In Australia also a series of publications and articles have been published. However, research in the area of organisation culture is very limited. The two most recent reports are: Change of culture – local governments planning for quality life (Jackie Ohlin, November 1992, for the Municipal Association of Tasmania) on integrated planning with the focus of cultural development, and Change of Culture (Karlo Juraskovic and Sandi Young (1993) for the Municipal Association of Tasmania) on the integrated cultural development project in nine local councils in Tasmania. There is no significant amount of research being carried out into organisation culture in local government.

Research on organisation culture has moved beyond a purely descriptive stage and begun to develop and test predictions. One study developed a questionnaire for assessing long-time employees’ perception of organisational values, and compared these organisational values with the value preferences of newcomers to the organisation. The results showed that new employees whose values matched the organisational value on dimensions such as respect for people, team orientation, innovation, and so on had greater commitment and job satisfaction, and fewer turnover. This suggests that it may be possible to seek a match between an organisation’s values and new employees’ values by screening job applicants for a values-culture ‘fit’ along with skill proficiency (Lenski, Nolan & Lenski 1995).

The concept of culture has become increasingly used in the study of organisation structure and management. This is a fairly recent development and has given organisation theorists a new perspective from which to analyse the behaviour of an organisation. Schein (1985) stated that culture as a concept is of recent origin, and further that although the psychologist has used the concept of group norms and climate for a long time (e.g. Lewin, 1947; Lipitt, Langseth and Mossop, 1985; and White, 1949), the concept of culture has been used in organisation research only in the last few decades.

Further details http://www.statoil.com/statoilcom/sypg00990.nsf/html web site 28/12/98. The author is Per Morten Schiefloe, who is professor of sociology at NTNU in Trondheim. The topic is Culture and Change and this is at a Statoil Forum.
While there is substantial literature dealing with the whole notion of culture such as values, elements of culture, its performance, definitions, characteristics and numerous other things, this thesis will not examine the whole notion in its entirety. However, there will be emphasis on the specific once and these are as follows: include: definition of culture and values; how culture is disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, and the employee contribution to organisation culture and change. This is different from the whole notion of culture because it only concentrates on the area important in a day to day activity while the whole notion is rather too general and difficult to apply in practice.

2.2.1 Definitions of culture

The definitions of organisation culture in the academic literature vary, eg. Schein (1985), Sathe (1983, 1985), Denison (1990) and Pheysey (1993) offer different perspectives but also have common attributes, such as values, assumptions and beliefs making up organisation culture.

Dobson, William & Walters (1993) highlight that the definitions of culture tend to deal primarily either with the way we act or the way we think. Deal and Kennedy (1982) defined culture as ‘the way we do things around here’.

The term culture has many meanings. In everyday speech, most people use it to refer to expressive or artistic activity, in many ways the area of society for which the “department of culture” is responsible. This is a value-oriented use of the concept. Culture can, however, also be given a different and more diffuse meaning such as lifestyle, behaviour, language and traditions.5

According to John Gunkler organisation culture has been defined as: “the pattern of expected and supported behaviour that develops among two or more people when they interact over time (and the things that are created to sustain and transmit that pattern).” He further stated that the key concept in this definition is that of a cultural norm, “a set of behaviour that are widely and typically expected and sanctioned by the group.” Furthermore he stated that another way of describing organisation’s culture is that it is “a system of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work)

5 Refer to footnote 4.
that interact with organisation's people, organisation's structures and control system to produce behavioural norms ('the way we do things around').\(^6\)

Schein (1985) claims that the primary function of an organisation culture is to create a foundation for consensus within the organisation in terms of the number of critical conditions linked to internal and external adaptation. Such consensus is necessary if the organisation is to behave in a coordinated manner when faced with challenges. He defines culture as an unconscious and largely invisible entity, which by definition is almost impossible to measure or change. In Schein (2nd edition) (1992: 3), he states

... that culture as a concept has a long and checkered history. It has been used by anthropologist to refer to the customs and rituals that the society develops over the course of their history.

Alvesson and Billing (1992) point out that perception of the functions of cultures are expressed in pictures or metaphors. Hofstede (1980) states that there is no uniform perception or definition of the concept of organisation culture. Guinn says, "Culture is like a water the fish lives in. She probably does not even know it is there. It is so much a part of life, it is taken for granted to always be there."\(^7\)

Deal and Kennedy (1982), Peters and Waterman (1982), and Kotter and Heskett (1992) all define culture as a variable which can be manipulated in the same way that structures and system can be managed. It is something which, an organisation has, rather than something which is organisation is.

McLean and Marshall (1988: 11) view culture as a web of understanding. They state that culture represents the understanding that we live by as members of an organisation; these are carried out as symbols, which act as the vehicle for meanings.

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\(^6\) [http://www.learning-orga.com/98](http://www.learning-orga.com/98) The subject of this site was *What is culture?*. This is the web site for the learning organisation hosted by Rick Karash. Discussion and public dialogue form part of the function of this organisation. John W. Gunkler through his e-mail is replying to the author of the learning organisation list as to what is culture. This is his viewpoint as to what is culture. Reference of the author is LO19973.

\(^7\) This is also a web site. This time the writer is Guinn, David L., who is responding to the question 'what is culture?' being asked by the author. The internet site is the same. Reference no LO20038.
Cultures have no fixed or broadly agreed meaning even in anthropology (Ortner, 1984) but variation in its use is especially noticeable in organisational studies, particularly because of the substantial variation in purpose and depth of these studies. The concept of culture seems to lend itself to very different understandings of its meaning - shared forms of cognition, values, meaning beliefs, ideologies, rules, norms, behaviour patterns, emotions, expressiveness structures and practices.

The most popular view of organisation culture research highlights on common values. Attitudes, beliefs and norms are thus seen as closely related phenomena, while little attention is paid to the symbolic dimension (Kilmann et al., 1985).

Herve Varenne states that “culture has more to do with the house we inhabit than what habits we acquire.”

So in summary then, there are numerous definitions of culture in the literature. Dobson, William and Walters (1989: 9) states that one text cites 164 different definitions of culture. These definitions attribute common elements such as values and beliefs. Denison (1990: 27) states

... That the culture perspective has focussed on the basic values, beliefs, and assumptions that are present in organisations, the patterns of behaviour that result from shared meanings, and the symbols that express the links between assumptions, values, and behaviour to an organisation members.

### 2.2.2 Values, dissemination and reinforcement

In regards to research done on values, their dissemination and reinforcement, there is a substantial literature; however, the research on this specific subject is limited.

Dobson, Williams, and Walters (1993: 1) state that

Despite the growing awareness of cultural issues, comparatively little attention is paid to the practical, day-to-day process involved in creating, managing and changing culture.

Peters and Waterman’s (1982) *In Search of Excellence*, for example, provides detailed analyses of the strategic values that underpin the activities of a number of successful US companies. It does not, however, provide detailed information on how these
values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis nor does it provide practical advice for managers wishing to introduce those values to their own organisation.9

In the popular management literature, organisation cultures have often been presented as a matter of values (e.g. Peters and Waterman, 1982). The Institute for Research on International Corporations in the Netherlands carried out research on organisation culture. Data were collected in twenty-work unit's organisations in the Netherlands and Denmark. The units studied varied from a toy manufacturing company to two municipal corporations. The study found large differences among units in practices (symbols, heroes, and rituals) but only modest differences in values beyond those due to such facts as nationality, gender and age group (Geert Hofstede, 1980).

Much of the literature claims that values form the core of organisation culture. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv and Sanders (1990) argue that the core of organisation culture is not made up of fundamental abstract perceptions but concrete shared opinions relating to practice and rules for everyday behaviour.

Per Morten Schiefloe, a participant in the Statoil forum on 28/12/98, stated

... If we consider value as a characteristic that individuals acquire through socialisation, this means that values primarily enter the organisation through the recruitment of new employees. Individuals have already acquired fundamental assumptions and values during their childhood, schooling and work education.

Schein (1992) views cultures as a set of widely shared attitudes, values and assumptions, and further states that this gives rise to specific behaviour and physical manifestations which become entrenched in the minds and practices of organisational participants.

Dobson, William and Walters (1989, 1993) stated that members infer values from the behaviour of other members from written communication and from the system, rules and procedures that are applied. The interaction they say is a reasoning process whereby individuals come to accept and agree with the beliefs, attitudes and values of

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9 See, for example, Michael, T. In Search of culture - holy grail or gravy train? Personnel Management, September, 1985.
other members. Over time individuals come to accept as correct particular goals, methods and the ways of doing things. These beliefs, attitudes and values become owned and valued by them. Behaviour becomes self-enforcing; things should or ought to be done this way.

Values, like attitudes, are learnt and based upon the beliefs the individual possesses. However, unlike attitudes, they are evaluated in terms of their logical consistency with existing beliefs (Dobson, William and Walters, 1989: 37-40).

Alma Whiteley (1995: 36-38) stated:

Understanding values is crucial to the understanding of organisation culture and the negotiating of shared meaning. Values are philosophical. They are an expression of truth as a person sees it. Values are reinforced by the “strength of generation” as each generation takes an implicit responsibility for handling down values to the next. It is a vital essence of a work group, company or department.

It is true that values are very important in an organisation and that they are passed from generation to generation; however, this begs the question as to the way in which this is done, something which is not examined.

Now having said one can depict those there lots of emphasis placed on values and the importance of it but how these are disseminated and reinforced is not been looked into. Dobson, William and Walters (1989, 1993) have emphasised these aspects at great lengths; however, their main emphasis, on the methods in which culture changes, they are too general and their work does not reflect other types of organisation.

Janet Newman’s (1996) research on the organisation culture of local government does emphasise the practical day-to-day world and it goes to the heart of studying organisation culture.

2.2.3 Employee contribution

Organisational research demonstrates that culture management is unlikely to achieve its full potential without some involvement from the personnel function. However, even in organisations where the personal function is extremely pro-active, there can
be a sense that culture is too important to be left to the personal (Baron and Walters, 1994: 79).

Furthermore, Baron and Walters (1994) also state that organisations which exclude personnel management are more likely to experience problems of competition, or tension between the different values and attitudes of the head office and the local business units.

Dobson, William and Walters (1993) stated that few commentators have approached the subject of organisation culture from a specifically human resource standpoint. They further stated that most books on human resources talk at length about business strategy, management structure and values, but not on practical issues involved in managing issues.

2.2.4 Concluding remarks

So in summarising my remarks in section on definition and concepts as mentioned earlier, it is clear that there is a substantial information about the subject of organisation culture, with numerous definitions of culture. Some writers use the term culture in its commonsense meaning while others use it for their own purpose. However, they all share one of its common attributes, ie values. Values are important. The literature further claims that the values are reinforced by socialisation, while other writers say that it is handed down from generation to generation.

As for the role of employees' contribution, research in these areas placed more emphasis on strategy and management structure. Dobson, William and Walters (1993) emphasised that most of the books on the subject talk about business strategy.

2.3 Why is organisation culture an important topic?

In this section I will discuss why organisation culture is an important topic in relation to its definition and other related concepts, such as culture, values, dissemination, reinforcement and human resource management.
Let me reiterate that research in organisation culture is vast. There has been an acrimonious debate between scholars, demonstrating that there is a lot of interest in the topic.

The organisation culture has rapidly attained tremendous popularity and also the greatest academic respectability (Alvesson and Berg, 1992). As Stablein and Nord (1985: 22) say: “Probably never before in organisational studies has an innovative area been given such attention so rapidly.”

2.3.1 Definitions and related concepts of culture
Alvesson and Berg (1992) state that because of the many meanings and their relevance for various context and situations, the concept of culture is frequently used and this in turns of course fuels general interest in it. Its inherent ambiguity and the large number of meanings makes it difficult to grasp the concept, thus stimulating debate and maintaining tensions and energy in the field.

Secondly, they state that in order to understand the rapid extension of culture surely “the study of organisation culture” must go beyond the market metaphor and the way “sellers” of theory appeal to the practitioners and look at the context of management in the 1980s. The social and cultural characteristics contribute to determining the market for organisations and management.

Moreover, their study also stated that using culture as a glue keeps a company’s activities together, making its managerial concepts more valuable in a rapidly changing environment. Of equal relevance might be changes in the structure of the economy, involving an expansion of the business service sector and an increase in the number of professionals and semi-professionals in an organisation. The study concluded that both the societal and cultural context in the development of organisation culture theory and interest, strategies and other characteristics of writers provide the goods are important factors behind the development and current popularity of organisation cultural studies (Alvesson and Berg, 1992).

Practical interest in the concept of organisation culture was boosted by the publication of books such as Peters and Waterman’s (1982) In Search of Excellence and Ouchi’s (1981) Theory Z, How American Business Can Meet the Japanese
Challenge. The argument of these authors was that successful companies achieved their success at least partially through a strong culture, which channelled workers’ efforts towards productivity. The implication in these books and many since (see Katzenback and Smith, 1993: 194-221) is that individual productivity comes from being motivated through values which promote diligence, creativity and enthusiasm, and that corporate productivity is a function of individual productivity (Porras and Robertson, 1994).

During the 1980s, culture emerged as a central theme in the field of management and organisation studies. Amongst practitioners the gurus of excellence promoted corporate culture (eg. Peters and Waterman, 1982) and endorsed by exponents of other flavours of the decade, such as human resource management and total quality management.\(^\text{10}\)

According to Davies (1984), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Pascale (1985) and Kanter (1983) corporate culture enhances organisation performance and secures greater commitment and flexibility of employees.\(^\text{11}\) Kanter, Frost and Lippert (1982) have also emphasised these in great detail.

The empirical studies of organisation culture and performance support the view that the relationship between the two is not straightforward. A study carried out by Calori and Sarrin (1991: 49-74) showed a tentative positive relationship between the intensity and homogeneity of culture, as measured by focus and consistency of responses to a culture questionnaire, and company growth as measured by the annual variation of net turnover. Certain cultural attributes such as personal fulfilment, listening to others and entrepreneurship was also related to growth. However, no relationships were found to obtain between culture and profitability (as measured by the return on investments and on sales). In another study Denison (1984: 5-22) found positive relationships between some aspects of culture and economic performance. For example, a participative culture showed a positive relationship with return on

\(^\text{10}\) Legge (1989: 28) notes that most HRM models emphasise the management of an organisation’s culture as a central activity of senior management. Crosby (1984), one of the leading figures in TQM, has also stressed the importance of changing culture as means of changing quality into the consciousness of every employee.

\(^\text{11}\) While one could argue that there is considerable diversity among authors, with some being more sophisticated in their treatment of culture and their prescription of
investment and return on sales over a five-year period. Strong cultures were associated with short-term performance but not long-term performance.

The concept of culture has in recent years been used with increasing frequency in the area of organisation studies, obliging experts to define it. In the yearly 1980s several books on corporate culture appeared on best-seller lists in the United States. Among them the most widely known were Ouchi’s (1981) *Theory Z, How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge*, Deal and Kennedy’s (1982) ‘Corporate Cultures’ – *The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*, and Peters and Waterman’s (1982) *Search for Excellence*.

When talking of local government, an understanding of its culture is important so that the local authorities can respond to complex social agendas and the issues of the late twentieth century. Culture supports them in this by helping them develop new ways of working and coherent responses to needs and demands.

Janet Newman (1996) stated that culture has a strong impact on how users and others view the local authority. She further stated that recently issues of culture have become significant in the context of internal fragmentation. Recent cycles of change and restructuring, she said, have created new divisions between purchasers and providers. Many local government authorities are attempting to introduce greater devolution and decentralisation at the same time as they are seeking a stronger corporate response.

### 2.3.2 Summary

It has been seen that organisation culture is a very important topic. There have been lots of articles written on the importance of culture, with some relating culture to performance while others state that it is a foundation of our life. Schein (1991) states that culture helps in the understanding of what goes on inside an organisation when different sub–cultures and occupational groups work with each other.
2.3.3 Values, dissemination and reinforcement

Much of the published research on culture has emphasised the central importance of values and beliefs that lie at the core of an organisation's system. The most frequently explored topics of interest have been the ways in which organisations develop and maintain these central values, and the behaviours that accompany them or the manner in which values and behaviours are transmitted to new members of an organisation (Sathe, 1983; Schein, 1985; Louis, 1981).

An in-depth understanding of how values are disseminated and reinforced in day-to-day activities will assist us in the following ways:

- Values provide a sense of common direction for all employees and guidelines for their day-to-day behaviour (Deal and Kennedy, 1982: 21).
- Values drive a company's goals, strategies and policies (Alma Whiteley, 1995).
- Values are the basis upon which attitudes and personal preferences are formed.
- Values are the basis for crucial decisions, life direction and personal taste.

Whetton and Cameron (1991: 57) stated that:

Values are among the most stable and enduring characteristics of individuals. They are the basis upon which attitudes and personal preferences are formed. They are the basis for crucial decisions, life directions and personal tastes; much of what we are is a product of the basic values we have developed through our lives. An organisation too has a value system, usually referred to as its organisational culture. Research has shown that employees who hold values that are congruent with their organisation's values are more productive and satisfied. Holding values that are inconsistent with company values, on the other hand, is a major source of frustration, conflict and non-productivity.

Now having said that values have a very practical impact on our working life, we as individuals have certain values that shape the culture in ourselves. We possess our own inviolable cultural values recognising a common, encompassing set of values. In work situation values of fairness, justice and equity are visible and we are to observe those values. This value captures the optimism, compassion and confidence in good workmanship. As for the dissemination and reinforcement of values, it is important because it is nearly every day that we get in contact with and are part and parcel of the system. We get a detailed understanding of the market, a potential for greater clarity
in organisation structure and business processes, reinforced by a more precise focus on key supply chains.

Dobson, William and Walters (1993) state that there is a need to engender a culture of continuous improvement in business supported by a rigorous framework of tools and approaches for analysis and development.

2.3.4 Human resource management

Dobson, William and Walters (1993) stated that the personnel function acts as a change agent. It influences culture through repeated and varied initiatives, using a wide range of personnel activities and techniques, some dealing with attitudes and values while others affect behaviour and also facilitate a management role in influencing culture.

To manage change effectively involves the ability to create a new synthesis of people, resources, ideas, opportunities and demands. The manager needs skills. Vision is essential and creativity is paramount. Support, training and people are central to any change process. People must be influenced; departmental boundaries crossed or even lowered up, new ideas accepted, new ways of working embraced and new standards of performance and quality achieved. Employees at all levels need to understand the problems their company is facing. Beyond this it is essential that people be given the chance to seek out and develop solutions.

Newman (1996) stated that in local government there is no single model of good leadership, and that the skills required would depend on the culture and the traditions of each local authority, its size and the nature of the changes it faces. Good leadership, she said, is more than good management. It requires vision, commitment and excellent communication skills. However, she also said that leadership in local government is different because of the pivotal importance of the officer / member relationship (Newman, 1996: 99).

Peters and Waterman’s (1982) In Search of Excellence, on which many local authorities drew, depicted successful organisations as being those which were rich in culture or which had a strong culture sustained by a system of shared beliefs, values and habits. Pascale and Atho’s The Art of Japanese Management (1982), Ouchi’s
(1981) Theory Z, How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge and other key texts all drew attention to the importance of the guiding values in improving company performance. The development of corporate cultures with a shared drive and common mission was established as a key to organisational success (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Denison, 1990; Newman, 1996: 9).

Lots of research has been done on culture; however, the importance of employees to culture change is still only vaguely understood and not feasible practically. There are more generalities and less of practicality. Employees and human resource management will have an important role and the study will demonstrate an in-depth understanding of it.

2.4 Statement of the problem

At a national level

At a national level the major drawback from which many of the cross-cultural studies of management and organisation suffer is the way in which they treat culture as a residual factor. For instance, researchers simply compare a group of managers and observe some differences in the way they view certain aspects of their work, and then attribute the absence of non-cultural explanations for these differences to culture (Tayeb, 1994). He states that cross-cultural studies made no effort to study the cultural setting of the organisation beforehand. At best they tried to learn about the cultural context of the organisation studied after the interpretation of their results required cultural explanation.

Child (1981: 306-309) began with a review of the problems associated with the use of culture in a cross-national study of organisation and identified some problems:

- Culture is not clearly defined.
- Cultural boundaries do not necessarily overlap with national boundaries but are usually taken to do so.
- Cultural factors are commonly brought in as explanatory variables without any explanation of their origins in a social history of the society.
- Not enough has been done to specify which components of which cultures are relevant to the organisation and also which aspect of the organisation behaviour is influenced.
• Conceptual and operational problems continue to hinder the measurement of culture.

Child developed a more sophisticated model and his key point was that culture is seen as a normative and preferential conditions for action not the action itself. It is the system of meaning within which the conceptually separate social system of organising human action is embedded and it is necessary to identify in advance the cultural characteristics of a country (Child, 1981: 306-309).

Roberts and Boyacigiller (1984) suggest that the most fundamental problem in this area has been the lack of agreement as to how to define culture and consequently a lack of currency within which to conduct studies.

A vast majority of the authors of cross-cultural studies claim to have investigated the influence of culture on organisations, but they have not made any effort to study the cultural setting of the organisation concerned beforehand. At most they have tried to learn about the cultural context of the organisation studied.

At an organisational level

Now what are the problems on the organisational level? This thesis only covers the organisational aspects of culture and these are categorised accordingly.

2.4.1 Problems of definition

There are too many definitions and none precisely defines what is organisation culture; it is not specified in research form what culture means. What are the common elements and how people interact in a day to day basis? Do they have the same definition of culture or different and what sort of culture exist in the entire organisation and what sort of culture exist in the department of an organisation? These questions are unsolved.
2.4.2 Study on distribution, reinforcement, employee contribution is limited

Values and how they are disseminated and reinforced, plus employee contribution is unclear. More emphasis is placed on the viewpoints of manager – the research is one-sided and general – no real success of anyone applying the concept.

2.4.3 Problems of analysis and methodology

Most authors look at an organisation as a whole and identify the values that are present; however, values vary within an organisation. A search for a better meaning is needed not simply artefacts.

2.4.4 Studies are U.S. and UK based – not reflective of Western world

Life style is different so we can not use the same line of thinking.

The concept and the definitions

The concept of culture in organisation is fairly recent and has given organisation theorists a new perspective from which to analyse the behaviour of organisations.

One unfortunate aspect of this newness, given the underdeveloped nature of this discipline, is that

... Even a cursory look at the literature reporting the use of culture in organisational research reveals the concept is seldom specified in any way. Most organisational researchers do not define culture explicitly and make no attempts to explain its use or to indicate how the concept fits into research design (Morey and Luthans, 1985).

Most authors do not define culture in a way that lends itself to research. Culture has been used to mean values, norms, rituals, rites, ceremonies and “the way we do things around here”.

While these definitions are illuminating and interesting, they do not go far enough. They do not specify what culture really is. I don’t wish to claim that they are wrong, but the fact of the matter is that it does seem to me to be an abstract term. Schein (1992) in Organisational Culture and Leadership stated that of all the meanings of
culture, many reflect organisation culture but none is the essence of culture. He argued that culture should be reserved for a deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation.

His definition comes closure to the research ideal. He argues that culture is

... The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be talked to new members as a correct way to perceive think and feel in relation to those problems... (Schein, 1985: 3)

While I see this approach as encouraging, given that he attempted to focus on the deeper level of organisation culture, the question is still how the various elements of culture contribute to the pattern as a whole. Which elements are important and which are less important?

Schein defined culture as an invisible and unconscious entity, which by definition is impossible to measure, change or investigate. Dobson, William and Walters called his approach intuitive and appealing but virtually have no intention to support them. To define culture in this way prevents it from being empirically investigated and impedes the development of knowledge and of our understanding the concept. Such concepts are premature and unhelpful.

According to Schein culture exists simultaneously on three levels. On the surface are artefacts; underneath artefacts lie values, and at the core are basic assumptions. He claims that basic assumptions hold the key to understanding a culture. Recently he argued that assumptions are best-examined using clinical techniques and recommended that a motivated group of insiders raise its own assumptions to consciousness with the aid of a clinically trained helper consultant.

Furthermore, Schein's claims that when new members are brought into the culture, they are either selected on the basis of a match between their values and those of the culture or they are socialised into cultural values. Cultures change, but only when new values are brought in from outside the culture, for instance, by decree or example of top management. However, Schein emphasises that new values will be
incorporated into basic assumptions only after they have proved their worth in terms of desired outcome.\textsuperscript{12}

Now one of the major problems here is that researchers who want to pursue culture beyond the inner circle may find this clinical approach unworkable. This model has value for non-clinical studies but the under-specification of this theory hampers its application.\textsuperscript{13}

In the same vein, Hatch (1993) states that the usefulness of these model depends upon identifying the links among the cultural artefacts, values and assumptions that Schein has not explained.

Organisations contain a more complex composition of cultural elements and these are directly and indirectly related to artefacts, assumptions, beliefs, etc. For example, in local government from the design of a building and its relationship to other artefacts we can always infer whether or not a given type of culture exists. This is not necessarily correct; however, some relationship could be inferred. I agree with Pedersen and Sorensen (1989) when they state that Schein’s model is hierarchical in the sense that it treats basic assumptions as the essence of culture whereas the other two levels are mere manifestations and symptoms of culture.

Now to strengthen my argument further, let us take an example of local government and in particular tourism. In a tourism department interaction and linkage between layers are important, for example, in the culture of customer care, such as the style and design of reception areas, notices and leaflets, and low profile symbols, such as everyday dress, etc. Linkages and interaction between layers is expressed in the practices with which staff interact with the public, how queries or complaints are dealt with, how the telephone is answered, etc. Now in order to explore culture we need symbols to read organisation values and beliefs and that will provide some clues as to how the department of tourism is important.

\textsuperscript{12} Monir Tayeb in his article ‘Organisation and national culture: methodology considered’, Organisation Studies Journal (1994), provides a detailed coverage of Schein’s approach to organisation culture.

\textsuperscript{13} Monir Tayeb also shares this view. Most of the issues that I have indicated are ideas adapted from his work; see footnote 12.
In the same vein, language, artefacts, traditions, buildings and a host of other symbols act as carriers of the culture and send signals about its appropriate values and practices.

Researchers have drawn on many of Schein's ideas while others have challenged or disputed Schein's assumption that organisation culture is unitary (Barley, 1983; Gregory, 1983; Van Maanen and Barley, 1985). Others have contested the idea that culture is to maintain social structure (Feldman, 1991; Martin, 1992). Still others, broadly working within symbolic-interpretative research, have pursued perspectives that Schein has ignored.

This problem exists despite (or perhaps in part because of) the existence of some 164 definitions of culture from a traditional anthropological perspective (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952). As the study of organisation culture develops, it is possible that a clearer definition will emerge, perhaps even several, with each one being appropriate to the particular context of the research for which it is intended. The working definition adopted by Dobson, William and Walters (1993) seems useful; however, a more conceptualised definition is needed. Their definition is good in that it is more practical in terms of its usage; however, I still feel that it is narrow in focus.

These researchers are defining culture in advance. I tend to see this as a problem on the following grounds:

In an organisation there are substantial differences in opinions and values as we go along the channels of the organisation. Each individual possesses an organisation culture different from others and one can not specify what sort of culture exists before analysing it. This is all the more so since most of the authors look at an organisation as a whole and identify the values and norms that are present. But these values vary within an organisation and differ as we move from one department to another. Failure to specify a group leads to conclusions that may be too general. It is not enough to learn what the local government authority believes in with respect to an individual. There is more to it; eg. How respect is expressed, why an individual adheres to the ways of the organisation, etc.

Let us take as an example local government administration. In local government there exist a number of departments. When we study organisation culture in local
government in general we may expect to find a bureaucratic type of culture. However, in some departments of local government this may be different. For example, in a tourism department there is a more an open type of culture or a more customer focussed type because there is more interaction between council staff and customers. A tourist department in local government, for example, is dependent upon bringing together people whose lifestyles differ.

In a department of tourism there is a clear understanding of what the community demands from the manager, and in turn what the manager has to offer the community. Knowing what the community wants is very important. Not everyone in local government should be a whiz at community relations. Managers serve different needs.

In a finance department one could expect a more hierarchical, stricter culture. Everyone has to follow guidelines and follow budgets and the like. It is thus more of a bureaucratic type of culture. Conformity and compliance is very important.

In general organisation culture may be defined as a set of cognition’s shared by members of a social unit (Rousseau, 1990). Elements of general organisation culture can be classified as myths and stories (Peters and Waterman, 1982), rites and rituals (Pettigrew, 1979) or behavioural norms (Cooke and Rousseau, 1988). Schein (1985) divides organisation culture into three hierarchical levels. Level one consists of conscious expectation, artefacts such as stories, myths, symbols customs and ceremonies. Level two comprises subconscious cognition and perceptions, while level three involves a deeper understanding of the shared assumptions of the organisation.

Despite of all other approaches to understanding organisation culture (for an overview, see compendiums edited by Frost, Lois, Lundberg and Martin (1991), Schein’s model remains one of the only conceptual models ever offered.

In summary, a lot of research has been done in the field of organisation culture; however, the literature is flooded with controversial issues. Dobson, Williams and Walters (1989) stated:
... Some consultancy-based authors have drawn conclusions far beyond the available evidence. It is really quite extraordinary that, for example, Deal and Kennedy and Peters and Waterman have made statements about the nature of organisational culture mainly based on the statements of CEO's and senior executives of large multinationals; These interesting, but largely second-hand, executive stories are probably the myths of culture. This is to say what is claimed to be organisational culture often represents the more or less official view of senior management. It seems to us that many of these cultural statements are more likely the products of corporate PR machine. The popularity of the works of these authors is thus a double-edged sword. For, while they have raised the consciousness of many boardrooms, they have not advanced the understanding of culture or its change a great deal...

to conclude, most writers on organisation culture do not specify in research-able terms what they mean by culture. They neglect the integrated nature of the concept and the questions that are needed for research. The current literature on culture causes one to agonise over the unit of analysis.

2.4.5 Values and how they are disseminated and reinforced

Peters and Waterman's (1982) In Search of Excellence provides a detailed analysis of the strategic values that underpin the activities of successful US companies, yet it does not provide any detailed information on how these values are disseminated, reinforced and managed on a day-to-day basis. I compliment the work of Dobson, William and Waters (1993) in recognising these problems.

However, one of the problems in the area of study is that the literature is narrowly focussed. Most researchers focus on one aspect of culture (values, stories, rituals, ceremonies) and when these authors analyse ceremonies, for example, they often exclude some more practical issues like values, day-to-day operation, communication, dissemination and the like. They assume that ceremonies will review the essence of culture, and that the rhetoric, heroes, and rituals that are often on public display can be used to infer meanings about the culture as a whole.

The vast literature does not go into describing practical approaches, for example, how are the values disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, or does it approach the subject of organisation culture from a human resource management point of view. The term value is rather an unclear concept and I don't profess in this
thesis to provide a clear-cut answer. Lewin (1947) stated that values influence behaviour but do not have the character of a goal.

Dobson, William and Walters (1993) provided some insight as to how values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. Their work can be accepted on the grounds that it provided some practical insights and was not unfairly based on assumptions. Their ideas are consistent and they tend to reflect on issues in an encouraging way. From the outset they rejected the approaches to culture that define culture in advance, as an invisible and unconscious entity, which by definition is impossible to measure, change or investigate. Their working definitions of culture incorporate many elements and identify many issues, and thus enable us to draw upon previous research on the nature of belief, attitude and value formation.

The world in which organisations exist is constantly changing. There is a change in values, norms, character and culture of business, how work is done priorities and so on. There is a lot of focus on the generalities of business and of reorganisation, but little on how values are reinforced on a day-to-day basis and the role employees play in the organisation.

To be successful in the 21st century, with an organisation still retaining its individuality, it needs to be better able to develop practical approaches and methods. This transformation will not be easy, nor it will be painless. Managers, systems developers and users must share their cultural stance with each other. They need to have shared values and beliefs. Only thorough talking to each other can this be achieved (Tricker, 1988: 342).

The research done on the dissemination of values is limited. Dobson, William and Walters (1993), Baron and Walters (1994) are some of the authors who have done some research on this. However, they are not very detailed; at times their main emphasis is on culture change and the methods and the techniques that have been used to achieve culture change.
**Human resources aspect**

There are a huge literature on human resource management, which embraces issues such as strategic human resources, planning and the like; however, there is little on organisation in respect of employee contribution.

Holmes, Scott, Marsden, and Stephen (1996) stated that the research specifically conducted within the professional accounting practices, most researchers do not appear to recognise the impact that organisation culture has on staff. They stated that, in all of the studies reviewing employee performance and job satisfaction, no consideration is given to the likely impact of organisation culture on individual staff members’ behaviour. Instead, a presumption appears to prevail that professional accounting firms are culturally alike, and that their cultures have little or no impact on the organisation’s members’ performance, satisfaction, motivation or commitment. Specifically, these studies do not consider the possibility that accounting firms, like any other type of organisation, may be culturally distinctive. This is now the third possibility; ie those accounting firms in total are different from other firms.


While these study is interesting, however the study do not show the impact employees have on culture change.

Baron and Walters (1994) talk at great length about the relevance of personal practitioners, and have developed a framework to assist practitioners by identifying the various stages of culture management during which the personnel function can be useful.

Dobson, William, and Waters (1989) also have gone into some depth to study this part of the research. However, I still feel that it needs to be more focussed, and that it needs to specify the contribution employees make.
Let us take an example of local government. Success for a public manager frequently is gauged by how well the governing body does its job. Personal competence, honesty and technical proficiency are expected of administrators by members of the public, who judge administrators in terms of the community’s well-being, i.e. in terms of getting things done, teamwork leadership in times of crisis, and so on.

Unit of analysis

Most of the authors examined looked at the organisation as a whole and identified the values that are present. However, this is not enough. Organisations have departments, which have sub-cultures. There is a difference in behaviour and beliefs between various professional groups in an organisation. Because organisations may employ members of a number of different professionals, there is a multiplicity of cultures, and interactions between the various professional groups, with different dynamics.

Having said that, we cannot look at the organisation as a whole; instead, we need to identify the departments and the different professions people belong to in the one organisation. Michael A. Berger, from the Corporate Institute of Vanderbilt University, stated in ‘Research on Corporate Cultures: The Agony and the Ecstasy’ (1986):

For example it is not enough to learn about IBM believes in “respect for the individual.” We need to know all units adhere to that value, affected by economic conditions, if in the early years of Thomas Watson, Sr., the company showed a greater emphasis on that value than they do in the present, highly competitive computer industry. The point is that attention to unit of analysis (with recognition that there are sub-cultures within larger cultures) and the time frame (with an understanding that a particular period of time will affect the culture of an organisation) is critical to the improvement of the culture research efforts.

And finally, most of the studies carried out on culture are U.S. and UK based. In Search of Excellence by Peters and Waterman (1982) is based on US companies, Changing Culture: New Organisational Approaches by Dobson, William and Walters (1989, 1993) is based on British companies, and the list goes on and on. Every country has its own culture and tradition and we cannot get rid of their culture and
instead replace it with yours or use the same line of thinking when studying culture or writing a book on culture.

2.5 **Why the problem exists**

To shift my focus, how do you study culture? You can study artefacts; they are worth studying, they are manifestation of culture; you can study values, they are also manifestations of culture. However, until you get down to the practical aspects you really have not covered what you were supposed to cover. To study culture we need to observe and describe many different things, the things with practical implications.

In the same vein as above, Schein (1985) stated that it is not all clear that one can make a judgement about the right or wrong way to do things in an organisation. One has to really consider first all internal cultural perspective’s, what it is that people are trying to do, what assumptions they are making, and explain from their point of view whether their behaviour makes sense or not.

Michael A. Berger (1986) highlights that a study of culture demands a search for more subtle meaning, not simply artefacts (such as stories), since they are supposed to represent latent culture.

Having said that, the current literature does not extend to practical issues such as how the values of culture are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis.

Some may disagree with my view and would argue that authors like Dobson, William and Walters, Whitely and a few others have provided a deep understanding of culture and extended the description of the practical issues involved.

2.5.1 **Definition, values dissemination, reinforcement and concept of culture**

Alvesson and Berg (1992: 182) state that despite the massive amount of specialised literature in the field, much of which is clearly intended to be practically oriented, there is little evidence today that anyone has any real success in applying the concept of culture at a practical level. For example, they state that they have not been able to find a published study describing the design, execution or effects of a large scale
‘cultural development program’ but have found a wide range of descriptions of programs and activities which are claimed to have constituted cultural interventions.

To say the least, most of the academics have their viewpoints, based on what they think is appropriate to a particular context. At one extreme culture is defined as the way things are done and the way we think about the things ‘around here’, or as the fabric of meaning through which human beings interpret their experience.

Some authors have defined culture in terms of thought and behaviour. An example of these would be commonly shared beliefs, values and characteristics, and patterns of behaviour. Now if we were to consider any practical manager, we could assume that he or she would view culture in terms of behaviour, either in private or public practice. In local government, for example, leadership does not occur in isolation and is not the activity of one person alone.

To put it in other words, managers are actively involved with their subordinates in making practical changes to people’s work, goals, etc.

By contrast, academics along with others, including a few senior managers, view culture in cognitive terms. They are more concerned with why culture changes than with the question ‘why change culture?’ I am not suggesting for one moment that there are serious problems in their research but as a matter of practicality this is not helping us to get a precise picture of the whole concept of culture and how practical it is to the day-to-day activities.

Some consultants, eg. Deal and Kennedy (1982), and Peters and Waterman (1982), have drawn conclusions that go far beyond the available evidence. They have based their conclusions on the statements of CEO’s and senior executives of large multinationals. Schein (1985) suggests that one of the great problems with Peters and Waterman’s (1982) book In Search for Excellence is that they did not look at enough failing companies to see how many of those had the same characteristics as the successful companies. Furthermore, Schein states that “we do not know which characteristics truly discriminate when we look at the successful cases.”

I go along with researchers such as Dobson, William and Walters(1993) in identifying this problem. In terms of values and how they are disseminated, scholars
such as Alma Whitely, Dobson and others have identified these but their concerns falls squarely within the remit of the whole organisation rather than its divisions.

Each division of an organisation has its own practical techniques and processes. They may or may not be the same in each organisation. The differences are entirely because of the different types of job and skills that are required to carry out a task. Example accounts department and human resource department. Though there are in one organisation but the span of control and job responsibilities are slightly different. Accounts department has very strict formalities when it comes to preparing of budgets, financial reports and all other accounting related work while human resource department are flexible or vice versa. Founders and other prominent individuals within an organisation create values but they are meditated and developed further as concretised practices and perspective on what constitutes acceptable behaviour.

2.6 Research explanations for the problems

At the outset the understanding of culture draws its most salient features from a range of approaches and it is no doubt very near to solving the research problems that I as a researcher have identified.

As to the definition of culture, Schein (1985) defined culture as an unconscious and largely invisible entity, which by definition is impossible to measure. He states that culture perpetuates and reproduces itself through the socialisation of new members entering the group. The socialisation process really begins with recruitment and selection in an organisation.

Generally speaking, Schein’s (1985) approach is workable and in some extreme cases solves the problems I have identified; these include an understanding of assumptions, values and so forth. However, I still have some reservations and these were identified earlier.

The approach by Dobson, William and Walters is very encouraging and that I will endeavour to provide further information.

The thesis will incorporate a working definition that draws on the views of various scholars, notably Dobson, William and Walters (1989, 1993), Schein (1991), and Alvesson and Berg (1992).
2.7 Research solutions and possibilities

I am going to adopt a working definition that I believe will be capable of being subjected to empirical investigation; above all, the definition will be highly practical. The working definition will incorporate both broad and specific meanings. This definition is somewhat similar to one proposed by Alvesson and Berg (1992). The reason I adopted this definition is because the organisation culture is looked in terms of the entire organisation and also in terms of the department. By doing that one is able to differentiate quite clearly the type of culture that exist in an organisation because often times the department culture is different to that of an organisation. We are in the position to identify the common elements. Moreover, I have adopted this definition because I found this definition very operational and practical and we can clearly be able to identify the layers of culture and how it is been shaped in the organisation.

In a general sense the whole of the organisation will be seen as a culture and things such as clans, tribes and founders form the foundation of the entire organisation. The elements of culture will permeate the operation of the entire organisation, whether large or small is immaterial. The difference between Alvesson and Berg and my approach is that my working definition will not treat culture as a phenomenon but as a working and continuous process that may change over time, however unlikely and also not all elements are directly involve in shaping the culture of an organisation. This working definition will state in clear terms that in an organisation, culture has a general and broad meaning. This working definition differs from others in that it is not formulated in advance but arrived at through observation and interviews, which observe the common elements that contribute to culture, and these will be incorporated in the working definition.

The research will highlight common values, attitudes and beliefs. These values may or may not be rooted in the system. I will not be accepting the definition of culture as formulated by many scholars but carry out research to identify how culture is to be defined. In other words, I will not accept any definition that will define culture in advance.

The most important of all the definitions of culture will incorporate symbols, meanings, attitudes and understandings of practice. The layers of culture will be
explained. The research will not go to the extreme of measuring culture but will identify practical issues and, most important of all, its values and how they are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis.

The research will be carried out in local government, which traditionally has been based around a strong set of values, which are enshrined in the cultures of bureaucracy.

Only the department of tourism will be examined, tourism because in this type of department one can expect different types of culture. The organisation chosen will be local government and in the area of tourism. There will be two councils chosen one, which is fully developed in the area of tourism, and one, which is in a developing stage.

In a tourism department it is envisaged that the Tourism Manager and his or her subordinates will be highly skilled in order to be able to sustain their competitive edge. I decided not to carry out my research in the private sector because much research has already been carried out there.

A culture varies according to the extent to which its values and assumptions are shared between organisation members, and the intensity with which they are held. Strong cultures have values that are widely shared and held with great intensity; weak cultures are the antithesis of that.

Local government is embedded in social, political, legislative, economic and technological systems. Organisations operating in different sectors have different markets, technologies and legal constraints. They have different skill and resource needs. These variations place different demands and constraints on organisations and create different learning environments. They influence the strategy of the organisation and the structures, systems and technologies that are adopted.

The culture of an organisation is likely to display disparities between the values and beliefs of upper management and of personnel at lower levels. Upper management has operative levels of values of hierarchy and secrecy. On the other
hand, at lower management levels there is an operative level of day-to-day activities.\textsuperscript{14}

Cultural change is a complex process encompassing all levels of an organisation. It is misleading to think that it can be managed by pulling certain cultural levers. However, the interventions described here may form a meaningful part of an evolutionary process, which occurs over a long time period (P. Dawson, 1994) and includes serendipities events as well. Naturally, more superficial levels of culture can be changed more quickly, but the deeper, taken-for granted levels may prove very resistant to change. When this occurs, dissonance between artefacts and assumptions is experienced. This can add leverage for change or simply propel the organisation into a damaging period of strategic confusion and a morale ‘doomzoom’ (Stace and Dunphy, 1985). These complexities suggest that managers would be well advised to develop a better understanding of the fabric of organisation culture, and its conditions for growth.

When speaking of culture as shared meanings, understandings, values, beliefs, systems or knowledge, we have to keep in mind that culture depends upon community and diversity.

In order for me to devise research into how culture is defined, disseminated or reinforced on a day-to-day basis, and the contribution of employees to culture change, the study will proceed from the data collected by the direct observation of artefacts and symbols, as well as the interviews conducted.

I will not be able to experience another person’s values; assumptions or symbolic interpretation but I will be able to experience their artefacts. Therefore, observation of artefacts and the behaviour that occurs around them is a typical starting point in a study of culture.

In the interviews I will try to discover the interpretations that members give to the artefacts that I will have observed. I will try to write down or tape record as much of the actual language of members as possible rather than putting the members’ ideas

\textsuperscript{14} This observation is derived from my diverse experience in local government administration.
into my own words. I will make notes about their feelings and all other relevant facts of artifactual and symbolic significance.

2.8 Conclusion

Every article and book seems to begin and end with exaltation for us to recognise that culture is important. We are also being told of the functions of culture and all other related matters. However, the questions that occupy our mind are: What is organisation culture? How to describe it? Who is right, Schein, Deal or someone else?

The chapter addresses the fact that they're many publications available. To whom do you listen? Who do you pick? This is a creative question being asked.

Andrew Dougherty and Clint Wallington (1986) state that published research has become so general that it is almost useless. However, they also state as good news that the published research has become more reliable and covers a wide range of different situations.

I have reservations about their claim since I believe that the more specific research is, the better it is for one's use in day-to-day work. Writing up research in organisation culture is daunting since on account of on-going criticism of published research and the acrimonious debate surrounding such research, it is difficult if not impossible to know which approach to research is the best.

However, my study does reveal that the literature on organisation is rather general and not applicable to every organisation, whether private or public. One can not define culture before carrying out an actual study or having an understanding of organisation values. One does not necessarily have to know the organisation in advance but the researcher should understand that an organisation is made up of people and is therefore very complex. There is likely to be division in an organisation, with each division perpetuating a different culture in its own right.

The organisation study of local government will show that each division has had a culture, which may or may not be the same. First and foremost there is no exact definition. Individuals have their own definition of culture, and this may or may not conform to the company's values.
ORGANISATION CULTURE: DEFINITION, VALUES, CHANGE AND PARTICIPATION IN TWO SHIRES

At one extreme culture is defined as the way things are done and the way 'we do things about things around here', and at the other it is defined as the fabric of meaning through which human beings interpret their experience.

Whichever it may be, commentators ignore the most fundamental problem, which is that it is premature to define culture in advance. Management today is changed. Concurrent with the technology explosion there is a trend in the workplace towards more autonomy, more flexibility, more demand for work to be meaningful. Most employees entering an organisation today are taking a job – they are not committing to a career with the organisation they are joining. This tendency means that management must think differently about a changing work place.

My research does emphasise that there are problems in the literature. Most of the studies on organisation culture define culture in advance. There is more emphasis on strategies and structures rather than the employees' contribution, and there is very limited research done on values and how they are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. The research concludes that we need a working definition so that one can expect to examine the day-to-day activities of an organisation and the practical issues involved.

This research advocates a working definition that will incorporate assumptions, values, beliefs and symbols. To this end, two municipal councils will be studied, one being a fully developed tourist destination and the other a developing one. In each their Department of Tourism will be studied. This is mainly due to the different types of culture that exist in the organisation. In the tourism departments of two councils one may expect a more entrepreneurial type of culture, with its officers serving the community with diligence and care so as to satisfy the needs of the visitors and at the same time sustain a competitive edge over other council administrations.

I am hopeful that this study, in addition to simply adding to a growing body of research using a variety of observations, will aid further research, and that its findings demonstrate that the conceptualising of culture demands greater consideration than it has been given so far.
Chapter 3  Research Procedure

3.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I discussed the theory and objectives of my research. The review of literature on organisation culture indicated that there are some problems in the literature and this is clearly identified in my research.

Due to the fact that considerable amount of research had been carried out and the number of different theoretical approaches attempted, I have chosen the theoretical framework developed by Dobson, William and Walters (1993) for my thesis, as the initial way of addressing the problem identified in the literature discussed. However, this thesis incorporates major issues relating to day-to-day work in organisations. Descriptive research practices have been used to gather information for determining and reporting on the present status of organisation culture with the purpose of clarifying and reporting on the things that are present.

In conducting my research the main emphasis is to determine how culture is embedded in the organisation and how the values is disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis.

Looking at the nature of the research project, I decided to take a qualitative research approach. The literature review pointed out that organisation culture could not be easily measured, observed and defined. The research will demonstrate how we can define culture. I have adopted a qualitative research approach because I wish to focus on the meaning of a particular aspect of organisation culture, and because my study looks at both a department and the whole of an organisation. Ethnographic strategies were also been used.

The research was carried out in two local government areas of the metropolitan region of NSW in the area of tourism. By studying a department, which is somewhat different from other departments of local government, I expected to be able to make comparisons and draw out similarities and distinctions. Researchers who have conducted research in organisation culture have missed the real complexities of
organisation life that exist in tourism. The study of tourism was thought to be interesting given the fact that although both shires are examples of local government, their culture was expected to be slightly different.

As the study of organisation culture talks about values and how they are defined, direct observation was employed so that a cultural description could be identified and definitions of culture studied fairly consistently with the aim being to define culture. I intended to cover the subject matter in detail so that norms and values could be demonstrated, and this helped me to gain an understanding of people's feelings, ideas and perceptions, and also helped me address my second research question: That is, how are values disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis? This question will be further addressed as part of my survey.

3.2 Who was surveyed and why?

For the purpose of getting the most complete information on the issues, two councils were examined, both were tourist councils. The developed tourist council offered a variety of tourist products, catering to a number of niche markets. These products included conference centres, speciality shops, picnic areas, arts and craft outlets, golf courses, antique stores, art galleries, restaurant and cafes and other primary service to the community.

Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Shire Council were chosen for this study. Only one department in each was examined, ie the Department of tourism. Both councils had a tourist base; however, one was developed while the other was not. The council with developed tourism, known as Tourism Southern Highlands (runs under the auspicious of Wingecarribee Shire Council), and it has more offerings than Tourism Wollondilly.

There is not a complete equivalence between the interview samples for the two cases due to the different bureaucratic and organisation structures between the two shires. One shire has a tourism department of its own while the other is not. One has more offering than the other and ultimately one could expect differences. The shire that has the department of its own has more workers and henceforth it was necessary to interview them so that the data is not deflated. The other shire had only two
employees working in the tourism section and I had to interview those two plus the general manager and the corporate manager and those who were involve in the department both directly and indirectly.

The tourism departments of local government were selected because in tourism one could expect to encounter lots of different types of interactions with individuals, guests and other parties associated directly or indirectly in some form or another. They in essence carry in themselves a culture that is different from others.

Another reason for selecting tourism was that the life of an organisation is not as simple as one expects. As I said in the introduction, there are complexities. The task of managing a tourism department is geared to multi-dimensional responsibilities, with competing objectives. On the one hand a tourism department must be committed to its customers yet at the same time it must have a commitment to the organisation of which it is a part. Therefore it is impossible to speculate as to what sort of culture might exist. One needs to study what certain values are present and try to understand how it is reshaped in a department?

And finally I decided to research in the area of local government because it was simply my personal interest.

While there had been a lot of research carried out on local government in both Australia and overseas, however, research on organisation culture has been very limited. Managing local government is different.

Managing a public sector organisation is not simply an instrumental response to various roles left to the public sector to perform. Some public sector organisation share today’s challenge and focus on issues of management. Today public managers are likely to be on the one hand responsible for imposing the strictures of commercial discipline, while on the other hand they are managing difficult moral issues that arise from dealing with real problems guided by the conventions of public sector practice (O’Faircheallaigh, Wanna and Weller, 1999: 33).

The relation between local government and the community are different from those in the private sector, which sees the public as a source of business. The uniqueness of local government is that community participation is a major function and therefore can be viewed not as a means to an end (as in business) but as an end in
itself (as in a democracy). The skilled local authority manager has to be sensitive with dealing with the local community, which is a far, more volatile and unpredictable organisation (Jones, 1989: 145).

3.2.1 Who were the interviewees and why were they chosen?

Wollondilly Shire Council

- **General Manager.** Council administration, policies, cultures in general, historical importance and information relating to organisation culture. General Manager was instrumental in bringing about the change in the organisation and also represented the council in any council matters including tourism. Being a policy maker and one involved in the council administration I was able to get the first hand information about the history and all related matters dealing with culture.

- **Secretary to General Manager.** Matters relating to council administration and providing indirect information regarding how the values of culture reinforced in a day to day basis.

- **Corporate Manager in charge of tourism.** Information relating to tourist development, contemporary importance to tourism, matters relating to dissemination and the research thesis such as approval, interviews. The corporate manager is the head of tourism and to interview him was not only beneficial but was a necessity. The corporate manager had the first hand knowledge of the tourism and was directly involved in the administration of tourism upon the advice of the tourism officer.

- **Tourism Officer.** Information about tourism, interviewees, surveys, taking part in discussions and interviews, getting information relating to research. The tourism officer is involved in the day to day work and the interview was necessary.

- **Inquiries Officers (3).** Provided necessary information in terms of general background, assistance in research, taking part in discussion, answering questions.

- **Reception Desk (2)** Information relating to the general view of shire and information on organisation culture.

- **Library Officer.** Helped to locate archives and library books, provided assistance in relevant secondary material and this included: annual reports, history reports, council minutes, council bulletins, pamphlets and numerous others books and publications dealing with the shire and etc.

Wingecarribee Shire Council

- **Corporate Manager.** Represented Council because at the time this interview was held the General Manager had resigned from Council and it was difficult for me to
consult somebody from the Shire to provide some general information. The Corporate Manager was chosen as the most appropriate person because of his experience and direct involvement in the council administration.

- **Tourism Manager Southern Highlands.** All matters relating to tourism and research questions in terms of culture, its definition, values, dissemination, reinforcement, and employee contribution. Tourism manager played not only the active role in the day to running of the tourism department but also managing the tourism department and representing the shire in terms of tourism matters. This job entailed challenge and dedication.

- **Tourism Supervisor.** Day-to-day activities information in regards to definition and all specific questions. Interviews, surveys, and entering into a discussion. The Tourism supervisor is second to the tourism manager and the job involves looking after the day to day work and to assist the subordinate officers to ensure that the department is run smoothly and effectively.

- **Tourism Officers/Workers (4).** Providing, information relating to tourism and organisation culture such as survey's, interviews and telephone conversations. I had to interview this officers to get their viewpoints at the shop floor level and at the same time to ascertain the type of culture that exist and how they define it. Is it different compared to those defined by the manager and the supervisor and the council.

- **Inquiry Officer Tourism Highlands.** Providing general information, brochures, pamphlets, etc.

**General**

- **Executive Officer of the Institute of Municipal Management NSW Sydney.** General information about local government tourism, government intervention, and completing the questionnaire survey. I had to interview the executive officer so that I could get general information about the council and particularly the ones dealing with tourism and all related matters.

- **Director, Local Government Studies, University of Technology, Sydney.** Matters relating to local government and the research streams, assistance and follow-up information. This was highly beneficial for the purpose of the literature and conceptualisation.

- **Academics and consultants.** University of Technology, Sydney, University of Western Sydney, University of NSW, University of Sydney, University of Melbourne. Research consultants: Dr Peter Soul, Paul Michael Andrews, Tricial Deasey, Sandra Joy Betts, Joy London, Chris Chittenden and others, who indirectly assisted me in terms of structure and design.

- **Institute of Local Government Management NSW.**
3.3 Research approaches

3.3.1 Background information

The respondents’ views and suggestions will form an important feature of the research, together with direct observation of the norms, artefacts and values of the organisation.

It has been suggested by Ciaran O’Faircheallaigh, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (1999: 8) in Public Sector Management in Australia: New Challenges, New Directions that public decision-makers are more constrained by scrutiny and accountability.

The role of local government manager is decidedly more complex than it was as recently as in the 1960s. Today’s local government manager is still concerned with potholes and roads but his or her responsibilities for people are greater. Anderson, Newland, and Stillman (1983) stated that:

The manager must work constantly in the swim of community life with shifting standards, values, ideas and ideals. The push and pull of community groups ensures that yesterday’s goal will not necessary be an appropriate guide for today or tomorrow.

My study of organisation culture studied proceeded in a typical fashion via collecting data and that is:

- Direct observation of artefacts and symbols and the use to which members of the culture put them – these are visible and audible which can be watched and listened. My observations were carried out over a period of seven to eight weeks, using ethnographic strategies. Being an observer, I had to distance myself from the culture I had been immersed in, listening and watching what others were doing. My observations were carried out at informal gatherings, moving around the building, watching for patterns of behaviour and observing interactions, and listening to employees’ jokes and gossip. I did this so that I could gather clues as to what sort of culture exist, and what symbols meant to the employees.

- Interviewees with organisation members focussed on discovering their ways of experiencing and interpreting their world. The interviews with staff at different levels of responsibility revealed a richer cultural picture than quantitative data gathered through surveys. They provided further opportunities for discussion and incorporating more useful information in other interviews.
• Surveys, through questionnaires, asked questions relating to organisation culture, its definition, values, and human contribution. The response rate was good, with more than 60% completed 20% partially completed, and less than 10% submitted after seven to eight weeks. Those who completed the questionnaire did address all the issues while others completed it in a point form and thereby missed the gist of the question being asked. A few responses were difficult to interpret and I had to telephone the respondents to clarify some aspects.

• Primary and secondary sources: see Chapter 2 for details.

3.3.2 Qualitative research

Looking at the nature of the research project and the methodology, I decided to take a qualitative approach in order to discover how the organisation’s decision-making processes and communication flow were designed and structured. It was also important to discover how the organisation responded to a crisis and other critical events, and what had been learned from these experiences.

Furthermore, ethnographic strategies were also chosen to describe the organisation culture, ie. Concepts and methods developed in sociology and anthropology were applied to the study of culture so that a richer understanding of culture could be developed. Ethnography simply meant cultural description. The focus on ethnography was produced via observation and interviews.

3.3.3 Data collection – participant observation

Direct observation of symbols, practices, and patterns of behaviour and relationships were available to me in this research. The time I spent in direct observation covered a period of seven to eight weeks. I used direct observation because this process was less obstructive and gave me an opportunity to observe the participants therefore getting the first hand knowledge and observing how staffs were dealt with, moving around the building listening to jokes and gossip. I also entered into their conversations to talk about their culture and how they responded to particular problems.

As regards to values and assumptions, one can not directly experience another person’s values, assumptions or symbolic interpretation, but one can directly experience their artefacts. Therefore observation of artefacts and the behaviour that occurs around them is a typical starting point in the study of culture. At the same time,
artefacts will appear as isolated objects and events. It is unwise to interpret these artefacts until additional evidence is collected. The best way to proceed is to examine as many artefacts as possible, making extensive notes about them and the symbolic uses to which one sees them put in the daily lives of organisational members.

According to Gagliardi (1990) artefacts are visible, tangible and audible remains of the behaviour grounded in cultural norms, values and assumptions. Some of the examples of artefacts that were present in both shires included building / design / logo; dress appearance; objects layout; ceremonies; communication patterns; stories, myths and history; metaphors, traditions and customs; rewards and punishment, and jokes.

Through interviews I tried to discover the interpretation that members give to the artefacts that I observed. I have written down as much of their actual language as possible. I also sensed a degree of symbolic significance in the artefacts I collected. I then made notes about members' feelings, and also jotted down what caused me to believe a particular artefact was acting as a symbol.

The observation was conducted by interviewing, working with groups, meetings, informal gathering, and also I moved around the building and looking informal patterns of behaviour and interaction, listening to jokes. Each member of the group was ask to recall the story which they were told when they join the organisation or moved to a new department or think of a story which they themselves tell to new staff. These were all tape recorded and also written down. The interpretation was based on reading the literature. Cultural symbols were important in constructing the meaning and these included ceremonies and traditions, physical environment and the style through which the organisation interact with the public. Apart from that I also observed slogans publications and speech, reports stories jokes, and dress and appearance and these were all recorded. I also recorded the everyday patterns of interactions, how people spend their time and how they solved problems and how work was processed. Values and attitudes were identified through the use of qualitative techniques and that included interviews, discussions, workshops and focus groups. I also prepared some diagnostic questions relating to surfacing values and attitudes and also for exploring behaviours and practice. These were all recorded and written down.
3.3.4 Artefacts

3.3.4.1 Physical setting

Quite often we are able to understand culture by simply looking around its material artefacts, including its buildings and surroundings.

The physical settings of the buildings in both shires invariably communicated an unmistakable message about the shire’s identity and its socio-economic activities. The designs of the buildings reveal something of the cultural heritage of the area’s founding fathers. The artefacts were beneficial in the following way:

- They provided quick clues about cultural patterns, which could then be investigated more thoroughly and with more sensitive and reliable methods.
- They strengthened the validity of cultural patterns as they begin to emerge from other collection activities.

3.3.4.2 Archives and other related records

In Wollondilly, these records were obtained with the help of the Shire’s librarian. She provided me with avenues so as to how I could compile these data. I also did a computer search in their library and was able to get up-to-date information. The library had substantial historical records, allowing me to choose those relevant to my research.

In Tourism Southern Highlands I was able to get information from the reception office in the Shire, the secretary of the General Manager, and the Information desk at Tourism Southern Highlands. I received reports, marketing plans, council reports, annual reports and other related materials from the tourism Manager. In summary, the personnel of both shires provided me ample assistance. Other scholars, for example, Clark (1972) and Pettigrew (1979) have also used this approach.

3.3.4.3 Organisation charts

Unfortunately most organisation charts are not reliable sources of information about organisation culture. Typically they depict how someone in authority believes an organisation should appear and that is basically it. There is not much information
concerning accountability or on organisation culture (Ott, 1989: 110). Meyer (1984) and Weick (1985) contend that the primary purpose served by organisation charts is to convince important constituencies that the organisation knows what it is about, and that it is under control.

Ott (1989) contends that

Organisation charts do provide useful information about organisation culture by their tallness or flatness; clean or scrambled lines of authority; types of position titles (directors versus coordinators); the presence or absence of people's names in position boxes; product or functional arrangement; and the placement of staff advisory and figurehead officers.

I also considered organisation charts as providing a clue to finding out what sort of controls were being used, eg. Is it more hierarchical or non-hierarchical? Non hierarchal organisation charts allowed me to predict that the span of control would not be very strict, due to a greater devolution of responsibility. On the other hand one would expect that a flatter organisation placed more emphasis on open discussion or debate, placing emphasis on empowering staff in order to deliver quality and flexibility in frontline services.

In terms of an understanding of culture we could also infer from organisation charts whether the organisation has open or a closed culture. In principle, if the organisation chart is too hierarchical then there is an expectation that the culture is very closed. There are stronger boundaries. The control mechanisms are tight and there are often stringent rules and regulations that staffs have to comply with. On the other hand, open culture is different – the flatter an organisation chart, the more there is an expectation of open discussion, with the organisation being more responsive to change.

3.3.4.4 Listening to the language people speak

If an organisational investigator is privy to ongoing routine conversations, “just listening” to language, jargon, humour, and the metaphors of an organisation is one of

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15 Closed culture has strong boundaries and weak internal and external networks, while open culture has weaker boundaries and values its external and internal networks. Janet Newman (1996: 51) had talked about this at some length.
the best ways of learning about organisation culture; see, for example, Boland and Hoffman (1983), Louis (1981), and Pondy (1978, 1983).

During the course of my research I listened to many conversations, and tape-recorded these so that I could listen to them again and draw meanings or interpretations from them. Interviewing was an alternative way for me to learn about organisation culture through language. I also conducted group interviews so as to ascertain the type of language members of the organisation speak, and to listen to members' concerns. Discussion followed by informal meetings were some of the other techniques I used to get members' responses.

3.3.4.5 Stories and myths

Matters relating to organisation myths and stories I was able to get through interviews, asking open question relating to the subject matter. It was a very daunting exercise; however, I was fortunate because of the support from both the Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Shire Councils. Everyone was willing to share their views and assisted me in whatever form they could.

3.3.4.6 Patterns of behaviour

The most useful methods for studying rites and rituals are similar to those for language, stories and myths (Smircich, 1983). Norms also could be studied through observation and interviews (Davis, 1984).

This was done though a survey using a questionnaire. It was quick, easy and inexpensive to administer. This questionnaire used in the survey is reproduced in Appendix 3-5.

Direct observation was also used to identify patterns of behaviour, such as found in teamwork, customer relations, leadership, communication, and training and development.

3.3.5 Beliefs and values

Organisational norms, instruments, innumerable pencil and paper questionnaires, and surveys exist for identifying values and beliefs in and out of organisations (Simon,
Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1972; Superka, Johnson and Ahrens, 1975). Can these instruments serve as some sort of indicators of assumptions? For the purpose of this thesis, I identified values thorough the use of qualitative techniques such as interviews and discussions. Diagnostic questions were developed which were used in both formal and informal approaches to cultural analysis, for example: What kind of public or community values are held to be important? What beliefs do officers hold? What kind of attitude does service staff hold about the Shire?

3.3.6 Survey questionnaire

While the use of secondary data was an extremely useful and effective means of investigation, it did not allow a close investigation of those issues that remained unsolved; please see below this chapter for details of secondary data. To overcome this limitation, I supplemented secondary data with primary data to examine certain issues in considerably greater depth, with personal interviewing chosen as most appropriate method.

Prior to carrying out the survey on the two chosen councils a general questionnaire was also prepared and the interviews were carried out in the NSW Shire Association; see Appendix 2.

To ensure comparability across interviewees, each interview was organised around the comprehensive questionnaire developed after the review of the relevant literature; see Appendix 4 for questionnaire. Open-ended questions were designed to elicit information about particular issues relevant to the research question. This was done in order to simplify individual responses by classifying them into smaller units, each including response that was similar in content.

The questionnaire focussed on culture change, specifically any attempt by the organisation to change its values, attitudes and perceptions. Respondents were asked whether or not the organisation had been involved in an attempt to change its culture. If the answer was affirmative, a brief description of the change was asked for, including how the values of the organisation’s culture was reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis and what was the employees’ contribution to change.
This study does not simply attempt to understand current organisation culture; it also draws on its past history in order to understand how it may be changed in the future. While it is true that when we manage change, we often look at the historical dimension at the same time, change depends in large part on the ways in which change and restructuring are managed. Janet Newman (1996: 153) states that

...While cultural change is often needed, this needs to be balanced by a respect for existing culture and beliefs. It is important to recognised, articulate and celebrate a local authority’s cultural strengths, grounded in local citizenship and community, accountability and equity, and to ensure that change is managed in a way which builds on these to reshape future direction and purpose.

Apart from the face to face interview, the rest of the questionnaire and the relevant instructions were given to the Tourism Manager of Tourism Southern Highlands and the Tourism Officer of Tourism Wollondilly, who in turn distributed them to their staff. Upon completion each questionnaire was sealed in an enveloped to ensure confidentiality. A concerted effort was made to ensure that the same procedures were followed for each Shire. Initially a short turnaround of three days was suggested to encourage a prompt response. However, I had to lengthen the period to between four and six weeks to achieve an acceptable response rate. Approximately ten questionnaires were given to the Manager Tourism Southern Highlands and nine to the Manager Tourism Wollondilly to be distributed to their staff. Of those only six were returned.

Wingeecarribee Shire Council’s response was not as good, simply because at that time the Shire’s General Manager had resigned, and there was lots of speculation with most of the employees more concerned about the council administration than any surveys. Only 60% responded while others completed less than half of the questionnaire. I would like to state here that the self-completed questionnaires had it problems in that I was not able to ascertain how accurate are those data’s and there was no check on the honesty of responses. Most of the respondent left gaps while others just wrote one of two sentences. I had to call them to validate the survey.

I had to lengthen this period to three weeks to get the response; however, few of the employees sent their responses after four weeks. I took on board their concerns and acknowledged the time they had dedicated to filling in the questionnaire. On the
whole the response was 75%. I could have expected better had it not been for the problem in the council administration.

I ensured that all the questions were answered as was required by the questionnaire. I achieved this by tape recording all responses in addition to writing them down while the questions were been asked.

I compared the written answers with the tape recordings and in the cases where there was some confusion I phoned the respondents to clarify the answers. I had problems with questions where further probing was required and in those cases where I could not fully understand what the respondents were saying, possibly because people spoke too fast. However, this happened only rarely. On the whole there was no major problem.

All in all survey questionnaire had advantages and this included (a) There was a large amount of information collected and a wide range of questions were asked in an attempt to explore culture. (b) Provided a relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values and beliefs. (c) Large amounts of data, was provided on a relatively low cost, in a short period of time. (d) It also allowed anonymity, which encouraged frankness even though sensitivity areas are involved and finally it encourages participation and involvement.

3.3.7 Second semi-structured questionnaire

This questionnaire was used to guide face-to-face interviews and some of the questions that were asked included:

- History of organisation
- Reasons for change
- Methods of change on a day-to-day basis
- What values were adhered to in the organisation and how are they disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis?
- Employment involvement in organisation culture
- Any other relevant information relating to the organisation culture and change
See Appendix 3 for the complete questionnaire; see Appendix 4 for the second questionnaire survey.

This thesis incorporates the viewpoints of managers and employees, both directly and indirectly; who were involved on a day-to-day basis. However, because there were only three staff involved in tourism in Tourism Wollondilly, I had to interview the Corporate Manager, the General Manager, and some of the officers of the shire, including the secretary to the General Manager, the inquiry officer, the reception officer and the volunteer who was working for the tourism department, as well as the Tourism Officer.

Every employee perceived culture and change different from others and therefore it was not appropriate to only interview the decision-makers. For example, decision-makers might be more positive about change than other staff. Having interviewed both groups provides an opportunity to identify any significant differences between them, perhaps even identify "sub-cultures", and also provide managers with more specific feedback on their areas. I also observed and participated in day-to-day activities such as meetings, etc.

3.3.8 Secondary sources

The following sources have been drawn on:


- **Text books.** These mainly relate to organisation behaviour. See List of References.

- **Articles from the Ovid database.** Key-words "corporate culture".

- **Articles from the Internet.** See footnotes and List of References.

- **Articles by management consultants.** See footnotes and List of References.

- **Organisational reports.** See List of References.
3.3.9 Interview procedures

Interviewing was an obvious methodology to use and undoubtedly the one I relied most on. One of its advantages was that I was able to evaluate conclusions from one interview in the light of findings from others. Because I did not define culture in advance, I proposed to take interviewees' viewpoints and make a broad comparison. Only change in organisation culture was defined, and this only for the purpose of relating the information gathered to some of the changes the Shire has carried out and to how its values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. If I had not defined change in organisation culture, the organisation's members would not able to know what change had taken place and how it related to culture. My research sought to discover members' own definitions of culture, and defining change in organisation culture had a different connotation altogether. The interview question was modified along the lines of their viewpoints expressed, and further probing during the interview was done accordingly. My working definition was not produced in advance but only formulated after the survey had been carried out. However, I borrowed definitions from various scholars, for example, from Dobson, Williams and Walters (1989); Schein, (1985, 1989, 1991); Ott, (1989) Alvesson and Berg (1992), Allaire and Firsirotu (1984), and others. I then compared that definition from the other scholar with my organisational study and found that a more conceptualised definition is one, which incorporates a broad and narrow meaning and ideally also the views of many of the employees and managers of the shire. I list below further details:

- The number of the people interviewed depended on the size of the organisation. However, my idea was to interview as many people as necessary to obtain a representative sample. In the Wollondilly Shire Council I interviewed 10 people including the employees from the Shire and the Tourism Wollondilly. Only two workers were involved in the day-to-day activities of the tourism department. However, because this was not a department in its own right, I interviewed the Corporate Manager, who heads Tourism, and the General Manager to get up-to-date information regarding policy and council administration.
- The period I took was four to six weeks; however, I allocated another two weeks because few of the survey respondents finished the research as requested. In Tourism Southern Highlands the response rate was not as high as in Tourism Wollondilly.
- The interview took place at the interviewee's place of work rather than asking the interviewee to come to some temporary office or to meet a consultant off site. This
was done to ensure that employees were not distracted from their work and also to provide a climate free of any kind of pressure.

- The interviews were scheduled to take no less than 45 minutes and no more than one hour. In the case of higher level people or key organisation members and in-group interviews, I allocated more time.
- I relied on interview, ie on their dynamics rather than fixed questions. But I had a structured format in mind to ensure that all key areas were covered. This was done in order to make the questionnaire user-friendlier and to attract the attention of the interviews.
- I processed as much detail of what I heard as possible, at the same time also tape recording all interviews to ensure accuracy.

Apart from asking the questions shown in Appendices 4 and 5, the following questions were also asked:

1. What are the principal images or metaphors that people use to describe your organisation?
2. What type of organisation culture exists in your department?
3. Give examples of special language used in your organisation.
4. What are some of the myths and stories in your organisation?
5. How do you describe the organisation culture in your organisation?

Interviews were conducted with the executive team and other key senior personnel and subordinates to gain an appreciation of the organisation’s operations and the way the systems and procedures reflect the underlying values of culture and change.

3.3.10 Interview process

The interview was arranged to fit into the availability of the respondents. The length of the interview varied and depended on the time taken by the respondent. I never envisaged any problem at that stage nor ever received any complaint. However, a few of the respondents never appreciated the style of the questionnaire and a few evens asked to have a questionnaire with closed questions.

    The interview began with an introduction – although it had been explained clearly in prior telephone conversations – and with the research question being identified,
thus giving interviewees a fair idea of what they were asked to talk about and to ensure that I did not deviate from my research objectives. I probe to expand the response when I intuit that the respondents had more to give. The tactics I used was by asking such as anything more, could you go over and your personal view on that. I followed a sequence of question and that included the introduction: Introduce myself, explain the purpose of my research, assured confidentiality and ask permission to tape and make notes. I started asking non-threatening questions to settle down and I covered the main body of interview that I considered a logical progression.

This required the respondent to be available for an interview of up to one and half-hours. I also asked the managers to identify key personnel in their business units who needed to be included in the interviews.

I adopted interview method together with the survey method for the following reasons: (a) It is a flexible approach and the adaptable way of finding things out. (b) Observing behaviour us a useful enquiry technique, but asking people directly about what is going on is an obvious short cut in seeking answers to my research question. (c) Through interviews I was able to modify one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires can not.

However, I did also encounter some problems and that include: (a) it was a very time consuming exercise. The actual interview lasted more than I expected. I would have though half an hour was enough, however, it took more. (b) Some participant had busy schedules and decided to do it but rushing through the questions. (c) Setting time limits was difficult. Not everyone had the same speed.

However, the process was good and everybody who participated showed interest and enthusiasm.

3.3.11 Introductory and covering letter

In an introductory letter I specified the purpose of the research and sought the participation of the manager. Confidentiality was also emphasised. A covering letter was also provided to both of the shires by Dr Gregory Teal (University of Western Sydney Macarthur); see Appendix 1, Introductory Letter.
The purpose of the introductory letter was to solicit contacts from potential participant organisations. It was a means to obtain formal permission to conduct research in the organisation. By means of an introductory letter I was able to acquaint the organisation with the purpose of my research, and to assure it that confidentiality would be maintained and that any information obtained would only be released with its permission. My request was made my objectives very clear at the outset so that council staff would not be under any misapprehension before the beginning of the research.

Being a member of the Institute of Municipal Management in Australia, I had the added advantage being able to introduce myself to colleagues and seek their participation in research.

My correspondence with the councils provided a written record of the research. Pointed questions were asked so that any correspondence would respond directly to the central issues. As a courtesy, I provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

3.4 Analysis of data

The focus of my research was to identify how organisation culture is being defined, how the values of culture are reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis, and what the role of personnel management was with reference to the issue of productivity in cultural change.

3.4.1 Analysis of observations

I organised and reorganised my observations until patterns suggested specific norms and values (Schein's model) were found and identify some symbols which I considered necessary. Moreover, I kept my distance, listening and watching what others were doing. I moved around the building and looked at informal patterns of behaviour and interactions. To do this I adopted an ethnography strategy since it gives priority to explanations and descriptions. I then linked a number of artefacts to several norms and values, and identified the convergence of some key symbols on one or more cultural themes, eg. aggression. This was a very tiring job; however, I was able to observe without any obstruction. I kept a diary so that I could access everyday
behaviour in a relatively unobtrusive manner, and also to keep account of activities over time. I was able to gather instances of events and feelings, and show how they happened.

I kept arranging and rearranging the artefacts and symbols until I began to realise that data have their own order and meaning. The fieldwork lasted for a period of six to seven weeks and I had to advise the manager of a given department of my presence in the field. I never envisaged any difficulty whatsoever. The staffs of Tourism Wollondilly and Tourism Southern Highland were very willing and assisted me in whatever way they could.

When I felt comfortable about the large picture of the culture was emerging from the first phase of my analysis, the data along with the emerging norms, values and symbolic themes was further sorted and organised. This was done prior to the first phase of my analysis and was done so that the data could be collated and compared. When the deeper beliefs, assumptions, and symbolic patterns of meaning linking the norms, values and themes began to reveal themselves, there was a point at which it was appropriate for me to try to finalise my description of the order in the data. I had never envisaged problems at this stage; however, I was very excited as to the outcome it might produce. It was of course impossible to read the organisation values and beliefs off the data since they are not visible, but artefacts could be visualised. I followed on from the symbols such as building, style, and material artefacts. This provided me with the clues as to what the Shire consider being important. In reading the symbols, I relied on diagnostic questions, such as what significance the building had for staff, considering its style and imagery, messages conveyed by the staff uniform, etc. This was all collated and analysed.

The original criteria applied to the interview concerned the shire's success in a particular economic sector, ie. Developing tourism and this showed some evidence of managing culture. I analysed the criteria, creating a balance between them.

Now to the question of analysing the two councils. First of all, the two councils were studied in isolation, with the same questions being asked of each council. The context of the interview, the research question, etc. were identical. The study incorporated all those aspects and the data gathered were compiled, processed and
analysed. Then the two councils were analysed and their similarities and differences were studied. These are discussed below in the discussion and concluding chapters.

3.5 Limitation of the study

At the time the interviews were conducted in one of the shires, the shire was faced with an administrative bungle. The General Manager of the shire had resigned of his own accord and there was lot of speculation as to what might have happened. Due to these disturbances, the response rate was not so great.

This thesis is more opinion based for it reflects the views of managers and employees of the two councils and it is likely that there will be some degree of bias.

In terms of cultural change no attempt was made to explore various techniques to alter the organisation culture. This was not done because of ethical issues and financial constraints. Also the thesis does not focus more on the process of culture change. self-completed questionnaires had its problems for I was not able to check the accuracy of the data nor validate the data except that on few occasions I had to ring the respondents to clarify.

Because of the limited sample size it was difficult to determine if the results were a true reflection of the type of organisation culture that exists in the organisation. One of the councils had only had three workers while the other had a department of its own. Also by choosing to study only tourism the research was somewhat limited in its ability to compare and contrast the results. Survey techniques is not a good research tool. It has some problems. The problem of securing a high degree of involvement by respondent to a survey is more intractable. This is particularly so when it is carried out by post but is also still difficult when the survey is carried out face to face.

3.6 Conclusion

Given the complexities of organisation culture, how does one go about identifying or otherwise conducting research in organisation culture? What should be deciphered? What research should be used? Does in fact the process of investigating an organisation change or even destroy it (Herbert, 1987)?
J. Steven Ott (1989: 99) stated that it is time to assess the applicability of different approaches, tools, and methods of researching, identifying, deciphering, or explaining organisation culture for different circumstances.

Because there is no consensus in the literature as to what culture means, nor what culture is expected to accomplish, it is impossible to have an agreement on the research methodology to be used; I could not come up with practical one. I even don’t profess to provide a better one; however, I built a research methodology on the basis of my experience, and worked deductively from this research methodology to see how it might fit with the theory and then modifying it based on the organisation studied. In summary, the research incorporated the following research methodology streams:

- Data collected from published articles, journals, text books, Internet sites, etc.;
- Direct observation, observing artefacts and symbols and interpreting for the purpose of the research;
- Primary data collected through surveys that included first and second structured questionnaires and interviews with members of the culture, discovering their ways of experiencing and interpreting their world.
- Comparison of the data collected.

Qualitative research was carried out to gather information to answer the research question, using ethnographic strategies. Analysis of the culture is seen as an important part of the managerial repertoire of change. And finally I ensured that the research question was answered and analysed accordingly.
Chapter 4  Wingecarribee Shire Council

4.1 Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to examine how culture is defined in an organisation and how the values of culture are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis. The chapter also addresses what contribution employees make to culture change. The chapter will examine these questions via the research data collected on Wingecarribee Shire Council, in particular, its tourism department.

The chapter proceeds by covering the following issues: historical perspective on the shire, tourism department, shaping organisation culture, definition of culture, values, communication patterns, cycle of responsibility, culture change, fears of change, how values are reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis, strengths and weaknesses of present culture, employee contribution and conclusion.

4.2 Historical perspective on the shire

The history of the shire dates back to 1798 to the village of Wingecarribee, now the town of Bowral. Mittagong and Berrima dominate the early history of the area. The Oxley family held land from 1825 in the Bowral locality.\(^{16}\) In 1823 Governor Brisbane formally granted John Oxley 2400 acres known as Benedolley West of what latter became the village of Bowral. In 1859 Henry Oxley and his brother, John Norton (Oxley’s Brother) subdivided a number of farms and farm-lets to be leased for 99 years. In early 1863, after the arrival of the Camden families, the Oxley family created the town’s first subdivision.\(^{17}\) The Oxley mall in Bowral was established in memory of John Oxley.

During its long history the shire has developed a strong sense of its own identity and values. These values are widely accepted even today and owned and shared by the

\(^{16}\) [http://www.hinet.net.au/~jblstat/L150.html](http://www.hinet.net.au/~jblstat/L150.html). These home pages promote research into the Loiterton family in Australia.

\(^{17}\) See footnote 16, which is in regards to the history of Wingecarribee.
workforce. There is a high degree of loyalty and commitment to the shire and its objectives, such that its employees are willing to invest substantial efforts meeting the shires needs.

Above all there is a belief that the shire's aspirations are aligned with those of the workforce and indeed the local community. The challenge of the shire was to build on its existing areas of cultural strengths while at the same time finding the means of overcoming or reducing its perceived cultural weaknesses. There was a need for a clear articulation of the purpose and direction of the shire.\textsuperscript{18}

Tourism development in the Southern Highlands in the years from 1991/92 to 1997 has been on a relatively small scale (including restaurants, conference centres, clubs and accommodation).\textsuperscript{19} Tourism Southern Highland faces competition from other destinations such as the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley, which is only ninety minutes' drive from Sydney. Tourism has played an important part in the development of the shire and with a new Southern Expressway and the VFT (very fast train) to Canberra imminent, the Sydney metropolis is quickly advancing on the country lifestyle of the Southern Highlands and Bowral.

The manager of the tourism highlands states that tourism is recognised as a major contributor to employment and to the economy of the region. Southern Highland is perceived, among other things, to offer visitors a peaceful and quiet environment, and an opportunity to enjoy the area's landscape, clean air and high quality food.

The greater proportion of the area's population resides in Bowral, Mittagong and Moss Vale. The population of this area continues to grow,\textsuperscript{20} the average weekly income earned in the Southern Highlands is low\textsuperscript{21} and unemployment in the area is below the national average.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} This information was derived from secondary sources that included publications, archives and internal sites.
\textsuperscript{19} Diagnostic Review of Tourism Southern Highlands, A. Stafford & Associates Pty Ltd, November 1997, Section 7.
\textsuperscript{20} The rate of growth of the population in the Southern Highlands between 1991 and 1996 was 10.65%. Economic indicators for the Wingecarribee Local Government Area, Illawarra Regional Information Service, March 1997.
\textsuperscript{21} Average weekly income in 1996 was $287.00 (Southern Highlands News, July 1997).
\textsuperscript{22} The results of IRIS research as at May 1996 showed that unemployment in the
4.2.1 Tourism department

In 1988 tourism in the Southern Highlands came under the auspices of Wingecarribee Shire Council. Tourism is a division of the council and their staffs are council employees; see Figure 4.1 for its organisation chart of Tourism Southern Highlands. Executives and staff work from the offices at the visitor information centre.

![Organisation Chart of Tourism Southern Highlands](image)

**Figure 4.1 Organisation Chart of Tourism Southern Highlands**  
(Source: Tourism Southern Highlands Marketing Plan 1999)

Representatives of the council and the tourism industry in the Southern Highlands constitute the Tourism Southern Highlands (TSH) board. The selection panel is made up of representatives from the council and the TSH board, with Tourism NSW nominating the board members.

The Board, apart from preparing management plans, budgets and statistics reports to the council, also fulfils an advisory role to the council. Management and staff assist the Board in fulfilling its function. The Tourism Manager is responsible for the coordination of the day-to-day activities of the department.

The Shire appointed a new Tourism Manager in 1995. The manager brings to the shire strong operational knowledge of all processes both within the office and between the office and the council. Furthermore, a review of the roles and functions of staff and of communications between staff and management was intended to optimise resource allocation and to improve morale and professionalism in the office.
Now the region is subject to major competitors, such as the Blue Mountains and the Hunter Valley. These two regions are becoming known for luxury accommodation and have quality restaurants and outlets.²³

The Tourism Manager stated that the Highlands are now developing a more flexible shire with emphasis on a stronger corporate approach via a redefinition of organisational values. The shire feels that this is necessary so that the shire is able to compete and to accomplish a certain level of quality.

The structure of Tourism Southern Highlands is changing. The Corporate Manager of the shire commented that its bureaucratic structure is changing fast. The rules and regulation, he stated, are no longer seen as important as they used to be in the past. He further said, that the shire is now realising the need for change and is moving towards being more open and accountable. This developing structure is a mixture of the formal and informal. There is a greater development of responsibility and more individual freedom.

Tourism Southern Highlands have attempted to build an open culture through training and development, counselling and leadership. Fundamentally what was required was the development of a different culture from closed to much more open. Some of the changes included:

- Restructuring
- Advocating values and symbols, creation of critical mass of shared values among managers and employees, realisation of organisational values, reviewing and monitoring reward system and ensuring that it aligns with the new culture.

4.3 Shaping organisation culture

From my observations I found that the organisation culture of the tourism department was friendly and professional, with all staff appearing well motivated. They were very cooperative and the way in which they served their customers was encouraging indeed, considering them their first priority as shown by serving them immediately and with utmost courtesy and professionalism. The department believed in an open

²³ These regions received in 1998 the NSW Award for Excellence in Tourism. See list of nominations for luxury accommodation and tourism restaurants. Sydney Morning Herald, 6 June 1998.
culture; it was open to new ideas and welcomed opportunities for collaboration with external agencies, the community and voluntary groups. Users and community were involved in shaping policies and services. Staffs were involved in external activities through placement and work with the community and voluntary groups. Staff worked towards a common goal and provided input into the development of organisation strategies necessary for cultural change.

The physical setting of their office was unique. Looking closely at the physical setting of Tourism Southern Highlands, one would not have been able to get reliable information on organisation culture. However, the setting of the Tourism Southern Highlands provides clues to existing cultural patterns, and also helps establish the validity of emerging cultural patterns.

When reaching the entrance of Tourism Southern Highlands one meets a sign with the shire’s name and logo. It is very discreet and tasteful in terms of colours and design. The building is relatively new. There are many parking lots but apparently no reserved ones. In general the place is characterised by discreet displays. Inside the building one approaches the main counter serving as reception. The light is subdued and the decoration reminds one of a hotel lobby with its modern art on the walls. From an adjoining room one hears the familiar noise of printers, keyboards and other office equipment. Customers would pass the office without noticing the senior office staff; however, they would immediately come in contact with reception, and notice the antiques that enhance the shire’s image.

Parallel to the interior, the style of the exterior is also characterised by being discrete and functional. The office layout does not seem to differ in size or decoration and thus indicates nothing of status or hierarchy. The employees of Tourism Southern Highlands seem relaxed in the way they dress, and address each other. They do not use titles; they call each other by first name, smile and chat in a hearty and warm manner. The dress code is informal and casual, ie. No uniforms or ties are worn. The manager herself adopts a dress code that is a very good illustration of this informality.

Following on from the above artefacts, it is very clear at the outset that artefacts play an important role in Tourism Southern Highlands. They help construct meaning such as the signals that it sends it to the staff to the users and the chamber and also the messages that could be conveyed about what the organisation sees as important and
unimportant. Furthermore it provides a symbolic representation of culture and
communicate information about beliefs, assumptions about values and ways of doing
things.\textsuperscript{24} The Oxley family initiated a series of efforts designed to drag the
management of the shire and its leaders into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{25} There is an
unstated but pervasive belief in Tourism Southern Highlands that the founders’
fundamental beliefs, values and assumptions are directly related to the culture that
exists now. The employees and the people at large accepted their beliefs and therefore
a common culture has existed ever since.

However, while this culture was accepted by the people, there were some
reservations held at the same time. The original culture changed through a process of
diversification as different cultures were generated and became embedded by the
process of integration. Tourism Southern Highlands has embarked on culture change.
There is a significant shift in values, and in the attitudes people hold towards their
jobs, and in the behaviour and interaction through which these practices are
reproduced from day-to-day.

The symbols and symbolism are central to the organisation culture. According to
the manager of Tourism Southern Highlands, symbols created, maintained and trans-
mitted share meanings, realities and truths in Tourism Southern Highlands. She stated
that symbols are valued in this shire, and this includes building layout, logos, uniform,
language, dress and appearance of the staff, and their ceremonies and traditions.

So in summary, the way that Tourism Southern Highlands is shaped is based on its
traditions and its sets of values, which are well understood throughout the
organisation, and these values are passed on to successive generations. The shire is
very much a product of its history.

Its artefacts provide clues to its type of culture and some sort of symbolic
representation. They help to create maintain and share meanings and perceptions of
truths and realities within the organisation.

\textsuperscript{24} This is my observation of the artefacts and could of course be contested by others.
\textsuperscript{25} The Oxley families were founders of and early settlers in the Southern Highlands
and date back to 1798. They provided direction and leadership, setting benchmarks
that the shire is still proud of.
4.4 How culture is defined in the Tourism Department

The Manager of the Tourism Department defines culture as values and beliefs that exist in the organisation. She stated that different people have different values.

Furthermore, she stated that culture in local government follows a formal structure and is part of everyday reality. This tells us how we respond to the everyday work of the department. In hindsight the department has an element of culture that is shared, and which is derived from its distinctive history and the traditions of the area.

The Corporate Manager of the shire on the other hand stated that culture is simply the way one behaves in the context of one's work.

He stated that the culture of an individual is based on some unique history and pattern. He added that ceremonies in the shire included staging of historical events and celebrating some of Donald Bradman's achievements, and other annual festivities. The shire has a social club where people meet and socialise. There is huge system of external social activities with their own ceremonies and rituals that are created by the employees.

Furthermore, he stated that the patterns of traditions in Tourism Southern Highlands give a general picture of great variety with diverse origins. He stated that the social network of the different clubs seems to be an important aspect of tradition. People have maintained these clubs over the years, with a culture that maintains and socialises new members, drawing in colleagues outside their working hours. In the shire itself, he stated, whenever an employee leaves the organisation, whether in anger or otherwise, the shire arranges a farewell ceremony, and managers, colleagues and customers are invited to say goodbye and thank the departing employee for their work.

The supervisor of the Tourism Southern Highlands of the shire believes that culture shapes the individual, and that it is a fundamental ingredient in shaping the type of cultural pattern. It is something that is interconnected in the human system and we are all part of it. The values, assumptions and beliefs are what make culture.

Having said that, she stated that "we all behave in a different way and perpetuate culture depending on the background one is coming from. However, at the end of the
day we try to consolidate the culture in a unified way to accomplish goals and the vision of the shire.”

Others, including the workers and the members of Tourism Southern Highlands, see culture as a sort of web that binds the organisation together and is transmitted to employees in a number of forms, these being stories, rituals, materials, symbols and language. The stories, they say, contain narratives of events about the organisation’s founders and these stories provide explanations of current practices. The rituals, on the other hand, express and reinforce the key values of the organisation, its goals, visions and the like.26

Language, according to the supervisor of Tourism Southern Highlands, is a way of identifying members of the culture or sub-culture. Employees attest to their acceptance of the culture and in doing so, help to preserve it.

4.4.1 Rituals

When I am talking of the rituals in the shire, I am referring to what Pettigrew (1979) has to said:

Rituals are repetitive sequence of activities that express and reinforce the key values of the organisation, what goals are most important, which people are important and which are expendable.

The Wingecarribee Shire Council’s celebrations in the historical village of Berrima have become a tradition in recent years. The day’s events are held in Berrima business houses. These are the icon attraction for the Southern Highlands. It signifies as a promotional tool. Additional heritage features, such as performing the Brigadoon festival against some of the older building in Bundanoon; building a replica of an historical train out tulips time festival or having a celebrity Santa for winter Christmas (with bat in hand) for a high profile cricket match at the Bradman Museum oval are some of the other things that the shire is intending to introduce in the near future.

26 Others refer to those who are directly or indirectly in some way involved in the activities or the business dealings of Tourism Southern Highlands.
4.4.2 Symbols and meanings

Symbols in Tourism Southern Highlands play a very important part in helping to construct meaning. Language, artefacts, traditions, buildings and a host of other symbols act as carriers of culture and send signals about the values and practices, which are appropriate. High profile symbols include ceremonies and traditions, the physical environment, and the public style and imagery through which the organisation interacts with the public. Most of these are found in the channels of communication. Low profile symbols include stories and moral tales, jokes, gossip, unofficial communication channels, dress and appearance.

Following on from the above, the cultural elements that were important in the shire include stories, physical artefacts, rituals, traditions and the like.

At Tourism Southern Highlands, staff's are encouraged to take the time to get to know guests and their needs. As mentioned earlier, the open nature of the rear office allows the staff to interact well. The Mittagong Visitor Centre enjoys a good location. The quality of the Tourism Southern Highlands is symbolised by the way the staffs pay particular attention to there dress and grooming. Their expectations are not detailed in the staff handout; however, decency and a well-pressed uniform are important. The staff are to adopt a professional approach in liaising with guests. Giving the customer priority is what Tourism Southern Highlands tries to advocate.

4.4.3 Language

The tone that the individual employees use in the organisation is pretty much informal. However, when there is an executive meeting or guests arrive, staffs speak formally and respect the traditions of the Southern Highlands. Common nicknames were rare, employees calling each other by first name.

Everyone spoke the common language ie English and this was universally accepted by the Tourism Southern Highlands. When you enter the premises the inquiry officers greet you with a common greeting, ie good morning, good afternoon etc. There seems to be a common acceptance in Tourism Southern Highlands that speaking just one language is better so everyone speaks English. There has not been any cultural shift.
As I said previously, everyone is called by their first name and this is due entirely to the fact that Tourism Southern Highlands believes that this sets a standard and others will follow it.

4.4.4 Stories

4.4.4.1 Bureaucracy

During my interviews I was often told about the bureaucracy, the inertia of the organisation and the strict rules and regulations. This story goes something like this: if Tourism Southern Highlands wants to demand something, it takes ages and ages for the shire to meet the demand, and often the managers lose interest and stop complaining.²⁷

4.4.4.2 The founders and the managers

The manager of the Tourism Southern Highlands stated that attitudes and values have been passed to us from previous generations, and whether one accepts these or not is a different matter. It could be inferred from this that the founders provided direction and control and legitimacy during a period of growth and thus created a tradition. These have stood the test of time and ensured future adaptation and survival.

4.5 Values

While the shire generates the values, they are reinforced by the strengths of generations. The same is true for the set of core visions, which forms the basis of developing a shared vision. Flowing on from these are the major activities of the shire as it cascades its mission, strategy and policy into everyday work practices. Values have a practical day-to-day impact on everyone’s working life.²⁸

The culture of the shire is very much influenced by the initial stage of the shire. Much energy is devoted to building up the organisation. Bureaucracy and lack of

²⁷ The person interviewed for this story was the manager of Tourism Southern Highlands.
²⁸ This information was obtained from observation and some secondary sources.
participation at an initial stage played an important role in the birth of the shire. The Tourism Manager stated earlier that the first impression received when we enter Tourism Southern Highlands was that it has a bureaucratic culture. The workers were told about the various reporting systems and appliances such as time clocks controlled them.

In Tourism Southern Highlands it seems as if the controlling system were accepted as such and regarded as a natural aspect of daily life. The manager stated this in the following manner.

When I first came to Tourism Southern Highlands I wondered I did not get any response as to how I had managed and if I have done any work all right. First I could not make any sense of this contradictory observation and statement. Later I discovered that some sort of control apparently only existed on the surface. Time reports seem to have more of a ritual character.

Furthermore, she added that in Tourism Southern Highlands if you wanted to make a career in tourism and get promoted, the wise strategy was to stay with the shire. Some employees, she said, believed that this whole process is not fair in its entirety.

Of course, not everyone in Tourism Southern Highlands shares values based on seniority. The point is that there were problems and change was needed.

In the same vein, the manager therefore believed that with changes there would be interactions and flexibility, which will in turn give rise to greater autonomy and accountability. She stated that the interaction between values was important.

For example, the culture of customer care is conveyed by high profile symbols such as the style and the design of the reception areas, notices and leaflets, and everyday dress and deportment of staff. It is expressed in the practices with which staffs interacts with the public; how queries or complaints are dealt with; or how the telephone is answered. Underpinning all of these is a set of values about the role of local authority being to serve the public, and a perception of its users having rights and an entitlement to be well treated.29

29 This is my generalisation based on observation and interviews.
Tourism Southern Highlands has a clearly defined and articulated set of values which is widely disseminated among staff, and these are expressed as follows in its Annual Report 1997/98:

- To provide excellence in service
- To be innovative and creative
- To offer mutual respect and fair treatment
- To provide open communication

To reinforce its organisational values, the shire has a statement of core goals and values that recognise the importance of communication, and posters, leaflets, cards and etc.

The consultants A. Stafford and Associates Pty Ltd prepared a vision statement for Tourism Southern Highlands in their study carried out in December 1997.\(^{30}\)

The Highlands will provide its visitor with quality opportunities to escape to relax, and enjoy natural, cultural and recreational experiences.

The suggested vision statement is aimed at the broad spectrum of potential markets and is intended to involve all industry participants in the area. The consultants illustrate the use of vision statements with the example of a billboard sign.\(^{31}\)

The vision statement appears to be taken very seriously at all levels in the shire. On the whole Tourism Southern Highlands is perceived to be manage on a basis of trust, with managers acting with fairness and integrity towards other employees. The emphasis on integrity is also manifested in the shire’s strong focus on ethical values. There is a published statement of ethical values, covering things such as market issues, conflict of interest, and commercial confidentiality.


\(^{31}\) The identity tag will, ideally, mirror the brand name of the area. The vision tag will ideally offer the visitor a guide to a market focus on the area. In addition to the suggested tag “Cycle the Highlands”, other tags could include A Taste of the Country; Come to Your Senses; A Relaxed Way to Do Business; Spoil Yourself in Style; Walk the Highlands, and Unwind in the Highlands.
In recent years, Tourism Southern Highlands has cut out management layers, and efforts have been made to establish other means of developing and rewarding staff. Example includes rewarding employees for their technical expertise.

Tourism Southern Highlands recognises its employees and this is reflected in the relative informality of relationships in the organisation. The Corporate Manager of the shire stated that “if you treat people nicely and show tolerance, they will create an image that will be illuminating and exciting.”

Another value shared by many members without exception has to do with one of the central issues concerning organisation life, namely decision making and competence. The employees have the perception or attitude that it would be wise to consult top management and ask before making decisions; examples include decisions regarding the selection of staff, and policy decisions like budgeting.

The Supervisor of Tourism Southern Highlands stated that the top manager is not respected because of his formal power but because he is dynamic, persuasive, and good at getting ideas across. He added that “you have to persuade, fight and stand up and prove that you are good; the results counts.”

In summary, Tourism Southern Highlands is very committed to its values. It sees values as an important essence of culture. The shire reaffirms its values, and a framework for continuously reaffirming the shire’s values is in place.\(^{32}\)

### 4.6 How are the values of culture disseminated and reinforced?

Meaning in Tourism Southern Highlands is constructed through social processes, specifically socialisation.\(^{33}\) Socialisation is a process by which an individual learns appropriate behaviour through interaction with others. For a culture to be strongly perpetuated over time, newcomers need to be socialised or acculturated (Trice and Beyer, 1993). Furthermore, in referring to organisation cultures, leaders need to

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\(^{32}\) This is drawn from my observation of values, which was fairly difficult since we only can observe behaviours whereas values are invisible in terms of rational explanation. I had to look for values that drive behaviours.

\(^{33}\) Information gathered through direct observation and interviews carried out 23 April 1999.
articulate new sets of assumptions, providing new and clear directions. On entering an organisation, individuals have to learn new sub-cultural elements and fit them into a broader total view.

Employees construct their own mental framework and act in accordance with it. The leaders serve as models of style, behaviour and values, whether they do so deliberately or not. In the shire there is one set of leadership skills being adopted. The skills most adopted depend on the culture and traditions of the shire.

The reinforcement of tourism is dependent on the

- Manner in which the manager reacts to a crisis
- Criteria for hiring, firing and promotion

4.6.1 **Manner in which the manager reacts to crisis**

The subordinate officers regard the manager of Tourism Southern Highlands as being entrepreneurial, charismatic and very visionary. At an earlier company, she instituted a similar form of participant forum and thus had experience of the strengths and weaknesses of consultation. She believed that workers perceived managerial authority and that it is essential that participation can be expected from employees. Employee involvement is essential. More flexibility and openness are vital. There should be a degree of openness in the dissemination of information.

Tourism Southern Highlands prides itself on having an intact system in place. Communication between TSH staff is a key issue, especially between office staff and shop staff, and full-time staff and permanent part-time employees. The staffs are kept informed via formal communication procedures.

However, in July 1997 A.J. Stafford and Associates undertook a *Diagnostic Review of Tourism Southern Highlands*, stating that at times there is a lack of documented procedures and processes for key tasks and responsibilities, including in its reporting system. There is a risk that with staff turnover, important institutional

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35 The key focus of this *Diagnostic Review* was Tourism Southern Highlands itself, but there were also some key issues external to Tourism Southern Highlands that were identified as having an impact on its ability to perform its function effectively and efficiently.
knowledge can easily be lost, impacting on work efficiency and the staff base that has been developed.

However, my research identified the following: Tourism Southern Highlands follows a consultative and open style, and when there is a crisis everyone becomes involved although primarily the manager has the final say. Take as an example the case when one of the employees has an argument with his/her colleagues; the manager will call both of them into her office and try to resolve the dispute between them rather than solving it herself. She listens to both and after participating in their discussion, she makes her final decision. At times such disputes are solved without any problem. However, sometimes a conflict will escalate and in that case the manager calls every participant and seeks clarification before and after making a final decision. Sometimes supervisors are called on to resolve a dispute.36

The process itself is informal. There are no quick fixes or easy solutions. Everyone understands the basic features of the culture they are working on. The discussion is important because the shire believes that it identifies the symbols, which the group sees as important, and then decodes the meaning, which these symbols hold for group members.37

If there are crises within the tourism department, different elements of culture are explored so that inconsistencies are exposed and the necessary rectifications are made. In this situation the manager allows the injured party to voice his or her opinion and requests an undertaking that he or she will be able to compromise, thereby accepting their values in whatever shape or form they are.

Often this type of problems is resolved quite effectively and sometimes the moral and ethical values are shared with the whole group and a discussion takes place about how far they reflect important aspects of informal culture.

36 Information derived from the manager via interviews with further clarification sought from the supervisor and subordinate officers.
37 Face-to-face interview with the Manager of Tourism Southern Highlands.
4.6.2 **Criteria for hiring and promotion**

A salary is paid in return for the employee’s contribution to the operation of the shire. The reward system is a powerful reinforcer of the shires stated values and objectives. The employees respond and are motivated when they perceive that certain kinds of behaviour will lead to financial rewards.

The organisation’s remuneration system is related to its cultural values and objectives. The shire’s payment system is commercial and is based on the organisation’s performance. The shire has introduced performance-based pay for individuals.

The continuous improvement program provides a system of ongoing reviews of how the council conducts its business with a particular focus on customer and community needs. Changing jobs, acting in a superior position, taking on new responsibilities, being seconded to another department and developing peer groups are some of the levers of change that the shire has adopted. This has been a new experience for the shire. The tourism department reinforced these innovations by action learning and training.

As for reward and promotion, the continuous improvement program (CIP) provides a system of ongoing reviews of what, why and how the council conducts its business with a particular focus on customer and community needs. Under the CIP, selected staff are trained and accredited as facilitators and empowered to act in the capacity of project team leaders, with the end result being a more productive and efficient workforce working in harmony to produce better outcomes for society.

Efforts were made in the years 1990-1999 to strengthen the shire reward and remuneration procedures. The aim of this, according to the tourism manager, Tourism Southern Highlands, was to promote a higher and a more pro-active level of performance. Salary increases were on merit based and proportionate to a cost of living adjustment. The whole process acted to reinforce its new corporate philosophy.

Training in Tourism Southern Highlands is becoming a major priority. Much of the training was highly practical and related to the day-to-day work of Tourism Southern Highlands. The training was linked to the strategic and cultural needs of the organisation. Customer orientation was seen as being of primarily cultural value.
Practical training was provided, such as telephone communication, with customers as the major emphasis. The employees were expected to adopt an entrepreneurial culture. Role playing exercises were used to foster awareness of different perspective’s and to encourage staff to view their operations from the perspective of their customers.

Training is used as a mechanism for disseminating the company mission and to build up an understanding of how this could be related to a particular job or department. This is carried out in-group exercise of team building.

In summary, the values in Tourism Southern Highlands are reinforced by the strengths of each generation of employees, and values are passed on from one generation to the next. The process of socialisation is important. However, before attempting to deal with the process of reinforcement, we have to ascertain the reinforcement procedures, considering the manner in which the manager reacts to a crisis, eg. is it open or closed and what are the consequences of each, and the criteria for hiring and promotion.

4.7 Communication and disseminated of values

Tourism Southern Highlands recognises the importance of communication.

Brochures are distributed to the community to keep abreast of developments and activities in the region. Tourism Southern Highlands prides itself on its standard of displays and services offered, and reserves the right to reject any promotional materials deemed unsuitable for display in the visitor centre.

Wingecarribee Shire Council’s Australia Day celebrations in the historical village of Berrima have become a tradition in recent years. Council’s Bulletin, now in its eighth year, continues to provide the community with the sort of council news that does not always make it into the local papers. An effort to promote it is intended to encourage employee commitment and support.

The council produces the Wingecarribee Web, the Southern Highlands community conservation newsletter, which updates environmental news for community groups and interested individuals. It provides a complete update of information about tourism products in the shire. The aim of this database is to provide comprehensive
information on tourism facilities, and to inform the public at large of the type of service offered in the shire.

Furthermore, the values are spelt out in the document circulated to all staff, with key messages emphasised:

- Customer comes first
- Team work – we all work as a team
- Ethical standards
- Quality in anything we do

The shire produced a statement of core goals, recognising the importance of communication. Poster leaflets are another mode of dissemination.

Apart from that, there is a regular meeting once a week, which is designed to provide a consistent and positive message about the shire’s policies and objectives. The meeting in particular demonstrates a consistent theme of customer orientation, reiterated again and again in the shire’s published documents and briefings. The employees stated that at times the meetings are informal and incorporate all the ideas that are being discussed.

The Tourism Manager has introduced structural mechanism to improve internal communication, including internal newspapers, team briefings and so on. The messages are simple, straightforward. Meetings are held monthly to resolve progress issues; issues are prioritised and sub-committees are introduced to facilitate the day-to-day operation of Tourism Southern Highlands. Staff and management hold weekly meetings. The representative of the council, the board member and the manager represents the sub-committees of Tourism Southern Highlands. The shire has channels of communication ranging from formal briefings to informal ones, ie. from simple to sophisticated.

The channel of communication in Tourism Southern Highlands is characterised by the tourism manager as informal and passive rather than active. Staffs are given the chance to discuss the content of any message so that they can explore what it means in the context of their own work, and their knowledge and understanding are reviewed from time to time. An example of this are staff advising management on they could
best serve the customers - by having more staff and total quality management. Employees perceived quality incentives very positively.

Employees are an important source of validation of our values and beliefs. Joining a new team and becoming involved in a new social activity are important sources of value reinforcement and the shire is very much aware of that. Having said that, this will not be possible without collaboration and consultation. Everyone in Tourism Southern Highlands is involved in its day-to-day activities.

Currently the shire is thinking of having an annual meeting to overview operations, to be held between staff vs management and also considering the need to link the computer system for internal and external e-mail purposes. Tourism Southern Highlands is very optimistic about improving its service, and the report by the consultant does support this optimism to some extent.\(^\text{38}\)

Now having ascertained that it reinforcement is dependent on the manner in which the manager reacts to a crisis and the criteria for hiring and promotion, the next question is how values are disseminated. Values in Tourism Southern Highlands are disseminated by various means, including brochures, posters, leaflets, standard displays, the Wingeacarribee Web and the newsletter. The corporate manager states that values are disseminated and reinforced by delegation.

### 4.8 Cultural change

The place of culture is firmly ensconced in the shire’s corporate plan and is reflected in its staffing structure.\(^\text{39}\) In other words, the shire’s corporate plan provides an image of the shire’s values, very clearly indicated in the staffing structure. The corporate plan incorporates values and expectation that are expected from the organisation. By reading through the corporate plan one is indirectly able to identify the type of culture that exists in the shire and this includes such things as respect, recognition and the values that the shire is committed to. Much of the tourism activity is focussed on the

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\(^{38}\) The consultant understands that a number of computer terminals in the office have, since the date of the *Diagnostic Review*, been linked for internal e-mail purposes: advice by Tourism Southern Highlands to the consultant, June 1998.

\(^{39}\) This information was gathered from *Change of culture – local government planning for quality life*. (Jackie Ohlin, November 1992, for the Municipal
Mittagong Information Centre and the potential this offers to the promotion of cultural events and entrepreneurial activities.

Many changes have taken place in Tourism Southern Highlands, some of which are discussed in the following sections.

4.8.1 Organisation structure and leadership

The control of structure is shifting as responsibility has been devolved to the tourism manager. The organisation is becoming more planned around the requirements of customers and communities rather than divided into separate functions. The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands stated that the organisation has undergone some major developments. She stated that when she started as a manager four years ago she envisaged a different change of attitude to what it exists today. Jobs are well defined and the staffs are given the opportunity to voice their opinion in matters of interest and this, if necessary, is taken further for action. A more consultative and participatory type of decision making is prevalent. There is greater scope for decision making.

Change of leadership and an open culture were some of the priorities for the department. The department considered that the change in leadership would provide new ideas and visions of the future that can act as a major stimulus to cultural change. In this case the manager appointed in 1992 came with lots of experience and was academically qualified to handle this fast growing industry. Her experience covers both private industry and the public sector.

Reshuffling people with different experience and knowledge into key position was also a concern. According to the manager, in practically all cases there was a marked improvement in performance throughout 1997/1998.

By changing people around, the manager stated patterns of beliefs and attitudes in the organisation were changed. Practical methods used by the shire for changing the beliefs, attitudes and values of employees included: role-playing, management education, counselling, briefing, education and formal communication. In some cases quality circles were used to identify and resolve quality problems, including the use of

Association of Tasmania).
an accreditation system. This was primarily because of employee involvement or participation. The benefits of the accreditation system included the introduction of competition among tourist operators for accredited status and a sense of pride by operators and the community in the accredited product offered.

Through the process of providing role models the shire was able to recognise the importance of individuals, particularly the senior once, who acted as role models for the desired attitudes and behaviours. Tourism Southern Highlands believes that people learn by observation and are likely to emulate those behaviours that they believe are likely to lead to success.

The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands was used as a role model in the training process. She was able to take questions and give answers because she has a personal style that is open to participation.

Tourism Southern Highlands have been very keen to ensure that a participatory management is given priority. There have been formal group discussions as a means of encouraging identification with and commitment to the group task, to improve communication and solicit the group’s experience in problem solving and finally to promote participatory management practices.

4.8.2 Building commitment

Tourism Southern Highlands feel that the key to success is the commitment of the manager’s staff and councillors, and the manager’s ability to provide leadership. The Corporate Manager of the shire states that the change will only take place if the staff are convinced that it is needed, know what it is about, and are willing to support it. Having decided that some kind of change is needed, the next thing is to consider how to develop the leadership capacity to deliver it.

The supervisor of the Visitor Centre agrees with the above. However, she went on to say that sometimes this become a difficult task as the shire has a tight budget and also a single leadership team which, though effective, is not enough to carry the shire through complex change. The shire needs to develop and enhance the leadership capacity of the organisation as a whole, with a range of staff at different levels being
developed to take on leadership roles. This, she said, is not an easy matter in local government.

A shared approach to leadership is currently under-way and the manager feels that it will be able to draw on a much wider range of talents and skills throughout the shire. Group discussion is an excellent mechanism for the development of shared beliefs and attitudes but whether or not attitudes are likely to change is dependent upon the specific nature and content of the discussion. Open discussion is also held and group assumptions are tested against reality.

Building commitment is conducted in part through training in new skills so that old behaviour patterns are replaced with new ones. Training to improve skills, create benchmarking and change beliefs about employees' capacities is also taking place.

### 4.8.3 Changing structure

The organisation has been restructured since 1995. The current manager Linda Marquis was appointed Tourism Manager for TSH in July 1995, and she has a background in tourism and council representation. Her staff consists of four full-time and seven part-time staff and a trainee (TSH Diagnostic Review, 1997: 21).

The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands sits on the TSH Board, an eleven-member body with council and industry representation. Membership of the board is for a two-year period, with new members being vetted by a nomination committee with representation from the council, the TSH Board and Tourism NSW.

Tourism Southern Highlands have for the past twelve months engaged Sue Marsh Ink as PR consultant. This has given the shire invaluable exposure in the Sydney and associated media.

### 4.8.4 By an image and a logo

The brand image of the Southern Highlands was the topic of research undertaken by consultants A. Stafford and Associates Pty. Ltd. on behalf of Tourism NSW in 1998. The image developed for the region is of a picturesque, safe destination with an English village type environment. The social values developed by FSA were
traditional, romantic and charming with a personality described as nice, quiet, reserved, friendly and thoughtful.

The shire on the other hand is characterised by a high country climate, with charming heritage listed homes built in a more gracious era set in large, magnificently landscaped grounds. Early in its colonial history the scene was set for the region to become an important tourist destination. Each of its towns and many villages have a distinct identity, with the deciduous trees giving the district its seasonal splendour. 40

The logo of Tourism Southern Highlands reflects the primary features of a product. The TSH Diagnostic Review carried out in 1997 stated that “Southern Highlands is generally liked as a destination name and the image, which it conjures up to the people and the visitors, is attractive. The Review further stated that the problem, which needs to be resolved, is the lack of a clear identity and appropriate packaging of the region.

4.9 Fears of change

The supervisor at Tourism Southern Highlands commented that quite often employees regard change as a detrimental to their job and feel insecure. They leave the organisation, saying, “I am better off leaving the job than having to face the perils of being dictated to by the bureaucrats.”

Some staff in Tourism Southern Highlands is very conservative and they never decided to be part of change. It is amazing the extent to which staff in the shire believe that there is an objective reality, yet it is how people see things, right or wrong, which will influence whether they will change or not. 41

They have been working for this shire for a long time and do not feel certain that their position will not be taken over by new blood brought in from outside. The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands stated that any change creates tension

41 This is my generalisation and it may be subjected to criticism. However, not to name anyone, most of the employees of Tourism Southern Highlands said that change is important but not in a shape or form detrimental to the employees.
around the issue of security to the point of causing psychological problems. This
means that for people to change they must believe that the shire is having troubled and
that their personal survival depends on doing something differently.

4.9.1 Resistant group – shop floor

The fear of being carried away with emotion and policies sometimes does not drive
the achievement of goals and objectives. This is due to extreme pressure, which
often takes away confidence, zeal and enthusiasm.

Other problems in relation to culture change at Tourism Southern Highlands
identified by employees and the Tourism Manager are:

- Staff perceive a threat to their job security and power
- Staff don’t like their colleagues demands not been heard
- Some staff don’t want to try something when they don’t know the outcome
- Staffs don’t want to be carried away with decision-makers.
- Staff’s adaptation to their job and the way it is handled are very important to them

4.10 Strengths and weaknesses of present culture in Tourism Southern Highlands

4.10.1 Strengths

- There is satisfaction amongst the staff and employees in their work
- Communications are adequately shared
- There is a change of span of control; previously control was very bureaucratic but
  now there is a more flexible approach
- Staff are given the opportunity to voice their opinion
- Control mechanism are slightly informal and this makes it easier to comply with
  controls sometimes
- Values are preserved
- The organisation’s approach to a more open culture ensures new ideas and greater
  opportunities for collaboration and joint working with external agencies

42 Renae Eccleston, Judy Collins and Jessica Mckenzie, Tourism Southern High-
lands, Wingecarribee Shire Council.
• There is employee involvement and this assists everybody

4.10.2 Weaknesses

• Staffs are under constant pressure. They have to complete their tasks within stipulated time.
• Some staff sees change in culture as an impediment to success.
• Strict deadlines and conformity to requirement sometimes frustrate staff.
• Some staff sees change as detrimental to their success. Often they are not interested in learning or do not appreciate change.
• Bureaucratic hierarchies still prevail in spite of the changes. This leaves staff in disarray.
• There is a tendency for staff to be swayed by emotions and sometimes this is not reflective of individuals’ behaviour.
• Much less room for compromise.

4.11 Employee contribution

There are still some sceptics as to how the human resources are perceived in the shire. Lots of opinions have been voiced. Some see contribution of employees as a deterrent while others see it as an important development in cultural change. The Corporate Manager states that employee contributions may be limited to the extent of culture change and their contributions should be peripheral, while the manager of the Tourism Southern Highlands states that the employees’ contribution is an important part in the change process.

She further stated that in this type of industry the employee drives or is the important vehicle that drives culture and change. Employees have an important place in society and it is very important that their contributions be observed and used in the day-to-day process of a business. They exert considerable influence as agents of culture and change.

The relationship between management and employees is likely to be a crucial element in determining organisation culture. If the relationship tends to be conflict oriented, then it will very difficult to disseminate management driven values.
The open culture is reinforced because it is likely to conform to the present values that exist in the shire and so is more driven towards goals. Staffs feel that managers need to provide a practical impetus to change deeply rooted activities and values. The personnel function provides this impetus.

The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands has played a key role in initiating the formation of culture and change. She has been a very influential figure in the development of tourism and no doubt it is because of her leadership style that she was able to initiate changes far more convincingly then expected.

The supervisor of Tourism Southern Highlands stated that employees have a major role to play in culture and change. She stated that if the shire attempted to exclude employees, it would be likely to experience problems relating to tension, conflicts and competition between different values and attitudes.

She added further that when she started working for this shire, everyone showed a good deal of understanding and patience with her. She stated that she did not feel disadvantaged.

Furthermore, she stated that in order to change culture, change must be driven with full consideration of management and staff. Even if the commitment is present, culture change will not happen simply by implementing process. It needs to be continuos and actively present.

In the same vein, Dobson, William and Walters (1993) stated that given that culture is likely to be persuasive, it could not be assumed that any single change mechanism, such as a new reward system or training program, would be sufficient. Such a mechanism, if used in isolation, is likely merely to be subsumed under the prevailing culture.

4.12 Conclusion

Nearly all employees and the members interviewed saw culture as fundamental to their day-to-day work. Invariably culture is important and is supported by a set of concrete practices. However, no one had one form of definition. Some view culture as values, processes, rituals and ceremonies while others talk about beliefs and
behaviours. Because of different values, beliefs and assumptions it is impossible to define culture as a single corporate culture, which is particular to the shire.

This is primarily because of diversity and differentiation. The reality of organisation life is complicated. Different groups ascribe different meanings to their work and to the shire as a whole. Change is dynamic and there are no quick fixes or easy solutions.

As to values, Tourism Southern Highlands considers values an important component in shaping organisation culture. Values play a crucial part in the understanding of culture. These values are reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis and have various channels like leaflets, brochures, consultations, collaborations, delegation, newsletters and so on. As it was clear from the outset that values can not be seen but artefacts were, in Tourism Southern Highlands artefacts provided a symbolic representation of culture. The design of the building, office layout, material artefacts, and symbols provided some clues to the study of culture.

Finally, Tourism Southern Highland, view employee contribution as a major impetus to culture change and without it, its organisational activities would not be complete. Their contribution is vital. Tourism Southern Highlands takes pride in its employees and in being highly competitive in the market place – employee contributions are seen as taking it a step towards the success it aims at.
Chapter 5  Wollondilly Shire Council

5.1  Introduction

This chapter examines the same research questions that I have identified in the previous data chapter, that is, how is organisation culture defined? How are the values of culture disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, and what contribution do employees play in culture change?

In essence this chapter will examine the question via the research data collected on Wollondilly Shire Council in the area of tourism.

The issues covered include: historical and contemporary importance of tourism, shaping organisation culture in the area of tourism, definition of culture, what are the values and how are they disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, communication patterns and the cycle of responsibility, culture change, fears of change, and strengths and weaknesses of culture in the department of tourism.

5.2  Historical and contemporary importance of tourism

Wollondilly is located to the south-west of the Sydney metropolitan region. The shire traces its history from 1798 when ex-convict John Wilson, followed by George Carley in 1802, led the first explorers through the area. In 1895 the town of Picton was proclaimed as a borough, and the Picton Municipal Council was founded. Picton has a long European history, being one of Australia’s earliest settlements. First the area was known for its cow pastures, then as a stone quarry. Major Henry Coldon Antil received the first land grant in 1822. Governor Brisbane decided on Picton the name in honour of an old soldier friend, Sir Thomas Picton.

However, following the Local Government Act 1905, Wollondilly Shire Council was proclaimed. A new chapter opened in council history in 1940. The provisional council at that meeting set about devising the administration structure of the council that exists today. The municipality of Picton was merged with Wollondilly Shire Council. Considerable advances were made following the merger, including the
construction of recreation facilities such as tennis courts, bowling greens and playgrounds.

The shire's culture during this period was strongly conditioned by the founders, who had inspired a high degree of respect and affection among the employees. The culture was strongly rooted in the shire's tradition, its good reputation and image. The personality driven culture was reflected in the shire's management style and systems. Pay and remuneration were centrally administrated and management tended to depend on personal conduct and communication rather than a formalised system.

The economic base of the area was in dairying and agriculture. The cow pastures and bulled remained to nurture the wool industry of Australia. Although the shire is no longer a purely agricultural area, the shire is still proud of its heritage and today reflects the foresight and confidence of the pioneering settlers.

In regards to tourism, the Macarthur Association was formed to develop the tourism industry in the Western Division of NSW, and Liverpool was chosen as an information centre. Macarthur Country Tourism was dissolved in 1995, the council feeling that a strategic direction was needed to be able to compete in the tourist market. Tourism Wollondilly was formed in 1997. Tourism Wollondilly now intends to incorporate lots of activities and improve its tourism facilities, not so much to change the culture but to retain the heritage that the shire has preserved. Tourism Wollondilly prides itself on being very rich in Aboriginal and European history, tracing back to the early founders of the shire.

Each of the town and villages has its own stories and personalities. However, they have in common rural and country hospitality and these are important aspects in the future of the council's progress and prosperity.

### 5.3 Shaping organisation culture in Tourist Wollondilly

The physical setting of the office of Tourism Wollondilly at Picton is unique and depicts the tradition of the shire in its own right. It has a colourful tapestry and its historical building would easily associated with secluded surroundings of quiet reflection or team building activities. It is a showcase of rural living, surrounded by natural bushland. The office with its clock and tower stand out as a landmark in the
town today. The other department of the shire is not located in the same building; however, it is no more than one or two minutes’ walking distance from the office of Tourism Wollondilly. There does not seem to be any kind of reserved parking.\(^{43}\)

After entering the doors of the information centre, one has the opportunity of entering the reception area. The reception area is very nicely presented with a traditional outlook, displaying a photo of the founders and the souvenirs that the shire produces. The reception area is decorated with flowers and as soon as one enters the building, one is greeted with this token of appreciation. The officers of Tourism Wollondilly come to assist the visitors smiling, signifying a culture of friendliness and loyalty. From the adjoining room one will hear the noise of printers. The employees seem relaxed in the way they dress and address each other. Their dressing is informal; however, it is decent and presentable.

Having said that, it was a bit difficult to interpret the artefacts. However, one of the most important things identified was the office architecture of Tourism Wollondilly. The building reflected an allegiance to traditional values; however, there was also a culture of openness.

The culture of Tourism Wollondilly is shaped by strength of the generation, i.e. from one generation to the next. This is inherited from the early settlers in the area, and who inspired a high degree of respect and tradition which are still regarded as very important and have systematically embedded themselves in the culture of the daily working life of the shire. Over the years Tourism Wollondilly has been slow to initiate changes.

There is no tourism department as such; however, the shire has been based around a strong set of values and this has included the values of professionalism, civil values, probity, steward-ship, and public service values. These values were enshrined in the cultures of bureaucracy and paternalism.\(^{44}\) A bureaucratic type of culture existed, because the shire at that time felt that that rigid rules and regulations of an office

\(^{43}\) Concluded on the basis of direct observation in my study of its physical artefacts.
\(^{44}\) As of 1999 the shire has a full-time tourism officer. Prior to that, responsibility for tourism was in the hands of the corporate department and the shire made all the decisions. The values of the shire are traditional and old allegiances to the community are preserved and valued.
hierarchy were necessary to have control over the non-organisational aspects of personnel, and to stabilise the effects of a changing environment.

According to the tourism officer, a group of bureaucrats resistant to any changes ran the council at that stage. Most important of all at that time was that local government administration across the country had a more bureaucratic framework and Tourism Wollondilly was no exception. The shire tends to be relatively formal and particularly concerned with hierarchy, and has been very closed rather than open in its communications between managers and other employees.

Tourism Wollondilly consists of only three employees, headed by the Corporate Manager, who is in charge of the corporate department, which includes tourism. While these hierarchical controls are shifting by more control and flexibility being given to the tourism officer in terms of making day-to-day decisions rather than expecting the council to make all decisions, this is a slow process. However, the shire is increasingly being planned around the requirements of its customers and communities rather than this being a separate function; however, there is still some element of bureaucracy, mostly in terms of decision making. The tourism officer of the shire stated that management makes all the decisions in regards to tourist matters and her job was to carry these out. Some element of bureaucracy still exists; eg. management makes even today all decisions. The tourism officer is expected to take part on a day-to-day basis in the celebrating and staging of major historical events such as the White Waratah and other simple heritage events.

Traditional departmental culture does exist and this clashes with the emerging user oriented culture of the shire. It is traditional in the sense that the shire still every year celebrates the Waratah Festival, which signifies its traditional heritage, and where the old allegiance is respected. Also the shire is traditionally divided on strongly functional lines and internally focussed. This is evidence that new thinking is required. The tourism officer of the shire stated that a strong culture is needed to reproduce an image. Diversity, she stated, is a major strength in the renewal of shire values and in the broadening of management approaches and styles.

The General Manager has the same opinion and further stated that while there is a need for breaking up the traditional culture, at the same time the shire needs to respect the strength of the old allegiances as well as providing leadership around a vision of
the future. The White Waratah Festival is held in October. This is original to the shire and is associated with the moving Aboriginal legend telling the story of both the flowers creations and the creation of the shire. Respect for elders is shown and loyalties are respected. The elders are invited to take part in the celebrations and are rewarded for their achievement, and greeting cards are sent on special occasions. He further stated that there are dangers in developing a more responsive, flexible and new culture, and some of the questions, which ought to be answered, include whether the new concept is likely to inspire or motivate the staff? How can values such as democracy and accountability be sustained?

The Corporate Manager stated that presently the council is redefining culture and that a major transformation is taking place. Some staff sees this as a great success in rebuilding its image while others are disappointed. To some the new messages produce cynicism rather than inspiration. The new cultural goals sound good but in actual fact they don’t mean much. Everybody has different values. And they actively shape their own meanings and interpret the world through the values which they bring from the outside the world, as well as those which they learn within it.45 The tourism officer states that while change is needed, people need to be educated and trained how to handle change.

Wollondilly Shire Council has been developing approaches to quality in recent years; however, many staff have realised that this is not something that can be done in the margins or as an add-on to the rest of its everyday practice.46 The shire’s General Manager stated that the quality initiative had been successful in terms of changing the image of the shire, but that it had not been seen as having delivered much from the customer’s point of view. He further stated that for quality to be meaningful, it requires the empowerment of employees nearest the customer and this means changing their beliefs and values and making certain how changes will affect their day-to-day work.

45 This is the Corporate Manager’s observation and may not reflect the view of many staff. There may have been some hasty generalisations. My observations do support the views expressed by him; however, I have a few reservations and these are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.
46 I could not get much data on these. The data I gathered was obtained from annual reports and bulletins.
5.4 What is culture and how is it defined in Tourism Wollondilly?

Due to many unforeseen delays the information centre finally officially opened in February 1999; it will remain a pivotal part of tourism in the shire. Tourism Wollondilly has its elements of shared culture derived from its history and traditions. The history of the shire is a development from the original assumptions, strategies and structures produced by its founders. In this shire in particular, traditional culture exists; respect for old allegiances and for the leaders who have made this shire a memorable one. In the tourism arm of the shire, there is a mixture of bureaucracy and more open culture, bureaucracy in the sense that authority is still vested with senior management, reflected in strict rules and regulations. The tourism officer stated that one of the traditional things practiced by the shire is that policy makers always resist senior management setting targets and formulating strategies, instead of giving the opportunity to subordinate officers or the manager to cope up with the business plans. The leaders were not so convinced that the manager or his immediate subordinates were able to provide the best possible solution or plans that could assist the shire in terms of development.

The tourism officer of the shire defines culture as a way of people understanding each other’s beliefs and values, and how one is able to think at a given time. She states that culture is a continual process; it is complex, complicated and dynamic; and she further states that each person has a different culture and is reshaped through their values, beliefs and norms. Furthermore, culture, she said, is being inherited in the shire through the process of history and has taken shape over the centuries dating back from the time it was inherited. The organisation, she said, has a culture that incorporates the image of the shire. The volunteers of Tourism Wollondilly define organisation culture as some sort of values and ideologies that the organisation has to offer. They also talk about its rituals, history, ceremonies, and stories.

The Corporate Manager defines organisation culture as one that relates to people and the values; beliefs and influence one person has over another. The General Manager on the other hand defines culture as a rethinking process and adds that it is very difficult to define culture in this organisation. Culture, he stated, is very

47 These data are purely observational but are also obtained through interviews with
fundamental and has a great impact on the behaviour of people. The founders have shaped the culture and it has continued over generations.

He acknowledges above all that local government is daily involved in seeking to understand culture as a part of community life. He further adds that culture is about thinking that it is an issue that symbolises the balance between different sets of values and practices that exist in the organisation. He further stated that culture is not a single quantifiable thing. It is qualitative thing. Each department has a mix of cultures and tourism is no exception. Culture is a manifestation of different sets of values; however, an exact definition is difficult to arrive at. The organisation is operated by a system, which has been inherited over time without knowing why the system operates. The direction of the council is defined and the analysis is drawn which sets out what the council is trying to achieve and what is being operated in the shire. There is a community of sixteen towns and each town has its own unique set of values. There is no one tourism standard for the whole shire. There are different values based on people and the current life style that they are living.\(^{48}\)

The council inquiry officers stated that culture is a pattern of behaviour that a people carry with them and that it is passed on from one to another. This shire, they stated, has a culture that is more traditional. Everyone in the shire respects and pays allegiance to the leaders.

Others treated culture as having to do with beliefs, thinking and behaviour.

In summary, the way organisation culture is defined in the shire and in the tourism department varies. Everybody had a different opinion.

### 5.4.1 Rites, ceremonies, stories and songs

Rites and ceremonies are elaborate, dramatic and planned public activities that consolidate several cultural form into one event, thereby delivering a set of meaning (Trice and Beyer, 1984). When performing these activities, cultural leaders and group members use symbols such as language, gestures, rituals and artefacts to heighten the

\(^{48}\) The General Manager, Mr Graham Taylor, is a very experienced local government administrator, with more than 25 years’ experience in local government. Prior to
expression of shared meanings appropriate to the occasion, and often myths, sagas, legends or other stories reinforce these activities.

Wollondilly Shire Council has a number of programs and ceremonies, including the Heritage Week at Wirrimbirra and the White Waratah Festival. The White Waratah Festival is held in October throughout Wollondilly Shire Council. There is an official ceremony and various traditions are observed, and it is through these that the organisation interacts with the public. Messages are conveyed through various channels of communication, such as vision of the shire and logos.⁴⁹ People are invited to join the shire and celebrate the accomplishments of its heroes and to maintain their culture and tradition. On special occasions speakers are called upon to reflect upon the achievements inspired by its heroes and the development of the shire to date.

The rites and ceremonies may be classified according to their social consequences, including the ideologies they deliver. A distinctive set of behaviours is observed. The manifest intended consequences of all these rites in the shire are to aid individual members of the social system in establishing equilibrium in their social relationships. These rejuvenate or reinforce existing ideologies and arrangements within the occupations, refurbishing the status quo and making it palatable.

The shire has also a prize-giving ceremony. Councillors, directors and managers are on stage, enthusiastically clapping and cheering the winners. Following the ceremony, the council gives a private cocktail party to which the winners, their colleagues and families are invited.

Occupational stories and songs in the shire dramatise group beliefs and practices by depicting everyday events. It is a mechanism through which members of different occupation develop a sense of kinship with the past along with a sense of sharing their current experience, producing inferences or instructions about how members should feel and behave while performing their tasks and responsibilities. Often this is characterised as low profile symbols. The members dress in one type of clothes.⁵₀

⁴⁹ Tourism Wollondilly, a registered business name of the Wollondilly Shire Council, publishes the Wollondilly Visitor’s Guide. The guide lists all the programs and in a summary form provides information about activities and the like.
⁵₀ This is based on direct observation, questionnaire surveys and interviews.
However, their dressing is informal. They seem to be relaxed. The dress code is informal and casual. There is no uniform and there are any ties worn.

The White Waratah Festival is an original of the shire and is associated with the moving Aboriginal legend telling the story of both the flower’s creation and the creation of the world. This signifies the tradition and the song that has existed in the past and will exist in the future. The festival has a lot of cultural significance and will remain an important part of the shire.

In summary, rituals, ceremonies, stories and song were not as clear as one could expect.

5.4.2 Language

In Tourism Wollondilly the officers do not seem to use technical jargon. They were familiar with some of the parts of it, but they did not use it themselves. Actually they disassociated themselves from jargon. They were polite and addressed each other with respect, not even using nicknames. One common language is been spoken and it is highly likely that there will be any change.

Everyone in the organisation was respected and was allowed to speak their mind; however, no vulgar language was accepted. The General Manager stated that the shire had clear-cut rules and if someone is found using abusive language, appropriate action is taken.

5.4.3 Values

Values in the shire and especially in tourism have a very practical day-to-day impact in people’s working life, beginning with strategy. In a more practical sense, values are a vital essence of work groups and are crucial to an understanding of organisation culture.

Like any other department Tourism Wollondilly follows defined values in areas such as high performance, integrity, respect and dignity. Staff is perceived to apply those values fully and seriously. These are widely disseminated among the employees. Although there is recognition that the management style inevitably varies from
individual to individual, in general Tourism Wollondilly is perceive to be managed largely on the basis of trust, with managers seen as acting in fairness and with respect for each other. The emphasis on trust and integrity is manifested in the shire’s focus on values.

The shire’s General Manager stated that values are the basis upon which attitudes and personal preferences are formed. They are the basis for crucial decisions and the direction where the shire is heading.

Council is committed to satisfying the needs of customers by

- Communicating its vision and purpose to all staff, and encouraging their commitment to it
- Providing high quality services
- Striving to achieve excellence
- Encouraging innovation, initiative and new ideas, and recognising achievement
- Recognising the importance of teamwork and delegating decision making

By communicating its vision to the staff, the shire believes that it will provide a common direction for all employees and guidelines for their day-to-day behaviour. The employees will be able to identify, embrace and act on the values of the shire.

Mission and social structure influence norms and values. The mission statement of the shire in particular defines its business. This is inextricably linked to a strategic view. The organisation values are expressed in the mission statement. The business is defined in behavioural terms. The General Manager adds that vision has more to do with mindset, and he further stated that the people who play key roles in its organisational life construct it.

The vision of the shire is shared with the members, and the employees. They are listened to, and are informed of the shire’s expectation of themselves concerning their behaviours.

From the earliest days, the shire has placed a heavy emphasis not only on objectives but also on values. There is a strong belief that these values will be taken seriously at all levels of the shire.
5.4.3.1 Providing high service quality

Tourism Wollondilly is committed to providing quality service. The employees are required to commit themselves to customers and ensure that customer satisfaction is of the utmost priority. Such things as customer care, diversity and responding to issues are something that Tourism Wollondilly is looking for in an employee.

5.4.3.2 Striving to achieve excellence

Tourism in Wollondilly is growing but the extent of its development is not great. The need to break down old traditions and traditional culture, ie its bureaucracy, is something that the shire is very mindful of. Because of funding constraints, the shire is not able to employ more than two employees in tourism. Tourism Wollondilly is striving to achieve excellence by changing mindsets, values, beliefs and the like. The shire prides itself on its creative and reflective energies but change is very slow at this stage.

The shire’s General Manager stated that values is an abstract concept but have a practical day-to-day impact on working life. It is one of the essences of work. He recognises the importance of values, and believes that values not only have a role in the culture but drive the shire’s goals, strategies and policies. Further to that, it gives direction and guidelines for their day-to-day behaviour. Tourism Wollondilly, he stated, no doubt is heading in that direction but the change is too slow.

5.4.4 New ideas, innovation and recognition

According to the tourism officer, new ideas, innovation and recognition are some of the things that are to be embraced. The focus on this gives rise to shaping culture and developing shared goals and values. The shire’s intention is to improve its employees by introducing new ways of working based on team building, problem solving and a high quality of communication and collaboration. At present most of the employees are perceived to enjoy their work in the shire.
5.5 How are the values of culture disseminated and reinforced?

Meaning in Tourism Wollondilly is constructed through social processes; that is, the organisation’s members establish cultures and communicate to new members how to behave. Ideally the newcomers internalise these expectations and perform the behaviours expected of them. The social process and its symbols are strong indicators of organisation values. Meaning is derived from stories, language, and jokes, mission statements, and vision statements. It is unrealistic to attempt to change a culture by changing the values of all those within it so that there is eventually some kind of consensus in the whole organisation around a new set of values. Value change is not about changing the values of the entire shire but about a change in the balance of power between members and officers promoting different sets of values. The prime value of tourism is customer satisfaction and at the end of the day we have to ensure that customers are satisfied. The restroom, tourism information centre and car park are some of the symbols of the traditional mindset. Being a part of a team, sharing a level of information, and receiving the same sort of development and rewards sets one group apart from the other. This has an impact on the way the shire’s history is developed.51

Reinforcement of organisation culture in the shire depends on the following:

- **What managers consider important?** A change in leadership can bring new ideas into the shire, and if coupled with a strong power base, it can be a great impetus to cultural change. Leaders need to be able to persuade both the immediate colleagues and the whole force. Both the shire’s General Manager and Corporate Manager share this view.

- **Manner in which managers react to crisis.** The role of the founder in creating organisation culture is straightforward. The manager acts as a role model. If the relationship between management and employees is confrontational, it is likely to be difficult to disseminate management driven values or objectives among the workforce. Management’s efforts to foster a particular culture will probably result in opposition, cynicism, and the creation of unhelpful counter-cultures. If on the other hand, the relationship is more relaxed and there is commonality of purpose, employees will be more receptive to management driven culture change (Dobson, William and Walters 1989: 124). The employee’s behaviour represents the

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51 Some of these statements are generalisation obtained from literature about the shire while other statements were obtained through observation, surveys, interviews and other primary sources.
approved way of behaving. The styles adopted by managers reflect a combination of personal values and their beliefs about the organisation and its environment.

- **Criteria for hiring, firing and promotion.** Recruitment is one of the most immediate points of contact between the internal culture of an organisation and the outside world. The shire adopts a strategic approach, including recruitment procedures, compliance with guidelines and accepting hiring employees who are over and above others and demonstrate high skills and the like.

The staff believed that before the department can manage organisation culture, they must be aware of it and need to understand it.

The values are communicated is by distributing or producing a statement of core goals and values. The shire has recognised the importance of communication, and many have produced posters, leaflets, cards and so on. Within the shire, values are expressed through organisational self-talk conducted in formal and informal setting.\(^5\)

Brochures are distributed to visitors to keep them informed of events, and these are updated. The brochure was designed by Tourism Wollondilly on behalf of the Warragamba village traders for distribution to local residents. Seminars are also a very important part of the reinforcement of values, with the tourism officer attending the Tourism Managers’ Forum conducted by Tourism NSW, the Tourism Olympic Forum, the NSW Council of Tourist Associations’ Annual General Meeting and the NSW Tourism Conference.

Tourism Wollondilly has been granted direct access via the Internet to the Tourism NSW database *visnet* to add and update its information about tourism products in the shire. Trained staff and volunteers of the Visitors Information Centre also provide an added service to visitors and residents through access to the detailed information contained in the database about other regions throughout NSW.

The aim of the databases is to provide comprehensive information on tourist facilities in NSW; they form the basis of the public domain web site ‘Visit New South Wales’.

Consultation and collaboration is a very important part of the team building process. The development of tourism in the region is part of the collective process not only the corporate department is involved but also such department as administration
and environment. Staffs are given the chance to discuss their grievances so that they can explore what it means in the context of their own work, and so they can review their knowledge and understanding from time to time.

Having said all this, it is unrealistic to change a culture by changing the values of all those within. The shire’s General Manager stated that a change in culture is more about a change in the balance of power between members and the officers promoting different sets of values.

5.6 Communication patterns and the cycle of responsibility

Communication is basically about transmitting and receiving pieces of meaning (Alma Whiteley, 1995: 30). The shire and Tourism Wollondilly employees are exposed to communication intended to influence their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Communication includes oral instructions from the manager, written memos, in-house journals, and letters from the shire and conferences.

The shire’s corporate plan is one of several documents, which guide its operation and direction. It sets out the council’s aims and strategies over a five-year period and is linked to a three-year management plan indicating targets and performance.

However, in the shire formal channels of communication are complemented by a structure of communication, which attempts to minimise authority. Meetings of the tourism department are held every month. The tourism officer meets with the Corporate Manager and discusses developments, which then goes to the council. The cycle of responsibility is as follows:

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Figure 5.1 shows the cycle of responsibility and is a good illustration of the communication channels in Tourism Wollondilly:

**The Cycle of Responsibility**

**Wollondilly Residents**  
"The community"

**Elected Councillors**  
Mayor  
Elected by the community

The elected council makes policy and decisions

**Council Staff**  
General Manager  
Providing services to the community

Council Staff turn Decisions into actions

**Figure 5.1 Cycle of Responsibility in Tourism Wollondilly**  

The elected council makes policy and decision, and council staff turns those decisions into action.

Now as for Tourism Wollondilly, people communicate with each other in writing, by phone and by visiting each other. There is both a formal and an informal form of communication channels, with information flowing downwards.

These communication techniques are important. Schein (1991) stated that at the most visible level culture is manifested in the organisation artefacts.
5.6.1 Organisation structure

Behaviours and practices in the shire are shaped by the organisation structure. For example, the everyday patterns of interaction are shaped by formal rules, which set out who is supposed to relate to whom and in what ways.

The organisation structure of the shire is very clear-cut. There is no department of tourism as such. There is one full-time and one part-time employee working and they come under the control of the corporate and community service. The tourism officer is highly skilled; however, the area of responsibility is limited. The Corporate Manager is responsible for tourism.

![Organisation Chart of Wollondilly Shire Council](source: Wollondilly Shire Council Annual Report 1998/99)

The council has undergone a change in its management structure and appointed Graham Taylor as General Manager in 1998. Council and the Wollondilly Tourism and Business Advisory Board support the promotion of tourism in the region.

5.7 Cultural change

The corporate plan identifies the values and provides an expectation and places an emphasis on the type of culture that is followed. Currently much of the tourism activity is focussed on the Information Centre and the potential this offers for the promotion of cultural events and entrepreneurial activities. The Centre offers opportunities and challenges into the future. The articulation of the community's shared vision is vital for survival. The major change in culture planned in this shire is to achieve a kind of integrated planning that embraces collaboration and rejects the notion of addressing the communities by a disciplinary approach. The issue of a
shared vision of the communities, leading to connections between physical, social, economic and environmental factors, will shape or reshape our environment.\textsuperscript{53}

The General Manager stated that their way of thinking must change in order to be more volatile in the future. There must be greater focus on tourism collectively. One of the tools the shire focuses on is the White Waratah Festival. The waratah is an Australian native plant that is celebrated in Aboriginal methodology, telling how Aboriginal women first grew out of this white waratah well before colonial settlement. The shire holds this festival annually to make it known to the community that white Australians are not taking away Aboriginal values but concerned to consolidate one another’s values.

The shire’s General Manager stated that he attempted to change the culture over a two-year period through team development and communication training, affecting all divisions of the shire, including tourism. There was a training component in which the executive team learned communication skills, and to give recognition and praise. The training programs were linked to the strategic and cultural needs of the shire. Practical training was provided in techniques such as telephone conversation with customers. The General Manager stated that employees could not be expected to be customer oriented if they could not communicate effectively with customers. The role-playing exercises are important. In the shire managers were encouraged to view their operations from the perspective of their customers. Above all, they were urged to consider the issues from strategic viewpoints to develop personal views on organisational goals and values, encouraging them to identify problems and provide solutions.

Some of the changes that are taking place are discussed in the following subsections.

\textbf{5.7.1 Encouraging new behaviours and practices}

This is done in the shire by setting goals and targets, rewarding new behaviour, and monitoring and evaluating achievement. The shire has eradicated outdated control

\textsuperscript{53} This observation is based on direct observation and questionnaire surveys. The observations are based on a cross-section of the organisation, with Tourism
systems – a move towards more pro-active management. Now with the establishment of a full-time tourism officer, the organisation structure is flatter; ie it provides greater autonomy and devolution. The tourism officer has taken the responsibility for tourist matters and this in turn has given rise to a span of control with greater autonomy and control for the tourist manager. The rigid organisation structure is becoming more flexible. The shire still feels that it is fairly difficult to do away with the traditional bureaucratic patterns of relationships. Change in the behaviour in the tourism department is brought about by change in formal relations, supporting new practices, and rewarding new behaviours.

Culture change in Tourism Wollondilly is a matter of changing values and attitudes rather than teaching the staff a bunch of new techniques and replacing old behaviour patterns.

5.7.2 Espousing new values

It is very difficult to change values; however, the shire supports change by the following:

- **New experience.** This is due mainly to the newly appointed tourism officer and the newly appointed General Manager, with is a change from a traditional culture to a more entrepreneurial culture. The officers brought into the shire a different experience and introduced new ideas and visions for the future.

- **New management peers.** Joining a new team, becoming involved in meetings and becoming part of the group; more consultation and more formalised and unformalised discussion in the guise of, for example, morning meetings, team briefings or quality circles are part of the cultural change process. The purpose of these is to increase the involvement of employees as a means of encouraging identification and commitment to a group task, improving organisational communication and control, and soliciting group experience in problem solving.

5.7.3 Internal promotion and reward policies

The culmination of a number of years of work resulted in the introduction of a new council pay administration system from 1 January 1998. It comprises both skill-based and performance-based progression as per the Local Government (State) Award 1997. A large part of the introduction of the program was the training of workplace

Wollondilly my main emphasis.
assessors with more than forty staff becoming accredited workplace assessors (Wollondilly Shire Council Annual Report 1997/98: 53).

The pay administration system's progressional rules were also the culmination of several years of development and incorporate a number of other procedural pay matters such as higher-grade pay. Essentially it establishes principles for the pay system and the rules for progression. It has been designed as a living document that will be further developed as the pay administration system becomes established (Wollondilly Shire Council Annual Report, 1997/98: 53).

The recruitment and selection processes were also reviewed, and this resulted in the introduction of new recruitment processes and procedures. The introduction of this procedure has greatly increased the degree with which recruitments can be said to be just and fair, and the shire's observance of federal and state anti-discrimination laws, and has ensured that successful applicants are appointed on merit.

Employees have new and wider responsibilities in the team structure. All employees receive salaries based on varying levels of individual responsibilities. In return the employees are asked to meet specified production and quality goals.

5.7.4 Changing the symbols

New symbols are created by the use of new language, communication of new a vision, opening of a new building or decoration of an existing one, keeping an appointment and so on.

The newly developed Information Centre and the way the products are displayed shows the type of culture in existence. The interior and exterior surroundings of the Information Centre portray an image of the shire.

5.8 Fears of change

While the shire has seen change as a major development, at the same time there are threats to this and these are listed in Table 5.1. Changes in culture threaten people's self interest because they get certain practical advantages from the status quo.
Table 5.1 Listing of fears of change  
(Source: interviews and surveys)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual level</th>
<th>Organisational level – group level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Self interest – this can be reduced while there is a change.</td>
<td>• Threats to power and influence. Workers will not like being influenced by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very hard to get rid of a habit.</td>
<td>• Social disruption – people come to value their interpersonal interactions and don’t like them to be violated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for security – individuals hold beliefs and resent those who questions them.</td>
<td>• Lack of trust – the bosses become too bossy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of unknown – workers are not very willing to try something which they have never done.</td>
<td>• Losing jobs and fear of losing experienced personnel whom are an integral part of the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of retention – workers are afraid that due to the change they will be retrenched.</td>
<td>• The conduct of business may be hampered by disagreements and change might be costly for the initiators of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dictatorial and sometimes fairly difficult to follow.</td>
<td>• Cost expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do not like to be dictated to by others.</td>
<td>• Difficult to change values that exist in the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Their way of doing things is being challenged and this leads to frustration and anxiety.</td>
<td>• Different perception and goals – may or may not be suitable to many, and at the same time it may not appeal to many or vice versa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unless there is a commitment, culture change will not take place or if it does, there will be problems. The staff should be convinced that it is needed, know what it is about, and is willing to support it.

Having decided that the above conditions are satisfied, the next thing is to consider or develop the leadership that will deliver it.

The tourism officer stated that presently the shire is yet to achieve what they are aiming to achieve in the next century. The General Manager on the other hand goes further and states that the foremost thing is to educate staff and carry out the rethinking process.
5.9 Strengths and weaknesses of the present culture

By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the present culture, we could generalise the people’s reaction, how they feel about the organisation, obtain clues as to what type of culture is more suited to them, and ascertain their problems and concerns. Are they happy with the present culture or are they being dictated to by their leaders? This section of the thesis is only for the purpose of some general information and viewpoints.

5.9.1 Strengths

- Respondents are generally satisfied with the level of personal performance. That is to say that whenever the shire asks them to do something, they have been able to perform. They were happy with their level of work and satisfied with what they were doing. This gives rise to confidence and enthusiasm.

- Influences and controls are distributed across all levels.

- Communication flows are adequately shared.

- Experience with and expectations of the organisation allow for satisfaction among the members of this work group.

5.9.2 Weaknesses

- There is an absence of job rewards in regards to recognition, respect, provision for advancement, and for doing a job well.

- Staffs are under constant pressure and sometimes there is a lack of adequate feedback as to how well an employee is performing.

- A very tight budget makes it extremely hard to keep pace with day-to-day activities.

- At times some of the staff get frustrated with the change in culture and this leads to a lack of coordination and cooperation among this group.

- The work group does not know what is expected of them, or how their job fits into the organisation’s overall plan.

- Often the type of culture is bureaucratic, sometimes making it a cumbersome exercise to conform to it.

- The work groups generally feel that upper management is not receptive to ideas and suggestions from the people closest to the issue.
5.10 Employee contribution

Tourism Wollondilly is not a very large tourism complex and therefore at this stage employee contributions are limited. However, the shire recognises the employees’ contribution as an important part of the change process. They are an integral part in the day-to-day activities of the shire.

Given the level of devolution, Tourism Wollondilly believes that the human resources function has an important role to play. The techniques that are used to bring about change cover a range of personnel practices like organisation structure, recruitment and selection, communication, training and development, payment and rewards.

In order to change culture and deliver the shire’s long term objectives, an understanding of skills, values and behaviours is required from managers who need to work to the requirements of change. The shire’s General Manager stated that in order to change culture, the thinking process ought to be changed. It is the people who have the ultimate choice of action, ie. Whether or not change is desirable or a detriment to their day-to-day work.

To add to this one of the enduring truisms of organisation analysis is that organisations are after all made up of people. As to Tourism Wollondilly, a well-trained and dedicated workforce is an important asset to the community. The ultimate goal is to provide an environment that enables quality service to be delivered to the community.

It is people who bring about change in an organisation. The shire’s General Manager played a key role in initiating culture formation and change. As a result of training courses and his experience in the council where he was previously employed, he was convinced of the need to develop a more participative management style. The manager imported these new cultural elements from his last employer. He initiated the change in culture. The Corporate Manager, who is directly involved in Tourism Wollondilly, was instrumental for the change in the area of work ethics and a customer focussed environment. A more open culture was vital. The tourism officer added the same qualities; however, her approach was very customer focussed and receptive to stringent control.
The Corporate Manager's role leaned more towards a coordinating type of work. His primary role was one of giving direction, inspiration and support. Within the content of culture change, it is the human resources system, which has been used as the levers of change.

5.11 Conclusion

In general there was some discomfort in talking about culture and values in Tourism Wollondilly. Strangely, the tourism officer stated that the culture here is more traditional and the shire respects the old traditions and values. The General Manager's approach is more pro-active and has the same premise except that he has asserted that change is taking place, and that in order to succeed, the rethinking process ought to be changed. While there are the views are expressed in a different manner ie one view expresses more traditional beliefs and the other a greater focus on culture and change; however, they both mention values. Others employees and management staff also put the same basic proposition but in a rather different form.

They say that values have an important place in shaping organisation culture. As to the question of how values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, it is simply a process of communication, ie. Sending leaflets, newsletters and so on.

By and large Tourism Wollondilly has a very strong and essentially bureaucratic culture. This is reflected in a number of values which are demonstrated in the behaviour of managers and employees, including high performance, individuality and high ethical standards. Tourism Wollondilly has clearly made significant efforts to ensure that there is a commonality of approaches, ranging from a formal publication of mission statements and values. Equally it is clear that the shire has invested substantial efforts in maintaining key values.

Although the core components of tourism culture have been evident throughout its history, the shire's values are continuing to evolve and there is a recognition that Tourism Wollondilly is currently in a state of significant changes. One of the most significant challenges facing Tourism Wollondilly is to sustain core values while responding effectively to a tourist destination that is rapidly developing from a traditional culture to an open one. However, the change process is slow and it will
take a while for culture to change. This might be difficult; however, Tourism Wollondilly is adamant that in the years to come it will be able to meet the challenge.

A positive reputation appears largely to have been sustained, even in the face of significant changes in recent years. There is a perception that, even when taking hard decisions, the shire has aimed to treat its employees with respect.

And finally, the employees have played an important role in culture and change. They have embraced the notion of team building and of moving towards quality improvement. The tourism officer shared with her colleagues the view that the employee has a major role to play in change, whatever form or shape this may take.
Chapter 6  Data Analysis

6.1  Introduction

Having reviewed the relevant literature and presented research data on the two organisations examined for this thesis, in this chapter I will analyse the data and present patterns of results and discuss the findings within the context of the literature.

The analysis of culture according to Janet Newman\textsuperscript{54} is not an exact science. She states that

Because culture is concerned with the ‘webs of meanings’ it is not readily accessible to the observer. How a local government authority publicly presents itself - through its buildings, its publicity, its publicity and its general ethos is immediately visible, but the everyday norms and patterns of interaction (for example how staff interact with users, how informal reward mechanism operate, how the officer/member relationship works) need more careful study. Yet others – the attitudes values and beliefs – often only manifest themselves when challenged, for example by the program of change (Newman, 1996: 25).

Exploring organisation culture then means stripping away its different layers, like peeling the layers of an onion (Schein, 1985).

The analysis below describes the related sets of organisational elements and shows that while there are real differences between the organisation cultures of the two councils, a developed and a developing one in terms of tourism, there appears to be overwhelming support that organisation culture is not something that can be easily defined. It is impossible to define culture in advance. Organisation culture is a very elusive term and to define precisely what it is rather impossible.\textsuperscript{55} These thesis emphases that instead a working definition is called for.

\textsuperscript{54} Janet Newman is a lecturer at the Institute of Local Studies, University of Birmingham, UK.

\textsuperscript{55} Dobson, William and Walters (1989: 222) in Changing culture: new organisational approaches stated the same proposition except that their study lacked objective evidence that any of the organisations studied actually succeeded in changing their culture.
The question of how the values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis shows that there is a clear articulation of values as these are communicated through various channels of communication including postures, publications and page.

This chapter will also raise some interesting issues, such as the values and how they are disseminated on a day-to-day basis in local government bodies and the public service generally, and also the employee contribution to culture change.

6.2 Shaping organisation culture and how it is defined

6.2.1 Common elements and differences

Highlights of the study are, among others, the interesting and important finding of the study that none of the employees from either council have listed or identified organisation culture as a visible entity, which by definition is impossible to measure or change. Unquestionably culture within an organisation is difficult to change or pin down.56 Each organisation’s culture, like any individual identity, is made up of cultural elements, which have their own uniqueness, and it depends on the organisation how they interpret it, and what is needed and expected in the organisation.

Now having said that the data presented to us infer that culture is an invisible entity and is difficult to measure or to change, the study in particular supports the definition formulated by Schein (1985) to the extent that it is an invisible entity but not to the stage of seeing culture as an unconscious and largely invisible entity which by definition is almost impossible to define. The relationship between culture defined in this way and organisation behaviour and performance is unclear. When he states that culture is unconscious, there is not much information to make one believe what he is trying to say.

This conceptualisation is pretty good on paper but in reality it is not convincing and should be more practical. The reality of organisation life is more complex and

56 Alma Whiteley (1995: 20) in Managing Change: A Core Values Approach identifies this in great detail. My research strongly supports her ideas.
change is more dynamic than a model might suggest. It is not possible to produce a 3 step or even 10-stage program for bringing about cultural change, which will be effective whatever, the context may be.

Local government, according to the study, provides that traditionally it is strongly differentiated around department cultures with distinct power base values and professional practices. Meanings are construed within this sub–cultures but they also have an element of shared culture deriving from history and traditions. Janet Newman (1996) has discussed this at great length and this study supports her proposition.

Currently, local government is characterised by the intersection of administrative, professional and bureaucratic, and now managerial and entrepreneurial cultures giving rise to multiple loyalties and identities within individuals. This is understood as fragmented cultures (Newman, 1996).

As to the question of unconscious belief, first and foremost Dobson, William and Walters (1993) stated that there are two ways in which the commonly held beliefs that exist in an organisation are unconscious. Firstly, members may unconsciously process information that influences the way they think. And secondly, the conscious beliefs, attitudes and values that underlie behaviour may lead to success to the extent that they become taken for granted.57

The study of the two councils supported these in the sense that individuals learn those values while in employment, and learn these as time passes, and through the process of socialisation there develops a common and largely unconscious understanding of appropriate behaviour and symbols.

Furthermore, my study adds that these form a basis for the interpretation of meaning, which has a pervasive influence on organisation behaviour and is also a major determinant of organisation performance. In the two shires studied, it has been an ongoing tradition that the shire has to respect the tradition of the area and the people who are working in the shire have to transgress. Through the process of socialisation there is a development of common and unconscious understanding of appropriate behaviour and symbols of significance. The Waratah Festival held by the

57 Dobson, William and Walters (1989: 16) in Changing culture: new organisational approaches express these quite succinctly and provide case study examples to back up
Wollondilly Shire Council has a tradition that has been followed and observed. This forms part of the fabric of the shire. Wingecarribee council is not very much into tradition; however, the values of respect, allegiance to older people, dressing informally though presentably, and the image of the area is very much respected. Examples of these are that the information centre still keeps the emblems and antiques which convey the shire’s image, and the building have a traditional outlook, which sometimes provides a clue as to the type of culture that is likely to exist.

Furthermore, the study of organisation culture reveals that the key feature of culture in the organisation is that it is shared but also limits the extent to which it is shared. For example, the employees within the given culture are able to discuss and reach some sort of agreement as to how to think and act or behave in a given situation. Trice and Beyer (1993: 176) stated “that people do not develop their culture quickly or easily. They need shared experience that stimulate collective sense making.” When people live or work in close proximity to one another, they can communicate frequently on a face-to-face basis how they view the world and how they cope with it. This is in sharp contrast to Dobson, William and Walters, who stated that culture is not shared.

The study emphasis that in relation to beliefs, attitudes and values an organisation comprises beliefs, values and attitudes that are unique to the work group, the department, the organisation and what society expects. The employees provided the evidence of this themselves while they were asked to define organisation culture. They identified those as the common attributes and stated that these attributes are important.

6.2.2 Differences

The first and foremost difference is that the type of organisation culture that is best suited to an organisation depends on the particular industry and place in which it is situated. In my study the department was tourism in both organisations. The relative importance of cultural components varies from organisation to organisation, and the cultures of the organisation will also vary according to the differences in its history.
Tourism Wollondilly shares values like honesty, self pride and respect for the founders. These values are very much traditional. The culture in this shire reflects the values and the action of the founder. Much of the culture can be traced back to the founder and the family members who subsequently maintained it. The members of the organisation, the families and the like banded together as a kind of mutual protection that developed a culture of its own. The culture in Wollondilly never started from scratch. The founders and the group members had prior experience to start with. The founders of the shire imposed their assumptions as a proposed solution to problems, and groups selected something to try before the process of learning whether or not it would work. They had strong theories about how to organise for maximum effectiveness. Some assumed that they can ultimately determine what was correct, and that therefore they could build a tight hierarchy and highly centralised controls.

As the founders’ prescriptions for how to do things were adopted, they helped to stabilise cognitively how to deal with the new world, and they helped to structure the unstructured relationships among the new group members. The assumptions are embedded in a group. The design of the shire and the reorganisation it has gone through have provided ample opportunities for the founders to embed their deeply held assumptions about the task, the means to accomplish it, the nature of people and the kinds of relationships to foster among people.

The founders of Tourism Wollondilly in essence laid the foundation for the creation of the organisation culture. The vision and the aspiration of the founders as well as their values and sense of mission played a critical role in forming norms and values within the shire. The founders were brought to the shire and had their own stories to tell and own personalities to meet.

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58 The founders were the Oxley family. Though there is no substantial evidence about the founders’ types of values, there are indirect indicators of these. The information is derived from the archives relating to the history of the shire, and a fair amount of information was also gathered in the interviews.

59 These observations are based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include information gathered through interviews and the questionnaire survey while the secondary sources include the council’s History Bulletin and an archive of historical material. This information may not be accurate in its own right but comes close to a research ideal.

60 This is my generalisation; drawn entirely on the basis of whatever information I could get. Much of it is derived from secondary data on this subject matter.
The manager of the shire stated that as history becomes embodied in stories about events and behaviour, the story, whether in the form of parable, legend or even myths, reinforces assumptions and teaches assumptions to newcomers.

Furthermore, he stated that while there is a need to break away from the traditional culture, at the same time the shire has to respect the strengths of old allegiances as well as providing leadership around a vision of the future. During its long history the shire have developed a strong sense of its own identity and values. The establishment of this type of culture has significant strengths, those being the employees' commitment and that they feel empowered to deal with problems that they encounter. Wollondilly Shire Council is a developing tourism destination. Because it is at a developing stage, the trend towards a more radical approach is far from clear and is not yet advocated. A traditional mix is more suited here because there is still a hierarchy of control and an emphasis on traditional culture, and its degradation will have an adverse effect on culture and tradition.

Tourism Wollondilly, however, now realises that there should be a change in the way things are done. There is a need to change so that the culture of the shire will interact dynamically with its environment and be continuously reshaped through its cultural value, beliefs and norms. There is a need for a clearer understanding and articulation of purpose and direction of the business. There is also a need to build an individual commitment and capability by promoting employee empowerment and accountability and control.

Tourism Southern Highlands on the other hand is a fully developed tourist destination and its organisation culture is more open in its orientation, ie there is open discussion, it is open to new ideas and welcomes opportunities for collaboration with external agencies. The staffs in the tourism department are involved in external activities through placement and working with the community.61 One of the most contrasting features that the study identified was the shift from traditional and bureaucratic structure to a more entrepreneurial culture. This was evident given the fact that the Tourism Southern Highlands were marketing their product to attract people to their region and at the same address marketed some of the varieties of

61 Janet Newman (1996) in her book Shaping Organisation Culture in Local Government UK also talks about these in detail and some of her thinking is applied to
services that the Tourism Southern Highlands had to offer. This is entrepreneurial in
the sense that there was an ulterior motive to enter into a competitive market so that
they would be able to compete with their competitors, such as the Hunter Valley and
the Blue Mountains.\textsuperscript{62} Though local government is a non-trading concern, within the
Tourism Department profit making and the generation of income was encouraged.
The organisation of work itself is increasingly being planned around the requirements
of customers rather than divided into separate functions. Traditional forms of
authority and control, based on regulation, supervision and instruction flowing down
from the top of the organisation are less effective. They are less effective because of
profound cultural changes, with more emphasis now on communication, participation,
employee involvement and an approach to quality. For quality to be meaningful it
requires the empowerment of employees nearest to the customers and this means a
revolution in internal authority relationships. The research done in these areas is
limited; however, Janet Newman (1996) did emphasise this requirement but in a
different context, ie in relation to the move from a closed to an open culture.

Each individual has connections with multiple groups and has alternative
frameworks of meanings. The culture of the shire interacts with its environment and
this is continuously being shaped and reshaped through the cultural values, beliefs and
norms.\textsuperscript{63}

Having said that the results were clear at the outset as the department was
becoming more developed, there has been a radical change in its culture. Open culture
prevailed and individual approaches towards defining culture focussed on inter-
action.\textsuperscript{64}

In the same vein Janet Newman (1996) stated that the multiple interdependence
that exists between an organisation and its relevant environment increases the level of

\textsuperscript{62} A Marketing Plan was available which provided lots of information.
\textsuperscript{63} This is just a generalisation and may be disputed; however, they are very important.
\textsuperscript{64} This may not be a clear-cut distinction given that Tourism Wollondilly had only
two employees. However, we could draw a comparison between it and a more
developed tourism area, so there will likely be more interactions in a larger department,
giving rise to people making choices and having opportunities, and therefore there
will be no such distinct pattern. However, I could not gather much information on this
point and therefore have some reservations about my conclusion.
complexity further. Being open, adaptive or even productive change is a capacity that is vital for a local government to survive. Local government needs to be aware of the change values and the needs of its workforce.

It is interesting to note that both organisations stated that culture is very crucial to the organisation success and even its survival. If circumstances change, the organisation may need to change its prevailing culture to respond to needs. Both organisations pointed out that culture incorporates a mixture of everything and anything. It incorporates a structure of values, attitudes and beliefs that underlie the shire’s activities.

It is justifiable to say that the study of both shires’ tourism departments’ shows that one can assume that culture is formed by a combination of personalities, and through reinforcement. Each individual personality has something to offer and that has been cherished in the past and these values are passed on from generation to generation. Trice and Beyer (1993: 131) stated that organisation clearly has a stake in seeing that its members fit into ongoing routines and conform to the organisation’s expectations. The organisation introduces newcomers to its cultures and attempts to inculcate its ideologies, values and norms.

Furthermore the study showed that culture is transmitted to employees in a number of forms, the most potent being stories, rituals, materials, symbols and language. Examples include dress, physical setting of the building, language and traditional ceremonies, all of which shape culture. The study of organisation culture goes astray without studying an array of cultural forms, including symbols language, myths, stories, jokes, rituals, settings and ceremonies.

Although cultural forms are distinct entities, they most often occur in clusters. The close study of these through interaction, interviews, questionnaires, observation and the like proves that they have an effect on behaviour. It dramatises the level of expectation and illustrates the life of people so that we can preserve the cultural heritage and follow the footsteps.

According to Kunda (1991: 91) cultural forms are the symbolic action through which ideology is brought to life. The study of the two councils also symbolises the same.
When we start talking to people about culture they smile, exhale and display behaviour that one would not otherwise anticipate. However, they all have shared values and this was present in both of the shires.

The study has shown that these cultural forms have a very significant place and all form an important place in shaping the culture of an organisation in its many forms, shapes and structures. We can not neglect it. The study of these two organisations shows that cultural forms invariably have a lot to do with shaping the culture. For example, low profile symbols such as communication channels and everyday language in Tourism Southern Highlands give meaning to events. Because the communication channels are flatter, they show that there is a more open approach to communication.

Tourism highlands on the other hand had a more hierarchical type of organisation culture and low profile symbols such as communication patterns were much more in conformity with a bureaucratic type of culture.

Also the study demonstrates that culture mediates our understanding of the world, filters the complexity of everyday events, and helps shape our view of what is important, and also that there are subcultures that can exist within the same or in a different department. In both of the councils there existed subcultures. The tourism department had a culture of its own and it was different from the entire shire. Trice and Beyer (1993: 175) stated that organisations have multiple subcultures within them. Subcultures, he said, have the same elements that culture has but distinct patterns of shared ideologies and distinctive sets of cultural forms. The degree of distinctiveness varies, however. So, in summary, the study finds that subcultures are present in the organisation.

6.2.3 Towards achieving a definition – some background

The definition of culture found in the relevant literature differs not only as regards to what should be included in the definitions but also as to where the main emphasis lies. Is it a question of cognition's, perceptions, emotions, behavioural norms, symbolism, philosophies or what? The definition covers everything from cultures of common systems of values, beliefs and norms to a view of culture as shared social knowledge.
Having said that, while this is good the studies do not help and classify the concepts; they only reflect the selective emphasis that is placed on one of these concepts. Furthermore, the use of these concepts is arbitrary because some authors use, for example, the values in the same way that others use beliefs or vice versa.

Can this concept be substituted for another one that researchers tend to focus on when they talk about culture? Or do they stand for different ideological components? If so, which ones? However, this does not solve the problem of what, specifically, they mean. The meaning of norms as rules of behaviour is clear but not the meanings of specific values, beliefs and assumptions.

6.2.3.1 What is culture then?

So what is organisation culture? It is a concept, and there are no concrete ways to demonstrate what the concept is.

My study does confirm the view that there is no one definition of culture and very clearly that there is a multitude of ways of defining it. Individuals in both shires define culture in multiple ways, these being a system of meaning, a system of values, a system of norms, myths, routines and a set of basic assumptions.

From this perspective it is obvious that no commonly accepted definition of culture exists. However, the study required a more conceptualised framework as to how we define culture, and after studying the organisation, the study necessitated a working definition. This working definition does not tell us precisely what organisation culture is but it indicates that in an organisation there are multiple cultures and that it is appropriate to classify them into two broad categories and specify which category is more relevant.

This is the same line of thinking as proposed by Alvesson and Berg (1992) to the extent that he talks about narrow and broad meanings and what it means; however, my study does not treat this as a phenomenon but as a continual process. This definition was accepted because it incorporates all the elements of culture, and my study demonstrates that those elements are important. However, some are not important directly but indirectly they are and that these are part of an ideal research design. At the same time it is practical in the sense that it tries to study culture first from the
perspective of an entire organisation and then looks at a department in more specific terms. And also it tries to deepen the understanding of culture, how it is shaped and embedded in an organisation. More so it provides an important clues to the type of culture that may exist in the organisation. Alvesson and Berg do not show this in detail, however this thesis does and to an extent goes into describing each and every element in application to the study. Alvesson and Berg model is very important and I suppose a more in-depth understanding is needed. The key concepts are explained precisely in the foregoing chapter.

This working definition will incorporate both narrow and broad meanings. In a narrow sense it is usually regarded as a system which contains values and norms. In a broader sense the cultural dimension is considered to be an entire organisation. Figure 6.1 is a good illustration of how the culture is perceived in an organisation. I accepted this diagram after compiling the information and found that this diagram in a nut-sell was very important. Though however, not all elements were present but those, which were present, provided some important clues on organisation culture. One of the most important was the fact that this phenomenon can be used when ascertaining culture of a department or the whole organisation in particular.
6.2.4 Organisation as an entity

6.2.4.1 Tribe and clan

These concepts are examples of metaphors, which are used to capture the very character of culture. Ouchi (1980), for example, speaks of clans in relation to formal hierarchies (bureaucracies), while Deal and Kennedy (1982) refer to tribes as a characterisation of social groups with common behavioural patterns.

My study showed that the culture is treated as a collective entity and it is thus treated in totality. Its history, rites, rituals and ceremonies demonstrate the levels of meaning that the organisation is ascribed to.

6.2.4.2 Artefacts

These have been important in both shires as they provided clues to their type of culture, and these in actual fact shape the culture of an organisation. Physical artefacts included the physical setting of the building and its design and architecture. In both
tourism organisations it was found that the designs of the buildings related to the history of the shire, with both having traditional designs. Sorensen and Petersen (1989) also indicated that artefacts are very element and it provides clues in shaping the culture.

However, the major distinction between these two councils was the office layout. In Tourism Southern Highlands the office layout does not seem to differ in size, decoration and layout, indicating nothing about status and hierarchy. The employees seem relaxed and dress informally. The office layout of Tourism Wollondilly is very traditional and also indicates about hierarchy and status.

### 6.2.4.3 Cultural patterns

Cultural patterns included rites, rituals, ceremonies and celebrations. These cultural patterns were available in both councils.

Tourism Wollondilly seems more dominant in terms of preserving these cultural patterns while Tourism Southern Highlands was more in a process of change.

### 6.2.4.4 Collective mental framework and manifestation

History, stories and myths are all important and the study does show these. It often describes how the organisation functions and provides some clues as to how the organisation culture is being shaped. Cohen (1969) has indicated that myths are very important and he has gone in great depths in talking about it.

The way both shires were able to capture their mental framework and its manifestations was to see culture as consisting of values, beliefs and norms.

Alvesson and Berg (1992) stated that norms and values in companies and other organisations involve collective ideas about what is positive, important and desirable in the organisation. They further stated that it may be a question of studying relatively simple and superficial behavioural norms, but often what is considered most interesting are the stable patterns of deeply internalised priorities as to what should be achieved and what ideals to be aimed at.
In summary, in order to study organisation we ought to treat an organisation as an entity and identify the components that this entity is made up of. The diagram of cultural phenomena in Figure 6.1 is self-explanatory in that it talks about the various key concepts that makes up the culture. Invariably all these key issues were relevant to the organisation studied. While the developed tourist destination had a less traditional look, the key elements were present.

6.4 Values and their importance

The study of the tourism Wollondilly and Southern Highlands found that values operate at the most basic and fundamental layer of culture. Value is a belief that forms the basis for judging the desirability and guide members' actions. The study has found that culture manifests itself in the values held by members. For example, respect, customer satisfaction, excellence, innovation and fair treatment were some of the values that were important.

The values in both shires are expressed in a form of value statement. The presence of corporate beliefs is often a characteristic of the existence of subcultures in part of the organisation. For example, though there were subcultures, the organisation has a commitment to major goals and objectives, the belief being to work for the betterment of the shire.

The study showed that each shire had a clearly defined and articulated set of corporate values, which are widely disseminated among the shire employees. There seems to be a common acceptance that each shire is committed to ensuring that its goals and objectives are met. Both shires are perceived to be managed largely on the basis of trust and honesty. The managers appear to be acting with fairness and integrity towards other employees.

Tourism Southern Highlands is perceived to be more defined in terms of its values in areas such as high performance, respect, dignity and justice. Previously Tourism Southern Highlands in Wingecarribee Shire Council appears to have fostered a culture of individualism and self-reliance. However, now there is a realisation of this and management has embraced the notion of team building and a drive towards
competitiveness. The performance appraisal system has been refined in order to develop approaches, which are less arbitrary.

Tourism Wollondilly is no exception here; however, change there is very slow.

The emphasis on integrity is also manifested in the shire’s strong focus on ethical values. There is a published statement of values that covers issues like conflict of interest, honesty, commitment, customer service and other issues. The statement also sets out the structure of managing ethical issues.

In both shires efforts have been made to establish means of developing and rewarding staff. Salary increases are on merit and individual earnings increase proportionate to the cost of living. Previously in both shires employees were dealt with on an individual basis but now this is done on a collective basis.

The study showed that the organisation had a mission statement and this was of great importance to the shire. In both shires the mission statement contained a set of values that intended to steer the day-to-day responsibilities of the individual participants in the shire.

In Tourism Southern Highlands the vision statement provided an important focus for change activity. The mission statement included purpose, strategy, values and standards of behaviour.

In both shires “mission” was used interchangeably with “vision”; in essence, it described the goals, which the organisation was striving to reach. The research found that both shires had successfully developed vision statements or a vision in the guise of a mission.

If the values of the past are not in tune with current ones, a shared vision will need to be addressed. To relinquish, and help others relinquish, past values managers need to be skilled in critically appraising their own assumptions as to why they do things the way they do. Keeping the culture alive becomes the responsibility of managers and employees alike. Continuous reinforcement is an essential part of culture building.

One of the other highlights of this study was that values and beliefs was the important core of organisation culture, and if the culture of the organisation is to be
changed, the beliefs of the organisation are to be changed. This view is demonstrated in the study of both shires. The study has found that it is not possible to change an organisation's values and beliefs by changing its symbols alone. This is because there are lots of other things involved as well. Dobson, William and Walters (1993: 77) stated that in order to change behaviour, there is a need to change people's beliefs and attitudes. However, while it is important that there be other things involved, what matters are how symbols are interpreted. It can be generalised that a well-designed brochure can induce a sense of organisational pride in some context, while in others it can induce cynicism. The way it is interpreted depends on any perceived gap between the symbol and the staff's perception of the reality.

The General Managers of both shires stated that values are very important and that they lay the foundation for an understanding of attitudes and beliefs. Beliefs about an organisation's design and strategy are two additional pillars, which determine the boundaries for any organisational process. For example, in Wingecarribee Shire the beliefs about processes regarding people's relations refer to members' theories of action as to how to relate to and interact with other people who are relevant to the organisation. These may be insiders, such as employees at different levels, but they may also be outsiders, such as customers, suppliers or competitors. This knowledge determines the degrees of formality and intensity with which to relate to individuals.

In Tourism Wollondilly the shire needs to develop and enhance leadership skills or capacity as a whole, with a range of staff at different levels taking on a leadership role. The shire has recognised that devolving responsibility through teamwork and a shared approach to leadership will enhance the overall capacity of the shire. The shire will be able to draw on a much wider range of talents. The shire now believes that traditional forms of authority and control based on supervision are becoming less effective and making all those who work within such a system less effective. There is much reliance on attempting to generate shared goals.

Underpinning all these is a set of values about the role of the shire in serving the public and about the perception of its users.

The study supports the notion postulated by Schein (1991) that values are important; however, it goes further and claims that values have a practical impact on the day-to-day lives of individuals. Each shire has its own values and this is
incorporated in the mission statement. However, one of the differences that I identified was the fact that although Tourism Southern Highlands and Tourism Wollondilly both had a mission statement, Tourism Southern Highlands never thought it to be as important as the other did. Tourism Southern Highlands had little idea of what the mission statement should contain or what its role should be in regards to the management of their culture and identity. However, developing a mission statement is of fundamental importance to the shire. All its decisions affect the service delivered, the staff employed and the structure developed to deliver these services. The thrust of the mission statement is to set the scene for these changes.

The General Manager of Wollondilly Shire Council defines values as the basis for attitudes and preferences. He went on to say that employees hold values that are congruent with the organisation values. Wingecarribee Shire Council, because of its large tourist complex, stated that values have a practical impact and the interaction is important. The values were not congruent with the organisation but only with the department. This was due to the fact that the employees were to compete with other tourist destinations and this they could only do if they had their own competitive values.

6.5 How are these values disseminated and reinforced?

6.5.1 Common elements and differences

The study of tourism in both councils proved that values are reinforced in the councils by the strengths of generations as each generation takes responsibility for handing down its values to the next. This view was also expressed by Whiteley (1995).

However, in each shire there are culture changes taking place as newcomers move into the shire, bringing in a generation of new members. Through the shires' socialisation process new and older members learn and relearn the organisation and those who do not come to share their cultural assumptions lose influence and depart. Thus the unique imprint of founders and other early dominant leaders remains pervasive and remains long after they have left.
The major differences between the two shires is that the developing tourist destination of Tourism Wollondilly is very traditional and its promotions of different sets of values very strong. They are traditional in the sense that there is an emphasis on history that is adaptable to old allegiances. Tourism Wollondilly sees itself as pursuing equal opportunities with more or less vigour. More emphasis is placed on respecting the strengths of old allegiances, e.g. maintaining the cultural manifestations of the past, and this is demonstrated in its annual festival. There is less emphasis on the creation of new opportunities and to enter the world of competition. The culture is based around a strong sense of values and these are enshrined in the culture of bureaucracy. The production of new statements may appear shallow to some managers and struggling frontline staff. New cultural goals and values sound good but mean little in practice. Tourism Wollondilly continues to work in old ways. There is a focus on policy and guidelines.

However, Tourism Southern Highlands is more into entrepreneurship. There is more focus on strategy and continual improvement. The newly appointed manager of tourism has been described as very entrepreneurial, charismatic and visionary. There is more involvement of employees in decision making, and the strict rules and traditional control system are fast disappearing. A very consultative and open style of leadership is advocated.

How these values are reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis varies according to the council. Each job within an organisation has its own particular needs, including a variety of technical information, coordination information and additional information. Having said that, the greater the uncertainty, complexity and independence of the task, the greater the need to share or process information.

The manager of Tourism Southern Highlands spends a substantial amount of time communicating with subordinates, superiors, peers and clients in planning, leading, organising and controlling activities. The shire produces a statement of core goals and values, which recognise the importance of communication. The values are spelt out in a document, which is circulated to all staff. The brochures are distributed to the community to keep abreast of developments and activities in the region. The council produces the Wingecarribee Web, the Southern Highlands community newsletter that
updates environmental news for community groups and interested individuals. There is a regular meeting.

In the process of collaboration, the Tourism Manager arranges a meeting with individuals with conflicts, making sure that each person sees this as an opportunity to resolve the conflict, not as an opportunity to inflict harm. Meetings are held to provide good information about concerns and perceptions. Active learning and getting more information is essential.

6.5.2 Consultation and collaboration are important in both councils

While it is clear from the outset that both shires’ tourism departments have much in common, especially reinforcement and dissemination procedures as identified earlier, at the same time both councils are hampered by budgetary constraints and this impedes the development of their tourism complexes.

In Tourism Southern Highlands there is oral instruction from the manager as well as written memos, with face-to-face communication the obvious channel of communication. However, the council publishes brochures and other publications and on the Internet. Communications in Tourism Wollondilly on the other hand is more formal, and mainly in a written form. There is no opportunity for the individual to validate the information through personal experience or interaction with others, except through brochures and other publications the shire produces.

6.6 Cultural change – common elements and differences

In both of the organisations studied a tremendous amount of change was taking place, all of which was related to cultural management. Structural changes such as reorganisations, delaying, changing of values, people and decentralisation was some obvious ones. Employee management policies were reassessed either as an element of culture or to facilitate specific changes in the work place. The study showed that there was no example of cultural change taking place in isolation from other aspects of organisation change. Culture was seen as an important component of culture change.

Cultural change has played a very important role in both councils. The tourism departments in both shires have attempted to change their cultures in order to imple-
ment a strategic choice, ie to be more competitive and try to commit more towards developing the shire and creating an image, which is attractive to visitors. In both studies it was found that change was strategy driven. Neither shire set out to change their culture for its own sake. The study also found that in order to change behaviour people needed to change their beliefs and attitudes. I have stated above that culture change does not occur in a vacuum but is linked to an organisation’s effectiveness.

The employees in both shires held that change was necessary and the organisation needed to change in order to compete successfully in the market. In both shires change occurred over time and many staff believed that it would take some time before the organisation could see any major effects.

It is argued in the literature, eg. by Dobson, William and Walters (1993), that culture change can not be achieved in a short space of time. However, my study proves otherwise. Behaviour changes can be accomplished fairly rapidly; for example, Wingecarribee Shire Council has accomplished an enormous amount of change, specifically in the customer care area.

It was also evident in the organisation study that there is more than one uniform culture. A council organisation with developed tourism faced the problem of managing culture with a myriad of sub-units where interpretation of and variation in the core elements of the culture were the norm.

The study also found that in order to change the culture of an organisation one needed to change the common beliefs, attitudes and values that exist in the organisation. Both the tourism manager of Wingecarribee Shire Council and the General Manager of Wollondilly Shire Council shared this view.

I wish to add in light of the above a comment made by one informant, a manager of Administration and Human Resources in local government, that “we should not make the mistake of believing organisation culture change can be achieved by simply making changes to the organisation chart.”

He further stated that of all the writing on organisation culture changes, which run to hundreds if not perhaps thousands of articles, the major thrust has been the

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65 Mr Phillip Sutherland is the Manager of Administration and Human Resources at the City of Nuarlunga in South Australia.
recognition that organisations are organic, that is, they principally consist of people and therefore the achievement of excellence in an organisation is possible only through people.

The research makes it clear that organisational change is very important. Both the shires/councils have attempted to change culture over a period of time through team development and communication training. The methods they have employed have included skills training, management education, role-playing, participation, formal communication, one-to-one counselling, advertising and the development of a corporate image as well as a realignment of the reward and control system. Thus both shires have attempted to change their culture by changing the people; changing beliefs, structures, and corporate image coupled with some minor ones. The shires used lots of methods, for example, Tourism Wollondilly appointed a Tourism Officer and General Manager; people have been shifted, skills were learnt, rewards were realigned and a new image of the shire was created.

6.7 Employee contribution – common elements and differences

The contrasting study of two councils inferred that irrespective of how small a council is the employee contribution is very important. Employees have a very important role to play in the management and implementation of organisation culture and change, including selection, reward and induction. The study showed that employees make an invaluable contribution to the management of cultural change.

The research demonstrates that it is impossible to achieve cultural change without the involvement of the personnel function. In both shires employee made a major contribution to culture change. They acted as facilitators and often were the guardians of culture. Everyone was involved in some aspect of change though subordinates only indirectly through their day-to-day activities.

The study complements the study by Dobson, William and Walters in recognising the employee contribution. In their study they stated that personnel has a number of roles to play in the management and implementation of the organisation’s culture and its change. First, it has a role in making the executive more aware of the cultural implications of strategic change. Secondly, it has a role to play as a process expert in
the management of change. And lastly, they said its main role is the implementation of change through, for example, the selection, reward, induction and training systems of organisation.

This study also recognises the contribution the employees make to organisation culture and change. While both organisations do emphasise that the employee contribution is vital, the Corporate Manager of the Wingecarribee Shire Council stated that it is not important. Culture change, he said, is the council’s job and the employees are only to follow the commands of the council. The tourism personnel, however, do have a different view— they all stated that the employee contribution is invariably important. The shire’s General Manager stated that without personal involvement any cultural change would be impossible.

At Tourism Southern Highlands everyone agreed that the employee contribution was important. The shire believes that given the level of devolution, the human resource has a significant role to play in managing culture and the values the shire is committed too.

Moreover, as this case demonstrates, the organisation attempted to change both values and behaviour. In Tourism Southern Highlands the notion of quality was being used to provide a framework of change. Changes in behaviour were related to change.

To sum up, let me reiterate what Dobson, William and Walters had to say further on these issues:

Culture is an interlocking system, which involves all aspects of the organisation. In implementing culture change, personnel practitioners need to develop a comprehensive and integrated program of human resource initiatives. It should not be assumed that culture can be changed simply by introduction of, say a new appraisal system, new reward practices, or new methods of training. All these are likely to have an effect on culture and each of them could be a crucial element in the culture change program.

6.8 Conclusion

Culture is defined in an alarming range of ways, making it elusive. Some of the more prominent ones are:

• the social glue that holds the organisation together (Baker, 1980)
• how we do things around here (Ouchi, 1981)
• a company’s way of doing things (Deal and Kennedy, 1982)
• a hidden yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction and mobilisation (Kilmann et al., 1985)

There are numerous other definitions in circulation but the fact of the matter is that the definitions are far too elusive and that culture can not be defined in advance. It is rather premature to define culture.

A precise definition of culture is still not possible though one could see from the definitions and from the study of the organisations that there are common elements present in each of the definitions of culture, such as values, norms and belief. To add to that the thesis proposed a working definition made up of a combination of definitions taken from the literature review and the study of the organisations. The study emphasises two meaning, a broad meaning and a narrow meaning.

The second part of the thesis, ie how values are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis, is dependent on the organisation’s goals and the objectives of each shire. There was not much difference between them except for the fact that each shire has its own way of disseminating data, something that was reflected in its staffing structure. Reinforcement and disseminated procedures are intact. Communication was seen as the single most important mechanism of culture change in the shires. Communication techniques in both shires played a crucial part in changing culture.

And finally, human resource management played a very significant role in culture and change. Without them, culture and change can not be driven. The research carried out in this area is limited.
Chapter 7  Implications and Conclusions

7.1  Background

The truism of contemporary life is that organisation is inescapable – whether one is working, jogging, playing, living, dying or for that matter anything at all, whether it is an activity or otherwise. Banntz Charles (1993: 3) in their book Understanding Organisation stated that “while the omnipresence of organisations makes them an organisation phenomenon, it is their character, however, that makes them intriguing.” They further stated that organisations are symbolic realities constructed by human beings in communication (Banntz Charles, 1993: 3).

Kilmann et al. (1985) state that organisation itself has a visible quality, a certain style, a characteristic a way of doing things that may be more powerful than the dictates of one person or any other formal system. He further states that to understand the organisation requires that we travel below the charts, rulebook, and machine building and moving into the underground world of culture. Furthermore, he states that culture provides meaning, direction, and a social energy that moves the corporation into either productive action or destruction.

Unfortunately, despite the popularity that the study of organisation culture enjoys in academia dealing with business and its literature today, research and experience show that frequently it is overlooked or misunderstood. There is a lack of consensus as to what the term exactly means. Every organisational expert has a personal definition and many have written books on the subject. The truth is that organisation culture can be described in a number of ways and each may be valid. What is important in organisation, such as in local government, for example, when one begins to probe its culture is not so much which definition is used but whether everyone in the organisation uses the same or a different definition. Many elements go into describing culture, with its behaviours and activities helping to differentiate an organisation culture.
The concept of culture still remains an abstract term. The study carried out by Dobson, William and Walters (1989) identified a number of ambiguities that exist in the culture literature and highlighted several roles personnel management plays in the management of culture and the implementation of change.

Given the intense practical interest in organisation culture in the 1980s, the study of culture still has his problems. The literature abounds with numerous definitions. Whatever culture is or is not, the problem, as making further efforts in the same direction will not solve Chapman (1992b) points out. It is too fundamental to be solved through tighter definition not because it is a particularly intractable area of human affairs, but because the idea is tied to a particular context. Alvesson and Berg (1992) highlighted that many hopes have been pinned on the practical application of the corporate culture concept (see for example Kilmann et al., 1985) but unfortunately or fortunately these hopes have not been realised.

From the research point of view, there are things that we need to understand more fully. Let me start with my initial observation on the organisation of one of the shires.

When I started talking to the tourism manager, I was trying to get a sense of what they were all about. It was a bit hard for me to sense or interpret most of the things and as such I was not making any progress towards my research. The tourism manager gave me the tourism reports, annual reports, the latest brochures and publications. Even then I was half lost and could not resist the temptation of being swayed by judgmental thoughts.

However, once I had tapped into their culture, talking with people and understanding their behaviour and symbols, I captured ethos of shires, which helped me to progress. We had intense hours and hours of discussion and finally I began to focus on deeper issues.

Now what I am trying to draw out here is that in order to study culture, no matter how qualified a professional one is, one needs to go deeper and understand the core of the organisation and its people. Writing up research in this area without actually studying people’s beliefs and attitudes and observing their artefacts, which are all important, is pointless without a complete study of culture, especially in the public sector.
Given that background, the research brings to light certain conclusions, which are summarised, in the next subsection.

### 7.2 Research implications and conclusions

Culture embraces the structure of values that underlie all organisation activities. However, the finding of my research indicates that culture is part of everyday reality. Culture allows us to make decisions and respond to changes. In the same vein Janet Newman (1996:16) states that “culture mediates the understanding of the world, filters the complexity of everyday events and helps shape a view of what is important.”

In local government, because of its vast array of activities, both internal and external, one can not set a standard as to the type of procedure to be followed to solve given problems. While one could argue that there should be a standard procedure in local government, nowadays there is a change in the way local government administration is carried out. Organisation is getting complex and each department has some measure of control rather than depending on the organisation as a whole. In the tourism department of Wingecarribee Shire council, for example, the department has its own procedures for handling disputes and the shire never intervenes in these processes. Unless and until one understands each other's cultures, he or she may not be able to handle employees and customers effectively. We can not generalise the relationship of an individual. The organisation culture perpetuated by one person is not the same as that of another.

In the same vein J. Steven Ott (1989: 3) states that organisation culture is different for several reasons:
First, what has worked repeatedly for one organisation does not for another, so the basic assumptions differ. Second, an organisation culture is shaped by many factors, including, for example, the societal culture in which it resides; its technologies, market and competition; and the personality of its founders or most dominant early leaders. Some organisation cultures are more distinctive than others are. Some organisation cultures are strong, unified, pervasive cultures, whereas others have weaker cultures; some organisational cultures are more distinctive than others are. Some organisations have strong, unified pervasive cultures that are quite pervasive, whereas others have many subcultures in different or geographical areas.

The study supports his line of thinking.

Moreover, sometimes we discover things we did not necessary set out to explore. This research is a good example. While the research does indicate clear support for the notion that the organisation culture varies in the department, at the same time we are left with the question as to how they differ and why? It is likely that factors such as the levels of competitiveness and of technological advancement that exist in a given department or organisation impact upon the type of culture that is being studied.

The study of the councils shows that although there are similarities in terms of council administration, at the same time different councils have different ways of doing things and therefore the organisation varies. It was evident in the study that more than one type of culture existed in the tourism departments of the shires. In a shire with developed tourism such as Tourism Southern Highlands there was a shift from a closed culture to a more entrepreneurial culture. However, a bureaucratic type of culture also existed. Charles Perrow (1970: 50) defines bureaucracy as a type of culture marked by rigid rules and regulations, a hierarchy of officers, narrow specialisation of personnel, and an abundance of personnel or units. Now referring back to bureaucratic culture, Tourism Southern Highlands exhibited more or less stable patterns of behaviour based upon the structure of roles and specialised tasks. They were bureaucracies when it came to decision making in regards to policy since these had to go to council for approval.

In Tourism Southern Highlands the shift of culture was due primarily because the shire felt that their bureaucratic type of culture impeded development and did not conform to customer requirements. There was a general feeling that Tourism Southern
Highlands was not achieving its full potential. It was realised that Tourism Southern Highlands needed to gain a strong sense of openness and identity.

There was no doubt that many staff, particularly those who had worked here for many years, resented the prospect of change, let alone changes in duties and responsibilities and even the prospect of a job loss. The task of the manager was therefore to ensure that resentment and understandable trepidation about the implications of change did not obscure the potential benefits.

In the shire with a developing tourist industry there was still a bureaucratic type of culture. The shire has a clear and explicit ideology, a unique set of behavioural norms and approaches to management. Most of the organisation members believe that these factors were an integral part of the shire's early success. In this shire the manager was faced with the problem of managing the culture and adept to changes. The shire was quite comfortable with the type of culture that existed. In this shire information was disseminated by a top-down approach, ie the information was cascaded from top management down to subordinates. In a shire with a more developed tourist industry the information was disseminated by a bottom-up approach.

### 7.3 Towards defining culture

Having said all that the question what is culture and why is it essential poses, I quote again Alvesson and Berg (1992) state that the definition of culture is essential so we can differentiate the concept of culture from other, similar forms of organisation.

After analysing the various definitions of culture that scholars have proposed, I have found that most definitions of culture are largely the product of values, beliefs, norms and objectives. Thus in a nutshell, values and attitudes must be influential in identifying how a culture is reshaped in an organisation. My study also supports these definitions; however, the study embraced a more conceptual definition, which is very practical on a day-to-day basis. It is practical in the sense that it involves day-to-day activities and that the employees carry these out every day as part of their duties. The working definition incorporates a mixture of general and broad meanings. This is so because in an organisation we normally could expect to have two meanings. One looks at the organisation from the point of view of the entire organisation and that
relates organisation to its history and heritage and here one culture seems to permeate the operation of the entire organisation. The other has a specific meaning, regarded as a sub-system of the whole organisation, and this is composed of such common things as norms, values, beliefs and assumptions.

My research in the study of organisation reveals that defining culture in advance as an invisible entity is rather premature and unhelpful. Each department possesses a culture of its own and thus cultures differ. We cannot say in advance what is an organisation culture in a given department. A closer study of the organisation is needed. In the area of tourism in local government there were all sorts of different ways in which individuals perceived organisation culture.

In the developing tourist destination, i.e. in Tourism Wollondilly, the way the organisation culture was defined had more to do with conformity to tradition, values, history and rituals, and there was less emphasis on openness. The research does not show this directly but indirectly more emphasis was placed on traditional values and rituals and the shire as a whole rather than just on tourism. Here there is a greater emphasis on traditional culture, which rested on history, ceremonies, rituals and stories that have long being perpetuated and which retain a very important place in the shire's values and system.

However, the common attributes were its values and also its norms. Generally speaking, here the general meaning of culture is more in use, incorporating an entire organisation and to a lesser degree a more specific meaning, incorporating common attributes like values. This does not mean that they do not use specific culture at all however, they do only tend to use one culture that applies to the entire organisation. Tourism Southern Highlands on the other hand adopted a more open culture and there the emphasis was more on entrepreneurship. The employees defined culture as a system of values and a specific meaning has been used. This, I think, is due to the fact that because it has a department of its own, it tends to focus on its specific meaning of culture rather than the entire organisation as a whole. However, they do use both because one is contingent on the other. Tourism Southern Highlands does emphasise history as important for it provides a set of values that the shire advocates.

However, in both tourist destinations the common elements are values, norms, beliefs, rituals, stories and ceremonies even though they differ in their manifestation.
Having said that I proposed a working definition after analysing the two contrasting organisations, I took into consideration cognitive and behavioural terms. Behaviour has its roots in the belief about demands and constraints as it does in the personnel’s attitudes and the values of the individual.

I took the view that the entire organisation shapes culture in whatever form, and that any broad or narrow meaning is the result of common attitudes in some subsystem that span the entire organisation. In Tourism Wollondilly, for example, the entire organisation’s culture is very much part of the organisation. Everyone valued the organisation’s core values and traditions, which were articulated in the shire’s core statement.

Where the entire organisation was the focus of the research, it is more generally focussed and has a general meaning. The whole shire has one type of culture and this takes place in the entire staffing structure, whether small or big. Everyone contributes to the operation of the shire.

Alvesson and Berg (1992: 79) also emphasised the same line of thinking except that they have treated culture as a phenomenon. I have not treated this a phenomenon simply because I think it is a continual process and can change over time.

My focus was more to do with the common elements. My observation in the study of these two organisations reveals that there are patterns of behaviour in the organisation, including rites, rituals and symbols. The study by Schein (1991) was insightful. I have attempted to extend Schein’s ideas and included symbols as very important in the process of culture and change. While the research concludes that culture refers to the beliefs, symbols, attitudes and values, to explore culture the study of cultural elements like stories, myths, rites and rituals is all-important. The research points to artefacts, which are visible, but everyday norms and patterns of interactions, for example, how staff interact with users, needs more careful study. Schein (1985) postulates that exploring the culture means stripping away its different layers, like peeling away the layers of an onion.

Defining culture in this way gives rise to an empirical study. Culture flows in and around the formal structures within local government. The definition touches on the broad subdivision of culture ranging from artifacts that can be seen and felt to
invisible elements such as values beliefs and assumptions. It is more fluid and
dynamic notion of culture that is continous and may change over time. People move
they take their understanding and expectation with them and this extends abroad. The
working definition is useful in that it highlights the elements of culture upon which
tourism impacts may be influenced its established patterns, artefacts and values.

The research as I indicated earlier examines organisation members own definition
of culture as a way of examining some of the definition in the literature.

7.4 Values and how they are disseminated and reinforced?

The study of the tourism departments of both shires found that values operate at a
most basic and fundamental layer of culture. Both shires had clearly defined values,
which are widely disseminated among the employees. In both shires history provided
a sense of identity and the core values drive the shires on a day-to-day basis.

The General Manager of the Wollondilly Shire Council stated that values are very
important for it lays the foundation for the understanding of attitudes and beliefs. He
stated that in order to change the beliefs or the culture of an individual the employee’s
thinking process needed to be changed. In its entirety this is a difficult task; however,
it could be possible provided everybody worked towards the common good. The study
found that the culture manifested itself in the values held by its members. Members
infer values from the behaviour of other members, from written communication rules
and processes, and thorough the process of socialisation. For example, education and
training programs are aimed explicitly at imparting technical knowledge in a
particular occupation so the employees and members may be able to acquire new
skills and knowledge.

I agree with academics like Dobson, William and William (1993) and many more
that talk about socialisation.

However, while it is true that values are determined at the centre of the
organisation, in the council with more developed tourism activities there was a slight
change. In Tourism Southern Highlands values appear to be more decentralised and to
rely less on a formal system to drive the organisation. Tourism Southern Highlands
tended to prefer a more open cultural approach to the problems. Having said this, these arguments are in sharp contrast to the position enunciated by Whiteley (1995).

To reiterate values are reinforced in the councils by strengths of each generation as each generation hands over responsibility to the next. Values were expressed in the form of a written value statement. The values in both shires inevitably shape the business plan and the objectives of the organisation concerned. Value attitudes and beliefs are significant in both shires. People have joined the shire because of its values, which are seen to underpin it. Having said that, each organisation has its own particular needs and is committed to the values that the organisation adheres to.

The study provides that mission and values are interpreted. People make meaning by drawing on the symbolic world they occupy but meaning are construed through social processes and can not be directly implanted in anyone. Social processes, according to Trice and Beyer (1993), refer to the processes whereby an organisation transmits to its members expectations associated with their roles. In both shires social processes arises by formal grouping and socialising.

In the council with developed tourist activities, socialisation of new members was perpetuated through fellow workers, who influence their group and its members.

The workers learn the expectations associated with roles and values. In the council with developing tourist activities social processes were not easily identified. However, the tourist officer stated that the social processes are valued.

The way such statement are interpreted is dependent on the following:

- The level of involvement of people, including discussion.
- The way in which the symbols are communicated and interpreted to staff. The shire has produced a statement of core values and goals, and communicates these via posters, leaflets, cards, Internet sites and so on. The staff is given the opportunity to discuss the content of the message so that they can explore what it means in the context of their own work.
- The gap between symbols and staff’s perception of the real world. Meaning is derived from symbols, ie language, stories, rites, rituals, jokes, stories, myths and so on.66

66 These are my observations, not derived from any secondary sources.
The study also attempted to show that it is unrealistic to change the values of the people in an organisation who are directly and indirectly involved on a day-to-day basis. People have different values. Changing values, especially held by those in key positions, a change in leadership, promotion, reward policies, reorganisation and management education are some of the elements of change.

Janet Newman (1996) stated that in local government the leadership is fundamentally different because of the pivotal importance of the officer/member relationship, and because of the divisional form of local authorities. This, she states, makes leadership both a political and a fragmented activity. Referring to the two councils studied, I find this to be very true. In both shires the lines of accountability are complex and conflicts often emerge. The finance / administration manager’s responsibility is very different from that of the tourism manager. There is lots of interaction in a tourism department. People come and go and they demonstrate a culture, which is entirely different from that of others.

The skills required for a local government, or a tourism manager for that matter, depend on the culture and traditions existing in the organisation. In Tourism Wollondilly there is a respect for old allegiances; however, in the more developed tourist destination there is a slight change.

While it is true that leadership in local government is fundamentally different, at the same time it is proper to state those leaders serve as a model of style, behaviour and values. Janet Newman (1996) states that

As leader what you say matters; your words will be listened to very closely. But even more important is that what you do; what you give attention to, how you make decisions, how you handle conflict, how you manage meetings, your use of time and other aspects of minutiae of everyday behaviour.

7.5 Cultural change

Both shires have tended to manage culture in response to a realignment of their purpose. Tourism Wollondilly represented a fairly traditional local authority structure with strong departmentalism but there was an effort to change the culture of the department to adopt a more open approach. Across Tourism Wollondilly as a whole change was incremental rather than radical.
In Tourism Southern Highlands the change adopted was more oriented towards business and commerce. Change was designed to give high levels of devolution and autonomy of business. Moreover, Tourism Southern Highlands attempted to realign themselves to provide a strong lead in the issues of concern to the local area. A wide range of restructuring was carried out, with an open approach favoured.

Furthermore, the study has concluded that restructuring was not enough to bring about culture change. Structures and cultures interact in complex ways. It was found that in order to change behaviour, changing structure, corporate image and beliefs were important, too. The councils used a variety of techniques, such as training and development, focus groups, reappointment of the tourism manager and so on.

There is a complex interplay of beliefs and values held by people. Local government employs several different professionals working in a multi-disciplinary team. The task of explaining how organisation culture and professionalism interact and change over time requires a conceptual framework. Such a framework must show how professionals, individually and collectively, make sense of structure in their worlds and how organisation structures impinge upon professional understanding and action. For instance, in the financial department there are accounting professionals and they holding beliefs different to other department.

The study found that there is variety of cultures in the department of tourism. Each individual relied upon other members as their primary reference group, and individuals share distinct patterns of values, belief and norms for the interpretation of others’ actions. The department of tourism in local government had varying degrees of success, with members, both individually and collectively, making sense of and manipulating events in their professional lives. Individuals in both shires define culture in various ways; however, there were also some common elements. Both councils attributed some common attributes to culture as norms, values and beliefs.

My observations in the study of culture confirm the fact that the shire is a product of history. There are some unique physical artefacts though they are not very clear in identifying the type of culture that exists; however, it gives a broad and clear background to the type of culture that might be expect to be present.
The study itself has provided some important insight and that has been clearly demonstrated in my earlier chapter.

The study showed that there was number of different cultures within the organisation. The vision of the founders of the shires placed emphasis on the patterns of organisation culture. These patterns created and sustained a cultural system, which places value on its clients.

7.6 Employee contribution

Human resources had a significant role to play in helping in the management of culture and values in the company. The managers and their subordinates in both shires advocated that the employees’ contribution be regarded as significant, given that they deliver the long and short-term objectives of the organisation and work within the conceptual framework. The research demonstrated that employees make a significant contribution to the management of culture. They have a role in making the executive more aware of the cultural implications of strategic change and in the implementation of change through, for example, selection, training and development, rewards etc.

While indirectly the employees of Tourism Wollondilly were not involved in the decision-making process, they form an important part of culture and change.

In the two tourism departments studied, the personnel function had a great impact on the councils’ operations, both in terms of operation and of maintaining the culture of which both councils are proud. The employees have acted as initiators of change. Some of the employees aimed to change attitudes and values directly.

The General Manager of Tourism Wollondilly stated that without employees it is difficult, if not impossible, to change the culture. He went on to say that in order to bring about change, the thinking process is vital.

Having said that, the study complements the works of scholars like Dobson, William, and Walters and many others, who have contributed in some way, shape or form.

Tourism Southern Highlands also have the same line of thinking.
7.7 Areas of further research

While this discussion may be interesting, much of it is based on speculation that relies on the limited results of this study. Therefore the hope is that future research can explore culture in a more conceptualised manner, in particular, why and how organisation culture varies between industries and organisations. The potential benefit is that organisations, whether public or private, may be able to better understand the significance of culture and be able to apply this knowledge in a way that will encourage the development of a culture that fosters the maximisation of the creative potential of organisations in order to achieve their potential.

How does the nature of an industry predetermine the type of culture it will have? Perhaps it is difference in terms of structure or technology or any other factors that combine to make up the industry that distinguishes it from others. It is possible that it is this combination of factors that predetermines the kind of work-related values and beliefs that the organisation cultures within that particular industry will develop.

In the midst of this speculation it is important not to lose sight of the fact that such research is useful in understanding not just the role of culture in the organisation but more importantly, it is a step towards understanding how they interact.

However, having said that the thesis makes an important contribution to the research particularly social science where it is treated as a very contentious subject, the tentative nature of this definition and conclusion aims to contribute to the literature and to more closely align definitions from the literature with empirical data from case studies.
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Appendices

Appendix 1  Introductory Letter

Date:

Organisation name:

Dear sir/madam

Request for information on organisation culture and related issues

I am carrying out research on organisation culture and the area of my emphasis is to investigate how organisation culture is defined. How are the values of culture disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis? What are the roles of employees in organisation culture and change?

My thesis will examine these questions in the tourism arm of your local government.

At the end of my field work I feel that I will be able to set a working definition of organisation culture and how the values of culture are being instituted, reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis in a tourism department.

May I request you kindly provide me information as asked in the questionnaire and interviews? This information shall be strictly confidential and shall be used for academic purposes only.

Thanking you,

Vijay Kumar
Appendix 2  General Questionnaire

Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales

1. What are the policies of tourism in local government?

2. How do you see the future of tourism at State and Federal levels?

3. How do you see Wollondilly and Campbelltown councils in terms of their tourism development?

4. What contribution does your association play in tourism development in the councils and particularly those two councils?

5. What is the major problem the council is facing in terms of development of tourism in the country? Are there any cultural barriers?

6. Do you see organisation culture as an impediment to tourist development?

7. What part does government play in the development of tourism in the council?

8. Do you have any views on organisation culture in the tourism department of local government?

9. What are the ranges of challenges faced by local authorities, and in particular tourism, and what is the importance to cultural change in responding to challenges?

10. As a local government servant, what are some of the features of local government culture?
Appendix 3  Structured Questionnaire

Municipal Council

Conducting a survey with questionnaire

Organisation culture change is simply "any direct and systematic attempt to change the values, attitudes, perception or belief of a significant number of members of the organisation or one of the constituent parts." (Dobson, William and Walters, 1989).

1. Is your organisation involved in an attempt to change its culture in the past ten years?
2. If your answer to the above is yes please give the description of the change and the methods involved and how are the values of culture reinforced and disseminated on a day-to-day basis.
3. Have the employees contributed toward culture change?
4. When you are talking of culture, what do you mean? In other words, how do you define culture in your department or generally in the whole organisation?
5. Do you accept the contention that culture is difficult to define? The only best way is to study the organisation and then redefine culture? Give reasons for your arguments.

Questionnaire survey in more specific detail

1. What are the values the organisation is dearly committed to and do you think it is important and why?
2. What are the basic organisation beliefs, expectations and shared values which sets the environment for quality of service provided?
3. What are the expectations of those values before and after leaving them?
4. Do you stop and ever think about the type of culture that exist in your organisation?
5. What public or community values are held to be important?
6. What are the attitudes which underpin the relationship between managers and the staff?
7. What community values are held to be important?
8. How does your department feel about changes and what unofficial code of behaviour operates in your organisation?
9. How do people spend their time? (in or out of offices, talking or writing, in meetings in contact with users, walking about and so on)

10. How strong is the commitment of relevant managers and employees to implementing change including how credible do they view the change as being, as to what extend do they own the approach, how can commitment be sustained?

11. What are the fears of change and how can they be minimised?

12. What kind of attitude do service staff hold about the service units?

13. Are employees an integral part in your organisation and change and in what ways are they integral?

14. What kinds of team attitudes are prevalent?

15. How are the values disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis and how satisfied are you with these values?

16. Is your department committed to the major objectives of the council? Do you encounter any difficulties and if so, what are they?

17. Are the values and the purpose clear?

18. How can we link the values to practical principles to guide staff through change?

19. How effectively have you managed change in the past? How can you develop more effective approaches in the future?

20. What kind of approaches to change is best suited to your department?
Appendix 4  
Semi-structured Questionnaire

Second semi-structured questionnaire
This questionnaire will be used to guide face-to-face interviews and some of the questions that will be asked will include:

1. History of organisation
2. Reasons for change
3. Methods of change on a day-to-day basis
4. What are the values the organisation adheres to and how are they disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis?
5. Employment involvement in organisation culture
6. And all other relevant information.

Using the questions
Use the following scale:
(1) Disagree strongly
(2) Disagree
(3) Neither agree nor disagree
(4) Agree
(5) Agree strongly

1. Employees have a very important contribution to make in organisation culture and change.
2. Culture refers to the underlying values, beliefs, and principles that serve as a foundation for an organisation's management system as well as a set of management practices and behaviours that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles (Denison, 1990).
3. In local government there is no exact definition of organisation culture. Therefore you can't define culture in advance. One has to understand how culture is embedded in the organisation.
4. The department of tourism has a culture of its own which varies from department to department. Management or administration or for that matter the accounting department will have different culture.
5. Cultures are complex and layered. There is a problem about talking of a single organisation culture.
6. "Organisations tend to be seen in terms of a single 'corporate culture', which is particular to an organisation, but relatively undifferentiated within it. This holistic picture is flawed since it does not encompass differentiation and diversity. The assumption is that this unified corporate identity can be imposed on an entire organisation." (Janet Newman 1996: 20)

7. Tourism department is no different to any other department except that it has a complex culture whereas the others do not.

8. This organisation has a very strong community focus.

9. The department is subdivided into units, each responsible for its business.

10. There is a large degree of consensus around corporate values and goals.

11. Staff at all levels tends to be comfortable working across boundaries within the organisation.

12. Local authorities need to develop and enhance the leadership capacity of the organisation as a whole.

13. Symbols play an important part in sending signals to the organisation.

14. Changing values, beliefs and attitudes often means changing people, especially those in key positions. Recruitment, selection and in many cases the way in which redundancy is organised are then an integral part of any cultural change strategy.

15. When it comes to decision making you are also involved. I think this is good practice.

16. Tourism is a major contributor of income to this council.

17. Values, attitudes and beliefs are very significant in your department. People have joined your department, a local authority or one of its professions because of the values, which are seen to underpin the organisation or profession.

18. At the heart of any cultural change lies a redefinition of values or purpose.
Appendix 5  

Interview Analysis

Analysing your culture

1. What words would you use to describe the culture you work in?
2. What is important about the history? How does this influence the way it works today?
3. What are the strength and weakness of the culture you work in?
4. How well does it handle change?
5. How does your culture respond to new perspectives or ideas from within?
6. How do you think the values of culture are disseminated and reinforced on a day-to-day basis?
ORGANISATION CULTURE:
DEFINITION, VALUES, CHANGE AND
PARTICIPATION IN TWO SHIRES

By
Vijay Kumar

A thesis
presented to the
University of Western Sydney Macarthur
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Masters in Commerce (Honours)

December, 2000

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

(Signature)
Abstract

Despite the large number of studies of organisation culture, there are still gaps in the current literature, in particular concerning the way in which culture is defined, how values are disseminated and reinforced, and how employees contribute to culture change.

This thesis examines these gaps via research carried out in two local councils in NSW, namely Wollondilly and Wingecarribee Shire Councils, specifically focusing on their tourism departments. The data for this study comprises interviews, questionnaires, surveys, personal observation and secondary sources. The study demonstrates council staff's views on culture, and how culture is defined by and embedded in an organisation.

Through examining the organisation members' own views of culture, values and their participation, the thesis aims to contribute to the literature on organisation culture by more closely aligning definitions from the literature with empirical data from case studies of organisations.
Acknowledgments

I am deeply in debt to my Principal Supervisor, Dr Greg Teal, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. Busy as he is, he always seemed to have time whenever I needed his help. He extended his support and encouragement throughout my work and at times went beyond the limits of professional duty to give me much needed constructive guidance and comments on successive drafts of this thesis. He has taken much pain to improve on the design and structure of my thesis. I am grateful for his support and contribution.

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I also owe a debt of gratitude to Wingecarribee Shire Council and Wollondilly Shire Council for providing me with an opportunity to undertake this study. My thanks to the entire teams of the tourism arms of both shire councils, and to the shire staff for providing me with support in the form of their views, ideas and responses to my questions.

Last but not the least, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the members of my family. Without their love and encouragement life would have been intolerable. I would therefore like to dedicate this thesis to my family. And finally to those whose names are not included here but who assisted me in one form or another. I sincerely thank them all. Of the innumerable qualities of everyone who assisted me, I most appreciated the extension of selfless help to me whenever it was needed.
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