

# DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL CULTURE

The Ministry of Education is implementing some new regulations for school planning and reporting called *Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together for Ākonga Success: Our School, Our Community*. This is the result of the new framework for planning and reporting which came into effect in early 2023 through the Education and Training Act 2020. This will necessitate revisiting your planning and strategy documents and may impact on what the school/kura does and how it is managed to achieve its vision.

An important management tool is identifying what your current school/kura culture is and developing a strategy and plan to align that culture, so that it assists in achieving the organisational purpose, vision, and values. This resource will present a tool for unpacking your current culture, allowing you to plan the changes to develop the desired culture.

## WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE?

Organisational culture can be described as, *"a pattern of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours which permeates any organisation and determines 'how we do things round here'"*.<sup>1</sup>

The organisational culture reflects how the school/kura operates and determines all aspects, from who gets employed, to how staff and students are managed, through to ceremonial matters. The culture has a significant impact on how, and if, a school/kura fulfills its vision.

Beare et al., developed a conceptual framework which is based upon two subgroups of cultural elements: *'Tangible expressions and symbolism'* and *'Conceptual intangible foundations'*<sup>2</sup>. The uniqueness of the culture is derived from the combination of the elements. This combination and dynamic interaction are crucial in analysing culture, and therefore the elements cannot be considered in isolation. The framework below has been adapted to reflect the cultural elements in a typical Aotearoa school/kura.

### Tangible Expressions and Symbolisms

#### Conceptual/Verbal Manifestations

- Planning Framework\*
- Curriculum Plans
- Annual Reports
- Language/Metaphors
- Management Structures
- Accountability Structures
- Organisational Stories
- Organisational Heroes

#### Behavioural Manifestations

- Rituals
- Ceremonial Matters
- Staff Practices, Engagement, Sanctions, Rewards
- Operational Procedures
- Policies, Practices, Financial, Budgeting
- Community Interaction, Engagement

#### Visual/Material Manifestations

- Physical Environment
- Artefacts and Memorabilia
- Logo, Marketing, Signage
- Dress Patterns, Uniforms

### Conceptual Intangible Foundations

Purpose, Vision, Values, Graduate Profile

\* Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together for Ākonga Success: Our School, Our Community



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The aim is to develop a strong, coordinated culture, where there is alignment between the intangible, foundational elements, and the tangible, outward expressions, and symbols. We are seeking an organisational culture that results in the desired individual and organisational behaviours being expressed.

The actual practices and visible displays of the culture should align with the purpose, vision, and values of the school/kura. For example, we may state that our values are *excellence* and *respect*, but we accept staff behaviour that does not role model this and our student management policies and practices are punitive and not enabling.

 **HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK**

The following are suggested steps that may be utilised to identify your current situation and a plan to move towards your desired organisational culture.

- Ensure the conceptual framework you use reflects the correct cultural elements of your school/kura. Adapt it to reflect your unique situation with cultural elements that are central to your organisational culture.
- Confirm that the purpose, the vision, and the values do not need reviewing and that they are easy to articulate and provide the guidance required for the school/kura and its community.
- Examine each of the tangible expression and symbolism elements to identify whether they align with the purpose, the vision, and the values. Do not forget that these elements are dynamic and work together and can't be considered in isolation.
- It is recommended that when you undertake this step, include staff and the wider whānau of the school/kura, as we as leaders often hold a certain perspective, where a collective perspective may be more accurate.
- Develop a plan to align the elements as required. For example, you may make changes to your staff practices to ensure they reflect the value of *excellence*, but you may also need to think about accepted dress patterns and behaviours.
- Please note - aligning the cultural elements is not a short-term fix and will take time and require continual adjustment as there may be unforeseen detrimental impacts that may need to be considered.
- Make culture a regular agenda item for staff meetings so that it becomes a collective commitment and allows staff input into required adjustments.

1. Marsh and Beardsmore, 1985, p.g. 69

2. Beare, H., Coldwell, B. J., & Millikan, R. H. (1989). *Creating an excellent school, some new management techniques*. London: Routledge

