

Course 10:
**Methods and Tools for Analyzing & Diagnosing Organizational /
corporate Culture**

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Lectures for first-year Master's students in Business Management.

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1. Introduction: Why Diagnose Organizational Culture?

Organizations diagnose culture to:

- Understand "**how things really work**" beyond formal charts.
- Identify cultural strengths that support performance.
- Detect **misalignments** (between values, behaviours, systems).
- Support transformations and change initiatives.
- Reduce resistance and improve engagement.
- Predict risks (conflicts, turnover, low innovation, toxic behaviors).

Culture diagnosis = a structured investigation of visible and invisible cultural elements.

2. What to Analyze? The Two Dimensions of Culture

Culture diagnosis examines:

A. Observable Elements (Surface Level – “Artifacts”)

- Dress code
- Office layout
- Rituals & ceremonies
- Communication patterns
- Symbols, logos
- Stories, myths

B. Invisible Elements (Deep Level – “Values & Assumptions”)

- Beliefs about leadership
- Attitudes toward risk, innovation
- Power distribution
- Norms about collaboration
- Views on time (speed, urgency)

Based on **Edgar Schein’s three levels of culture.**

3. Main Methods of Diagnosing Culture

A. Qualitative Tools

1. Observation (Direct or Participant Observation)

- Used to capture behaviors in real time.

What to observe:

- Meetings
- Work routines
- Interactions between hierarchy & staff
- Office arrangement
- Non-verbal communication

Strengths: Rich, contextual

Limits: Subjective, time-consuming

2. Individual Interviews

- Semi-structured interviews are the most common tool.

Examples of guiding questions:

- “What behaviors are rewarded here?”
- “How do people react to mistakes?”
- “What makes someone successful in this organization?”
- “Describe the leadership style.”

Strengths: Access to deep assumptions

Limits: Social desirability bias

3. Focus Groups

- Useful for comparing perceptions across teams or hierarchy levels.

Applications:

- Comparing departments
- Understanding subcultures
- Validating findings from interviews
- **What is a Focus Group?**

A **focus group** is a **guided group discussion** with **6 to 12 participants**, led by a trained facilitator, to explore their perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and opinions about a specific topic.

- It is a **qualitative research method** used to collect **in-depth, collective insights** that interviews or surveys alone cannot capture.

In organizational culture, focus groups help understand **shared norms, unwritten rules, and collective experiences.**

3. How a Focus Group Works: Step-by-Step

Step 1 — Define the objective

Example:

- Understand employees' perceptions of leadership
- Diagnose resistance to change
- Identify cultural strengths and weaknesses

Step 2 — Select participants

Typically:

- 6–12 people
- Preferably from same level/department (to avoid hierarchy pressure)

Avoid mixing:

- Managers with frontline staff
- New employees with founders
- Conflicting teams

Step 3 — Prepare the discussion guide

A set of open-ended questions.

Example for culture:

- How would you describe the way things are done here?
- What behaviors are valued or rewarded?
- What frustrates employees the most?
- What does a “successful employee” look like in this company?

Step 4 — Conduct the session (60–90 mins)

A facilitator ensures:

- Everyone speaks
- No one dominates
- The discussion stays on topic
- A safe environment (confidentiality)

Tools: audio recording, notes, flipchart.

Step 5 — Analyze the data

Look for:

- Repeated themes
- Common perceptions
- Contradictions
- Emotionally charged topics
- Indicators of subcultures

Step 6 — Report results

Typical outputs:

- Main themes (strengths/weaknesses)
- Culture map
- Quotations illustrating key insights
- Recommendations

4. Document Analysis

Analyzing:

- Company policies
- Internal communication
- Training materials
- Corporate values statements
- HR policies
- Website & social media

Often reveals the **espoused values** vs **practices**.

B. Quantitative Tools

1. Surveys & Questionnaires

- Most used for measuring perceptions at scale.

Examples:

- OCAI (Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument – Cameron & Quinn)
- Denison Organizational Culture Survey
- Hofstede Multi-focus model questionnaire

Strengths: Comparable, scalable, statistically analyzable

Limits: Generic, may miss subtle factors

2. Cultural Metrics & KPIs

Indirect indicators of culture:

- Engagement rates
- Turnover levels
- Absenteeism
- Innovation rates
- Number of suggestions per employee
- Customer satisfaction
- Time to decision-making

Helps quantify cultural health.

Cultural Metrics = measurable indicators that reflect different aspects of organizational culture.

KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) = specific metrics used to evaluate how effectively the culture supports organizational goals.

C. Mixed Methods

Combining qualitative (interviews) with quantitative (surveys) gives a **complete** picture.

Example:

- First interviews → identify themes
- Survey → measure their intensity
- Focus group → validate contradictions
- Observation → check alignment with behaviors

4. Diagnostic Frameworks & Models

1. Schein's Model (3 Levels)

- **Artifacts** (visible)
- **Espoused values** (declared)
- **Basic assumptions** (invisible, unconscious)

Helps explain contradictions between what an organization says vs what it actually does.

2. Hofstede Multi-Focus Model

Measures 6 cultural dimensions at organizational level:

- Process vs Results
- Employee vs Job
- Parochial vs Professional
- Open vs Closed system
- Loose vs Tight control
- Normative vs Pragmatic orientation

Used to compare **subcultures** and **international subsidiaries**.

3. Competing Values Framework (CVF) – OCAI

Classifies culture into 4 types:

- **Clan** (collaborative)
- **Adhocracy** (creative)
- **Market** (competitive)
- **Hierarchy** (control)

Great for mapping desired vs current culture.

4. Denison Model

Links culture to performance outcomes:

- Mission
- Consistency
- Involvement
- Adaptability

Shows which cultural traits drive performance.

5. Practical Steps of a Culture Diagnosis

A complete diagnosis often follows **7 steps**:

1. Define objectives

- E.g., understand resistance to change, improve innovation, align with strategy.

2. Select tools

- Interviews, OCAI, observation, document analysis...

3. Collect data

4. Analyze themes

- Identify:
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Contradictions
- Subcultures
- Misalignments

5. Validate with stakeholders

- Workshops, feedback sessions.

6. Produce a culture map

- Visual representation of cultural elements.

7. Recommend action plan

- Leadership model, rituals, HR practices, communication...

6. Common Results of Culture Diagnosis

We learn to spot:

✓ Cultural strengths

- Trust
- Collaboration
- High learning culture
- Customer focus

✓ Cultural weaknesses

- Lack of communication
- Fear culture
- Resistance to innovation
- Silos

✓ Misalignments

- Values vs behaviors
- Strategy vs culture
- Leadership vs employees
- Formal vs informal practices

7. Summary – Key Takeaways

- Culture diagnosis uncovers the real functioning of the organization.
- Tools include **observation, interviews, surveys, documents, and KPIs.**
- Models help structure the analysis: *Schein, Hofstede, CVF, Denison.*

A successful diagnosis identifies **strengths, weaknesses, subcultures, misalignments,** and proposes **aligned changes.**