CHANGING OUR SCHOOLS

Full reference of paper	Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996) Changing Our Schools, (Buckingham, Open University Press) Chapter 11: Evaluate what you value
Aims purpose of paper	
Method and sample (if applicable).	
Key findings/ideas presented	School culture plays a powerful role in changing schools. Any attempt to improve a school that does not address its organisational conditions will be doomed to tinkering. • Culture is difficult to define but simply put is ' the way things are done around here': metaphor, customs, rituals, ceremonies, myths, symbols, stories and humour are all facets. • Schools are shaped by their history, context and the people within them. They are also shaped by external political and economic forces and changes in national or local education policies. Cultures are also created by their participants and so change as they change. If there is also a cohort of long-standing participants then cultures can be paradoxically both static and dynamic. • Culture is linked to structure but structures can be changed without any necessarily impact on culture. Similar structures between schools will also not necessarily result in similar cultures. • Several typologies have been used to describe/label different idealised types of school culture. Stoll and Fink have developed a matrix (see PPT) which classifies schools as one of five types: moving; (effective in value added and the people working within them work together to respond to their changing contexts and to keep developing), cruising (generally perceived as effective), strolling (neither effective or ineffective – average schools that are not improving quickly enough), struggling (ineffective and aware) or sinking (ineffective but not perceptive of this). • Cultural change occurs in different ways and for different reasons: evolutionary change is implicit, unconscious and unplanned; additive change may or not be explicit as norms, beliefs and values become suddenly modified when new initiatives are introduced; transformative change is explicit and conscious with deliberate attention to norms, values and beliefs. • Cultural norms that underpin successful school improvement include: i) shared goals – we know where we are going; ii) responsibility for success – we must succeed; iii) collegiality – we're working on this together; iv) continuous improvement – we can get better; v) lifelong learning – learning is for everyone; vi) risk taking – we learn by trying something new; vii) support – there is always someone there to help; viii) mutual respect – everone has something to offer; ix) openness – we can discuss our differences; and x) celebration and humour – we feel good bout ourselves.