

Living Equalities: Group Culture



In TA there is a model for looking at group culture which identifies three components - **Etiquette, Technical and Character**, each of which loosely corresponds with the three ego states - **Parent, Adult and Child**.

The **technical** part of the culture is to do with the purpose of the group. It refers to the knowledge, skills and techniques, planning and organisations and the political arrangements etc. In short, this refers to the aspects of culture 'which one has to do'.

The technical culture of schools has to do with buildings, playgrounds, classrooms, teaching resources and equipment, teachers and teaching, students and learning, timetabling, assessment, curriculum, routines such as registration, classroom management and assemblies.

The **etiquette** of the group culture refers to the beliefs, ideologies, values, rules, moral codes, beliefs about life and death, about good and evil, about gender, race and other identities, about abundance and scarcity, superstitions, customs, rituals, social hierarchies, prejudices, expectations of the 'ideal' life, methods of reward and punishment. In short, this refers to 'what one is supposed to do'

The etiquette in the culture of schooling has to do with how teachers and students are meant to behave with one another, how junior staff relate to senior staff, the way in which parents should/not communicate with the school and how the group expects itself to behave.

The **character** of the group culture refers to ways of experiencing and of acting out love, hatred, pleasure, pain, acceptance, rejection, obedience, resistance, hungers, needs, drives, friendship, jealousy, birth, death, freedom, identity, fear, hope, fulfilment, and the ways of sabotaging or deviating from the cultural etiquette. In short this refers to 'what one might like to do'.

Character, in the context of school culture, refers to how individuals are able to express their frustrations, needs and wants and a whole range of other personal emotions and inclinations (without transgressing the group etiquette).

Exercise

Think about a recent experience with regard to DEI work, eg. resolving a student dispute, dealing with parents, managing colleagues. As you de-brief the scenario ask yourself the following questions. You may find it helpful to organise your notes in three stacked ellipses representing Etiquette, Technical, Character.

What were you **supposed** to do in that situation? Think about expectations of you as an educational professional, an employee of your particular school, perhaps also of yourself as a citizen. Did you see others in the situation also adhering to similar or different expectations?

What was your understanding of what **had** to be done in the situation? Think about the process and procedural aspects, eg. Ethical conduct, professionalism, technical expertise, language etc. Do you think others

What would you have **liked** to do? How could this have shown up, or, perhaps, did show up? Is there anything you would have liked to do which you believe would have been inappropriate, beyond the expected boundaries?

As you review your answers, what do you recognise in your notes potential unconscious processes, Parent ego state beliefs about intersectional factors and have/have-not positions?

