The organizational culture. A students' survey

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Abstract: *The paper is focused on presenting the main results of a study conducted on a sample of 300 students from a university remaining anonymous, regarding their attitudes and opinions about the values and the image of the organizational culture of the university that they attend. The findings show that they are quite attached to the university, even if the distance from the power is high.*

Key-words: *organizational, culture, organizational behaviour*

1. Introduction

Organizational culture, according to new theories, has a strong impact on organization and management, emerging from its nature and its content. It is a system of assumptions, values, norms, and attitudes which the members of an organization have developed and adopted through mutual experience that the members of an organization share and shape significantly their interpretative schemes. Thus, they assign meanings to occurrences within and outside the organization and understand the reality that surrounds them.

Considering these aspects, the present paper aims to relate the opinions of the students to their role within the university, as part, members of the organization studied.

2. Objective and method

The main objective of the paper is to study the link between the opinion and attitudes of the students regarding the values and norms of the university as an organization. The students are a part of the organization and their attitudes, opinions and beliefs is vital, even if their role is not permanent because of the limited schooling period of time.

The method adopted is a research based on questionnaire applied to 300 students from a university. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions and is

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addressed to the opinions and attitudes of the students regarding the norms and values and the image of the organization itself.

Organizational culture is a form of collective interpretative scheme shared by the members of an organization, due to which they assign meanings to occurrences, people, and events within and outside the organization in a similar way and treat them similarly. This view has been supported by Schein (2004).

Thus, the values, norms and attitudes, were studied within a known university of Romania, the study being conducted based on questionnaire applied to 300 students, considering students as part of the organization. The university has chosen to remain anonymous.

Many researchers have conducted a review of the concept of organizational culture. It was defined as a distinct and shared set of conscious and unconscious assumptions and values that binds organizational members together and prescribes appropriate patterns of behaviour.

This definition focuses on the assumptions and values that are consciously or unconsciously cohesion that binds an organization, assumptions and values that determine the behaviour patterns of members in the organization.

Other researchers defined the organizational culture as the sum total of shared values, symbols, meaning, beliefs, assumption, and expectations that organize and integrate a group of people who work together or the totality of values, symbols, meanings, assumptions, and expectations are able to organize a group of people working together.

Another definition, part of a pioneering theory on the organizational culture, proposed by the Edgar H. Schein. Schein (2004) states that organizational culture is focuses on the assumptions and values that are consciously or unconsciously cohesion that binds an organization.

Schein states that organizational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions that are valid and work within the organization. A series of basic assumptions can be studied by the members of the organization. Organizational culture can act as a conduit of a solution to the problem of organization, and as an adapter to factors outside the organization that developed, as well as in conducting internal integration of its members.

Other researchers define organizational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumption that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new member as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

A more detailed definition of the organizational culture given by Matt Alvesson (2013) states that when talking about the culture of the organization it seems to mean talking about the importance for people of symbolism – of rituals, myths, stories and legends – and about the interpretation of events, ideas, and experiences that are influenced and shaped by the groups within they live. I will

also, however, take organizational culture to include values and assumptions about social reality.

As a synthesis of this understanding, one may consider that organizational culture is the totality of values, symbols, meanings, assumptions, and expectations that can provide solutions for factors outside the organization that developed and able to be the glue for its members.

Etzioni typology of organization include (2011) coercive organizations, utilitarian organizations and normative organization. The coercive organization is an organization whose members are trapped in physical and economic reasons that have to abide by any regulations imposed by the authorities. The utilitarian organization is considered one in which the members work for a just and fair result and it there is also a tendency to adhere to some rules are essential in addition to the workers preparing the norms and rules that protect themselves. The normative organization is an organization in which the individuals contribute to the commitment because it considers that the organization is the same as the goals themselves.

3. The research study and results

The study was conducted on 300 students, from the first year to the third, from three different faculties. It intended to evaluate the feeling of belonging to the university. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions, and the main results shown that the students feel that they are part of the organization, they like being engaged in different activities apart from lectures and the main concern has been that they want to have a closer partnership relationship with the teachers.

Like Abdi Osman Jama mentioned (2013), cultures are dynamics, they shift in response to external and internal changes. So, trying to assess organizational culture is complicated by the reality that you are trying to hit a moving target. But it also opens the possibility that culture change can be managed as a continuous process rather than through big shifts (often in response to crises). Likewise, it highlights the idea that a stable "destination" may never — indeed should never — be reached. The culture of the organization should always be learning and developing.

According to Figure 1, over 30% percent of the students in the first year though that the main value of the university is professionalism and correctness, while 70% of the students in their third year think the same thing.

The last value on the list, according to 45% of the students in the first year and 65% of the students in the third year, was considered the professional relationship with the teachers, meaning that they feel like their opinion is not valued enough.

90% of the students in the second year and 98% of the students in the third year consider that they are treated with respect and dignity, these values being some of the most important of the organization.
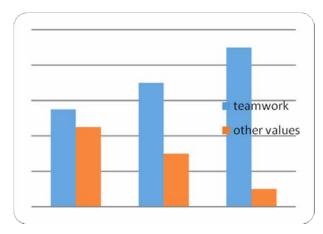

Figure 1. Distribution of the opinions of student regarding the values of the university

Organization's culture is reflected in their decision making as well. Decisions regarding the students are made after consulting and communicating with them, according to 55% of the students in the first year and 80% of the students in the third year. This is not a university where decisions are made by the management only, but the students feel that they are in charge and then decisions are implemented top down.
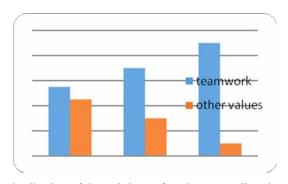

Figure 2. Distribution of the opinions of student regarding the teamwork

According to Figure 2, in order to facilitate teamwork, students are encouraged to work in teams for different projects, as 55% of the students in the first year are saying and 90% of the students in the third year consider too. Thus, 90% of the

students in the third year, consider that the projects should be encouraged more, starting from the first year, for the students to be accustomed to teamwork.

Concerning the organizational structure, students' feels like the distance from the power is high, 45% of the students in the third year considering that the access to the top management is difficult to achieve. The university is based on a large middle management and upper management, but also the students are involved in decision making.

The process of communication between the students included in the board of decision making organisms of the university and the rest of the students is considered an issue, according to 89% of the respondents.

4. Conclusions

The organizational culture remains an important issues when analysing the efficiency and the effectiveness of university activity. The role of the students had changed over the years; today they are considered the main resources and also partners in order to achieve success and higher standards in education.

The students should be considered as important factors on decision making and applying the policy of the university, generally, and the main factor for achieving the accordance with the market needs.

The conclusions of the study conducted at the university considered, show that students feel part of the organizational culture, and that they belong to the university. They also consider that the main values promoted by the university are respected and applied, the main issues considered being that the communication should be better and the distance from the power should be lower.

Generally speaking, the results show that the students are accustomed to be treated with respect and used to work in teams.

The results may not be generalized; the studies must be conducted within other universities in order to have a complete image of the Romanian university organizational culture.

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