

DOES ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE INFLUENCE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AT WORK?

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Abstract

This article attempts to bring to the surface some key aspects, which closely related to the culture of the organisation. The article relates many key result areas, where the organisational culture influences the human behaviour at work. Work motivation, leadership, team work, organisational efficiency, organisational development, organisational changes etc., all are related to the beliefs and assumptions members have towards the prevalent organisational culture. The success of an organisation greatly depends how organisational members integrate the belief system and widely shared assumptions about work and work values. This article is based on the theoretical underpinnings, and the experience the author felt during his doctoral thesis work on impact of organisational culture upon employee's behaviour.

Concept of Culture

Culture is a concept borrowed from the field of Anthropology. Sociologists, Anthropologists and Behavioural scientists have extensively used the term culture. Culture stands for symbols and values; it is the strong widely shared core values; and it is regarded as the moral spiritual and intellectual attainment of man. Taylor E.B (1987) defined culture as that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society". Culture facilitates a harmonious and balanced cultivation of all the faculties in man: intellect and emotion, intuition and sense perception, flesh as well as spirit. Culture is the primary and basic thing; it is inside every human being and is what we are. Culture plays the role of a guide, which makes human being confirm to accepted ways of life. It liberates as well as enslaves him. It lays down norms of behaviour and provides the mechanism, which secure an individual his personal and social survival.

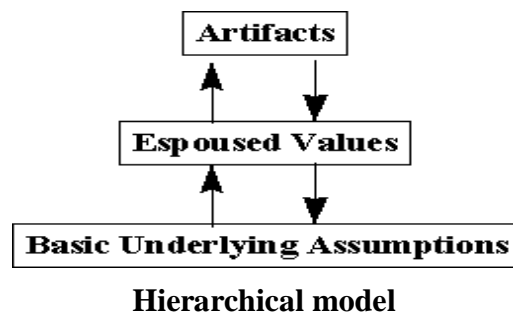
Concept of organisational culture

The concept of organisational culture or the work culture is different from sociological concept of culture. While society has social culture organisations have work culture. Society mould human behaviour and place him as a responsible social being inculcating social and cultural behavioural traits. Social culture facilitates human being to make constructive contributions to human and social development. Social culture is the mean to an end, the end being the holistic development of one's own personality and one's own society. Although the concept of organisational culture is generally derived from its Anthropological equivalent into

(e.g., Frost et.al., 1985, Martin, 1992., Smircich, 1983) the context of an organisation is very different from that of the societies with which Anthropologists and Social Theorists are typically concerned. Organisations are bounded purposive and intentionally structured in ways that societies are not and where as societies embrace their members' lives, organisations, like other institutions, are directly concerned with only part of those lives. Organisational culture cannot, in general, be isolated from the cultures of the societies in which organisations operate (Hofstede, 1980).

Edgar Schein (1992) illustrates "organizational culture as a hierarchical model with three levels:

- the lowest level contains the unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, thoughts, and feelings which are called the "basic underlying assumptions;
- the next level contains the strategies, goals, and philosophies of the organization which are called "espoused values;" and
- the uppermost and most visible level contains the organization's structure and processes and is referred to as "artifacts" (Figure 1).



Artifacts, Values and Assumptions:

Behavior and artifacts: The most visible level is behavior and artifacts. This is the observable level of culture, and consists of behavior patterns and outward manifestations of culture: perquisites provided to executives, dress codes, level of technology utilized (and where it is utilized), and the physical layout of workspaces.

Values: At the next level of culture are values. Values underlie and to a large extent determine behavior, but they are not directly observable, as behaviors are. There may be a difference between stated and operating values. People will attribute their behavior to stated values.

Assumptions and beliefs: To really understand culture, we have to get to the deepest level, the level of assumptions and beliefs. Schein contends that underlying assumptions grow out of values, until they become taken for granted and drop out of awareness. If the alternative is acceptable and successful it may well be tried again and again until it becomes common practice. In this way the value becomes a belief and eventually an assumption about behaviour practiced

by the organization. These basic underlying assumptions are Schein's third level, and they represent the 'taken-for-granted ways of doing things or solutions to problems'.

The culture of the organisation reflects a vision shared by the members at large. If the vision of the organisation does not take into account human sentiments and values and majority organisational members does not share it; have no utility at all. It is the shared vision that which makes whole organisation aligned and prevents people from working at cross-purposes. Organizational culture may be described as an ideal that serves as a filter for the actions of individuals to develop internal integration and facilitate external adaptation over a long period. Organisational culture facilitates human being to make effective contributions to their own and organisational development. For an organisation, work culture is means to an end, the end being the holistic development of one's own potential and that of their organisation.

Morgan (1986) describes culture as shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense making. He argues that culture must be understood as "an active, living phenomenon through which people create and recreate their worlds".

Robbins, (1998) indicates, organizational culture as system of shared meaning held by organizational members that distinguishes the organization from other organizations.

'Organizational culture is often defined in terms of shared meanings, patterns of beliefs, rituals, symbols, and myths that evolve over time, serving to reduce human variability and control and shape employee behavior in organizations,' (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983; Lorsch, 1986; Weick, 1987; Denison, 1990).

Relating the concept of culture with organisational culture, Kramer (1974) and Foy (1974) indicates that culture might be seen as a glue that hold organization together – a means by which participant communicate and coordinate their efforts and incidentally a ring fence separating insiders from outsiders”.

The concept of organizational culture, the idea of viewing organizational culture- where there is a system of shared meaning among members, is a relatively recent phenomenon, formalized by the human relationists and organisational theorist. One of the contingent and situational factor that affects human behaviour at work place is the 'culture' of the organisation. Culture of an organization is somewhat like personality for a person. Just as individual has a personality that makes each person unique, each organization has a culture, clearly distinguishes it from other organizations.

Conceptual understanding of Healthy Organisational Culture

A healthy organisational culture is perceived as that work culture, which;

1. Develop a sense of identity to the organisational members
2. Promotes self-managed team effort for target accomplishment.

3. Maintain conflict free environment between different departments and employees and employees.
4. Believe in quality of relationship between members.
5. Holds flexible rules and regulation though having better control over members' behaviour.
6. Entertain meritorious reward and promotion strategies.
7. Maintain sound relationship between trade union and management.
8. Believe in continuous learning, socialization and training of members.
9. Make use of both formal and informal means of communication.
10. Believe in smart sizing than downsizing.

High involvement Organizational culture

A high involvement culture is a glue in which the members;

1. Have genuine interest to extent their personnel effort to meet the organisational goals.
2. Bound to do and continue in doing organisational responsibility even when the pay offs are obvious.
3. Feel motivated to sacrifice ones own goal for the sake of the organisational goal.
4. Express high emotional attachment to the organisation.
5. Consider organisation as a good place to work for individual development.
6. Wish to identify with the organisation.
7. Feel proud to be a member of the organisation.
8. Have strong desire for the development of the organisation.
9. Feel greater work experience.
10. Feel greater trust and confidence in organisational policies.

Socialization and Human Behaviour at work

Man spends major part of his life in the organisations within which he works with. When people join an organisation, they bring with them the unique values and behaviours that they have been taught. Any organisation with firmly established organisational culture would be taught the values, beliefs and expected behaviours of that organisation. The process of integrating the organisational values and believes is done through socialization. Just as society moulds human behaviour, an organisation also moulds human behaviour that in tune with the prevalent organisational culture. In this process, certain basic attitudes and beliefs about the people and their work situations get slowly but firmly accepted in the organisation, which becomes its 'Organisational Culture' The process of socialization may have significant influence on the attitude and behaviour of individual members in integrating the work culture, i.e., work ethics, work values, work etiquettes, and work behaviour that are widely shared by the

organisation. The socialization tries to internalize the elements of culture. It tries to inculcate the do's and don'ts of the work. The organisation with strong culture will taught their members various components, specific to the organisation, like the leadership pattern, supervisory relationship, mode of communication, conflict resolution forms, employee morale, ethical standards, etc so that members can internalize work culture and there mould their behaviour in accordance with cultural preferences.

Human behaviour is the out come of frequent interaction between several value system and pattern of the interrelation of cultural traits. It is not self-induced phenomenon. Man acquires social behaviour and develops habits as a member of society. Here, 'culture act as a blue print influencing all aspect of life; if we wish to understand the significance of human behaviour, particularly collective human behaviour, we can only do so against the background of culture in which the behaviour take place'.

If we examine the behaviour of organizational members in work environment, we may find some glaring differences in the way they organize their efforts and perform their task effectively. It may be observed that some members are more involved and put in their best effort. The possible explanations offered by the behavioral scientists on such behavioral variations as individual motivation to work in a cultural environment were employees' derived maximum pleasure and satisfaction in the task performance.

Individuals are socialized into specific cultural patterns based on definite values, postulations and norms. Organisational culture is created and transmitted mainly through employees sharing their interpretations of events or through story telling. When organisational members share their beliefs and attitude about the leadership, the cultural features attributed to the organisation actually become the organizations characteristics. The more employees talk about leadership qualities the more these qualities become organisational characteristics. Differences in the organizational culture are likely to be reflected in the structure, systems and behaviour of organisational members. Such suggestions and arguments indicate that culture is a key variable influence on motivation of employees at work.

Work motivation and culture

Motivated employees are the biggest assets of any organization. Until, people who have been motivated genuinely, whatever the technology and equipment an organization newly implemented do not have much result. The big question, then, before modern human resource management is what tends to motivate employees and thereby to modify their behaviour towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives. Of course absolute utilization of talent is a pre-requisite for building a healthy work culture were all contribute their maximum for the growth of organization. A healthy work culture, which utilizes human potential effectively, will reinforce individual behaviour and it facilitates for a series of success. It creates involvement and commitment on the part of organisational members and thereby develops a dedicated work force.

Motivation is the precipitated behavioural out come of individual satisfaction in any environment. More than external work motivation internal work motivation influences the behaviour of members. Internal work motivation refers to the degree to which an individual

experiences positive internal feeling when performing effectively on the job. An individual experiences high motivation should perform at high levels and by doing so he receives well benefit out of work. When employees face with internal and external problems they feel helpless and uncontrollably anxious about the situation. It develops demotivation among them to work with genuine interest. Lack of motivation to work creates dissatisfaction, anxiety and depression among individual employees. Major reason for increasing job stress, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, labour turnover and low productivity may be lower level of loyalty and loosening psychological contract between employees and employers in a weak organisational culture. Thus behavioural adaptation and adjustment is well knit with culture of the organisation.

Leadership and Organisational culture

The leadership culture of organisation may vary from industry to industry. As the different leadership culture influences decisions of top management its impact on member's behaviour may vary from organisation to organisation. Though organisations may have some similar cultural elements it may widely varied in different leadership styles. An organisation has been considered as patrimonial if its operating culture dictates that the authority is extremely centralized.

According to Hayward. S (1996) "empowering leadership leads to;

- Responsiveness to customer needs
- Initiative and creativity
- Speed of decision making
- Motivation
- Commitment to successful outcome at all level".

Such empowering leadership pattern may influence member's attitude towards work progress and target accomplishment. Leadership pattern and collective work is closely associated with an organisation, which promotes democratic style of functioning, and supports team intervention for task accomplishment. There, the supervisor or the leader allows certain degree of autonomy and freedom in decision making to their subordinate members. The stories of many organisations give evidence on the importance of empowering work culture on profit, production and employee commitment. The empowerment leadership culture predisposes an individual to feel, perceive and act in a specific manner.

Teamwork and organisational culture

A healthy teamwork culture is a concept or a tendency in which the employers and employees organized around as team and work collectively towards the attainment of organisational objectives with high involvement and inspiration. In which the members feel that the starting point for organisational design is not with supervisor but with operators or casual workers. Here the relation between leaders and workers to be taken into account. There is chance for risk taking and innovative behavior. Within the team the members feel motivated, elevated and comfortable to perform their task assigned. There the power of giving up control over people

is central idea in getting control over results. Members mutually express their reflective and creative ideas in planning and strategic decision-making process to attain the team task. They perceive difference of opinion, disagreement and criticisms neither as antagonistic nor as against the will of other. Team members encourage raising genuine criticisms from among members to make the task performance effective. They accept the task or assignment with enthusiasm and honest effort.

Work efficiency and Organisational Culture

Efficient behaviour is an out come of inner feeling. It is based on three components of organisational life i.e., situation, environment and the person. The level of attitude and behaviour of organisational members towards existing organisational culture, largely govern the success or failure of an organisation. Behaviour of members continuously influenced by internal and external work culture elements i.e., the regulatory guidelines, supervisory behaviour, reward, conflict free environment, better communication, team work, commitment, better socialization, etc. The efficient behaviour towards organisation demonstrates the employee's attitude to assist in the accomplishment of targets and priorities in time without creating any loss or waste.

Five key inputs involve in organisational process are knowledge, experience, skill and attitude in addition to motivation. To manage these inputs the organisations require management structures and procedures that consistent with the work culture where each on of the employee free and willing to contribute his best efforts. A culture sensitive organisational approach will be able to draw on large reserves of creativity, knowledge and skills that are found within the organisation. As culture is deeply rooted in the beliefs and values of the organisation it may have tremendous influence upon the efficiency behaviour of organisational members.

Behaviour towards work-efficiency largely controlled by internal ability and willingness to work hard. It is based on sincerity of participation, involvement, devotion to duty, earnest desire to work, and discharge of responsibilities with confidence and competence. Behaviour is greatly influenced by the work culture. The strategies must be sensitive enough to the roots of the organisation, its values and attitude. A healthy work culture always facilitates active participation of manpower resources in improving the level of out put. Healthy behaviour is the keenness to work hard and a strong desire and willingness to contribute to the best. The formation of healthy organisational culture is a continuous effort on the part of founders and top executives to develop and harness human excellence in their organisations. Culture therefore must be central component of development strategies. Efficiency and productivity are the direct result of strong culture.

Organisational Environment and Organisational Culture

The business environment may be stable, changing, or turbulent environment. Since the culture of an organisation is subjected to constant changes in technology, knowledge, process, product, finance, banking, other services of the firm, it is difficult to find a stable business environment. Organisational and business environment are becoming more complex diverse and unpredictable. Since change is permanent and inevitable many industrial organisations are undergoing rapid rationalization and restructuring process to cope up with the global

entrepreneurial changes. Public sector organisations are under the process of privatization to improve their performance, profit and production. Whether these changes are beneficial or non-beneficial to the organisation that depends on the attitude of employees and employers resistance towards change process and integration of new attempts by the organisation. The resistance towards the change is mainly due to the incongruence between the human expectations towards new value system and the feeling of uncertainty. Introducing new cultural traits without considering human values, entrenched beliefs and practices and resource on existing organisational culture, may be a suicidal attempt. Such situations may produce turbulent organisational environment. Organisational culture is a prominent factor that needs special attention for effective planning, organizing, directing and control of man, machine, money and material to improve work efficiency. It is the task of the policy makers, and the administrators to develop new belief system integrating the new cultural traits with the existing structure and culture.

Any change in the larger socio-economic system directly influences the subsequent smaller cultural system; it further affects the behaviour of members in any organizational system. As a consequence of in the changing global business scenario, the psychological contract existing in between employees and employers is gradually vanishing now. The components of globalization are now vastly affecting the labour-management relationship i.e., work culture, of industrial organisations. In the changing business scenario, the evolving nature of the organizations along with failure, downsizing, merger and acquisition, maintaining organizational productivity calls for better strategic planning efforts by the human resource profession. The new global culture is a big challenge in retaining the talented employees and employers.

The traditional ways of ensuring excellence were very simple: the stick and carrot, fear and money. Today the situation has changed. In the changing global environment, existing culture may not be sufficient enough to move an organisation with fidelity and accuracy. The current economic environment posed increased challenges for business and industry to be competitive both nationally and internationally which in turn necessitates organizations to perform better in terms of productivity, quality, time and service. The traditional organizational culture, which provides safety and security to the employees and employers are now under stake, due to disinvestments and downsizing policies. The liberalization of economy is considered an important element in the reform package, stands for structural reform in the management of economy resulting in minimization of economic role of the Government and in-discriminatively relying upon the free market mechanism for resource allocation. Here we can expect a cultural clash.

New strategies, approaches and technical know how that in tune with the global requirement is the prime concern of management. Managing human and non-human resource of both private and public sector organisations is now pretty difficult. The changing size, technology, excessive automation, invasion of information, state policy, political instability, privatization, transnationalization, downsizing of labour force, invasion of multi-national corporations etc, in addition to internal organisational factors make it difficult for the management to maintain the level of motivation of employees and the value system of the organisation. The labour forces are now facing severe threat from contemporary policies of golden shake hand, retrenchment, frequent transfer etc. The uncertainty towards occupational life

develops several behavioural problems like anxiety and depression among employees in organisational settings. The changing cultural elements are developing new ways and strategies to cope up with the organisational changes. Reports of various industrial journals indicated that the management is facing severe organisational problems like absenteeism, labour turn over, job stress, job dissatisfaction, loss of productivity, in the wake of new global order. Here how organisation can convince the new global order and develop new pattern of belief system without losing the trust and confidence of employees that determine the level of success of the organisation.

New Mantra to Organisational Excellence

Major challenge before contemporary human resource management is to maintain their human resource in accordance with the changes in global environment. The work culture is becoming an important topic in the organisational behaviour area. Organisational Culture is a relatively new concept. The perception of employees towards strong organisational culture varies from individual to individual. Organisational culture refers the favorableness or unfavorableness of a job environment of people and it covers persons feelings about every dimensions of work including economic rewards and rewards and benefits, security working conditions organisational and interpersonal relationships the intrinsic meaning in a person's life". Culture may contribute on high performance behaviour of employees and employers in industrial establishments. Since the values, beliefs, norms, and practices varied from organisation to organisation and perception of employees and employers towards organisational factors depends on influence of several organisational factors such outcomes may not be relevant in all research studies. Attitude and quality of work life are closely linked with.

Every organisation may affect and get affected by the cherished beliefs, nurtured values and held perceptions of organizational members that are given situations in organizations. Human behaviour is the precipitated outcome of several situational, organisational and individual factors. The organizational factors such as leadership, quality of supervision, monetary / reward, communication, socialization, technological change, conflict, organizational policies and practices, trade unionism, the nature of job, factory or office lay out, follow workers, etc., may have a key role in moulding human behaviour in organisations. Variation in the human behaviour used to highlight the variation in the structure, process and culture of any organisation.

Conclusion

The mantra of organisations with business success is the establishment of a high performance culture that promotes efficiency of organisational members. The success of an organisation greatly depends on a variety of factors viz., vision, leadership, team work-style, human resource, information system, motivation etc in a strong organisational culture. Many forward looking organizations, in such a climate, are taking steps to undergo massive cultural change so as to bring about reciprocal changes in their performance. Since any change in the larger socio-economic system directly influence the subsequent smaller cultural system, the behaviour of employees and employers also required to be adjust with the new developments. This necessitates better adjustment of human potential with the changing business scenario. The creation of right kind of culture, that is one, which encourages outstanding contribution from

employees, is a central factor contributing to excellent companies. The success of an organisation here thus greatly depends on verity of factors, viz. vision, team work-style, leadership style, conflict free environment, mentoring, etc.

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