Reflection on working culture in public organizations: The case of three Iranian Higher Education Institutions

Iman Tohidian* and Hamid Rahimian

Abstract: Working culture in organizations reminds us that there should be facilitative atmosphere in an organization if the main goal is to achieve optimum efficiency. It happens if all the stakeholders' rights are taken into account without deviation of their rights, roles, values, and voices. Employees are one of the major contributing groups in each organization which are at the top of researchers’ focus for further investigations. Universities and higher education institutions are also organizations with specific predefined roles and responsibilities based on the national, regional, and international goals, necessities, and ideals of the countries; while in some cases, these needs and goals might also change based on the rapid pace of changes in the global educational market. Here, 67 male employees from three Iranian higher education institutions were purposefully selected to participate in the study as we aim to identify the employees’ views on and reactions towards working culture at their universities. Data analysis through Strauss and Corbin’s

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Iman Tohidian is pursuing his Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration at Allameh Tabataba’i University (ATU), Tehran, Iran. He has taught courses for undergraduate EFL learners at different universities of Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, Kashan, & Tarbiat Modares University. He has published research articles and book reviews in international reputable journals. His areas of interest are Higher Education, Educational Policy, Educational Management & Leadership, Critical Literacy, Internationalization of Higher Education, Language & Power, Teacher Education, Critical Pedagogy, and Educational Reform.

Hamid Rahimian (Associate Prof.) is affiliated with the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Faculty of Psychology & Education, Allameh Tabataba’i University (ATU), Tehran, Iran. He got his M.A. in Educational Administration from George Mason University, USA in 1986 and his Ph.D. in Educational Administration from University of Maryland, USA in 1992. He has served three times as the head of department at ATU. He is also the founder of the Institute of Management Research and Education which is affiliated with the Ministry of Energy, Iran.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Organizational Studies and Organizational Behaviour are not new concepts; rather they have an enriched background in our working culture. What is happening within the organizations among their employees can be regarded as a portrayal of outside society where the organizations are located. It is a globally acknowledged belief that improved working culture increases organizations’ outputs and help them achieve their goals even sooner than what is highlighted in their future plans. We investigate employees’ reactions and views about the working culture within three universities to identify how Employee–Employee and Employee–Manager relationships are shaped and reshaped (if necessary). Embedded and implicit negative and debilitating feelings were the main concerns of the employees which managers and authorities of the organizations must consider if the organizations’ goal is success and prosperity.
Constant Comparative method illuminated the employees’ total dissatisfaction specifically concerning colleagues’ mutual relationships, biased and unfair managers’ looks towards some employees, and their fear of being kicked out of the organization if their ideas are expressed within the context of the organization.

Subjects: Public Services; Work; Sociology of Work & Industry; Urban Sociology; Urban Cultures; Human Resource Management; Employment Relations; Human Resource Development; Organizational Studies

Keywords: Working culture; Iranian employees; total dissatisfaction; suppression of ideologies; biased looks; dozens of stress

1. Introduction

Each community enjoys specific cultural norms and values. Further, it needs to be mentioned that the concepts of culture and policy are interwoven entities; hence, the prevalent political ideologies in the larger societies shape and reshape the working culture of the organizations. Our surrounding global community is embarrassingly witnessing well-decorated policies embedded with too much unwritten and hidden ideologies and manipulations of people’s minds. According to Peterson (2003):

... public policies are made via some kind of hybrid arrangement involving a range of different actors, including some representing private or nongovernmental institutions. The concept of policy networks—clusters of actors, each with an interest, or ‘stake’ in a given policy sector and the capacity to help determine policy success or failure—has been developed and refined as a way to try to describe, explain and predict the outcomes of policy-making via such hybrid arrangements (p. 6).

It is also interesting to know that Juntti, Russel, and Turnpenny (2009) try to emphasize:

... an exploration of three key inter-related issues is necessary to develop a richer understanding of why evidence and policy interact as they do. These are the nature of evidence itself; the normative, moral or ethical ‘politics’ of policy-making; and the operation of power in the policy process (p. 207).

Rhodes (2006, p. 425) also tries to unearth the role of networks in policies as “a policy network is one of a cluster of concepts focusing on government links with, and dependence on, other state and societal actors”. It is largely evident in the society that higher-order authorities and corresponding government bodies announce promising numbers, but the public’s perceived reality is totally different. It might also help the governments and policy-makers manipulate people’s minds to move forward their intended ideologies which well suit the situations. Interestingly, Fallis (2016, p. 120) notes that “One way to make someone ignorant about a particular topic is to intentionally cause her to have a false belief. In other words, you might deceive her”. Then, he further provides some philosophers’ notes to “make someone ignorant without causing her to have a false belief”.

People actively conceal or destroy evidence in order to keep other people ignorant. People also passively withhold information in order to keep other people ignorant. People even fabricate or modify evidence in order to make other people ignorant. [It might be interesting to note that] the foregoing techniques are typically carried out covertly. But people sometimes overtly deny access to information in order to keep other people ignorant (p. 121).

Therefore, the available norms of the larger society shape/reshape the prevalent atmosphere of our surrounding communities. In this regard, employees are obliged to work under such circumstances with no excuses to deviate from the higher-order rules of the organizations. O’Reilly III, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991, p. 487) mention that “researchers seem to agree that culture may be an important factor in determining how well an individual fits an organizational context”. So,
the ultimate success will be achieved if the congruence between the working culture of organizations and the employees’ adopted norms and values of its employees is observed. Somerville (2005, p. 5) also indicates that “culture” can be reconceptualised in order to involve workers in their own cultural analysis and to articulate the relationship between the complex, collective, and contested nature of contemporary workplaces and the learning that takes place there”. Concerning the pivotal role of organizational culture as well as its (re)shaped working culture, we can get back to Adler and Jelinek’s (1986, p. 81) statement as “Organization culture is a widely acclaimed metaphor for understanding how organizations differ, how their members cohere, and how organizations and members interact”. It is in alignment with Alvesson’s (1987) claim that:

The individuals who belong to a certain organization are thus presumed to be characterized by cultural similarity in terms of shared understandings, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, etc., and, consequently, to differ to some extent from individuals and groups outside the organization (p. 5).

Moreover, it might be the reason why Astakhova (2016, p. 961) mentions that “As industry evidence shows, ‘cultural fit’ has become a powerful buzzword for many organizations that no longer hire for a job but rather to hire for a fit with organizational culture and people in it”. So, it is believed that working culture can play a facilitative role to expedite the pace towards more organizations’ efficiency, success, and prosperity if employees’ rights and values are observed in the organization. Now, it is fair to confirm the interdependence of two concepts of policy and culture by citing Burstein’s (1991, p. 327) work that he mentions “Policy change is affected most directly by formal organizations whose activities are channeled and given meaning by culture; government organizations play an active role in formulating policy and deciding how it will be implemented as well”. Further, it needs to be highlighted that organization success happens if employees with divergent characteristics try to diminish those discrepancies to work together and increase the organizations’ efficiencies. In this regard, Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, and Neale (1998) stress that:

the purported benefits of demographic diversity are more likely to emerge in organizations that, through their culture, make organizational membership salient and encourage people to categorize one another as having the organization's interests in common, rather than those that emphasize individualism and distinctiveness among members (p. 749).

However, it should be emphasized that all these evident discrepancies in individuals’ characters have their roots in cultural differences. Giorgi, Lockwood, and Glynn (2015) also claim that:

The concept of culture is central to organization studies. Whether studying an individual, an organization, or even a nation, scholars of organizations invoke culture to explain a variety of outcomes, reminding us that differences in actors' behaviors are the result not only of chance or of individual character, but often of differences in culture (p. 2).

It is also in alignment with the Sadri and Lees’s (2001, p. 858) concluding remark that “we urge companies to shape their corporate culture to their advantage in improving both their employees' experience of the workplace and, in turn, improving their own profitability”. Now, based on such an emphasis on organization and working culture; we aim to investigate the employees’ views and reactions towards the available working culture (Employee–Employee/Employee–Manager) at three Iranian higher education institutions to unearth if the present atmosphere facilitates or hinders the organizations’ performance to achieve their goals.

2. An overview of our working community

Unfortunately, due to failure in proper and research-based decisions in higher-order policies of education in Ministry of Education (as the overseer of engaged parties in K-12 cycle of education), and Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology (MSRT as supervisor of the higher education), we experience the graduates’ unemployment challenge and crisis. There is no doubt that almost all
corresponding decision-making bodies are engaged in good/bad results of their earlier decisions with no overview of near future effects of their decisions in larger society, over the state, and in each and every parts of our life (Tohidian, 2016).

Researchers of social sciences and educational practitioners in (inter)national levels are working to learn how employed administrative staff at different organizations feel about their current status as an employee, the (un)seen top-down relationships in organizations, how hierarchy concerns are met, and the staff’s (dis)satisfaction of their position if all their predefined agendas and goals in educational years are obtained in the current positions (e.g. Boye Kuranche-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016; Damij, Levnajic, Rejec Skrt, & Suklan, 2015; Faisal & Al-Esmael, 2014; Guinot, Chiva, & Roca-Puig, 2014; Herzberg, 1968; Mosadeghrad, Ferlie, & Rosenberg, 2011; Mosadegh Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006; Reave, 2005; Rynes, Gerhart, & Minette, 2004; Saraji & Dargahi, 2006; Smith & Shields, 2013).

Almost all data are quantitatively gathered on some of these concerns, but it is really important to find out how staff’s ideologies and perspectives are presented and portrayed in their daily life routines as an employee in Iranian context.

Working hours for administrative staff at the public and private organizations are scheduled from 7:30 a.m. to 15:00 p.m. (of course, there might be some slight changes depending on the internal policies of the organizations). The staff, then, are supposed to work on some duties based on the title of their positions. Administrative staff titles (Bottom-Up order) in Iran are usually ordered as expert, senior expert, manager/director, deputy, and chancellor/president; while most advertised job vacancies are for expert position.

It is interesting to note that due to large number of graduates and no proper decisions to train well-proficient graduates who fit the available job vacancies, such a position is now overwhelmed with large number of Master and Ph.D. graduates who are just looking for a position to earn the minimum monthly payment. It is really important to provide an environment and working culture enriched with friendship, cooperation, and unbiased atmosphere where all embedded ties and relations are well suited to all engaged parties. There is no doubt if staff’s inner demands and voices are met, their characters are respected, and promotions are awarded based on well-developed and value-laden criteria, then all employees will try to work based on the organization or institution goals and agendas to develop their organization in our current competing world to obtain well-deserved status in a global perspective.

3. Research design
The research approximately took eight months as we intended to experience and to learn the employees’ views on working culture in those three higher education institutions. It was an amazing chance to live with the employees. It, for sure, provided me with enriched concrete data which are rarely obtained through questionnaires which, in most cases, are designed for non-Iranian contexts; but are nowadays adopted by Iranian researchers and students to work on research questions in areas of organizational studies and organizational behavior. Although these questionnaires are translated into Persian and are also piloted to check all relevant reliabilities and validities, still it suffers from the lack of staff’s emotions, feelings, and ideologies which are not included in the rigid context-based designed multiple-choice items that leave no space for the respondents to go further into details to elaborate their mentalities and feelings towards all surrounding issues.

I also had the experience of filling in some of these questionnaires for Master or Ph.D. students. One of the main drawbacks of some of those questionnaires was the lack of Not Applicable (N/A) choice, as some choices are not related to our context (Iran) with its specific cultural, religious, and political norms which exclusively affect the relationships within the organizations, and the society where divergent competing ideologies are living together. In fact, the dearth of research to
investigate the employees’ status and their feedback and comments on how do they feel in an environment where their feelings, ideologies, mentalities, and positions – as human beings and not mere employees – are acknowledged and appreciated by their colleagues and the administrative authorities sparked off the light to work on such a concern which should the policy-makers’ priorities in their higher-order decisions in education, politics, economic, and social policies.

All the data were gathered through my notes of employees’ feedback on their positions, the authorities’ reactions towards employees, brown bag meetings with colleagues, and reactions I received from employees during short-slot semi-structured interviews. Therefore, saturated data are obtained from multiple sources. In all cases, I also tried not to ask employees’ identifying information to keep their anonymity; however, they usually mentioned the corresponding sections where they are working therein with all data which are presented in Table 1.

There were no types of audio-recordings, as I just tried to immediately take notes of the comments. Some further information as age, year of experience, marital status, and educational backgrounds were also collected to learn more deeply about the participants’ position towards their jobs. A total number of 67 employees comprised the participants of current research (Table 1). Furthermore, due to diversity in adopted data gathering tools in my research, male colleagues were the most immediate participants for the research.

As soon as enriched data were gathered based on the research question, the transcriptions were translated into English. Then, Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) Constant Comparative method of data analysis with its unzipping three phases of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding was adopted to analyze the data to locate the themes in order to illuminate how ideologies are buried in participants’ minds and there is no channel to voice (dis)agreements in a strictly free environment with no fear of being kicked out of the organizations or being relocated in another section of the organization. The three phases of data analysis usually resemble a sieve of three different sizes, so some degrees of purification are made in each step. It needs to be mentioned that interesting concepts (Figure 1) were emerged from the analysis of data which well-illuminates how employees are dealing with their profession in the job market. However, I tried to present all the themes as an all-inclusive theme which completely portrays all the emerged themes during the final phase of data analysis-selective coding.

4. Results

4.1. Suppression of feelings, personality, prestige, and utopia: JUST for the sake of cash

As an all-embraced fact, most employees believed that working in a friendly environment is the first and most important factor which most of the time is dismissed in favor of rigid nature of the duties and managers’ attitudes and perspectives towards the strict work mentality. It was interesting to receive impressions concerning the lack of friendly environment imposed by the higher-order managers/directors and some other colleagues in each section. In almost all cases such a feeling was over-emphasized by the employees, while financial burdens and breath-taking economic crisis were their further concerns. As a global norm, it is also in line with Herzberg’s (1968) ideas expressed as:

Ask workers what makes them unhappy at work, and you’ll hear about an annoying boss, a low salary, an uncomfortable work space, or stupid rules. Managed badly, environmental factors make people miserable, and they can certainly be demotivating. But even if managed brilliantly, they don't motivate anybody to work much harder or smarter. People are motivated, instead, by interesting work, challenge, and increasing responsibility. These intrinsic factors answer people's deep-seated need for growth and achievement. (p. 87)
Table 1. Participants' background

| Age range | Year(s) of employment | Economic status | Educational background & marital status |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| 12        | 24–30                 | N/A            | B.A. (4)/S: 0; M: 4                    |
| 27        | 15–24                 | N/A            | B.A. (10)/S: 1; M: 10                  |
| 20        | 10–19                 | N/A            | B.S.C. (9)/S: 0; M: 9                  |
| 8         | 5–10                  | N/A            | M.A. (7)/S: 3; M: 4                    |

S: Single; M: Married; S*: Divorced.

© Not applicable (N/A) resembles employees' feeling that their economic status means NOTHING in current economic status of the state.
Here, some of employees’ comments (translated from Persian to English) illuminate how an environment overwhelmed with friendship, mutual respect, and cooperation is one of their priorities for success in work place and promotion of their organization.

There is a lack of friendship in our section. Unfortunately, it’s believed that if we are here, we should work work and work. We should stick to the work. It’s not possible. We are human beings! We are not robots. Unfortunately, I received the feedback from some colleagues (who are working as deputy director at our section) as: You are paid, so you need to work! (I work, but it seems they suffer from a philia to dictate their authority). Believe me, you will be emasculated as soon as you see their behaviour as well as tone of speech early at morning while you need to continue your day-long in the same office. (Participant #17)

I already had the experience of working in four sections of the organization. Two decades of experience well inform me that almost all colleagues who are joining the work place are motivated and energetic at first. But, amazingly such a sense and feeling decreases at the very beginning months as soon as they confront with the imposed strict and rigid atmosphere of the sections. No one likes to be dismissed! But, it’s usually felt that employees, especially, at lower ranks are usually dismissed by the managers and directors, while some other colleagues at the sections may drive the car of power. If you receive no feedback and feeling from your director/manager, if they even don’t know your name; then you’ll be dismissed! I found it really decreases employees’ motivation! (Participant #03)

I really hate working within such disgusting and annoying colleagues. Their behaviour even will be condemned by the animal rights groups. We are humans! It seems if someone is of higher order, then there’s a right for him/her to suppress you in all cases. He/She will decide what you are supposed to do. He/She will dismiss all your suggestions and feedback in different situations. There is a prevalent sense that if your level of position is lower in the office, then you have to accept whatever is decided by your colleague and you even have no
right to think about it to reject or comment on that decision. I just count the seconds for lunch time when I feel there'd be just two more hours to be at such a prison with an awful guard force (my colleague and office, I mean) who observes me in each and every seconds at the work place. (Participant #09)

One of the employees (Participant #14) had the experience of teaching at the university prior to joining the job position as an employee. He stresses that friendship, cooperation, and mutual respect promote working output:

I also had the experience of working in an environment where I received too much harsh and aggressive behaviour from one of my colleagues. My personal character is to respect all people no matter of their gender, age, academic, social, religious and economic status. I also tried to teach the same attitude to my students during teaching career which is well portrayed in my students' email during my leave (Figure 2).

Another employee (Participant #41) provided his overview of working in their office as below:

One more interesting point was the manager of the section who was among those acknowledging work work mentality. We talked too much on these issues, but he just appreciates the output. We talked too much and I tried to convince that my colleague's behaviour towards me and others is embarrassing, but he said “I'm already aware of all these misbehaviours, but when the output is satisfactory it's fair enough for me. I'm sure respect is a missing ring, but you don't that much hard. I can tolerate all misbehaviours, but in your case, I cannot accept". Interestingly, he was totally hypnotized by my colleague's attitude and behaviour and it was not acceptable for me. I do not care if I receive no money, but if my ideologies and attitudes are appreciated it is motivating for me. Contrary to all colleagues I visited during my stay at the organization who accept all biases and unfairnesses to receive payment at the end of each month and with a hope of professional progress in future, I really don't like to continue to work in an atmosphere where respect is not observed towards me and other employees just by a person. I also tried to inform the higher-order person in organization (Figure 3.) through different email correspondences, but received no feedback. It just helped me to find out that if I want to work in that specific section, I should just close my eyes and robotically work as much as I can and try not to put all emotional and humanity feelings outside the organization doors and just stick to rigid unfair rules of the organization. Of course, there are few personalities who have such a character; but all believed that even one is too much.

Such a feeling was also blinking in other employees' comments as well as feelings:

Figure 2. My student's feeling when I joined new job vacancy.
Working as an employee for fifteen years means treasure. If you are employed you are condemned to accept all rigid norms and there remains no right for you to deviate from higher order authorities’ command as it’s some human beings’ nature that sense of power closes their eyes and helps them forget their early years of employment. They are now in power and try to impose themselves just to convince others that he/she is the best for no doubt. I witnessed some youth who joined the organization with a hope to progress, but the first feedback they received from some colleagues at the one hand, and the need for payments to fund their living costs on the other hand, makes them to continue their work and accept all biases and unfairnesses just for the sake of cash. The role of your colleagues, how do you cooperate with them, how do they react to you both as a human being and their colleague, as well as how do they acknowledge your progress during your employment all are vital to both your success as an employee and pursuing future success of the organization. (Participant #37)

Mosadegh Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006, p. xxv) also scrutinize “leadership style of hospital managers that affect employee’s job satisfaction”. They concluded that “Employees’ job satisfaction was significantly correlated and was affected by leadership style of managers especially employee-oriented dimension”. It is again in line with our findings that the relationship is at the core of attention. It is really vital for employees to be considered and seen by both their colleagues and managers. If their ideas as well as comments are acknowledged in a friendly mutual relationship, then there would be an increase in a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization which finally promotes the organization in near horizon. In another research, Nasl Saraji and Dargahi (2006) stress that “high Quality of Work Life (QWL) is essential for organizations to continue to attract and retain employees”. They explored one of hospital employees’ (supervised by Tehran University of Medical Sciences) positive and negative attitudes towards QWL and found that:

... the majority of employees were dissatisfied with occupational health and safety, intermediate and senior managers, their income, balance between the time they spent working and with family and also indicated that their work was not interesting and satisfying. TUMS hospitals’ employees responding to this survey have a poor quality of work life (p. 8).

If employees’ prestige and character is appreciated and valued as a human being not a mere employee who is assigned to some administrative stuff. If working environment is overwhelmed with commitment, cooperation and honesty, while there is no rigid and tough hierarchy which creates a forbidden zone for employees to talk frankly with their higher order authorities; in this case all try to do their best based on the organization goals in order to achieve near and future prosperity based on mission and vision of the organization. It’s the responsibility of the managers/directors to provide such an atmosphere for employees to talk without any fear of being kicked out of the organization. (Participant #58)
I got my M.Sc. in Chemical Engineering from one of the thirteen top Iranian universities with a hope to pursue my Ph.D. to work as a teaching staff. Unfortunately, I had no chance to win the interview session of Ph.D. test.

[Some years back, Ph.D. test was administered by each university independently. But, at the moment it is administered by the Evaluation Organization that is supervised by the Ministry of Science, Research, & Technology. At the first phase, some candidates are selected based on their ranks on a nation-wide entrance exam, then those selected students participate in interview sessions at the departments.]

I preferred to find a job to cover costs of life expenses. I was so motivated at the beginning, but I found it’s the nature work places that demotivate you totally as in some cases you condemn yourself for leaving academic life just for monthly payments. All my prestige was vanished in cyberspace and my utopia was collapsed as you are overwhelmed with lots of administrative stuff which leaves no space for you to even think about your routine life. Within these nine years of joining the organization, I just blame all my life as it was the life financial burdens which made me to look for a job vacancy. [Still, there are too much to say ...] (Participant #44)

Guinot, Chiva, and Roca-Puig (2014, p. 107) also stress that “when mutual trust spreads among all the people in an organization—regardless of whether they belong to the same hierarchical level or not—job stress can be reduced, and levels of job satisfaction can rise”. It might be interesting to note that almost all those who had master degrees were dissatisfied as they illuminated the lack of trust among different levels of employees. They were also concerned that their level of knowledge and education are not taken into account by the colleagues and the directors/managers within the organization:

One of my colleagues who had more experience had the potentiality to totally control our manager at the section. In some cases, I had more recent ideas which, for sure, provide new hints and clues for progress of our section, but the main problem was that all my comments and feedback should go through my colleague’s filter which unfortunately was immediately blocked. I tried to inform the manager, but again it was an unfair case which my voice was immediately suppressed. Repetition of immediately highlights how my ideas and voices were rejected without taking them into consideration to see if these might be helpful. (Participant #36)

Rynes, Gerhart, and Minette (2004, p. 381) emphasize that “pay is not equally important in all situations or to all individuals, and identify circumstances under which pay is likely to be more (or less) important to employees”. It was highly quoted by the employees that while importance of payments cannot be denied, but acknowledgment of employees’ ideas, attitudes, and voices by their colleagues as well as higher-order authorities. But, the main problem was that almost all prefer not to voice their disagreement and try to accept whatever happens even if their rights are violated due to some biased mentalities which are not nowadays well embraced in well-developed countries and organizations. Another employee (Participant #13) also had such an experience as he was nothing than a mere recipient of his colleagues’ order and notes. He mentioned that “some other colleagues at different sections also found such a biased attitude towards me and, in some cases, I frankly talked with the higher-order administrative authorities and the managers, but the result was nothing than a mere acknowledgment that “yes, it’s totally unfair. You should ask the manager to change the situation. Why there is such an unfair relationship!”

He further explained that in fact, the notes as well as correspondences he received from one of my colleagues was overwhelmed with too much biased and aggressive words and phrases. In some cases, even the way how the communications were addressed to me was interesting to me and impolite in general perspective. Figure 4 also portrays one of the kinds of communications I received at the weekend for what I should immediately do upon my arrival at the organization early at Saturday morning.
The gathered ideas and overviews illuminate that all staffs’ utopia, prestige as well as voices are usually dismissed and suppressed in the work place. It also makes no difference whether you are academically, socially, and culturally higher than your colleagues, but it is the matter of links and ties which affect all relationships.

5. Concluding remarks
The governments’ failure in proper decisions concerning different situations lead to future failure of decisions concerning other engaged powerless parties. Unemployment rates and failure of appointment of higher education graduates in positions well suited with their academic background are due to governments’ ill-made decisions concerning the future academic success as well as prosperity.

Here, the participants well illuminated that all wish to continue their higher studies to get Ph.D. in different fields as they thought working as a teaching staff is the most prestigious well-paid job in an Iranian context. They believed that academic staffs’ position, feelings, ideas, voices, and prestige are well acknowledged by the surrounding community. There is no such work pressure (stress) on teaching staff while all administrative staffs at the organizations are suffering from dozens of different pressures (financial, social, life, etc.) which demotive them from pursuing further progress in academic, economic, and social life.
The findings of the research also illuminate that managers/directors need to change their mentalities towards staff. They should remember that all burdens of work place are imposed on the administrative staffs, while almost all higher-order authorities are from teaching staff who have the power and right to make decisions. It also needs to be mentioned that the participants emphasized the role of in-service courses for the employees on how to manage the working atmosphere and cooperate without any sense of bias and unfairness. It also needs to be mentioned that the role of training courses is undeniable, but the higher-order managers also should observe the relationships and try to give priority to the nature of employees as human beings who have the right to progress, to voice their ideas, to give suggestions, and also to be acknowledged by their managers if some attitudes and mentalities are different from their own ideologies. It is interesting to note that financial problems were the participants’ second concern which stresses the already mentioned idea that employees’ personality and character should be appreciated.

The research well informs the politicians and governmental bodies to well decide about higher-order priorities and consider the future success of new generations in all higher-order decisions.

**Funding**
The authors received no direct funding for this research.

**Author details**
Iman Tohidian
E-mail: tohid_483@yahoo.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4087-2749
Hamid Rahimian
E-mail: hamidrahimian@yahoo.com
E-mail: rahimian@atu.ac.ir
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2808-0618

1 Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Faculty of Psychology & Education, Allameh Tabataba’i University (ATU), Tehran, IRAN.

**Citation information**
Cite this article as: Reflection on working culture in public organizations: The case of three Iranian Higher Education Institutions, Iman Tohidian & Hamid Rahimian, Cogent Social Sciences (2019), 5: 1630932.

**References**
Adler, N. J., & Jelinek, M. (1986). Is “organization culture” culture bound? Human Resource Management, 25(1), 73–90. doi:10.1002/(ISSN)1099-050X
Alvesson, M. (1987). Organizations, culture, and ideology. International Studies of Management & Organization, 17(3), 4–18. doi:10.1080/00208825.1987.11656459
Askhakhov, M. N. (2016). Explaining the effects of perceived person-supervisor fit and person-organization fit on organizational commitment in the U.S. and Japan. Journal of Business Research, 69(2), 956–963. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.08.039
Boye Kuranchie-Mensah, E., & Ampomah-Tawiah, K. (2016). Employee motivation and work performance: A comparative study of mining companies in Ghana. Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management, 9(2), 253–309. doi:10.9296/jiem.1530
Burstein, P. (1991). Policy domains: Organization, culture, and policy outcomes. Annual Review of Sociology, 17, 327–350. doi:10.1146/annurev.so.17.080191.001551
Chatman, J. A., Polzer, J. T., Barsade, S. G., & Neale, M. A. (1998). Being different yet feeling similar: The influence of demographic composition and organizational culture on work processes and outcomes. Administrative Science Quarterly, 43(4), 749–780. doi:10.2307/2393615
Damji, N., Levnajic, Z., Rejek Skrt, V., & Suklan, J. (2015). What motivates us for work? Intricate web of factors behind money and prestige. Psychological Reports, 107(1), e0132641. doi:10.1373/journal.pone.0132641
Faisal, M. N., & Al-Esmoael, B. A. (2014). Modeling the enablers of organizational commitment. Business Process Management Journal, 20(1), 25–46. doi:10.1108/BPJ-08-2012-0086
Fallis, D. T. (2016). Is making people ignorant as bad as deceiving them? In R. Peels (Ed.), Perspectives on ignorance from moral and social philosophy (pp. 120–133). Taylor and Francis. doi:10.4324/9781315671246
Giorgi, S., Lockwood, C., & Glynn, M. A. (2015). The many faces of culture: Making sense of 30 years of research on culture in organization studies. The Academy of Management Annals, 9(1), 1–54. doi:10.5465/19416520.2015.1007645
Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition. Amherst: Bergin and Garvey.
Giroux, H. A. (1988). Teachers as Intellectuals: Towards a critical pedagogy of learning. Granby, MA: Garvey Publishers, Inc.
Giroux, H. A. (1989). Schooling for Democracy: Critical pedagogy in the modern age. London: Routledge.
Giroux, H. A. (1997). Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture, and schooling. Boulder, CO: Westview/Harper Collins.
Giroux, H. A. (2014). When schools become dead zones of the imagination: A critical pedagogy manifesto. Policy Futures in Education, 12(4), 491–499. doi:10.2304/pfie.2014.12.4.491
Guinot, J., Chiva, R., & Roca-Puig, V. (2014). Interpersonal trust, stress and satisfaction at work: An empirical study. Personnel Review, 43(1), 96–115. doi:10.1108/PR-02-2012-0043
Herzberg, F. W. (1968). One more time. How do you motivate employees? Harvard Business Review, 56 (January–February), 53–62.
Juntti, M., Russel, D., & Turnpenny, J. (2009). Evidence, politics and power in public policy for the environment. Environmental Science & Policy, 12(3), 207–215. doi:10.1016/j.envsci.2008.12.007
Mosadegh Rad, A. M., & Yarmohammadian, M. H. (2006). A study of relationship between managers’ leadership style and employees’ job satisfaction. Leadership in Health Services, 19(2), xi–xxvii.
Mosadeqrad, A. M., Ferlie, E., & Rosenberg, D. (2011). A study of relationship between job stress, quality of working life and turnover intention among hospital employees. Health Services Management Research, 24(4), 170–181. doi:10.1258/hsmr.2011.011009
O’Reilly, C. A., III, Chatman, J., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991). People and organizational culture: A profile
comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit. Academy of Management Journal, 34(3), 487–516.
Peterson, J. (2003). Policy Networks. IHS Political Science Series 90. http://irihs.ihs.ac.at/1506/1/pw_90.pdf
Reave, L. (2005). Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness. The Leadership Quarterly, 16(5), 655–687. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.07.003
Rhodes, R. A. W. (2006). Policy network analysis. In M. Moran, M. Rein, & R. E. Goodin (Eds.), The Oxford handbook of public policy (pp. 423–445). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rynes, S. L., Gerhart, B., & Minette, K. A. (2004). The importance of pay in employee motivation: Discrepancies between what people say and what they do. Human Resource Management, 43(4), 381–394. doi:10.1002/hrm.1099-050X
Sadri, G., & Lees, B. (2001). Developing corporate culture as a competitive advantage. Journal of Management Development, 20(10), 853–859. doi:10.1080/02621710110410851
Saraji, G. N., & Dargahi, H. (2006). Study of quality of work life (QWL). Iranian Journal of Public Health, 35(4), 8–14.
Smith, D. B., & Shields, J. (2013). Factors related to social service workers’ job satisfaction: Revisiting Herzberg’s motivation to work. Administration in Social Work, 37(2), 189–198. doi:10.1080/03643107.2012.673217
Somerville, M. (2005). ‘Working’ culture: Exploring notions of workplace culture and learning at work. Pedagogy, Culture and Society, 13(1), 5–26. doi:10.1080/14681360500200212
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
Tohidian, I. (2016). How do my students think about me as an English-language teacher? Reflective Practice, 17(1), 739–751. doi:10.1080/14623943.2016.1207622.