IDENTIFYING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN INDIA

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Abstract

Getting the culture right, is challenging – but is well worth for the rewards of success. Every institution is characterized by its own culture, which is different from others. Identification of organizational culture in an institution may help in determining if mission, goals, and strategic objectives were being met. This study investigated academic staff members’ perceptions of organizational culture in selected institutions of higher learning. Faculty’s views about different dimensions of organizational culture were examined. A total of 100 academic staff members from private institutions of higher learning have completed the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument. Analysis of data was done by using descriptive statistics explicitly to determine the kind of existing organizational culture in private institutions. Results of this study revealed that private institutions mainly have market culture.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Private institution, Academic staff members

I. Introduction

Academics cannot be held solely responsible for the quality of teaching and research at their university. They operate within the resource and policy constraints created by the government and senior managers of universities. Recognition of the value and validity associated with different roles of its stakeholder’s groups and appropriate mechanisms to enable each to contribute according to their strengths is
essential for universities to meet the challenges of the modern era [VI]. Ultimately, quality in education and research depends to a large extent on the skills and motivation of academics committed to their work and resourced adequately to do it. Since there is a huge requirement for higher educational institutions in India, being one of the most populated country. Private investments were considered the answer to this requirement and have become vital since 2000 [V]. Before the entry of private investors, higher educational sector was dominated by state-run institutions. After the entry of private investors, a noticeable failure can be traced in accommodating and regulating these institutions like illegal practices and incompetency. It was some time before this was recognized and measures were adopted to counteract them.

The prevailing skepticism faced by this sector owes much to the dominance of such players. Numerous incidents were reported since 2002 in private higher educational institutions of corruption and cronyism in its operations as well as compromise with quality in India. Chhattisgarh was among one of the federal state where private universities were legally challenged. This has opened up a gamut of issues on the operation of these universities. As a follow-up to regulating and monitoring the standards of these institutions, a series of steps need to be adopted. Still it requires something new to be done and thought of. This could be possible through the creation, management, and sometimes even destruction of culture in that institution.

Shared values and norms focus employees’ attention on organizational priorities and guide their behavior and decision making [IV]. Cultural differences cause rise in issues such as identity, communication problems, human resource problems, ego clashes, and inter-group conflicts and ultimately failure of any institution.

This study was carried out to identify the type of culture prevailing in different private institutions of higher learning located in metropolitan regions of India. Data was examined by scoring, tabulating, and computing in order to do Descriptive Analysis. According to the results obtained from the study, it is believed that through identification of organizational culture, institutions may determine if mission, goals, and strategic objectives were being met. It is required because if faculty’s perception of organizational culture is positive, this will increase their commitment to its institution.

For the development, modification, and change of organizational culture according to the requirements of present situation the prerequisite is to understand the existing organizational cultural in any institution in order to be effective. It is the productivity through human element that makes a difference in the institution to gain competitive advantage otherwise every institution is almost same in the world. The manager of an organization faces challenges such as, working with people from different cultures, improving the quality of teaching, enhancing employability of the students, maximizing their satisfaction and so on. In doing so a work force that has different aspirations, needs, attitudes and style. While there are numerous studies on perceptions of organizational culture but it should be noted that a number of aspects impact perceptions, such as humiliation, experience, prior learning, and knowledge [II]. The current study focused primarily on academic staff for understanding and knowledge of their organizational culture.

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II. Organizational culture

Organizational Cultures a multidimensional as well as a multilevel concept that represents fundamental norms, perspectives, values, beliefs, and assumptions shared by organizational members.

University culture has a diverse kind of organizational culture where beliefs, values, and basic assumptions are carried in common by almost all universities [X] for instance, all universities have routine ceremonies. Furthermore, at workplace people should also celebrate not only events of their professional promotion but also events connected to their personal life, such as birthdays, wedding, or retirement [XI].

University culture is formed by exchange and collective reception of same values and artifacts rather than by individuals acting alone. “The bottom line for leaders to manage is that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will start managing them. Organizational culture is important because shared beliefs and norms affect employee perceptions, behaviors, and emotional responses to work place. Organizational culture has a direct impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment [III]. When considering the impact of cultural context on managerial leadership both strengths (relationships) as well as negative trends (corruption, politics, trade unions, seniority issues) appear. Globalization also impacted the culture and it becomes necessary to copy new ideas from others such as managerial leadership and while imitating others, one should never leave their own traditions. Organizational culture is directly related to leadership and can be manipulated and altered depending on leadership.

Cameron and Quinn [VIII, IX] explained four culture types based on the Competing Values Framework. Competing values produce divisions like flexibility vs. stability and internal vs. external focus which were found to be important for defining organizational success. It consists of a quadrant with four types of culture based on six characteristics of organizational culture. Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) evaluates four kinds of cultures which are as under:

III. Dimensions of Organizational Cultures

1. Clan Culture

   I. Dominant Characteristics: The organization is a very personal place, like an extended family, sharing a lot of them.
   ii. Organizational Leadership: The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.
   iii. Management of Employees: The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.
   iv. Organization Glue: The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.
   v. Strategic Emphases: The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.
   vi. Criteria of Success: The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.
2. **Adhocracy Culture**

I. Dominant Characteristics: The organization is a very dynamic entrepreneurial place and people are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.

ii. Organizational Leadership: The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk taking.

iii. Management of Employees: The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.

iv. Organization Glue: The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.

v. Strategic Emphases: The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Utmost value is given to prospecting for opportunities and trying new things.

vi. Criteria of Success: The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest products. It is a product leader and innovator.

3. **Market Culture**

I. Dominant Characteristics: The organization is very results oriented with very competitive and achievement oriented people.

ii. Organizational Leadership: The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.

iii. Management of Employees: The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.

iv. Organization Glue: The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.

v. Strategic Emphases: The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Dominance is given on winning in the marketplace and hitting stretch targets.

vi. Criteria of Success: The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.

4. **Hierarchical Culture**

I. Dominant Characteristics: The organization is a very controlled and structured place with formal procedures to govern people.

ii. Organizational Leadership: The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.

iii. Management of Employees: The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.

iv. Organization Glue: The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.

v. Strategic Emphases: The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important.
vi. Criteria of Success: The organization defines success on the basis of efficiency. Critical factors here are smooth scheduling, dependable delivery, and low-cost production.

IV. Context of the Study

As this study was related to private institutions of higher learning, therefore private institutions in North East, West, and South area of India were selected through random sampling. Thereafter academic staff members that are faculty members who voluntarily agreed to participate prior to survey administration were contacted. 100 out of 130 set of questionnaires sent to respondents were received showing a response rate of 76.9 percent. This data was collected between 10/4/2017 and 17/02/2018. Rapport was maintained throughout the process of data collection. The subjects were asked to give free and frank responses and the responses that come first to their minds. A quantitative survey of faculty members was conducted through digital and personal administration of the structured questionnaire. Out of 450 questionnaires, 400 questionnaires were received that shows response rate of 88% percent. The majority of respondents were married (72.9%) males (53.3%), within the age group of 30-40 years, (47.7%) working in Government Institutions from less than 10 years (50.5%) experience and tenure of their present position was below 5 Years (42.1%).

V. Research Design

The study uses a non-experimental, descriptive design in that it aimed to explore faculty member’s perceptions of Organizational Culture in their institution.

Testing and Intervention Procedure

Faculties were informed, through the use of an information sheet that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that anonymity and confidentiality would be ensured. No identifying information was requested on the questionnaire. Quantitative data was gathered and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Instrumentation

To obtain the organizational culture related responses, a questionnaire constructed by [IX] was used. It comprised of 24 items. It is a multidimensional scale which was converted into five point Likert scale [XVI]. It has a five-point response dimension running from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scale identifies four kinds of organizational culture i.e. Clan culture, Adhocracy Culture, Market Culture, and Hierarchy Culture present in the organization on the bases of six dimensions which are Dominant Characteristics, Organizational Leadership, Management of Employees, Organizational Glue, Strategic Emphasis, Criteria of Success. First of all the reliability and internal consistency of scale was calculated. A Cronbach alpha value above 0.7 is considered to be acceptable [VII]. Overall alpha value of Organizational Culture Scale and its dimensions entered separately were found to be more than 0.7; hence the scale is reliable to be used in the study.

Results and Discussions

Table I illustrates the mean scores and standard deviation of different organizational culture alternatives (Clan, Adhocracy, Market, and Hierarchy). Average scores were
computed from OCAI survey distributed to the 100 participant. Through this assessment, the researcher determined that the Market Culture is the current organizational culture of private institutions of higher learning [VIII]. The Market Culture description is indicative of faculty member’s feeling that the department is a very results oriented with very competitive and achievement oriented people. Leadership in these institutions is generally considered to demonstrate an aggressive, no-nonsense, results-oriented focus. These organizations are characterized by a management style which focuses on high demands, hard-driving competitiveness, and achievement. Glue that holds these organizations together is their emphasis on goal accomplishment and achievement. Winning and aggressiveness are common focus. Competitive actions and achievement are the most important concerns in these organizations. Winning in the marketplace and hitting stretch targets are the dominant factors. Success is defined in these organizations on the basis of outpacing the competition and winning in the marketplace. They concentrate most on competitive market leadership.

Further, results of the organizational profile also indicate an external focus/orientation in the institutions. It occurs in the conditions of stability and control. This culture emphasizes achievement as well as efficiency [XIV]. Employees in these institutions are success-oriented. Personal interests are given importance over the organizational goals and concentrate on forecasting, performance and proficiency.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N-100)

| Organizational Culture | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Standard Dev. |
|------------------------|---------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Clan                   | 0       | 45.81   | 20.22 | 6.83          |
| Adhocracy              | 0       | 42.35   | 21.01 | 8.17          |
| Market                 | 5       | 63.64   | 28.09 | 10.07         |
| Hierarchy              | 0       | 49.09   | 24.32 | 9.03          |

The organization’s culture needs to be understood and improved for providing suitable interpersonal atmosphere [I]. The managers in the private sector are significantly higher than the public sector regarding organizational culture and managerial effectiveness [XIV]. It means in the private sector managers perceive their organizational culture to be better and are more effective than the public sector managers. Academic leaders have to focus upon employee behavior (people management), work process and people attitude towards work (task management), liaising among them (relationship management) with a future orientation (Strategic management) to adapt to the changing situations [XII]

V. Conclusion

In this study, it is concluded that the main organizational culture type in Private institutions is Market Culture. According to the faculty members of these
surveyed institutions, they experience a familial feeling, where faculty are seen as mentors or even parental figures. Commitment and cohesion are the two dominant characteristics of the department, as there is much emphasis on internal maintenance with flexibility, concern for people, and sensitivity to students [VIII]. Orientation of private institutes is towards the external environment rather than internal concerns. They have a focus on transactions with (mainly) external constituencies such as competing institutions, students, Accreditation authorities/licensees, unions, and regulators. The major focus of markets is to conduct transactions (exchange, admissions, and contracts) with other constituencies to create a competitive advantage. Profitability, results, expansions, and secure admissions are the primary objectives of the organizations. Competitiveness and productivity are the core values that dominate here which is done through the strong focus on external positioning and control. Activities and functions which contribute to goal achievements and results need to be focused [XIII].

VI. Limitations and future research scope

The study is limited to metropolitan cities only which does not serve as a representative of institutions of the whole country. Further it should study other factors also along with organizational culture which may also get impacted by it. An increased sample size would strengthen the validity of the results. Research may also be carried out to compare the organizational culture of the universities to see the differences among the organizational types. Generalization was also difficult due to the possibility of the Hawthorne effect (when faculty member answer differently than they normally would simply because they know that they are part of a study).

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