Organizational Culture at the AEC: What Quantitative and Qualitative Data Reveal
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Introduction

In the last issue of ILI, I introduced three research questions related to organizational culture and Intensive English Programs (IEPs). My focus was the Applied English Center at the University of Kansas. The research questions were: (1) what do the employees of the AEC perceive to be the dominant organizational culture?, (2) what dominant organizational culture emerges from analysis of qualitative processes within the AEC, and (3) what are the differences between the perceptions of the dominant organizational culture of AEC employees and the dominant organizational culture that emerges from analysis of qualitative processes? In this article, I will summarize the methodology used to answer these questions and present the results of my study which showed that the AEC was a predominantly transformational organization.

Methodology

The research questions were addressed using a concurrent mixed method design. Qualitative data were collected in order to compile an ethnography of the participating IEP, which was the Applied English Center (AEC). Quantitative data were collected concurrently, using the Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ)® to determine –AEC employees' perceptions of the organizational culture. In order to avoid bias the quantitative data were not analyzed until after the qualitative data were collected and compiled. The qualitative and quantitative sets of data were then compared to determine if the qualitative data supported or refuted the data from the ODQ®.

The Qualitative Portion

The qualitative portion of this study was an ethnography of the AEC. The purpose of the ethnography was to support or refute the findings from the quantitative portion of the study. Based upon the information from the survey, the AEC was categorized into one of nine typologies listed in the quantitative portion of this chapter. Qualitative data gained from the ethnographic study of the AEC was compared to the specific characteristics of the typology in which the AEC was placed to determine if the data sets corresponded to one another. The overall purpose was to determine if employees' perceptions of the organization found in the quantitative survey were demonstrated in the organization's day-to-day activities, and published documents.

The types of qualitative data typically collected in an ethnographic study are participant observations and interviews as well as artifacts and documents of the organization or culture being studied (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative data that was collected for the purposes of this study focused on text documents related to procedures and processes integral to the functioning of the AEC. Interviews of key participants were conducted to clarify or supplement information uncovered in the examination of the artifacts and documents

Participant observation, the third data collection method typically used in ethnographic research, was minimally used. Although Smith (2006) claimed that a participant observer may be able to make connections that outside researchers might not be able to make, it was necessary in this particular study to limit participant observation in order to avoid bias. Therefore participant observation was used only to clarify or draw connections between the artifacts and documents and interviews collected.

According to Creswell (2007), "the naturalistic researcher looks for confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data. Both dependability and confirmability are established through an auditing of the research process" (p. 204). In this study multiple data sources were reviewed for similarities and contradictions in order to get the most accurate picture of a phenomenon (Eisner, 1991). Each process examined in the qualitative portion of the study was reviewed using multiple textual and interview-based sources for common patterns of behavior. Creswell (2007) identified this process as triangulation.

Additionally, the purpose of this study was to "understand rather than convince" (Creswell, 2007, p. 205), and therefore I did not begin this study with the idea of finding anything specific. Creswell (2007) additionally stated that "substantive validation means understanding one's own understandings of the topic, understandings derived from other sources, and the documentation of this process in the written study" (p. 206), but must go one step further. The researcher must include a high degree of self-reflexivity which allows others to draw their own conclusions about the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2007).

The Quantitative Portion

The Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ)® was developed by Bass and Avolio (1992) and is a 28-question survey. Each question offers a statement relating to organizational operations. The respondent was asked to indicate whether this statement is true or false for the organization, resulting in a score for transactional and transformational cultures. Organizations can then be categorized into a typology as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Frequency of Types of Cultures According to the Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ)® Scores

		Transactional		
		-14 to -6	-5 to +5	+6 to +14
	+6 to +14	Predominately 4 I's	Moderated 4 I's[4]	High Contrast
Transformational	-5 to +5	Loosely Guided	Coasting	Moderated Contractual
	-14 to -6	Garbage Can	Pedestrian	Predominately Contractual

Figure 1. Adapted and reprinted with permission from "Organizational Description Questionnaire, Sampler Set" by B.M. Bass and B.J. Avolio (1992), Mind Garden, p. 19. Copyright 1992 by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio.

Definition of Categories. Bass and Avolio (1992) stated that organizations that fall into the "Predominately 4 I's" category were considered "purely transformational" (p. 20). Formal agreements and procedures were not emphasized, rather there is focus on "purposes, visions, values, [and] fulfillment" (p. 20). The "Moderately 4 I's" category was demonstrated by a move towards more formalization of agreements and procedures.

A "High Contrast" organizational culture was characterized as having a high amount of both transformational and transactional qualities. In a "high contrast" culture, it is possible to "see a great deal of both management and leadership activity, with conflict over the best ways to proceed" (Bass and Avolio, 1992, p. 21).

A "Loosely Guided" organizational culture was relatively unstructured. Members in loosely guided organizations worked relatively independently of each other and leadership was rather informal. "Predictability is low, but there is some degree of flexibility" (Bass and Avolio, 1992, p. 21).

In an organization that demonstrated a "Coasting culture," neither transformational nor transactional values were dominant. In this type of organization, "managerial and leadership activity tends to be moderate in amount" (Bass and Avolio, 1992, p. 22). This category typified an organization that appeared to be maintaining status quo.

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[4] The "Is" in 4 I's stand for idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. According to Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991), it is the combination of these factors that makes the ideal transformational leader.

Organizations that were in the "Moderated Contractual" or the "Predominately Contractual" categories tended to be more bureaucratic than the other types of organizations. The "Predominately Contractual" organizations were heavily focused on self- versus group-interest and transactions were highly systematized and regulated. "The organization's structure is likely to be stable, centralized, tight and tall with a clear top-down chain of command" (Bass and Avolio, 1992, p. 23). The higher the transformational score, the more emphasis was placed on "concern for the individual" (p. 23) and "concern for new ideas and a longer-term perspective" (p. 23). This characterized an organization as "Moderated Contractual".

In a "Garbage Can" organizational culture, there was little to no structure or leadership and it did not have "clear purposes, visions and values or clear rules and regulations" (Bass & Avolio, 1992, p. 24). This type of organization was characterized by individuals who follow their own set of self-developed rules and procedures and "consensus is likely to be absent" (p. 24). It is unlikely that people in this type of organization could identify its culture.

Finally, Bass and Avolio (1992) categorized a "Pedestrian" organization as one where established and formal arrangements dominated. Commitment to the organization was generally low, and "work is routine" (p. 25) and "risk-taking is avoided" (p. 25). The organizational structure was generally oriented towards management by exception or contingent reward.

Qualitative Procedures

The qualitative analysis portion of this study was conducted in a four-step process. These steps (a) determine which AEC processes to examine, (b) determine what process data to examine, (c) analyze each data set and (d) determine each process' transformational/transactional category. Each step is described in detail below.

The first step in the qualitative analysis was to determine six processes which are integral to the operation of the AEC. The purpose of examining only six processes was to narrow the data set to a manageable level. Organizations are so complex that identifying and analyzing all possible processes related to their culture is not feasible. I assumed that six integral processes would be a solid reflection of the organizational culture of the AEC and by narrowing the scope to six processes, patterns of organizational culture would be more easily discerned.

According to DeVault and McCoy (2006), ethnographic research has an emergent nature, therefore the six processes were not chosen in advance, but were determined from an initial review of artifacts and interviews with key employees. Specifically, I reviewed the employee handbook and created a list of processes found within the document. I then presented the list to the Director who was asked to identify the six most integral processes to the operation of the AEC. The six processes chosen were then used in step two of the qualitative analysis.

The second step of the qualitative analysis was to determine what data to analyze related to the identified processes. Again the employee handbook was the starting point for analysis. The handbook was reviewed for references to each process, specifically for references to key documents and employees. I created a list of data to be analyzed for each process. Data sets included documents such as the employee handbook, memos and e-mails from supervisors and administrative personnel, promotional material, meeting minutes and student handbooks. Interviewed employees came from faculty, staff and administrators.

The next step of the qualitative process was the analysis of each data set. Each document and interview transcript was analyzed to determine the major steps and components of each of the six processes. Each step or component of the process was then coded based upon how transactional or transformational it is in nature, which was the final step in the qualitative analysis process[5].

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[5] Organizational culture can be described in many different ways and there is no agreed upon "best" way. There are even some researchers who believe that it is not possible to define or categorize an organization's culture. However, for the purposes of my study, I worked on the premise that organizations can be described and labeled. Therefore, I chose to use the Organizational Description Questionnaire® developed by Bass and Avolio (1993) who created a typology based on the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1993) characterized transactional leadership as a reward and punishment system with each organizational member having a clear idea of the job and responsibilities and

The criteria used to determine into which category of culture each step in the chosen processes falls can be found in Figure 2. These criteria were developed using Bass and Avolio's (1993) nine typologies. The number of transactional and transformational scores for each process were compiled to determine if the process was more transactional, more transformational or a balance of both types. The formula and table used to determine this is also found in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Qualitative Data Analysis Tool for Determining Transactional vs. Transformational Culture

Formula: Total Transactional _____ - Total Transformational = _____

Mostly Transactional +5 or more	Balanced Between -4 and +4	Mostly Transformational -5 or less
• Strong emphasis on formal agreements and procedures • Heavy focus on management vs. leadership • Little decision-making on the part of the employee	• Evidence exists of both formal agreements and procedures and an emphasis on visions, values and fulfillment • Evidence exists of both management and leadership behaviors • Evidence exists of a mix of prescribed procedures and independent decision-making by employees	• Strong emphasis on visions, values and fulfillment • Heavy focus on leadership vs. management • A lot of independent decision-making is done by employees

Quantitative Procedures
Data collection for the quantitative portion of the study began in the fall semester of 2012 when most employees of the AEC were present. The ODQ® described above was sent to all employees of the AEC via Survey Monkey®. Recipients had two weeks to respond to the ODQ® as well as an additional demographic portion of the survey. Permission to use was obtained.

Once the data was collected it was input into SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Originally the plan was to also use inferential statistics to compare data among different groups of employees, but the numbers of each group were too small to do this with any validity. Instead, the total transactional and total transformational scores were calculated for each respondent. Then, the mean scores for both transformational and transactional values were calculated based on all respondents to determine an organization-wide ODQ® score.

Synthesizing the Data Sets
To compare the difference in employee perceptions of organizational culture to that of the actual processes related to the organizational culture of the AEC, each data set was synthesized to get a better overall picture of the organization. The quantitative and qualitative data were examined for similarities and differences relating to transactional and transformational organizational culture variables to gain an understanding of what type of culture is present at the AEC. Specifically, the total mean scores for all ODQ® questionnaires were compared to the data uncovered in the analysis of documents, artifacts and interviews related to six key processes at the AEC.

Results

Quantitative Data Analysis
The quantitative data analysis portion of this study addressed the first research question: What do the employees of the

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should rarely deviate from this prescribed workload. Bass (1995) added that transactional leadership is also characterized by management by exception, meaning managers only intervene if they see something going wrong. Transformational leadership, on the other hand places more emphasis on individual follower concerns and relies heavily on the leader's personality (Bass, 1995). Rather than relying on a traditional reward and punishment system, transformational leaders "must also address the follower's sense of self-worth" (Bass, 2008, p. 618)

AEC perceive to be the dominant organizational culture? The first step in the quantitative portion of the study was to send the Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ)® to all employees at the AEC. An e-mail was first sent on June 25th, 2012 with a link to a Survey Monkey® site where the ODQ® had been put in electronic format along with additional demographic information. The survey link was sent to 69 recipients, 42 of which voluntarily and anonymously responded for a response rate of 60.8%.

This response rate was adequate to answer the research questions encompassed in this study, however further statistical research is difficult due to the small number of responses in various categories. For the purposes of this study, descriptive statistics provided information on the types of respondents, but no inferential statistics were used due to the small number of respondents. See Table 2 for a summary of data gained from the demographic portion of the survey.

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Data

Question	Response	Number of Respondents	Response Percentage
Employee Status	Full-time employee	36	85.71
	Part-time employee	6	14.29
Job Title	Pool, Multi-term or Permanent Lecturer	26	61.90
	Language Specialist or Other	6	14.29
	Graduate Teaching Assistant	2	4.76
	Staff or Administration	8	19.05
Length of Time in Organization	0-5 years	22	52.38
	6-10 years	5	11.90
	11+ years	15	35.71
TESOL Related Degree	Yes	37	88.10
	No	5	11.90
Have worked for other similar organizations	Yes	34	80.95
	No	8	19.05
Age	20-35	9	21.43
	36-50	14	33.33
	51+	19	45.24

The next step in the quantitative data analysis portion of the study was to determine the overall ODQ® score for the AEC. I calculated the ODQ® score for each of the respondents individually using the suggested formula of the test maker, which was described earlier. In order to get the overall score for the AEC, the averages of the transactional and transformational scores were calculated. The results were used to place an organization on the matrix depicted in Figure 1. The average transactional score for the AEC was .60 and the average transformational score was 8.71. This placed the AEC in the Moderated 4I's section of the matrix. Therefore the perceived dominant organizational culture of the AEC is considered to be mostly transformational in nature with a move towards more formal agreements and procedures (Bass and Avolio, 1992).

Qualitative Data Analysis
The second research question was addressed through the qualitative analysis portion of the study. Research question two was: What dominant organizational culture emerges from analysis of qualitative processes within the AEC? The first step in the qualitative portion of the study was to determine six processes that are most representative of the AEC. In order to determine these processes I read through the employee handbook and created a list of the processes found there. A list of 29 processes were found and subsequently categorized into five umbrella categories: administrative, curricular, employee-related, fiscal and student-related. I then shared the list with the Director of the AEC so that he could determine if there were any major processes missing from the list.

Once it was determined that the list was complete, I asked the Director to choose the six processes that he felt were most representative of the AEC . The only stipulation was that there was at least one process chosen from each of the main five categories in order to ensure a comprehensive study of the organization. The six processes chosen were strategic planning, course coordination, hiring personnel, annual evaluation, budget planning and implementation, and counseling. A brief explanation of each of these processes as they are utilized within the AEC can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Description of the Six AEC Processes Chosen for Qualitative Analysis

Process	Description
Annual Evaluation	The process of evaluating employee performance at the AEC.
Budget Planning and Implementation	The process of determining resource allocation for the fiscal year.
Counseling	The process of advising students on a number of matters including language and cultural adjustment and explanation and interpretation of AEC and university policies.
Course Coordination	The process of supervising each course in the AEC. One lecturer or language specialist is given responsibility for the development and implementation of the course as well as monitoring of instructors assigned to that course.
Hiring Personnel	The process of hiring faculty and staff.
Strategic Planning	The process of creating a plan for the implementation of new initiatives or the maintenance of current operations.

The second step in the process was to determine which data sets to analyze for each of the six processes. First, the employee handbook was reviewed for references to each of the six processes. Documents were identified as possible data sources and key employees were identified to interview. Table 4 presents a summary of the types of data analyzed for

each process. It is important to note that no documents were reviewed for the Budget Planning and Implementation process because no documents existed that provided written evidence of the procedures to follow for this process.

Table 4

Summary of Data Sources for the Six AEC Processes Chosen for Qualitative Analysis

Process	Documents	Interviews
Annual Evaluation	Employee Handbook	2 Associate Directors Former Committee Member
Budget Planning and Implementation	None	Director Accountant
Counseling	Employee Handbook Counseling Guide	3 Counselors
Course Coordination	Employee Handbook	3 Coordinators 1 Coordinated Instructor
Hiring Personnel	Accreditation Self-Study Document	Director 1 Associate Director
Strategic Planning	Accreditation Self-Study Document Pre-Semester Meeting Notes	Director

The third and final step in the qualitative analysis process was to determine whether each process is more transformational, transactional or a balance of the two. In order to make this determination, I reviewed each document and interview transcript for key steps in each process, or in the case of interviews, key observations of the participants. Each step or comment was labeled as more transformational or transactional in nature. The number of transactional and transformational markers were totaled for each process and entered into the formula shown in Figure 2. The results can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Results of Qualitative Analysis of Six AEC Processes

Process	Score	Result
Annual Evaluation	-22	Mostly Transformational
Budget Planning and Implementation	8	Mostly Transactional
Counseling	-14	Mostly Transformational
Course Coordination	3	Balanced
Hiring Personnel	24	Mostly Transactional
Strategic Planning	-14	Mostly Transformational

The results in Table 5 reflect calculations that cannot be considered exact because the number of comments and observations are not constant for each process. However, this method provided a way to remove, as much as possible, research bias from the qualitative process and provided a way to compare the data in an objective way. So although the scores may not be exact, they provide a picture that is as accurate as possible of the AEC. Therefore, after reviewing the qualitative data, it appears that the dominant culture revealed in the analysis of the qualitative data is mostly transformational in nature with some underlying transactional processes.

Synthesizing the Two Data Sets
The third and final research question of this study looks at the agreement or disagreement between the quantitative and qualitative sets of data. To reiterate, research question three was: What are the differences between the perceptions of the dominant organizational culture of AEC employees and the dominant organizational culture that emerges from analysis of qualitative processes? While an exact comparison of the data sets cannot be made due to the nature of the data, there is enough information to conclude that the qualitative data supports the quantitative data in that both data sets reveal that the AEC is mostly transformational in nature, but has some transactional elements. According to the data, the employee perceptions of the AEC's culture were similar to the culture that is represented in the dominant organizational culture revealed in the analysis of the qualitative processes found within the AEC.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion
The purpose of this study was to examine the concept of organizational culture as it applies to Intensive English Programs. The results revealed the AEC to be mostly transformational in nature with an undertone of transactional processes. These results are perhaps not surprising given the nature and overall structure of most IEPs.

Most IEPs are required to respond quickly to changes in the outside environment. Enrollment numbers fluctuate depending on U.S. relations with other countries. For example, IEPs may have to deal with a sudden influx of students from one particular country and have to adapt to a cultural learning curve that inevitably comes with this group of students. Additionally, IEPs have to contend with growing competition. It is no longer just the bigger English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia that are competitors for U.S. IEPs, but other countries are now starting their own schools and recruiting native English speakers to teach in them, forcing IEPs in the U.S. to become more aggressive in their recruiting practices (Pennington & Hoekje, 2010). This makes flexibility, a necessity for IEPs, which in a sense, forces them into a partially transformational culture.

On the other hand, IEPs are part of an overarching university structure which is usually very hierarchical in nature (Gioia, et al., 1994; Olson, 2009) making it necessary for IEPs to implement certain transactional processes that they might not otherwise have were they not attached to a larger university system. For example, IEPs are often restricted in their hiring practices because of university regulations. IEPs may not be able to predict the number of students coming into a program from year to year and may have to make hiring decisions very quickly. Many universities have strict hiring policies that are not conducive to quick hires. Also, IEPs often have budgetary restrictions placed on them by the universities, forcing IEPs into certain transactional behaviors.

Conclusions
This study's results indicated that the AEC has developed an organizational culture that is receptive to individual contribution and creativity, and was somewhat flexible in its operations and therefore was able to adapt to certain changes in the types and amount of students coming into the program. This is evidence of a transformational organizational culture. The data also suggested that the AEC was bound by certain university procedures such as budgeting and hiring, which have bred a certain amount of transactional culture in the AEC. Therefore the AEC fell into the Moderated 4Is category of the ODQ® (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

This study was an examination of the concept of organizational culture as it applied to the field of Intensive English Programs. It was discovered that the AEC has adapted an organizational culture that is suited to the environment in which it is situated. While these results may not be surprising, they are certainly useful as a foundation for future studies as well as best practices in IEP directorship.

Recommendations

Given the global trends mentioned in this study, it seems that IEPs will persist for the foreseeable future, but the landscape in which they currently sit is constantly shifting. Considering the impact this will have on IEPs, it is very important for IEP directors to understand their organizations to the extent that they are able to use that knowledge to make the necessary changes that will ensure the survival of their IEPs in this dynamic and volatile setting. The structure and results of this study can perhaps be helpful in this endeavor.

However, before discussing how IEP directors can use this study to better understand their organizations, it is important to reiterate that Lewis (1998) cautions that some researchers feel that organizational culture is too abstract to be useful to managers, while others feel it is a beneficial concept (Hofstede 1998; Schein, 1990). IEP directors should keep this dichotomy in mind when reviewing these results and should approach organizational culture research very carefully and with a sense of purpose (Schein, 2010). Large scale decisions should probably not be made solely on the basis of an organizational culture study.

Nevertheless, having a greater understanding of the underlying assumptions and values that drive an organization can only help in decision-making and change management. Knowing the type of organizational culture that is present can lead directors of IEPs at the very least, to a better understanding of why change initiatives are not working, and can potentially help them make decisions that work within the organizational culture rather than against it. Leaders can affect great change in their organizations if they have an understanding of its culture and how to use it to their advantage (Hofstede, 2000).

Furthermore, Bass and Avolio (1993) state that an ideal organization is one that presents a balanced mix of transformational and transactional cultures. The AEC in this study was shown to have this mix and appears to be well-prepared to meet the upcoming challenges mentioned previously and to survive and excel in a dynamic environment. Leaders of other IEPs in the United States can perhaps use the AEC as a model for operating an IEP in the modern landscape of teaching English as an additional language.

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