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Organizational culture in focus of measurements

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Abstract

In practical sociology the extensive experience of measuring organizational culture is obtained. But, up to now it remains unclear which method of research: either quantitative or qualitative is the most established, valid and reliable regarding an assessment of organizational culture. The authors represent the results of the pilot sociological research conducted on the basis of Cameron and Quinn's method in one of the Russian universities. The problem situation is connected with changing legal, economic conditions, norms and rules in the activity of universities under present reforms of higher education in Russia. Using the example of a researched unit of the university the authors make a hypothesis that such definition as organizational culture will allow to receive a strategic tool by means of which it will be possible to focus organization activity in total and each employee in particular on mobilizing, displaying initiative, searching resources and overcoming problems of adaptation to new conditions of development.

Keywords:

1. Introduction

According to changes in the area of reforming an education system the issue of the organizational culture transformations is topical for all Russian higher education institutions today. In the most general definition the main task is connected with reforms in the area of management, its solution will promote the effective performance of higher education establishments. Forms and nature of changes directly depend on quality of conformance of an old organizational culture (OC) to the new goals of competitive strengths achievements, world ranks positioning, increasing scientometrics, etc. In this regard it is necessary to keep basic academic values which distinguish university from other establishments and to define strategies promoting fast and effective reforming.

In the modern world the management and its quality act as a key factor of successful development. Management miscalculations spill over into the catastrophic mistakes leading to difficult situations. Management in education has strategic character as through this social institute the future parameters of a person productivity

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assessment in particular and society in general are set. But the management assessment process (especially change management) is complicated and ambiguous. We assume to carry out the analysis of measuring quality management methods, to choose the most flexible and effective ones according to inputs and time expenditures, and in addition to test it in education sphere.

2. Literature Review

Changes in organizational culture determine the success of any organization activity. According to the famous philosopher, sociologist, futurologist E. Toffler "… We are, in fact, witnessing the arrival of a new organizational system that will increasingly challenge, and ultimately supplant bureaucracy. This is the organization of the future. I call it "Ad-hocracy." (Toffler A., 1971). He offered this term as an alternative way of organizing people, as opposed to bureaucracy. He points out the three basic characteristics of bureaucratic organizational system emphasized by M. Weber as division of labor, vertical hierarchy and organizational relationships tended toward permanence. As opposed to this system, according to Toffler in adhocratic system a person becomes freer from "performing mindless routine tasks in response to orders from above" (Toffler A., 1971), overcomes conformism, indecision, becomes mobile, initiative, enterprising. It is connected with changing the management style of ad hoc (from Latin "especially for this case") in which managers are coordinators between various mobile fixed-term groups of individuals joint to solve specific problems therefore it is a "temporary structure" (E. Toffler's term). The main characteristics of an adhocracy are dynamism, mobility, flexibility and a creative component. It should be noted that in adhocratic system there is no centralized power, only professional knowledge and experience admit authoritative, employees differ in high degree of competence. Intra group interaction in the adhocratic organization has exclusively informal character. According to Toffler "… Man will encounter plenty of difficulty in adapting to this new style organization. But instead of being trapped in some unchanging, personality-smashing niche, man will find himself liberated, a stranger in a new free-form world of kinetic organizations. In this alien landscape, his position will be constantly changing, fluid, and varied. And his organizational ties, like his ties with things, places and people, will turn over at a frenetic and ever- accelerating rate" (Schein E., 2004). He attributes such organizational structure is the thing of the future, focusing on the appearance of adhocracy which will promote adaptation, organization adaptiveness to fast-changing market demand.

From our point of view, this model can be considered as a certain ideal which can be achieved, but almost practically impossible to carry out, as well as impossible to construct an ideal system of public administration.

It should be noted that the term "organizational culture" (OC) is polysemantic as a notion and polyaspect as a multifaceted and complicated phenomenon. In world literature organizational culture is described as an exact product of organization activity, as an object of management, as a complicated multilevel system etc. We offer to use the definition introduced by Ed. Schein, a famous American researcher in this field, as "   basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of survival in its external environment and its problems of internal. They come to be taken for granted because they solve those problems repeatedly and reliably, therefore they are taught to newcomers as the correct way of perceiving, thinking and feeling in relation to these problems" (Schein E., 2004).

3. Methods and Results

In practical sociology the certain experience of measuring organizational culture has been gained. Among researchers the question about methods of measuring OC engenders argument: which method: either quantitative or qualitative is the most authentic, valid and reliable in assessment.

We consider that the most flexible way of measuring OC is the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) suggested by Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn. This is the Competing Values Framework based on "using a scenario analysis procedure in which respondents report the extent to which written scenarios are indicative of their own organization's culture. These scenarios serve as cues - both emotionally and cognitively - that bring core cultural attributes to the surface" (Cameron K., 2006).

The advantages of the OCAI are the following:
- It allows to carry out the analysis of OC at micro and macro levels;
- Indicators make the maximal exhaustive pattern of fact to estimate organizational performance;
- Stock values define the basis of OC foundation;
- It allows to estimate OC in present and (preferable) state;
- It is applicable to research small and big groups;
- Combines quantitative and qualitative assessment;
- It does not require much time and material inputs, consequently can be used in any personnel.

It should be noted that the OCAI promotes the solution of the main task pointed out by A. Toffler as to adapt organization to changes in OC management. Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn based on the William G. Ouchi's classification, pointed out four types of OC: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market. According to K.Cameron and R.Quinn, diagnosing by the OCAI is divided into 3 stages:

- Questionnaire. It is based on OC assessment. The formalized questionnaire consists of blocks: a question and four alternative answers. It is obligatory to distribute points (total 100) among alternatives of answers in both columns "now" and "preferred".
- Graphic plotting the organization profile. Average scores are calculated beforehand, then the numbers are plotted on diagram quadrant. For every alternative of "now" and "preferred" some sort of a kitelike shape has been produced The place of profiles is strictly fixed.
- Interpreting the Culture profile. Defining an overall culture or combination of cultures which are the organization foundation is revealing an average culture profile. Establishing prevailing distinctions and similarities between the present and possible future profile allows making the list of necessary changes in OC and ways of achieving OC ideal and typical model. At this stage the key points are highlighted, focus is adjusted, further actions are planned.

The authors of the OCAI underline: "... Having a diagnostic instrument to identify core organizational culture values can be an especially useful tool in the effective management of organizational change" (Cameron K., 2006). The validity of this tool was approved in the study of OC in world-class companies, for instance, in 334 institutions of higher education in the USA. In every exact institution from 12 up to 20 respondents of all job levels were questioned and in total 3,406 respondents participated. Moreover, dominant cultures were revealed in most cases. These are clan (family) and market cultures. Mixed types are occurred much less. What is more, the institutions where the adhocratic type is dominant are more effective in adaptability to changes. The market type is effective in general but in accumulating/increasing resource importance, such as: income, image, status, etc. The clan (family) type is effective in creating/ keeping values. Hierarchic OC as opposed to others is not effective in any of the career field. As E. Schein fairly noticed " Leaders should be conscious of culture otherwise it will manage them" (Schein E., 2004).

We suggest considering the sociological research carried out in one of the Russian universities in the early 2014 as an example of applying the OCAI. It should be emphasized that the studying university was in TOP15 Russian leading universities rank in 2013. The key task of these universities is to be in TOP 100 of World University Rank in 2020. These 15 Universities get public funding to achieve this goal and to increase competitive advantage of Russian universities.

The object of the research is an academic staff of one of the department. Among respondents were assistants, lecturers, teachers, senior teachers, Associate professors, Professors. In total 15 individuals responded.

The subject of the research was OC of the department. The problematic situation is connected with changing in legal norms, economic conditions, university rules and regulations. In that context, the question about basic inner values consolidating the staff became currently central. They can be certain rules, which determine the role of every employee depending on his/her position in the institution, and controlling his/her activity. Following the rules leads to achieving goals of organization as well as to assess mutual expectations and to implement formal/informal control of employees.

The topical task of OC management is to define the effectiveness of the given process. That is why the primary objective of the study is methodic and practical help in elaborating new management strategy.

The basic hypothesis of the research is to define the OC type which allows getting a strategic instrument. This instrument would help to focus the work of organization as a whole and every employee particularly on mobilization, displaying initiative, resource searching, negotiating adaptation problems to new development conditions.

3.1. Management System
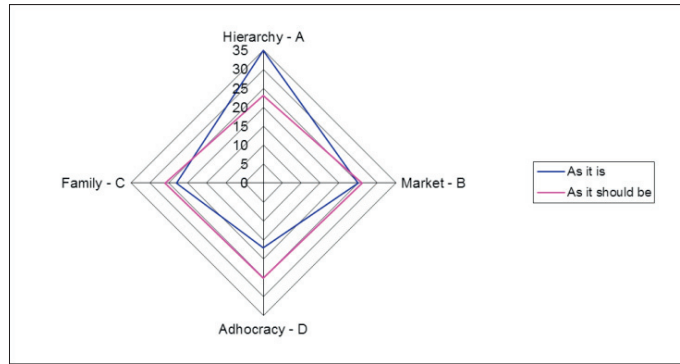
Fig. 1. Management system

The interpretation of received results allows drawing the conclusion that the management system in the given organization is constructed on the evident dominating of formal principles of interaction between the leader and employees at present (that is surprising), and as staff members suggest it should be in the future. All this is based on obvious ignoring of an adhocracy culture (creativity, ability to be responsible, to be initiative etc.). It is necessary to notice that in graph "as it should be" it is assumed that the creativity element is enlarged but not much. Thus the staff of the department states over existence of family culture and competition elements. In their opinion, the part of the informal beginning in work should decrease, but not due to strengthening of the competitive beginning, but due to creativity.
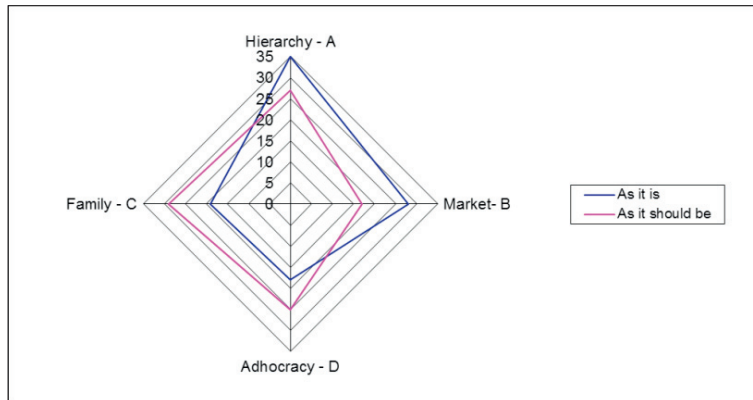
3.2. Organizational leader

Figure 2. Organizational leader

The leadership at the department in the category "as it is" is based on formal relationship between the leader and an employee. Employees consider that the promotion system toward leaders is in the situation of the extreme

competition (that is connected with the requirement of the leader to carry out goals on time). Thus the leader is close to perceive himself as a father, but at same time it is not forgotten that he is a chief). Ideally in the category "as it should be" leadership has to be formed on the basis of the creativity and more informal relationships, due to decreasing positions of traditional domination (because you hold a position) and owing to warmer (family) atmosphere.
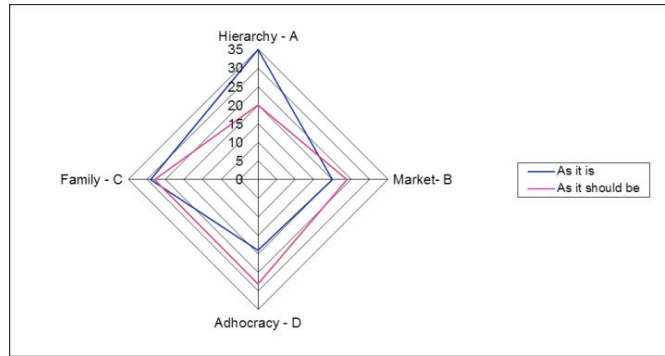
3.3. Target

Figure 3. Target

The targets are not set at the department; they are borrowed from program documents of superior organizational units. Thus the very essential role in its understanding is played by the head of the organization. Delivering on targets is considered more as the performance of the tasks given from above and department management satisfaction.

It is remarkable that in "preferred" respondents note the necessity to display self-dependence and freedom much and more essentially when determining targets.
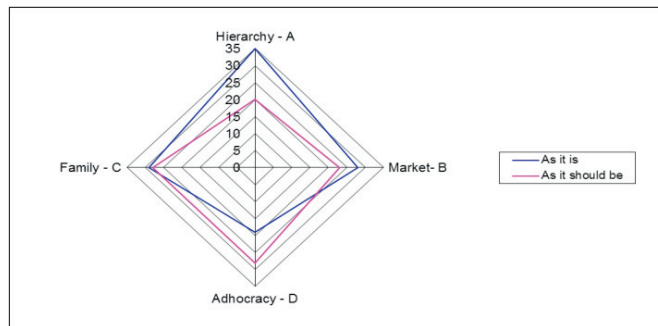
3.4. Integrity

Figure 4. Integrity

The integrity of the department is essentially maintained by formal rules and the awareness of necessity to do the tasks given by the management. Moreover, there are informal traditions and a general recognition of the family values which also supplement the integrity of individual's perception by the staff.

There is a lack of more creative and independent interaction among an individual and other departments as well as decreasing the level of the competition.
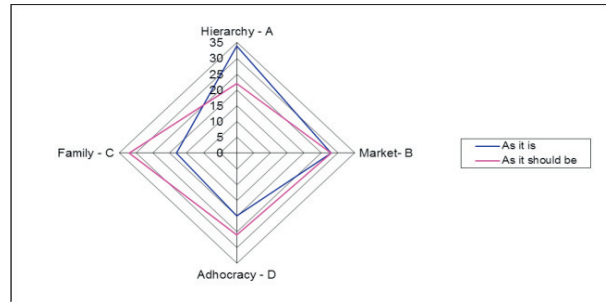
3.5. Criteria of success

Figure 5. Criteria of success

Primarily formal performance of demanded indexes is considered as the criterion of success, at the same time, in a less degree (but it is significant) the success in gaining the market is encouraged (selecting an exact number of prospective university students, wins a grant, publish the necessary number of articles, etc.). But employees do not have enough personal assessment of the management of their merits, unique projects and original tasks.

In an ideal, employees would like to create more command projects and to perform creative tasks which will help them to feel more independent and unique that is an objective criterion of success.
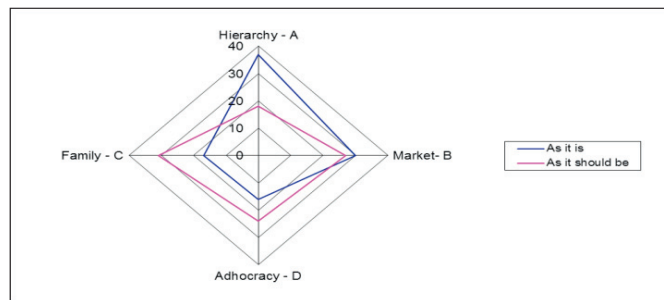
3.6. Encouragement

Figure 6. Encouragement

Encouragement in the department is defined by the leader's assessment. Thus it is necessary to take into account a correlation of this assessment with the results of work. Despite the results are important, the leader's assessment as a stimulation is more significant.

There is a lack of work stimulation according to staff assessment and creative independence (these factors can act as powerful stimulus if a management style is changed). The general constructive atmosphere and team work can become especially attractive in "preferred" version.

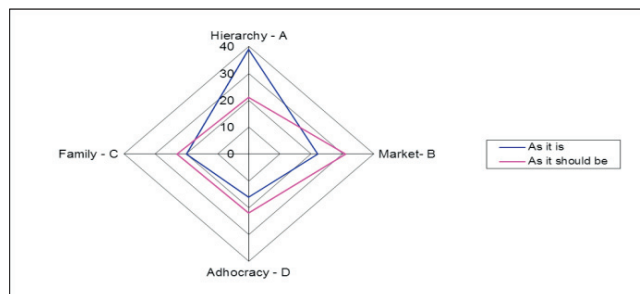*3.7. Decision-making in an uncertain situation*

Figure 7. Decision-making in an uncertain situation

Decision-making in a situation of uncertainty depends on the leader of the department more. Thus, an external situation is not excluded and should be taken into account: possibility to consult with the staff; in exceptional cases – acting according to situation.

Employees believe that in uncertain situations it is more important to estimate market conditions. As a less significant factor - to act upon a situation, much less significant factor – collective council, as a last resort – to act alone.
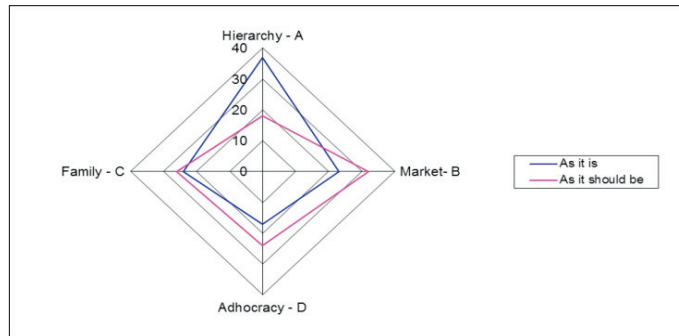
3.8. *Resolution of conflicts*

Figure 8. Resolution of conflicts

The resolution of conflicts is connected with the unit manager only (actually it is his sphere of competences). There is a role of the staff, of the market and a case, but only in light of a leader's position.

In an ideal, employees believe the necessity to decrease the role of the leader and to take into account objective indicators in resolution of conflicts (employee's performance), more active staff participating and conceding its independence in a greater degree.
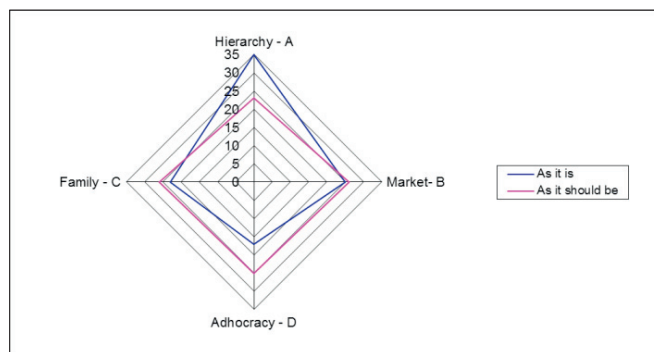
3.9. *Organizational characteristics*

Figure 9. Organizational characteristics

We can state that at the department the culture of hierarchy (formal attitude to business) dominates and there is a deficit of the creative start. Employees are more focused on internal problems of the organization, on better adaptation to them, than on external environment, on expansion of range of communicative contacts. There is an evident deficit of independence and freedom in their activity. Herewith, it should be mentioned that employees realize it. In graph "as it should be" culture of family and market almost coincide with the graph "as it is". Probably, it should be less elements of family culture.

On the basis of the conducted research it is possible to offer improving measures for making changes.

In the studied organization the situation with management through the lens of corporate culture testifies to essential prevalence of hierarchy culture. There is a formal target, task, functioning indicators, etc. which performance is the main criterion of assessing professional activity. All this is aggravated with strict control of superior organizational unit (as an external factor for division) and essential influence of family culture, (predominance of corporate responsibility/irresponsibility).

In a management system the following problems occur:
- Absolute dependence of all processes on the leader;
- Excessive formalizing of labor relations and indicators;
- Low activity and initiative of the core personnel in solving corporate questions;
- Professional development (bad professional contacts with external environment).

To solve these problems the following changes should be done:
- Changing the management style (ideally – changing the leader);
- More active involvement of ordinary employees to management and to solution of professional tasks;
- Developing academic freedoms (greatest possible);
- Encouraging a personal professional initiative in professional questions;
- Activating contacts with the external professional environment;
- Encouraging personal professional development;
- Getting rid of the employees, not ready to follow changes in formation of development strategy of OC.

4. Conclusion

Summing up what has been said, we can state that the organizational culture is really the accurate instrument of effective organization management assessment. The efficiency of such tool is in the possibility to diagnose the state of management with the minimum costs. Herewith, this assessment allows formulating conceptual actions for improving changes that raise organization indicators of the professional activity qualitatively and quantitatively.

If the Russian higher education institutions want to be competitive among other international universities, developing and measuring organizational culture will be an integral part of their progress. According to world universities rankings we can state that the experience of the world leading universities prove this to the full extent.

Acknowledgements

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