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FACTORS INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Abstract. The purpose of this article is to present the determinants of organizational culture and its sources. It was proven that the factors creating culture that are present in the general environment are directly related to national culture and only to a small extent are controlled by managers. Further it was noticed that the influence of the founders, managers and employees on organizational culture, with their source in the target environment of the organization, increases the possibility of shaping the value of organizational culture intentionally by the managing staff. It was pointed out that the managers' knowledge of the factors determining organizational culture is essential to shape it consciously.

Keywords: organizational culture, determinants of organizational culture, shaping organizational culture

UWARUNKOWANIA KULTURY ORGANIZACYJNEJ

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie determinant kultury organizacyjnej z uwzględnieniem jej źródeł. Wykazano, że czynniki kulturotwórcze leżące w otoczeniu ogólnym organizacji pozostają w bezpośrednim związku z kulturą narodową i w niewielkim stopniu pozostają pod kontrolą kierownictwa. Zauważono, że kulturotwórczy wpływ założycieli, kierownictwa i pracowników, mających swoje źródło w otoczeniu celowym organizacji, zwiększa możliwości intencjonalnego kształtowania wartości kultury organizacyjnej przez kadre kierowniczą. Zwrócono uwagę, że wiedza kierowników o czynnikach warunkujących kulturę organizacyjną jest kluczowa w kontekście jej świadomego kształtowania.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura organizacyjna, determinanty kultury organizacyjnej, kształtowanie kultury organizacyjnej

1. Introduction

The dynamic transformations that an organization is surrounded change the factors that shape its organizational culture. Previously it was believed that organizational culture was developed by managers, then that it was influenced by cultures in a broader sense, for example by national culture. That view required an explanation why there are different methods of organization management in different countries. Another stage in the development of views on factors that create culture was related to the increasing industrialization, which points towards the universal practices in work management, based on the global spread of knowledge and technology as it is „created by a uniform logic of industrial conduct, shared principles, the organizational framework and conduct in general”¹. Currently it is assumed that „the actions in the area of human resource management which strengthen [...] the employees’ desired attitudes and behaviors are essential for building and sustaining organizational culture”². “Moreover, the current trend towards knowledge-intensive industries means that competitiveness increasingly depends on the management of the relational bases of members of organizations. Culture, attitudes, values and commitment to employees, then, are more important to the success of firms [...] than ever before”³. It is to assume that “corporate culture is a true strategic asset [...] for many, if not all, companies in today’s economy”⁴. One may also claim that organizational culture „is the intangible that sets it apart from its competitors in an environment where products and services are generally viewed as interchangeable”⁵. This requires „creative and innovative behavior, risk taking, long-term orientation, focus on results, flexibility to change, co-operation, independent behavior, tolerance of ambiguity and a preference to assume responsibility”⁶. Therefore, a defined organizational culture should be accepted by the employees in order to ensure that the objectives of the organization are attained. The considerations above indicate that the factors that influence the development of organizational culture and sustain it are influenced by various conditions. The purpose of this article is to present the modern determinants of organizational culture.

¹ Glińska-Noweś A.: Kulturowe uwarunkowania zarządzania wiedzą w przedsiębiorstwie. Towarzystwo Naukowe Organizacji i Kierownictwa, Dom Organizatora, Toruń 2007, s. 145.

² Gadomska-Lila K.: Wpływ kultury organizacyjnej na postawy i zachowania pracowników – wyniki badań, [w:] Szymańska K. (red.): Kultura organizacyjna we współczesnych organizacjach. Wydawnictwo Politechniki Łódzkiej, Łódź 2014, s. 42.

³ Dabic M., Ortiz-De-Urbina-Criado M., Romero-Martínez A.M.: Human resource management in entrepreneurial firms: a literature review. „International Journal of Manpower”, Vol. 32, 2011, p. 16.

⁴ Flamholtz E.G., Randle Y.: Corporate culture, business models, competitive advantage, strategic assets and the bottom line. „Journal of Human Resource Costing & Accounting”, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2012, p. 76.

⁵ Pennington R.G.: Yes, but how? Nine tips for building a culture focused on results, relationships, and accountability. “Industrial and Commercial Training”, Vol. 41, No. 3, 2009, p. 146.

⁶ Dabic M., Ortiz-De-Urbina-Criado M., Romero-Martínez A.M.: op.cit., p. 17.

2. Overview of the definitions of organizational culture

“It is widely accepted that organizational culture is defined as the deeply rooted values and beliefs that are shared by personnel in an organization”⁷ and indicate what the organization supports, how it operates, and what is important to it⁸. In the literature on organizational behavior there are numerous definitions of organizational culture. Some of them are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1

Chosen definitions of organizational culture

Author	Definition
GLOBE Project	the shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations
S.P. Robbins	the system of meanings that are assumed by the members of an organization; it distinguishes that organization from other organizations; this system of common beliefs is a set of basic characteristics appreciated by the organization
A. Brown	the pattern of beliefs, values and learned ways of coping with experience that have developed during the course of an organization's history, and which tend to be manifested in its material arrangements and in the behaviors of its members
H. Scheuplein	concepts, values, norms, and beliefs generally accepted in the organization, they constitute a system
O. Lundy, A. Cowling	basic values, ideologies, and principles that influence the behavior of an individual and organization and shape them; they manifest in more measurable aspects, such as legends, rituals, language, decoration, office design, or dress code

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of: Tsui A.S., Nifadkar S.S, Ou A.Y.: Cross-National, Cross-Cultural Organizational Behavior Research: Advances, Gaps, and Recommendations. “Journal of Management”, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2007, p. 430; Robbins S.P.: *Zachowania w organizacji*. PWE, Warszawa 1998, s. 403; Sun S.: Organizational Culture and Its Themes. „International Journal of Business and Management“, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2008, p. 137; Scheuplein H.: *Unternehmenskultur und persönliche Weiterentwicklung*. “Zeitschrift Führung + Organisation”, Vol. 56, No. 5, 1987, S. 301; Lundy O., Cowling A.: *Strategiczne zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*. Oficyna Wydawnicza, Kraków 2001, s. 172.

A common feature of the definitions quoted above is values that lead to certain standards and principles of conduct. Additionally, they point out attitudes that are to trigger desired reactions in the members of the organization. This is how they distinguish a given organization from other organizations. From that point of view, organizational culture is „shaped by the experiences of the members of an organization, and that these experiences may impact on the underlying value system of the organization”⁹.

The definitions of organizational culture in management sciences are justified by psychology, which analyses the mental mechanisms in the development of culture as a result of numerous adaptation processes and the organization members' learning process.

⁷ Sun S.: op.cit., p. 137.

⁸ Griffin R.W.: *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*. PWN, Warszawa 2001, s. 117.

⁹ Low D., Chapman R.: Organisational and National Culture: A Study of Overlap and Interaction in the Literature. „International Journal of Employment Studies”, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2003, p. 70.

Furthermore, the social principles that are present in the organizational culture definitions, which are structured patterns that interconnect people in the context of their relations and products being their manifestations, indicate connections with sociology and social anthropology.

3. Determinants of organizational culture

Organizational culture is determined by numerous factors, classified in accordance with the criterion of the organization environment, which means¹⁰:

- the general environment which creates time and space conditions in which the organization exists, such as economic and political systems, technology, legal and cultural standards, and values,
- the target environment, made of the organization and entities with which it interacts.

It must be emphasized that the general environment may be understood as: the task environment (connected to the relations that result from competition) and the social environment (economic, political). The target environment, on the other hand, is the organizational environment within the formal borders of the organization¹¹. Thus, the factors that shape organizational culture may be divided into: external ones that originate from the surroundings of the organization and internal ones that originate inside it.

3.1. External factors creating organizational culture

The influence of external factors on organizational culture is related to the development and growth of the organization.

The external factors connected to the development of the organization, aiming at a planned, systematic change in the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the employees in order to enable the organization in adopting better to the fast changing external environment of new markets, regulations, and technologies¹² are: changing market, political, legal, financial, technological, and social conditions, as well as the increasing globalization and mobility, changes in consumption and shopping habits, or the life style of societies.

The factors related to the growth of the organization are e.g.: the achievements and position of the organization on the market, trends in demand, the penetration of new markets and competing on them, customers' quality requirements which require flexible organizational structures, the accessibility of capital and qualified personnel.

¹⁰ Sikorski C.: Zapamiętane z dzieciństwa. Szkice o kulturze organizacyjnej. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej w Łodzi, Łódź 2003, s. 37.

¹¹ Ibidem, s. 36-37.

¹² Businessdictionary.com, www.businessdictionary.com, 22.02.2015.

Nevertheless, the external conditions influencing organizational culture in the general and target environment are directly connected to national culture¹³. It is defined as a “set of norms, behaviors, beliefs and customs that exist within the population of a sovereign nation”¹⁴. The influence of national culture on organizational culture is described from two perspectives as¹⁵:

- *free from the influence of culture* – admitting the creation of common principles and organizational framework and various modes of conduct, even against cultural constraints;
- *culture-oriented* – admitting that the employees’ behavior is dominated by national culture to a larger extent than by the culture of the organization they belong to. Culture of society influences also the employees’ values. On one hand this is related to adopting values and cultural patterns directly where people can be made aware of their assimilation (it relates to values and patterns identified by most members of the organization), or where they are unaware of them (it relates to the interpretations of values and cultural patterns that are neither noticed nor interpreted). On the other hand, values are adopted by the organization indirectly, through its members who acquired them in the primary or secondary socialization process. This is particularly visible in the values propagated by the managing staff¹⁶.

It is noteworthy that everybody lives in a number of communities that build a certain society, and the existing correlation of various cultural events provides information to those who participate in the events. The organizational reality is embedded in a broader social context, which, from the organizational perspective, allows the conclusion that “organizational cultures are partly predetermined by nationality, industry, and task, partly related to organizational structure and control systems, and partly unique products of idiosyncratic features like the organization's history”¹⁷. That means that organizational culture depends strongly on the social and cultural environment in which it functions and on national culture in which it is rooted. The influence of national culture on organizational culture is mostly visible in¹⁸:

- the communication in the organization – meaning the level of openness and formality of this process, how extrovert it is, and whether it is possible to show emotions,
- leadership – especially the sources of power and the ways of exercising it, the proximity or distance in the hierarchy, the level of the employees’ participation in the decision-making process, the feeling of community,

¹³ Low D., Chapman R.: op.cit., p. 60.

¹⁴ Businessdictionary.com...

¹⁵ Tsui A.S., Nifadkar S.S., Ou A.Y.: op.cit., p. 435-454.

¹⁶ Sułkowski Ł.: Kulturowa zmienność organizacji. PWE, Warszawa 2002, s. 108.

¹⁷ Hofstede G., Neuijen B., Ohayv D.D., Sanders G.: Measuring organizational cultures: A qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases. “Administrative Science Quarterly”, No. 35, 1990, p. 306.

¹⁸ Aniszewska G.: Geneza pojęcia kultura organizacyjna. „Przegląd Organizacji”, nr 10, 2003, s. 17.

- motivation – the pressure to achieve results, competition, the acceptance of uncertainty, the care for the quality of interpersonal relations, the evaluation of individuals and groups, providing safety,
- the organization model – especially the level of the standardization of work, processes and skills, structure, and ways of exercising control.

In recent years, many organizations have introduced or changed policies, products and processes to minimize resource use, and to improve community and stakeholder relations. In order to fully respond to environmental and social challenges, organizations have to undergo significant cultural change¹⁹. This means that the external conditions influencing organizational culture are included „in the long-term processes of social development, in historical experiences, influences of religion, geographic conditions etc.”²⁰.

3.2. Internal factors creating organizational culture

Role of organization founders in creating organizational culture

An important factor creating organizational culture is the founder of an organization. He influences the employees so that most values shared by them in a given organizational culture are the consequence of his actions²¹. The aspects of the founder's influence on the organizational culture are related to the vision and mission of the company. The vision determines the perspectives and describes the company in the future through which it becomes a power that triggers the employees' integrated energy which enables the transformation of their motivation into the performance of their tasks²². As „an image of the future that the organization members want to create”²³, the vision does not specify the goals of the company. The aims to be achieved are determined in the mission, which is „a precise expression – in a language understandable for the employees and the environment of the organization – of far-reaching plans and aspirations of the organization. The mission is therefore a re-formulation of the vision for the purposes of strategy”²⁴.

The culture-creating role of the mission results from the fact that it concerns the future, it specifies the direction of the actions taken in the organization, which require the employees' collective effort based on the shared values, and by that it concentrates them around the strategic goals. Through that it becomes a message that „is the basis of internal identification”²⁵ and it enables the organization to distinguish itself, which strengthens the feeling of identity and the employees' identification with the organization.

¹⁹ Linnenluecke M.K, Griffiths A.: Corporate sustainability and organizational culture. “Journal of World Business”, No. 45, 2010, p. 358.

²⁰ Sikorski C.: Nauka o zarządzaniu. Wydawnictwo Akademii Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Łódź 2009, s. 167.

²¹ Robbins S.P.: Zachowania w organizacji. PWE, Warszawa 1998, s. 410.

²² Zbiegień-Maciąg L.: Kultura w organizacji. Identyfikacja kultur znanych firm. PWN, Warszawa 2005, s. 87.

²³ Oblój K.: Strategia organizacji. W poszukiwaniu trwałej przewagi konkurencyjnej. PWE, Warszawa 2007, s. 389.

²⁴ Ibidem, s. 389.

²⁵ Zbiegień-Maciąg L.: op.cit., s. 78.

Role of organization managers in creating organizational culture

For operations to be successful, it is necessary that the actions taken by managers are correlated as they aim at producing consistent results. The same refers to the leadership which is a condition for necessary changes²⁶. Its style, based on the preferred values, and the nature of the organizational structure determine the limits and the way in which the managers influence the employees of the organization, including their attitudes²⁷. The special position of the manager who is somebody that his subordinates feel „they depend on and on whom they concentrate their attention”²⁸ lends strength to his views and opinions, values and attitudes so that they have a considerable impact on the employees. Therefore, his behavior, actions and words shape the image of the organizational culture in the minds of his subordinates.

Managers influence the behavior of the people in the organization by setting rules that determine e.g. how desired taking risks is, how much freedom the employees should have, how they should behave, communicate, dress, what actions offer prospects of a pay rise, promotion, or other awards²⁹. Hence „corporate culture becomes a tool of the managing staff who, through human resource policy, can influence the members of the organizations”³⁰. It must be emphasized that “beyond the assumptions held by leaders, their skills and qualities (including their personal styles and leadership strategies) have a profound impact on organizational culture. This impact can be positive and transformational – sending signals for achievement-oriented and cooperative behaviors and thereby creating and reinforcing a constructive culture. However, this impact can alternatively be negative and dysfunctional – implicitly requiring passive and aggressive behaviors”³¹.

Role of organization employees in creating culture

Each organizational system is based on people who are to carry out the tasks that are necessary to achieve the goals of the organization. On one hand, well-chosen employees with the required qualifications, traits of character, abilities, are fundamental for effective operation of the organization. On the other hand, the people influence the goals and tasks by shaping the environment in which they work is done or where technology is chosen, which require that the employees have to develop new skills.

The human factor is essential not only for achieving the objectives of the organization but also, in accordance with the definition of the organization as a system with a specific internal

²⁶ Szczepańska K.: Doskonalenie zarządzania jakością. Podstawy. Ocena. Perspektywy. Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Warszawskiej, Warszawa 2013, s. 87.

²⁷ Stańczyk S.: Nurt kulturowy w zarządzaniu. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego, Wrocław 2008, s. 23.

²⁸ Sikorski C.: op.cit., s. 174.

²⁹ Robbins S.P.: op.cit., s. 412.

³⁰ Stańczyk S.: op.cit., s. 24.

³¹ Balthazard P.A., Cooke R.A., Potter R.E.: Dysfunctional culture, dysfunctional organization. Capturing the behavioral norms that form organizational culture and drive performance. “Journal of Managerial Psychology”, Vol. 21, No. 8, 2006, p. 715.

structure, for the proper operation of its individual subsystems, including organizational structure. The employees' influence on the organizational culture consists in the process of „cultural negotiations, arrangement and – as a result – reaching a compromise by the members of the organization on the matter of the desired and appropriate, in their opinion, elements and features of the organization. Those arrangements, which are mostly secret and unconscious, lead to a common perception of the organization as a tool for achieving the interest of the group”³². They apply to the elements of the organization (e.g. the strategy and goals, the measures to attain them, the criteria for evaluating the results, or the ways of correcting the directions of its operations), as well as to the cultural integration of its members. The reference points for this integration are e.g. the common language, notions and meanings, the limits of the group, the principles of stratification, interpersonal relations, and the common ideology³³.

The collective acceptance and submission to the values, standards, attitudes, and behavior patterns will have a positive impact on the set of elements of the organizational culture mutually perceived and shared by the employees, which will make it stronger. On the other hand, the lack of compromise as far as the common interpretation of the elements of the organizational culture is concerned, manifested in different attitudes or views of the employees of the organization will hinder the process of shaping the organizational culture in the organization. Hence it is necessary to ensure that the employees of the organization can learn the values, standards, attitudes, and behavior patterns which they may identify with.

4. Shaping organizational culture

Organizational culture “should be regarded as the right way in which things are done or problems should be understood in the organization”³⁴. It is based on the mentality and language affecting common perception of the reality and individual commitment and performance³⁵. The cross-influence of „the founders' assumptions and views and what its first members learn from their own experience”³⁶ is fundamental for shaping organizational culture. „When the culture already functions, the conduct in the organization supports it, subjecting all employees to similar experiences (...). Of key importance for sustaining the organizational culture are the following factors: the ways of choosing employees, the actions taken by the top management, and the methods of socialization”³⁷, which is shown on figure 1.

³² Sikorski C.: op.cit., s. 164.

³³ Ibidem, s. 164-165.

³⁴ Sun S.: op.cit., p. 137.

³⁵ Gupta V.: Cultural basis of high performance organizations. „International Journal of Commerce & Management”, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2011, p. 223.

³⁶ Robbins S.P.: op.cit., s. 410.

³⁷ Ibidem, s. 410-411.

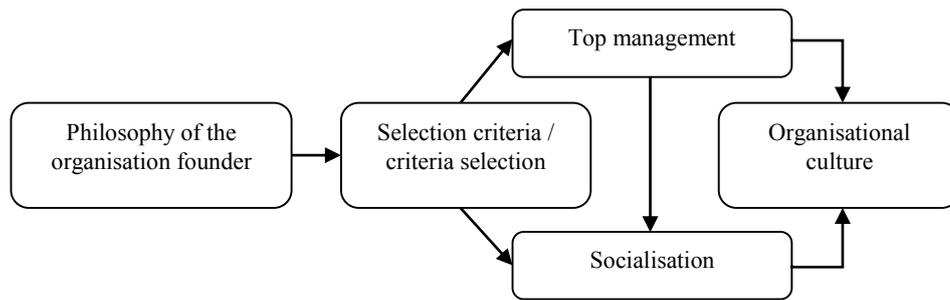


Fig. 1. Shaping of organizational culture

Source: Robbins S.P.: *Zachowania w organizacji*. PWE, Warszawa 1998, s. 418.

Organizational culture is shaped in few stages³⁸:

- The first one consists in formulating the principles of organizational culture. The key role is played by the owner, the founder of the organization, or the managing personnel that represents him. The factors that determine organizational culture at that stage are mostly behavioral manifestations of attitudes, standards, and values and the vision of the organization.
- The second one is the development of organizational culture. It consists in searching for what connects people. It is important to build teams and internalize the community. At this stage the main factors determining the organizational culture are group processes, including the employees' reactions to the behavior of other members of the organization, the result of which is a change and modification of attitudes and behavior. Also at this stage the organization begins to distinguish itself visibly from other organizations in its environment, which should accelerate the consolidation of its organizational culture.
- The third one is a process of culture consolidation, adjustment, and stabilization, with the evaluation of human behavior. At this stage the most powerful factors that create the organizational culture are internal processes that lead to the integration of the employees, from the recruitment, through their adaptation in the working environment. The influence of the managing personnel on the employees (e.g. through the managing style, organizing team work, giving instructions, supervision, motivation, awarding) plays a vital role.
- The fourth one is maturity, i.e. full stabilization, strong internal control, concentration on sustaining the group, but also reluctance to change. The factors with the strongest influence on the organizational culture are consolidated behavior patterns, standards, and other artifacts developed by the members of the group, as well as transparency in contacts with the environment, which should encourage the employees to increase their efforts to consolidate the community.

A very important role in the process of shaping organizational culture is played by socialization, the purpose of which is to adjust the employees' personalities to the organizational culture. The responsibility for shaping the personality i.e.: mentality, attitudes, feelings, and habits of people in the primary socialization, which takes place while the

³⁸ Sikorski C.: op.cit., s. 165-166; Zbiegień-Maciąg L.: op.cit., s. 38.

individual is becoming part of the society, rests primarily with the members of the family. In the secondary socialization, which takes place when an individual becomes a member of new social groups (e.g. organizations), the responsibility rests with the community of the organization, especially with the managers. In practice it means the necessity to shape organizational culture through such influence on the members of the organization which will allow the creation and consolidation of desired behavior patterns, based on appreciated values, in the employees' consciousness and attitudes at the stages of formation, development, and consolidation of organizational culture. Consistently enhanced, they support formal management principles and facilitate the achievement of the goals of the organization.

5. Conclusions

As it was proved above, the determinants of organizational culture are the internal and external factors. The internal factors that shape organizational culture are the founders of the organization, its managers, and employees who interact with each other in the environment of the formal structure and remain under the influence of the management style and managers.

The external factors, on the other hand, related to the development of the organization are e.g.: the changing market, political, technological, social conditions, the increasing globalization and mobility, the changing consumption and shopping habits, and the life style of societies. The external factors related to the growth of the organization are e.g.: the achievements and position of the organization on the market, trends in demand, the penetration of new markets and competing on them, customers' quality requirements, the accessibility of capital and qualified personnel.

It is necessary for managers to know the factors that determine organizational culture to shape it consciously. This enables them to influence organizational culture through the factors that can be controlled or influenced by the managers as well as such that are beyond their control. Organizational culture may better fit the needs of the organization if it includes all types of determinants. Nevertheless, it should be investigated how powerful the connection between the determinants that shape organizational culture is.

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