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ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND THE DOMINANT FORM OF COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

Abstract. Culture in an organisation, also in university, is under the impact of numerous factors resulting from both external and internal environment. The characteristic features of organisational culture include: an organisational scenario, philosophy on which the organisation's policy is based, the core of the values which determine the company's philosophy and mission, organisational climate, attitude towards work, the degree of personal responsibility for work, achieving progress in the organisation and customary and traditional ways of thinking and acting. Organisational culture of the university has an impact on the forms used for internal communication. Author made an attempt to identify the organisational culture of some of the university's employees and students. The purpose was to establish what type of culture prevails in that institution and also studied the used forms of communication between teachers and students.

Keywords: organisational culture, higher education, communication management

KULTURA ORGANIZACYJNA A DOMINUJĄCA FORMA KOMUNIKACJI NA UNIWERSYTECIE

Streszczenie. Kultura w organizacji, także na uniwersytetach, znajduje się pod wpływem wielu czynników wynikających zarówno z otoczenia zewnętrznego, jak i wewnętrznego. Charakterystyczne cechy kultury organizacyjnej to: scenariusz organizacyjny, filozofia, na której opiera się polityka organizacji, rdzeń wartości determinujących filozofię i misję firmy, klimat organizacyjny, stosunek do pracy, stopień osobistej odpowiedzialności za pracę, osiąganie postępu w organizacji i zwyczajowe sposoby myślenia i działania. Kultura organizacyjna uniwersytetu ma wpływ na formy wykorzystywane do komunikacji wewnętrznej. Autorka próbowała zidentyfikować kulturę organizacyjną niektórych pracowników uczelni i studentów. Celem było ustalenie typu kultury w tej uczelni, a także zbadanie stosowanych form komunikacji między nauczycielami i studentami.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura organizacyjna, szkolnictwo wyższe, zarządzanie komunikacją

Introduction

Organisational culture is one of the more important phenomena which drive people's behaviours in various organisations, including higher education institutions. Higher education institutions differ from one another with their organisational culture which, in turn, is the factor determining their ability to adapt and react to the changes occurring in the market of higher education. The higher education institutions in Poland which have been under the impact of the turbulent changes related to the transformation of the political and economic system after 1989, to the development of private higher education institutions, growing influence of business and labour market, demographic and economic changes and the new Law on Higher Education, need to adapt to those changes. It is not easy, however, with the frequently fossilized and hierarchic structures.

1. Organisational culture at universities

In the literature you can find a number of different definitions of organisational culture. In 1952 A.Krober and C.Kluckhohn defined the organizational culture as “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action”.¹ Other authors define the organizational culture as “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”² or “collection of values, traditions, aspirations, beliefs, attitudes which are the essence of everything which people do and think about in an organisation.”³ S.Cameron and R.Quinn state that “unwritten, often subconsciously observed rules which fill out the gap between what is written and what really happens. Culture refers to common views, ideologies, values, beliefs, expectations and standards.”⁴

From the synthetic point of view the determinants of organisational culture development which can be found in the literature can be divided into 4 groups: features of organisation's

¹ Kroeber A.L., Kluckhohn C., Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions, Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology Papers, Harvard University, 1952, vol. 47, No 1.

² Hofstede G., Hofstede G.J., Minkov M.: Kultury i organizacje, PWE, Warszawa 2011.

³ Kuc B.R., Zarządzanie doskonałe, Wydawnictwo Menedżerskie PTM, Warszawa 2008.

⁴ Cameron S.K., Quinn R.E.,: Kultura Organizacyjna- diagnoza i zmiana, Wydawnictwo Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2003.

members, features of the organisation itself, condition of the environment and the object of the organisation's operation.



Fig. 1. Factors which have an impact on the organisational culture
Source: own analysis based on literature

In the case of a higher education institution the impact of these individual elements on the organisational culture is specific. The particularly important features of the higher education institution's *environment* include: community's perception of the institution and the values attributed to the it which have been changing over the last few years (prestige of higher education institutions has been undermined and the value of certificates received has been devalued); a relatively significant distance of authority in the Polish national culture which finds its reflection in the relations between students and employees and between the employees with various academic degrees and functions; regulations of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education which impose the framework for the institution's operation; unfavourable demographic changes, low birth rate and ageing of the society which force higher education institutions to compete for students; increasing impact of the labour market and businesses which demand that the institution have a more flexible approach to the market which translates into a necessity to adapt the offered majors and teaching methods.

Important *features of the organisation* include: mission and goals of the higher education institution which, unlike in business, are not profit but achievement of statutory assumptions; history of a given institution – long-term functioning in the market of public higher education institutions is on the one hand their strong point and a distinctive feature but on the other one may result in certain problems with adapting to change; consolidated patterns of relations between employees with different academic degrees and titles; hierarchic structure, top-down management style and high dependence on the decisions of the central authority; specific system of communication with employees.

Object of activity: what is specific for higher education institutions is that they offer a pure service which means a significant heterogeneity which manifests itself in the fact that the quality of the provided service depends to a large extent on the person providing it, higher education institutions have been trying to implement uniform standards of education, e.g. in the Silesian University of Technology an Education Quality Manual has been introduced, however, the specific character of the lecturers' work makes unification of their conduct and behaviours very difficult; the ways of providing the service have been changing, the possibilities in the area of direct provision of the service (e-learning platforms) have been increasing; accessibility of partner programmes such as e.g. Erasmus, giving the employees and students a chance to study in foreign universities, has been growing; the existence of the system of grants which allows carrying out the research in cooperation with various entities, also on the international level; strong emphasis on the research and commercialisation of its results which shifts the burden from teaching to the scientific activity.

Organisation members: in the case of higher education institutions the features of their members are determined by the institution's profile (technical, human sciences, fine arts, etc.); technical higher education institutions are still dominated by men, both in the structures of authority and among the academics, whereas administration is dominated by women. This results not only from external conditions in which the organisation functions but also from the dominating socio-cultural system. Despite the changes which have been taking place in the last few years in Poland we can still observe the domination of the masculine culture which translates into a domination of a hard approach to the organisation's functioning.

Higher education facilities currently operate in a strongly-competitive market, with determined unfavorable demographic processes, and have to compete for students. One such competitive factor is the facility image and positive relationships with various elements of the environment. The strategic role, in addition to the service offer, when creating a positive image, is attributed to the adopted forms of communication.

The most important environment, from the perspective of a higher education facility, is the student environment, being part of the Generation Y (with access to huge social networks).⁵ The Generation Y, also called the Millennials, the Net Generation or the 2.0 Generation are people born after 1980, for Poland it is considered that after 1985.⁶ The profile of this generation includes several most important characteristics: *cooperation*- the Net Generation actively participates in discussion groups, plays massively multiplayer online games, shares files and videos e.g. on Facebook and other portals, shares information; *fast pace* - this generation has been growing up in the digital era so they expect speed - in computer games, fast response to e-mails or fast reaction to posts; *innovation* - the Net Generation has been raised in the culture of invention, they want the latest and the best available products;

⁵ Levinson P.: Nowe nowe media, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2010.

⁶ Tapscott D., Cyfrowa dorosłość. Jak pokolenie sieci zmienia nasz świat, Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2010.

interactivity - they do not want to be passive receivers but to co-create which may mean bigger interest in the games that provide more opportunity for level configuration or for purchasing additional game accessories. Limits of interactivity are of technological nature.⁷ The second important issue in the relational approach is the lecturer - students communication. From the point of view of PR, this type of communication will also determine the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of students and will influence the image of the university in the environment.⁸ In fact, the only that remains beyond the control of higher education facilities is their students' communication via social media between themselves and between the students and the environment outside the university. The two most important planes of communication are: university - students (current, prospective graduates) and lecturers – students.

2. Method

Author made an attempt to identify the organisational culture of some of the university's employees academics and students. They studied the organisational culture in the Silesian University of Technology. The purpose of the research was to establish what type of culture prevails in that institution and associated university forms of communication. The research was carried out among 123 students and 67 teachers, in February 2016 year. The research was conducted with the use of Cameron and Quinn's questionnaire and questionnaire developed by the author. Type of organizational culture defined by a typology of Cameron and Quinn.

Types of organisational cultures according to Cameron and Quinn:⁹

Clan oriented culture - The place of work is perceived as a friendly place, people work together willingly, team work is appreciated. Supervisors act as advisers, teachers and they care about their employees. Organisations are able to survive due to their employees' loyalty and attachment to tradition.

Adhocracy oriented culture - It is dynamic, entrepreneurial and creative. In this culture risk-taking and experimenting are a daily occurrence, people are not afraid of taking up challenges and leaders are innovative and are not afraid to introduce changes and experiment with new ideas.

Hierarchy oriented culture - It is characterised by integrity and gradation of subordination relations. The scope of work and expected behaviours of people are defined in very seriously treated procedures and regulations. Organisation's integrity is ensured by the emphasis on

⁷ Jenkins H.: *Kultura konwergencji. Zderzenie starych i nowych mediów*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2006.

⁸ Kaplan A. M., Haenlein M., *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*, „Business Horizons”, nr 53, 2010.

⁹ Cameron S.K., Quinn R.E.: *Kultura organizacyjna...*op cit.

formal rules and regulations. Coordination and systematisation are a challenge for leaders, strong emphasis is put on efficient functioning of the organisation, following time schedules and gradual, continuous cost reduction.

Market oriented culture - This model focuses on results and task implementation. People are driven by ambition and orientation towards goals whereas leaders are ruthless, demanding and focused on competitiveness. Organisation's integrity is ensured by expansion and desire for victorious competition.

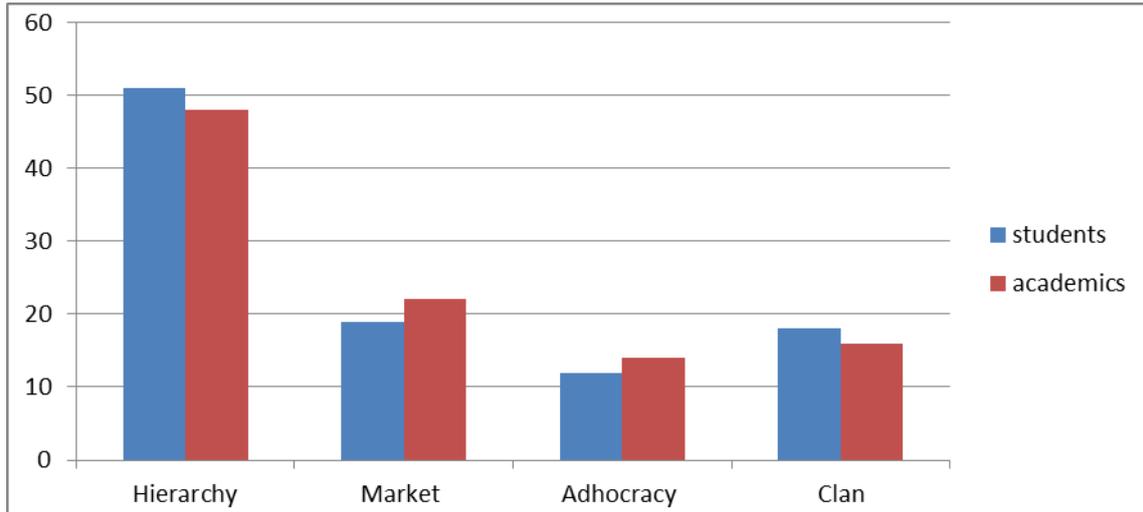


Fig. 2. Perceived organizational culture at the university (%)

Source: own analysis based on research

Both of the surveyed groups recognized by the dominant organisational culture at the university is culture of hierarchy - 51% of students and 48% of lecturers.

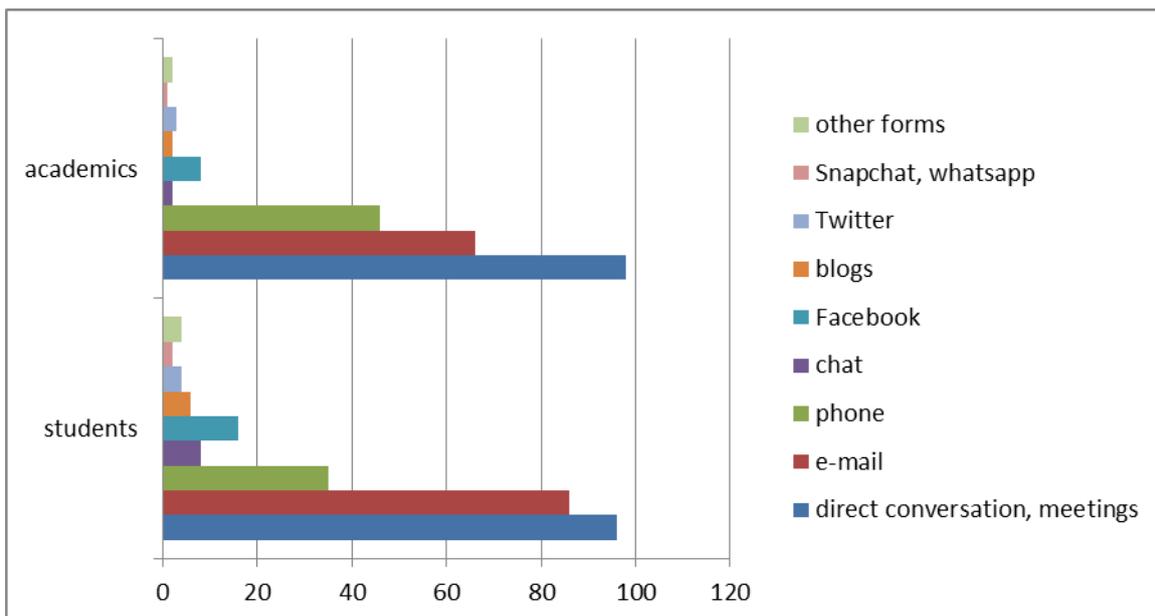


Fig. 3. Basic forms of communication in the relation in the group of academics and students (%)

Source: own analysis based on research

Hierarchy oriented culture is not conducive to the use of social media in communication between faculty and students. The communication between faculty and students modern forms of communication, such as social media (Facebook, blogs, snapchat, Twitter) are used very rarely. The main forms of communication are direct meetings and contact e-mail and telephone.

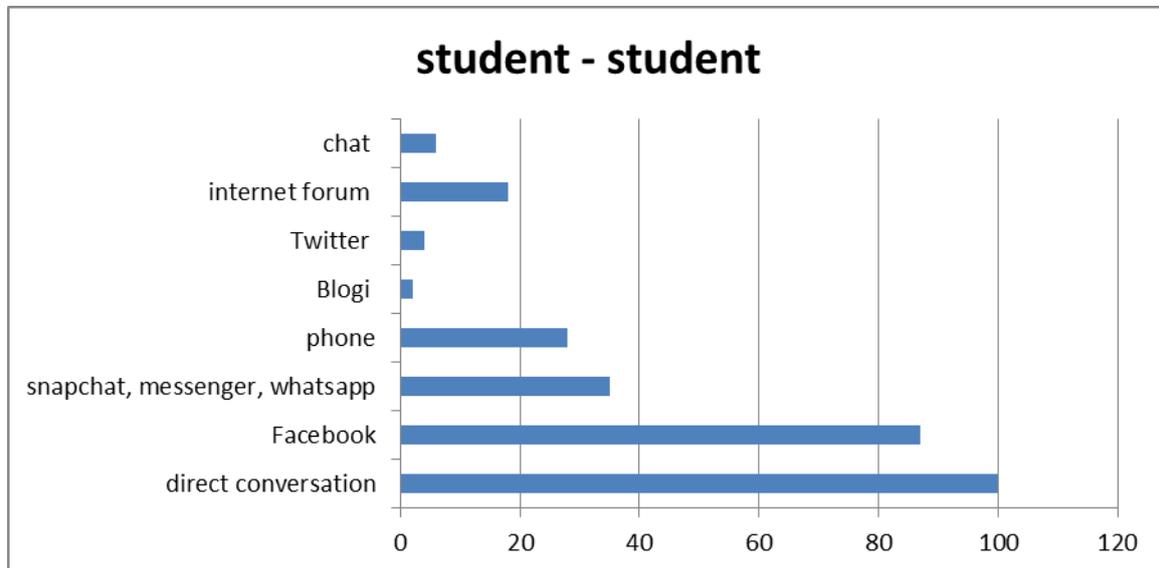


Fig. 4. Basic forms of communication in the relation in the group of students (%)
Source: own analysis based on research

The students communicate among themselves mainly with the use of social media - Facebook, Snapchat, Messenger.

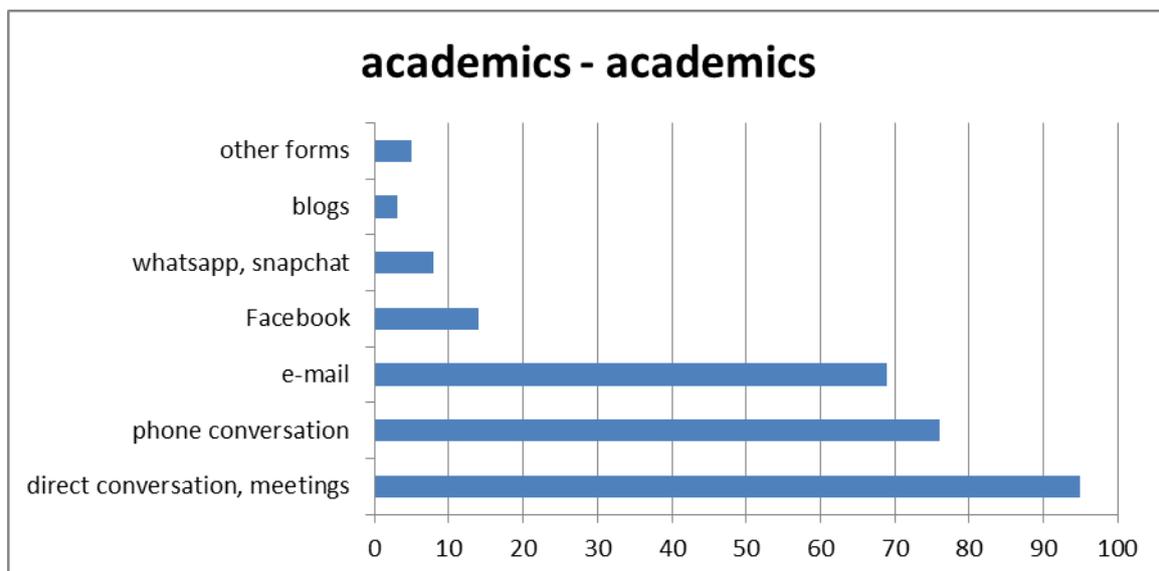


Fig. 5. Basic forms of communication in the relation in the group of academics (%)
Source: own analysis based on research

The lecturers in the communication with each other rarely use social media. Dominate of the direct conversations, telephone and e-mail.

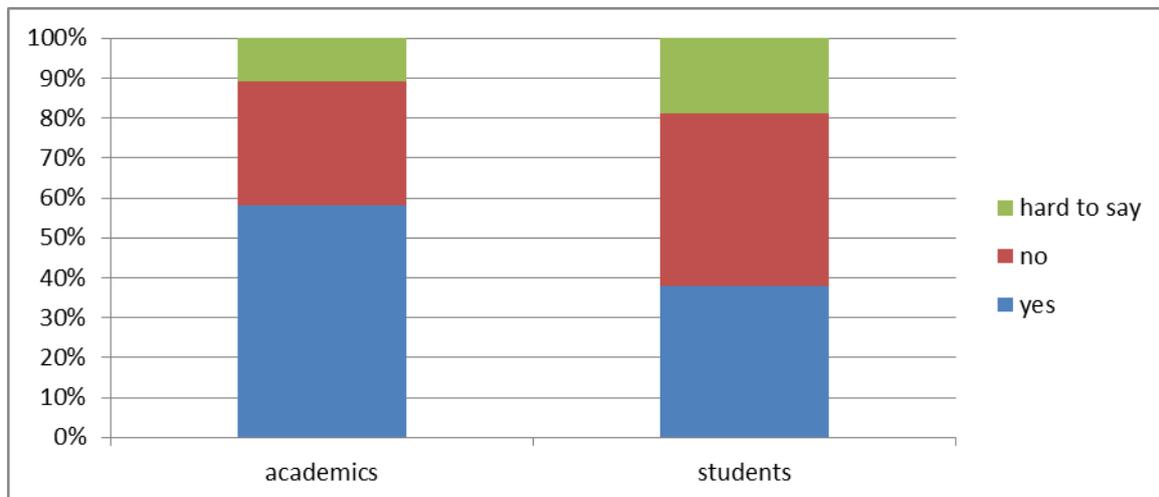


Fig. 6. Is the organizational culture of universities promotes the use of social media in communication academics - students? (%)

Source: own analysis based on research

58% of lecturers and only 38% of students believe that the organizational culture of the university promotes the use of social media in communication between lecturers and students. 19% of students and 11% of teachers had no opinion on the subject.

3. Conclusion

As regards other options chosen from among cultural orientations by the academics and students, only the hierarchy oriented culture is on a noticeable level. It may result from the master-student relationship consolidated on the level of standards and values and organisational artefacts which, however, in the contemporary system of relations in the academic community seems to play a secondary role. Hierarchic position and the academic degree or title are still perceived as an important element of the academic ethos, nevertheless, in the face of a number of diversified projects and systems of supporting science and research by grants, it is not perceived as a sources of pro-developmental innovations and not conducive to the use of social media in communication between lecturers and students.

There are differences in the use of social media communication in the generation of faculty and students. You can notice that in hierarchical cultures social media are practically non-existent. Only if relations are not formalised, new forms of communication occur in the relations between employees. Hierarchic relations based on mentors and patrons as specific coryphaei of academic progress guarantee cohesion of the task teams system and the

determinant of a professional promotion in the academic and scientific community, but they are not any more the leading source of inspiration in determining employees' individual decisions with respect of their personal life and their professional interests development. The introduction of social media as a communication tool between teachers and students might, as students think, have a positive effect on the perception of universities. The university communication management requires planning and takes account of changes in the media and characteristics of the recipients. Social media have a new specificity, the media are available around the clock, and based on interactivity.

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