

Chapter 11

Organizational Culture in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Universities are higher education institutions with an academic and autonomous structure have created a unique organizational culture while performing their functions such as education, basic scientific researches, and community services. The organizational culture that a university has makes it different from other universities by its values, basic assumptions and norms, leaders and heroes, symbols and language, stories and legends, ceremonies and customs. In this study, first the terms “organization” and “culture” were explained and then “organizational culture” and “organizational culture in the higher education” were thoroughly examined.

INTRODUCTION

Today, it is seen that a rapid change have been experienced, it has been getting harder for some organizations to keep up with this change, while others have been the determiner of the change. It has been observed that organizations experiencing difficulty to keep up with the rapid change are weak because there is an uncertainty about what is good what is bad for them, what is aimed and what is not aimed and what should be done and what should not be done (see Table 1). When we have look at the organizations determining the rapid change, it's clearly seen that they're strong to have determined this change not by chance, but in accordance with the hypotheses, norms and the values they have. In this study, first the terms “organization” and “culture” were explained and then “organizational culture” and “organizational culture in the higher education” was thoroughly examined.

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Table 1. The Story of Five Monkeys

Five monkeys are put in a cage, with a ladder in the middle and hang the bananas up above the ladder. When a monkey wants to reach bananas by climbing the ladder, they pour the cold water over their heads. Each monkey who tries the same is got wet with cold water, and all get soaked at the end of these experiments.

After a while, the monkeys who move towards the bananas are prevented by the others. When one of the monkeys heads to the bananas hanging up at the top of the ladder to satisfy his hunger, the others pull it down from the ladder and beat him, because they know very well that whoever attempts to get the bananas fails and they get wet with cold water. After a while, they accept the truth, they start walking around in the cage by looking at the bananas they want to eat, but they know well that they won't be able to do.

Afterwards, one of the wet monkeys is taken out of the cage and a new one is placed instead. The first thing this new monkey does is climbing the ladder to reach the bananas, but the others don't allow him to do that and try to prevent him, but the new one cannot understand why the other four monkeys which are in the cage earlier prevent him to get the bananas. The new monkey who is quite hungry again makes a second attempt sometime later and this costs an arm and a leg for him. He is prevented and beaten by the other four monkeys even before approaching to the ladder. He never understands that why he's always beaten by the others. As he has understood that he would be beaten for his attempts to reach the bananas, he also-like the other four- starts walking around the cage by watching the bananas from a distance although he is starving.

After a while, the second of the wet monkeys is taken out of the cage and a new one is put. As soon as the second new monkey gets in to the cage, he just climbs the ladder to get the bananas and of course he is beaten by the others. The most interesting point is that who beats the second one violently is the 1st new monkey... The third one of wet monkeys is also replaced. This third new monkey is punished at his first attempt. Two monkeys arrived recently have no idea about why they are beating this new monkey.

Finally, the 4th and the 5th of the wet monkeys are replaced with the new ones. These two new monkeys run towards the ladder as soon as they see the bananas., but, these new ones were beaten by the other three monkeys who came in to the cage earlier and the beaten by the others and never know why they were beaten. Though a bunch of bananas was hanging up over them, they do not approach to the ladder. Because here, it has always been this way and it will always be like that.

Organization

First of all, organizations are small society models formed by people. Today, people spend most of their life in various organizations. An individual's every action is connected to an organization or occurs in it. Social or personal needs cause formation of new organizations. Organization that keeps an important place in people's lives has been tried to be defined by different philosophers. Barnard (1994) described organization as "A system of two or more people's power or activities that have been coordinated consciously" (cited in Morgan, 1998). Schein (1970) explained organization as "the rational coordination of the activities of people who come together for a mutual aim or to achieve that aim under an authority or responsibility hierarchy by making and sharing jobs (cited in Terzi, 2000). In broad terms, the organizations are the basic tools constituted to solve the problems and the tasks which people can't come over by themselves and these tools defines the way a society functions. In the past a number of metaphors were used to describe organization. Although machine and organism metaphors are mostly used, these are found insufficient to clarify the abstract and special dimension of the organizations since they mostly evaluate the physical features and dimension that can be obviously seen. According to new approaches that explain the abstract dimensions, the organizations are accepted as the social constructions, cultures, and symbol systems that are formed by shared meaning systems. Organizations are open systems which have their own particular cultures; they get input from the community and serve it by giving output. They are in continuous interaction with their environment, so the structure and the features of the environment they are in is getting more important. Organizations attain their goals by the actions people perform. The first condition of organizational activity is human power, for this reason; organizations are meaningful with the existence of people (Açıkalın 1994; Atay 1998; Morgan 1998; Terzi 2000; Güçlü 2003; Işık & Gürsel 2009; Şimşek 2014).

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