# Example of thesis on organizational culture

Business, Management

1. Introduction

Government agencies are in most cases mandated with essential service-delivery and thus are often non-profit in nature. Hence, they are riddled with a culture of inefficiencies and underperformance. This paper will evaluate organizational culture, particularly in government agencies, thus the term organization will strictly be used to refer to government agencies (the civil service and the public sector in general).

In this ever dynamic business environment, management strategies are formulated every once in a while. The broad purpose of the so-called strategies is to enhance performance at the organizational level. For this to be possible the work process should aim towards advancing organizational knowledge; a technological infrastructure should be set up to support the knowledge and organizational customs/culture should be defined for effective application of knowledge. Clearly, the above components are dependent on each other and inseparable. The organizational culture refers to the shared behavioral norms, values and beliefs that dictate the code of conduct and mode of operation in an organization. These values are informal, flexible in nature, nurtured over a long time and to a large extent based on specific ideologies.

Generally, organizational culture defines the organization in terms of what acceptable behavior, values and beliefs is and what is not acceptable within the specific organization. It is part of management strategy to improve performance and relationships. This management strategy is developed to compliment the formal organizational structure, policy and procedures. Thus culture in an organization downplays the inadequacies of the formal

channels and provides the necessary frameworks for implementing organizational goals. In essence, culture sculpts operational ideologies and experiences, and their subsequent advancement over time. This is because organizational culture is historical hence subject to temporal changes. Culture thus, is critical in both public and private sectors and more so government agencies that are riddled with inefficiencies in performance. Culture develops the organizational capacity to deal with the ever dynamic and tricky operational challenges. However, in the absence of positive factors negative culture prevails, as it is the case in government agencies. Thus, it's up to the management to ensure that organizational culture impacts positively on performance.

## 2. Concept of Culture

For one to understand organizational culture there is need to briefly examine the general concept of culture. Broadly, culture refers to way of life of a given group of people; how they understand the world and the subsequent tools they use to deal with it. Culture varies with place, race, ethnicity and time. It forms a basis for power relations and a people's institutions. Culture is the distinguishing factors between different societies and binds a people in the same society. It is mostly expressed in terms of religion, language, economic and political structures. These values, customs, norms, traditions and practices and norms give one an understanding of the different people. Thus, culture can be defined as the collective and common beliefs, knowledge, customs, norms, habits, patterns, morals, and laws learnt and adhered to by members of a given society and consequently passed down from one generation to another. Therefore, culture is an integral part of a

people's existence.

Suffice to say that culture is learnt and taught over a long period of time. It is the details and the processes of learning that distinguishes one culture from another. These processes are usually based on human characteristics such as house construction, food production and preparation, clothing, societal institution, language amongst many other factors. Due to that, culture is referred to as man's ability to cope with his ever changing environment. Culture is defined by the following concepts; it is time-bound. That simply means that societal norms, habits and values vary significantly with the advancement of climate, technology and behaviors. For example in food production, as result of the varying seasons, certain foods may be produced and thus consumed at a particular time and scarce at another. Culture is also space-bound; meaning that culture varies from place to place. Hence, from the above concepts, it is fair to conclude that culture is universal (people from different places and generations have culture) yet specific to a given people residing in a particular place at a particular time. Therefore, culture is an attribute of all human beings and is their collective effort to sculpt the natural environment to sustainably meet their needs. Culture is dynamic in nature. The change might differ greatly with time and space, but the change is continuous and consistent. In other words, though the components of culture vary (are replaced or modified) significantly, the flow of change is the same all through the different generations. This is because whenever some component is changed, there is a state of equilibrium where one component is replaced with another.

Culture can either be material or immaterial. When it is expressed in terms

of all tangible instruments fashioned and created by the human society, it is material in nature. Thus the tools used in day to day activities of a given people define their culture. On the other hand, non-material culture refers to the symbols and ideologies expressed by a given people. This type of culture governs the relations between different genders and age brackets within the society. These include societal beliefs, norms, values and attitudes.

3. 0 Concept of Organizational Culture

In an organizational perspective, culture refers to a set of relatively uniform pattern of enduring values, belief, customs, traditions and practices shared by an organization's employees. These traditions are subsequently learnt by new recruits and passed down from one generation of employees to another over time. This cognitive framework gives the employees a common perspective that is shared and distinguishes the organization from other organizations. In an organization, the culture is strongly influenced by the management. Thus, it is commonly considered as one of the many management strategies. Organizational culture is not directly observable, but its effects are evident in every aspect of the organization. Culture in an organization is important because it is a tool of behavioral control; it encourages stability and equilibrium within the organization and gives the employees an identity.

It is important to note that culture is a three-layered management strategy. Culture in an organizational set up can be viewed upon at different levels. The first level of organizational culture consists of the visible organizational characteristics and artifacts. Thus, this level is difficult to explain because it is superficial in nature; it broadly reflects the corporate norms and practices

not necessarily unique to the organization. This includes the dress code and the general office image. This first level is also characterized by quality and information systems necessary in safety and operational management. This includes accident related statistics, sick leaves and information about any broken down mechanism of production. The above artifacts gives one an idea of the nature of culture an organization subscribes to. The second cultural level comprises of the values and ideologies an organization advocates for. These can be deduced from an organization's official goals, professed operational practices and affirmed ideologies (core values). These values however cannot explain the day to day organization's operation. The third and the last cultural level is the most important in an operational perspective. It consists of an organization's underlying assumptions. These refer to the external solution to problems that have been internally integrated by the organization. These assumptions end up becoming above reproach reliable but non-conventional solutions to future organizational challenges of the same nature. This includes problems related to external adaptation and internal integration. External adaptation challenges refer to the problems related to the implementation of an organization's objectives and purposes within its environment. The solution to such problems involves the formulation of a framework to enable the smooth implementation of the organization's acknowledged ideologies. Challenges related to internal integration refer to the operational capacity that relate to language and notions that define employee limits and boundaries. They also define power relations between the management and the support staff, and the nature of interaction amongst the employees themselves. Finally, they stipulate the

reward scheme and type of punishment for exceptional performance and misconduct respectively. These assumptions subconsciously determine how the workforce behaves, thinks and understands organizational ideologies. Culture applies not only to individuals, but also to groups of individuals. As result of this, within the organizational culture, there are several subcultures that too define the organization. In order to have an in depth comprehension of the concept of organizational culture, there's need to assess subcultures. Subcultures arise from the decentralized nature of an organizational structure. Different departments in an organization express different cultures and thus the concept of subcultures. For instance, it is impossible for the finance department to have the same culture as the public relations department given their different roles. Though subcultures may vary significantly from the dominant organizational culture, they are strongly linked to core organizational characteristic. This implies that though departmental culture may be unique, it exists within the organizational culture and is dependent on the organizational characteristic. The concept of subcultures is important because it enables the management to create a work environment specific to the needs of the department in question. The concept of subcultures is not necessarily limited to the departments of an organization. It can be based on the basis of management (leadership) and the support staff (the other employees). Because culture is a management strategy, it is vital to understand subcultures on a managerial basis. It is the management that sets the social processes in motion in a bid to achieve organizational goals. Thus, the managerial subculture is the basis for the overall organizational culture. It gives organizational culture

directional sense and relates it to the formal structures and characteristics in place. This is so because the management is charged with the responsibility of communicating the organizational structure, visions and goals. As result, it is the management preserves to initiate appropriate strategies to steer the organization toward those goals and uphold the already set up structures. Though it might appear to be simple, culture in organization is a very complex concept. The management does not just wake up one day and formulate it in boardrooms. It is subject to many other factors and time. For there to be culture in organization, there must be distinctive ideologies that clearly define the organization. To subscribe to these ideologies, the management must make every effort to hire competent and like minded employees. This step is followed by defining, devising and implementing a specific culture in organizational habits and practices. The next step involves the management encouraging socialization at the work place. This enables the set ideologies and culture to be inculcated sustainably in all aspects and members of the organization. The organization is thus structured to encourage the formation of subcultures. Departments are created and the aforementioned steps repeated to come up with various departmental cultures. Finally the operational culture should be flexible and adaptable to the changing business environment. Thus, this culminates organizational culture formation. It is important to note that the process takes a significantly long duration in the tunes of tens and hundreds of years. Also, this process is in a constant state of flux, organizational culture can never be fully attained. It is always in a state of modification subject to change in times and personnel.

3. Effect of Culture on an Organization

It is very crucial to understand the organizational culture at every level. This is because culture determine what is permissible and forbidden in organization. This varies from organization to organization and from department to department within an organization. For instance, innovation and creativity is encouraged in sales and marketing department while in the organization, status quo is the norm in for example in quality control and assurance department. In some work environments, social relations are core while in others business relations are emphasized e. g. in public relations and finance departments respectively. In addition, teamwork may be the norm in some department while in others individual is highly valued and recognized. Regardless of all these differences that might arise in different cultural strategies, the most important thing is that the organizational intermarries with the employees' values and norms. Productivity and efficiency will be achieved at ease if a majority of the employees share the same values and practices. Thus, it is easier to adopt and implement the organizational culture. It is therefore for the employees to widely accept the culture being propagated by the management. Extremely productive organizations are characterized by harmony between employees' overt and covert values. Culture is important in an organizational setup for the following reason. Culture in organization affects the implementation of any new business strategies. Dependent on the organizational practices, employees are more likely to reject change. For example if the organization has been propagating status quo, it will be difficult to convince the employees otherwise. Also, technology will be only adopted and widely accepted if it relates strongly

with the organizational culture. This means that effectiveness of new technology is not dependent on its soundness but how it fits into the culture of the organization in question. Finally, since the success of an organization is pegged on the technical, social and professional expertise of the employees, for future productivity, the culture of the workforce has to be sustained. It is clear that a firm's success is thus pegged on the interaction of the organizational culture with other factors of production. In addition to this, culture has been found to advance the organization to its goals and vision. Culture provides the framework to meet the set goals and also uphold the set up organizational structures. Culture is also a tool of motivation amongst the employees. This is attributed to the sense of identity that employees derive from culture. This oneness not only enhances a sense of belonging it also give the employees a sense of ownership that stimulates them to work diligently.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, culture creates the basis for solution of organizational challenges. This is so because culture is flexible and hence allows the organization to surmount a wide range of obstacles. It also enhances the employee capacity to think critically under pressure. It is because of culture that an organization is able to sustain performance over time. The knowledge of extraordinary performance motivates the workforce to maintain and even supersede it. Thus, organizational culture can termed as a strategy of rejuvenating collapsing business entities. Culture also mediates the difference that might arise between individual and organizational knowledge. Culture establishes the differences between individual and organizational knowledge and subsequently sets a forum for

the interaction of the two. Through patents and copyrights, culture determines legitimately the extent of individual and organizational intellectual ownership. It determines who owns information and how to subsequently share or restrict access to it. Besides the mentioned roles, culture also creates the basis for social interaction in an organization. This is important because for human beings to be productive there's need for functional relationships amongst them. The social not only breaks the monotony of formal structures but creates a platform for teamwork and it provides an opportunity for employees to bond on all aspects. It breaks the barriers created by the organizational structures.

4. How Government Agencies can Benefit from the Concept Of Culture

For managers to benefit from organizational culture, the following must be done. For starters, they need to make the organizations vision and strategies clear to the employees. This necessitates the need for culture to align with the organization's ideologies. Secondly, the management must show commitment; there must be goodwill from the management's end that encourages cultural change in the organization. This should be so because culture is flexible and hence the need for it to change with changes in the organization's environment. Third, cultural change should trickle down from the management down to the support staff. The management should be first to exhibit the norms and the practices they expect the organization to adopt. This gives the organization a sense of direction. This may include setting up committees and employee taskforces to spear head the cultural changes. Fourth, the management needs to modify the organization to support the ever dynamic organizational culture. This includes the amendment of

company policies, strategies, and modes of operation, norms and practices to align with the new and desired organizational culture. These might entail variations in the remuneration schemes, accountability systems and employee conscription and retention schemes; the purpose is to communicate to the workface of the change. Fifth, the management should only recruit employees that subscribe to the organizational culture and fire or replace those that do not. This ensures that the acknowledged organizational culture is common to all employees. This can also be done through training the employees on the need to embrace the organizational culture. Finally, there's need for ethical and legal frameworks to deal with the challenges that might arise due to the implementation of the organizational culture. It includes hiring consultants.

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