ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE DIMENSIONS AND VARIABLES

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There are numerous definitions of the concept in the specialized literature and the majority present organizational culture as a system of values, norms, rules, beliefs, habits learned and internalized by the organization members and embodied in their behaviors. Such definitions highlight the fact that organizational culture is a system of values, norms, customs and beliefs shared and assimilated by the entire membership of the organization in order to transform them into inherent characteristics of their behavior. The newly acquired behavior will be promoted, defended and developed throughout their work. Even if organizational culture is built upon such a strict, rigid, formal institutional support, it evolves and develops in order to help the organization adapt and perform efficiently. In order to have an easier understanding of the concept, in this paper we shall use for our analysis the following dimensions: cognitive, normative, human and material.

Key words: *culture, dimensions, variables, indicators, strategies, goals, objective, change*

1. INTRODUCTION

Developing a sociological perspective on the size and organizational culture variables requires, first of all, to define the concept of organizational culture and then making it operational which means breaking it down into: dimensions, variables and indicators.

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2. A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture remains a relatively abstract concept, and to make it more tangible the concept must be broken down into a successive series of elements. In other words, it must be operationalized sociologically, i.e. decomposed into: dimensions, variables, indicators, indices and items [1]. Nonetheless, throughout this paper we consider that deconstructing the concept of organizational culture just into dimensions, variables and indicators will be sufficient.

We suggest to use for our analysis the following dimensions: cognitive, normative, human and material.

The cognitive dimension refers to all information that the members of an organization must assimilate with the purpose to develop and adapt their behavior according to the social model promoted by the organization. The category of elements the members of the organization must learn and internalize first, includes: values, norms, customs, and traditions, beliefs that the organization promotes and defends within and outside its walls. Also, here we can take into consideration both the formal and the informal values, norms, traditions, beliefs promoted by the groups that make up the organization. This is a natural consequence of the fact that every organization, regardless of its domain of activity consists of two structures: the formal and the informal one. Both structures influence the manner in which its members acquire the specific information and translate it into their individual and collective behavior.

This dimension can be ascribed the following variables: values, formal and informal rules of the organization, beliefs, customs, and organizational traditions. Each variable can be decomposed using indicators. Thus, the organizational valuescan be measured using indicators such as: the number of values; the nature of each value, the contents of that value, the degree of the members' awareness of the specific value. The norms are emphasized by indicators such as: the number, the nature of the norm (formal or informal); the members' degree of awareness of the norm.

The normative dimension comprises all the norms and regulations governing the activity of the organization. On the one hand, we can talk about the norms, and regulations existing in the organization which result from laws, government decisions, instructions, orders in the organization. They are binding for all organization members regardless of their status in the organizational hierarchy.

On the other hand, we can talk about rules and regulations, customs, traditions cultivated and transmitted through informal structures of the organization. Obviously, the latter are just as important as for an efficient activity as the official ones, since respecting them is a requirement of each separate group which is part of the organization. Basically, the normative dimension illustrates the system of formal and informal norms governing and formalizing the conduct of the members of the organization inside, as well as outside the organization.

As the variables of this dimension we can mention the following: formal and informal norms, formal and informal regulations. As indicators of the variable we suggest: the number of formal and informal norms, the nature of the norms (i.e. regulating the conduct, the hierarchical relationships, the cooperation among individuals, the activity), the number of the rules which were breached by the organization members; the degree to which the norms and regulations are assimilated by the members of the organization.

The human dimension describes the system skills and abilities that must be met by the individuals performing in the organization in order to become a trusted member,

on the one hand. On the other hand, it is about meeting the requirements of the roles derived from the status.

Being a member of an organization signifies *"the position one individual occupies in the organization ... and the set of legitimate expectations from those who occupy other positions within the same system"* [2]. The role assumed by each member represents "the dynamic aspect of status, the implementation of the rights and duties resulting from the social status of the individuals"[3]. We consider that the physical and mental qualities of the human being help him acquire, through learning and education, the knowledge, skills and abilities required by the social status and role assumed.

This dimension, as a whole, defines all the innate qualities and those acquired through learning and education, through which the individual is able to accomplish the requirements of a certain status and to assume its corresponding roles.

As variables of this dimension we chose the following:

1) variables that describe the human individual: general abilities, specific skills, affectivity, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation; memory type, attention characteristics; individual and

collective attitudes; volition characteristics;

2) variables that describe the human group as a structural element of the organization: group cohesion, organizational climate, organizational consensus, organization's effectiveness in reaching its objectives, organizational traditions.

Each of these variables can be assigned indicators. Thus, the abilities variable can be measured using indicators for individual variables such as: the type of aptitude (general or specific); the number of people possessing a certain general ability; the number of people possessing a specific ability required by the organization's field of activity; the proficiency level of the specific ability; the number of people characterized by positive affectivity; the number of people characterized by negative affectivity; the number of people having positive / negative feelings towards the organization; the number of people with intrinsic / extrinsic motivation; the work satisfaction / dissatisfaction; the number of people possessing the memory type required by the organization's line of activity; the number of people having distributive attention; the number of people showing positive / negative attitudes towards the organization and its

activities; the number of people possessing strong volition.

As indicators for the group variables we chose: the degree of cohesion; the level of consensus; the type of organizational climate; the effectiveness of group activities; types of traditions; the number of people who share these traditions.

The material dimension comprises all the material resources which are necessary and sufficient for the organization to fulfill the objectives it was created for. We specifically mentioned that the resources should be those required and sufficient for the activity to highlight that both characteristics should be covered by the organization for it to be successful in achieving its goals. There a cases when those who founded the organization could cover only the material resources necessary for the start up without aiming or expecting full achievement of the objectives. The sufficiency of material resources shows that the organization has the capacity to achieve at an optimal level the objectives for which it was created.

The variables of this dimension are: the necessary materials and the sufficient amount of material resources necessary for the optimal functioning of the organization. These two variables can be measured using indicators of the following

type: the degree of provision with the necessary / sufficient resources; the number of necessary / sufficient resources existing in the organization; the amount of resources necessary for the optimal functioning of the organization.

With regard to the operationalization of the concept from a sociological perspective there are absolutely no mandatory rules regarding the number of dimensions to decompose it into. The number of variables as well as the number of indicators assigned to these variables is a consequence of the complexity of the issues addressed, the time available to operationalize a concept, the experience, the imagination, the sociological expertise of the person who undertakes this complex task.

Therefore, the operationalization of the concept is a more creative work than the routine technique applicable ad literam to any topic or scientific endeavor.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE VARIABILES

The literature consulted presents a number of variables pertaining to the organizational culture.

According to Coze Annie-Claude & Potin Yvan there are external and internal variables [4].

External variables are those that take into consideration socio-economic factors that explain the organizational phenomena and therefore influence the culture of the organization.

Internal variables are the product of the organization which creates and develops its own values.

Other voices say that any approach to the organization should include and analyze, at least the following variables [5]: structure, strategy, personnel, management style, systems and procedures, guiding concepts, shared values and the skills desired by the organization.

According to Gareth Morgan, *to organize* means to make choices, and an organization cannot be effective unless several elements are compatible: strategy, structure, techniques, commitment needs of its members and the environment [6].

McKinsey argues that together, seven factors determine how an organization functions. These factors include: shared values, strategy, structure, systems, staff, management style and skills [6].

According to John Kotter, the organizational dynamics model comprises seven major elements [6]: main organizational processes, external environment, employees, tangible assets, organizational structure and its components, culture, technology, strategy and objectives.

William Joyce, Nitin Nohra, Bruce Roberson say that the organizations performing very well at their work are very good at four core practices: strategy, execution, culture and structure [7]. To these four we can add: skills and abilities, leadership, innovations, mergers and partnerships.

Kepner Tregoe speaks about variables that influence organizational performance such as [7]:

1. external variables: customers and the customers' clients, suppliers, competitors, management, economy; society and community, the mother company and shareholders;

2. organizational variables: business processes, goals, information management;, organisational structure;

3. human variables: leadership, culture, human abilities;

4. organizational and human variables: strategy; problem management.

Another reference [8] speaks of 7 groups of variables as follows.

The first group of variables refers to the economic, political, legal, social and technological environment;

The second group of variables refers to the organizational management philosophy, its values and directions;

The third group of variables objective covers how the activity is organized. The structure, roles and tasks, work organization, decision making process, human resource management policies and practices and working conditions are the variables of the third component. Organizing the activity constitutes an independent variable that influences the perceptions and attitudes of employees towards their work situation.

The fourth group of variables comprises the perceptions that the employees have towards their work environment. In this case, the perceptions of work are analyzed under three angles: the perception of the tasks, job satisfaction and management perception. In such context, we can mention the following variable characterizing work perception: work overload, work safety, monotony etc. Job satisfaction is analyzed according to the following variables: physical environment, work organization, relations with superiors, salaries, promotion. Management perception is measured by the following variables: care for quality and service, administrative efficiency.

The reaction of the individuals to their working environment is the subject of the fifth group of variables. Here we measure the fundamental organizational behaviors like work motivation, identification with the company's aims and goals career-management, work related stress.

The sixth group of variables refers to the overall performance of the company.

The seventh group of variables includes individual and organizational variables like: age, seniority, function. The analysis also turns towards the intermediate variables or catalysts between the perceptions of work, behavioral reactions and organizational and individual repercussions.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can say that all these variables describe the organizational culture of an organization and show how it can change and evolve. The variables chosen to describe the organizational culture are determined by what we have in mind when making such an analysis. In our opinion, these variables are not linked to the dimensions of organizational culture. Therefore, we consider that the proposed new sociological perspective is perhaps more complete and can be used when assessing the culture of a specific organization. Since this approach decomposes the concept of organizational culture into successive components - dimensions - variables and indicators that allow for an investigation centered on elements of interest.

Analyzing the phenomenon through in the light of all these theories we can ask the following question: to what extent organizations are able to change? Judging by the institution (formalized, fixed regulation) - organization relation we can say that each is built upon strict, rigid, formal institutional support, characterized by rigid rules and procedures routine, behaviors, we tend to think that the change is either impossible or very difficult to be implemented necessitating time and a mentality restructuration.

However, practice shows that organizations can and must change if they want to maintain a valid place within the social and economic environment.

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