

An Investigation of the Organizational Culture at a Higher Education Institution in Thailand

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Abstract

Many researchers have reported the relationship between organizational culture and job performance. This research study aimed to investigate the influence of organizational culture upon employees' performance among personnel at one large university in Thailand. The population of the study was employees of the university. Organizational culture was classified into detail-oriented, outcome-oriented, people-oriented, team-oriented, competition-oriented, security-oriented and innovation-oriented cultures. Results revealed that detail, outcome, and security orientations could significantly predicted job performance but people, team, competition, and innovation cultural orientations could not determine job performance

Keywords: organizational culture, university personnel, performance.

Introduction

An organization is an entity that includes many people. These people come from different background and values. An organization binds them together and forms commonly accepted rules and guidelines for behaviors of people within. Organizational culture originates from the founders and is adjusted by the people. Upon working in an organization, people negotiate among each other for desired behaviors and form commonly accepted norms so they can work together smoothly. Organizational culture evolves from these common

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rules. Rules and guidelines that people accept tend to be kept and those which are not accepted are modified or eventually dropped over time. Organizational culture becomes the governing system of thought for people within.

This research paper had an objective to investigate the influence of organizational culture towards employees' performance in the context of a public university in Thailand. The results could provide a better understanding for policy maker regarding the preference of employees and could promote appropriate culture within the university.

Literature

Organizational culture is a topic that leaders seek to understand. It has been studied by various researchers (Chen and Chen, 2009). Kreitner and Kinicki (2012) suggested that organizational culture is something that holds employees together. It serves as the mutual agreement among members of an organization. The identity of the members is formed with reference to the organizational culture. Employees use it as the guidance for appropriate behaviors (Faerman, 2009). In the context of a university, organizational culture is very important because it forms the societal norms of employees. It influences the values and behaviors of employees and serves as the personality and spirit of the organization. Waddell, Jones and George (2013) suggested that organizational culture affects the ways employees think, feel and behave toward each other. The university needs strong culture that can guide employees towards the same goal, that is, to facilitate knowledge creation and the learning process in order to excel in the administration of teaching and learning process.

Organizational culture was originally classified as a culture that emphasizes either task or people (Iroanya, 2012) based on an Ohio study and a Michigan study. Later on, researchers proposed considerations of other dimensions. Robbins and Coulter (2015) classified organizational culture into 7 orientations:

Attention to detail orientation – a culture that values control, accuracy and details of work flow.

Outcome orientation – a culture that prioritizes results and achievement over methods of work, the end over the way.

People orientation – a culture that values employees' feedback and take account of employees' concerns during decision making.

Team orientation – a culture that values working as teams.

Competition orientation – a culture that focuses on outperforming the competition and promotes competition among employees.

Maintenance of security and status quo orientation – a culture that aims to maintain the status quo and an uninterrupted work flow.

Innovation and risk taking orientation – a culture that promotes changes, innovation and risk taking behaviors.

These orientations were utilized as the construct for organizational culture in this research project.

Methodology

This research project was a survey research. The population of the study was 4300 personnel who worked at the main campus of one leading public university in Thailand. Even though there are several other campuses, the majority of employees worked at the main campus. A 1,000 sets of questionnaire were distributed to all faculties; 347 usable sets of questionnaire were returned.

The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts. Part 1 was the demographic data of the respondents. Part 2 elicited the information from the respondents regarding their perceived organizational culture. Part 3 measured the respondents' self-reported level of performance in 9 dimensions of work at the university, namely: quality of work, quantity of work, time spent for work, problem solving ability, adherence to discipline, work structure, knowledge in job, and the conservation of resources. 4-point rating scales were used in part 2 and 3, ranging from 1 = highly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = highly agree to avoid neutral or undecided data. A score of 1-1.75 was considered highly disagree, 1.76-2.50 was considered disagree, 2.51-3.25 was considered agree, and 3.26-4.00 was considered highly agree to the measurement (Tanchaisak, 2016).

Results

284 respondents were female (81.8%) and 63 were male (18.2%). The majority was aged between 34-44 years old (71.5%). Most held a bachelor degree (77.8%) and 20.7% held a degree higher than a bachelor degree. The majority had worked with the university between 1-5 years (51.3%), followed by more than 10 years (23.3%), 6-10 years (20.2%), and less than 1 year (5.2%).

The respondents perceived the university had a culture focused on the maintenance of security and status quo (mean = 3.11, SD = 0.63), teamwork (mean = 3.09, SD = 0.66), paying attention to detail (mean = 2.99, SD = 0.61), outcome oriented (mean = 2.95, SD = 0.64), people oriented (mean = 2.81, SD = 0.64), innovation and risk taking (mean = 2.78, SD = 0.60), and competition oriented (mean = 2.53, SD = 0.71) (see Table 1).

Table 1 Means and standard deviations of the employees' perceptions regarding organizational culture

Organizational Culture	Mean	Standard Deviation
Maintenance of security and status quo	3.11	0.63
Teamwork orientation	3.09	0.66
Paying attention to details	2.99	0.61
Outcome orientation	2.95	0.64
People orientation	2.81	0.64
Innovation and risk taking orientation	2.78	0.60
Competition orientation	2.53	0.71

Results from the stepwise regression revealed that four types of organizational culture could predict the level of employees' performance at the significance level of 0.05. These were maintenance, outcome, teamwork, and detail oriented cultures. The Pearson correlation was 0.71. Variance of the four predictors could explain 0.50 of the variance of employees' performance. The ANOVA analysis confirmed the ability of the four types of cultures to predict employees' performance ($F = 88.12$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). People, competition, and innovation orientation cultures could not predict the level of employees' performance.

The standardized beta coefficient was 0.31 for maintenance oriented culture, 0.24 for outcome oriented culture, 0.16 for teamwork oriented culture, and 0.12 for detail oriented culture. All were below the significance level of $p = 0.05$.

The predictive equation consisted of unstandardized beta coefficient.

Performance = 1.06 + 0.24 Maintain + 0.19 Outcome + 0.12 Teamwork + 0.10 Detail oriented

The regression table is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Regression coefficients of the prediction formula

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.06	0.11		9.51	0.00
Maintain	0.24	0.04	0.31	5.89	0.00
Outcome	0.19	0.04	0.24	4.70	0.00
Team	0.12	0.04	0.16	3.25	0.00
Detail	0.10	0.04	0.12	2.38	0.01

Dependent Variable: Performance

Discussion

Results revealed that maintenance culture had the highest predictive coefficient weight (beta = 0.24), followed by outcome orientation culture (beta = 0.19), teamwork orientation (beta = 0.12), and detail orientation culture (beta = 0.10); people, competition, and innovation orientation cultures could not predict the level of employees' performance. It is possible that this university is highly bureaucratic and had a conservative characteristic which was reflected by the highest mean score of maintenance orientation culture but lowest for the innovation culture. Hence, maintaining of the status quo was the dominant norm of the university. This cannot be attributed solely to veteran employees, as the majority of respondents indicated working at the university for a period of only 1-5 years. However, it is possible culture could transcend from generation to generation. The data confirmed that organizational culture governed the behaviors of employees. New employees were assimilated into the dominant culture and formed work behaviors accordingly.

Employees in this university preferred not to change the work methods they were accustomed to, which may be partly due to the fact that this university is a public university which is subjected to many established formal procedures imposed by the government. Employees perceived they could not change the rules and regulations so they strived to maintain the status quo. However, contrary to what would normally be expected, this bureaucratic organization prioritized outcomes over methods. This resulted in the high means of the level of performance. Employees tried to achieve outcomes while following the rules and regulations. In this university context, performance was used as the measurement standard. As long as the rules were adhered to, an employee could do anything to achieve the objectives of the unit. Employees in this university preferred to work in teams; this is in accordance to the collectivist culture common to Asian societies. The attention to details was

somehow relevant to the maintenance of the status quo and the formal procedures. Employees observed their behaviors carefully so as not to breach the formal rules and regulation.

Conclusion

It was evident from the data that employees in this university could work well if they were provided with a set of prescribed procedure to follow. However, this procedure should be flexible enough for them to be a little bit out of the way, not too much though, in order to achieve the objectives. The preference for detail orientation confirmed that employees were careful to follow the procedures to a certain extent, else they might be punished or evaluated negatively. If they came across a rule that obstructed their way, they would figure out some method of work that complied with the rules to attain their goal.

The university should set clear rules and regulations for personnel to use as the guidelines for their operations in all areas. Moreover, an attempt to link rewards to performance could further enhance the motivation for personnel to increase their efforts in their jobs.

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