

The Impact of Organisational Culture as Panacea on Organisational Stability, Stability, Performance and Sustained Growth

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Abstract

This paper looks at effective organisational culture as an essential managerial tool in enhancing image building, integrity (ethics), building HR confidence, growth, job performances, and organisational stability. The economic growth and development of an organisation invariably depends on the organisational culture, norms, custom, morals and belief, though, given less attention in our society today. Organisational culture is the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interaction that contributes to the unique social and psychological environment of an organisation. Culture is considered the “glue” that holds an organisation/society together, and for others, the “compass” that provides direction. The desire to learning and knowing things around us, therefore, is a fundamental part of human existence. From birth, however, human development and knowledge acquisitions are a learning process through which we explore and come to terms with our environment, workplace, and we soon discover that we are not alone, and in the paradox of human existence both compete with others for scarce resources and cooperate to find and share them. Human beings have to be curious, competitive and cooperative; both as individuals and as social group; we ensure our survival either by attempts to dominate others by ways of imposing our cultures and traditions on them for one reason or the other for mutual benefit. In the same vein, human beings for millions of years ago have wanted to dominate others either for economic, political, religious, social, cultural, or selfish reasons, etc., the maintenance of our cultural norms and practices have taken a centre stage in our day-to-day activities. This paper therefore, is built on previous theoretical and empirical studies to determine the extent to which contextual factors and organisational culture impact on organisational harmony, HR team work, and productivity. The author concludes that sound management of organisational cultural norms, beliefs, custom aids and sustain the growth and development of 21st century organisations.

Keywords: Organisational Culture, Strategic Impact, Organisational Efficiency, Effectiveness, Productivity, Stability, And Industrial Harmony.

Introduction

"Successful careers are not planned. They develop when people are prepared for opportunities because they know their strengths, their method of work, and their values. Knowing where one belongs can transform an ordinary person-hardworking and competent but otherwise mediocre - into an outstanding performer".

- Peter Drucker

Many things go through the mind of people when they hear the word “culture” but it suffices to mean that it is all man-made activity that glues organisation or the society together. Culture is a way of life. For example, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the language we speak and the God we worship, all are the products of culture. In very simple terms, however, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. It is also the things that we have inherited as members of society. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Culture is an extrapolation of the past. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “culture as the improvement or reinforcement of mind, tastes, and manner; the condition of being thus trained and retrained: the intellectual side of civilisation”. According to Stanley Paliwoda (1987), culture is popularly used as a loose term to embody what is in effect a syndrome, as when we refer to the whole set of social norms and responses which condition society’s behaviour.

The concept of culture reveals a certain uncertainty in its definition, although, it often seems obvious, given the social familiarity with which it is used. The concept of culture is used in various situations such as cultured person, national culture, professional culture, group culture, ethnic culture, regional culture, religious culture, youth culture, organisational culture, etc. It is ironic therefore to consider how the Nazi general Hermann Goering was once quoted as saying, ‘When I hear anyone talk of culture, I reach for my revolver’. The variations in the meaning of culture according to the social contexts in which this concept is employed contribute to this uncertainty as well as those that have occurred overtime-leading, sometimes to the coexistence of several meanings (Cuche, 2006).

According to Bennett & Kassarian (1972) in Nwafor Simon (2016), culture is a set of learned beliefs, values, attitudes, habits, and forms of behaviour that are shared by a society and are transmitted from generation to generation within that society. Culture refers to a way of life of a society. It is a very powerful force in shaping people’s lives. The two major components of culture are external and internal. The external includes material culture, and internal, mental culture. Cultural norms range from fads and fashions (that is, it may come and go very quickly), to folkways (everyday practices), to mores (moral or religious values), to laws (strict codes of behaviour). Culture is used here as the complex of values, ideas, attitudes and other meaningful symbols created by man to shape human behaviour as they are transmitted from one generation to the next. A child growing up in a society like ours learns the basic set of values, acceptance, preferences and behaviours through a process of socialisation involving a family. Each culture for instance, contains smaller groups or sub-cultures and each of these provides more specific identification and socialisation for its members.

In this paradigm, therefore, it could be stated that the culture of an organisation eminently influences its myriad decisions and actions. A company’s prevailing ideas, values, attitudes, and beliefs guide the way in which its employees think, feel, and act—quite often unconsciously. Therefore, understanding culture is fundamental to the description and

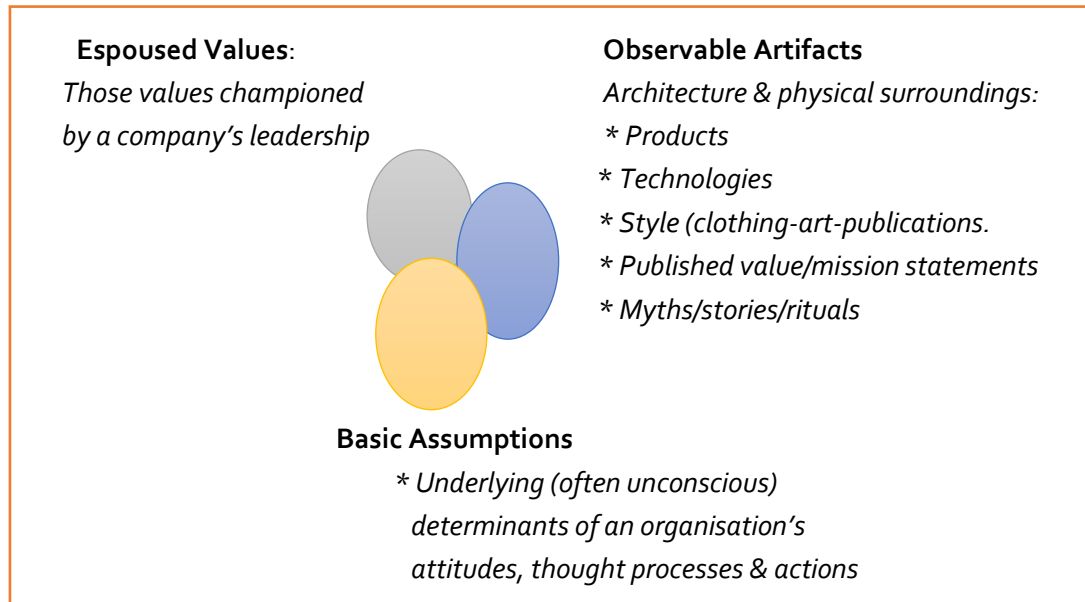
analysis of organisational phenomena. And, for some, culture is considered the “glue” that holds an organisation together and for others, the “compass” that provides direction. These are but two of many such metaphors (e.g., magnet, lighthouse, exchange-regulator, affect-regulator, need satisfier, sacred cow), illustrating that organisational culture is indeed very important, but whose definition is slippery and often contested.

A culture is the total socially acquired life-way or life-style of a group of people. It consists of the patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that are characteristic of the members of a particular society or segment of a society (Harris). As we can see, definitions agree on the fact that culture consists of something that is shared and/or learned, and transferred by a group of people, but the content of the culture varies in different definitions. In the same token, therefore, culture denotes “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of a society.” Undoubtedly, this definition influenced the shift toward current dictionary definitions. To speak of culture as being shared narrows the field of relevant activity to that which is common and social, a particular action is not cultural if it is unique to one or relatively insignificant number of individuals. According to Frost et al (1985:) in Nwafor E. S (2017) definition of organisational culture to mean talking about the importance for people of symbolism—of rituals, myths, stories and legends—and about the interpretation of events, ideas, and experiences that are influenced and shaped by the groups within which they live’. Organisational culture denotes values and assumptions about social reality but for many, values are less central and less useful than meanings and symbolism in cultural analysis. This position is in line with the view broadly shared by many modern anthropologists. Culture is then understood to be a system of common symbols and meanings. It provides ‘the shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organisation, and the means whereby they are shaped and expressed (Kunda, 1992).

Culture, therefore, is not primarily ‘inside’ people’s heads, but somewhere ‘between’ the heads of a group of people where symbols and meanings are publicly expressed, e.g., in work group interactions, in board meetings but also in material objects. Culture then is central in governing the understanding of behaviour, social events, institutions and processes. Culture is the setting in which these phenomena become comprehensible and meaningful. Also, culture is learned (actively or passively) and is transmitted cross-generationally through formal or informal social interactions—we are not born with the understanding that stealing is wrong or that “diamonds show you care.” One of the primary characteristics of human life, over animal life is that we assign symbolic meaning to ideas, behaviour, and objects, as well as have language and speech. We say that humans have culture while animals do not. This is largely due to their inability to ascribe arbitrary symbolic meaning to their world—a chimpanzee could not designate his banana to signify honesty, for example. Culture is also adaptive in that it can and does change in response to various influences and conditions. No culture is truly static—many aspects of American culture are radically different in the wake of the Internet, the dot-com bubble, and global

terrorism. And finally, culture is integrated in the sense that it permeates society and becomes part of the social machinery. In fact, culture is the ever-present, ethereal medium in which members live and through which they act.

Culture is found in:



Source: the author's construct

Organisation Defined

Organisation involves division of work amongst whose efforts must be coordinated to achieve specific objectives and to implement pre-determined strategies. Organisation is the foundation upon which the whole structure of management is built. It is the backbone of management. Obviously, after the objectives of an organisation are determined and the plan is prepared, the next step in the management process is to organise the activities of the enterprise to execute the plan and to attain the objectives, which include the custom, norms, belief, etc., of the organisation. However, every organisation operates on a "theory of the business", that is, a set of assumptions as to what its business is, what its objectives are, how it defines results, who its customers are, what the customer's value and pay for. According to Smircich (1985), organisations exist as systems of meanings that are shared to various degrees. A sense of common taken for granted ideas, beliefs and meanings are necessary for continuing organised activity. This makes interaction possible without constant confusion or intense interpretation and re-interpretation of meanings. But Edgar H. Schein (2004), clearly noted that as organisational practitioners—managers and others shaping organisational life—a developed capacity to think in terms of organisational culture facilitates acting wisely. Insights and reflections may be useful in relationship to getting people to do the 'right' things in terms of effectiveness, but also for promoting more autonomous standpoints in relations to dominant ideologies, myths, fashions, etc. To

encourage and facilitate the thinking through various aspects of values, beliefs and assumptions in industry, occupations and organisations seem to me to be a worthwhile task.

Furthermore, organisation can best be understood as a dynamic process and a managerial activity which is necessary for bringing people together and tying them together in the pursuit of common objectives. It can also be referred to the structure of relationships among positions and jobs which is built up for the realisation of common objectives. Without organising, however, managers cannot function as managers.

Organisation is concerned with the building, developing and maintaining of a structure of working relationships in order to accomplish the objectives of the enterprise. Organisation means the determination and assignment of duties to people, and also the establishment and the maintenance of authority relationships amongst these grouped activities. It is the structural framework within which the various efforts are coordinated and related to each other. It is worthy of note that sound organisation with enabling cultural attributes can contribute greatly to the continuity and success of the enterprise. The distinguished industrialist of America, Andrew Carnegie has shown his confidence in organisation by stating thus: "take away our factories, take away our trade, our avenues of transportation, our money, leaves nothing but our organisation, and in four years, we shall have re-established ourselves". That actually shows the significance of managerial skills enshrined in an organisation. However, good organisation structure does not by itself produce good performance, but a poor organisation structure makes good performance impossible, no matter how good the individual may be.

Effective organisations achieve strong relationships with both their external and internal environments (SWOT Matrix). Internal environments can be considered to have three main components - dominant coalition, structures, and culture, which shape the behaviour of its employees (Beer, 1980). The dominant coalitions are a group of key decision makers whose influence on the system is greatest (Kotter, 1978; Miles & Snow, 1978). The coalition usually includes senior management, but can also include others whose collective job experiences, skills, cognitive orientations, personalities and values define the internal environment. More so, structures, such as training, job design and performance evaluation are the formal aspects of an organisation which signals to people that certain behaviours are desirable and that rewards are likely to result if they practice them. Culture is the complex and broad set of relationships, values, attitudes and behaviours that bind a specific community consciously and unconsciously together. Culture means the composite perception employees have of their internal environment, expressed by such concepts as "open", "risk-taking", "warm".

In this spectrum, therefore, managers rather than changing an entire organisation's culture, an organisation culture can be adaptable and agile by allowing certain types of subcultures to emerge. Organisational subcultures however, are groups whose common characteristic is a shared norm or belief (Boisnier & Chatman, 2002). Subcultures are classified as enhancing, orthogonal, or counterculture, each exemplifying a different level of

congruence with the dominant culture's values (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Members of enhancing subcultures adhere to dominant organisation cultural values even more enthusiastically than members of the rest of the organisation. Members of orthogonal subcultures both embrace the dominant cultural values and hold their own set of distinct, but not conflicting values. Finally, members of a counterculture disagree with the core values of the dominant culture and hold values that directly conflict with core organisational values. While having a deeply embedded organisational culture is usually associated with higher performance, these organisations may not be adaptive enough to ensure their long-term survival. Organisations may, therefore, become more agile by allowing subcultures to emerge.

Organisational Culture Defined

Organisational culture is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape the ways in which human resources in organisations behave and things get done. 'Values' refer to what is believed to be important about how people (HR) and organisations behave. 'Norms' are the unwritten rules of behaviour. Attitude is the state of emotional and mental preparation, which is formed through experiences that has a directive or dynamic influential power on an individual's behaviours towards all things and situations. Organisational culture includes an organisation's expectations, experiences, philosophy, as well as the values that guide member's behaviour, and is expressed in member's self-image, inner workings, interactions with the outside world, and future expectations. Culture can be inferred from what people say, do, and think within an organisational setting.

According to Heinz Weihrich, Mark V. Cannice & Harold Koontz (2011), culture involves the learning and transmitting of knowledge, beliefs, and patterns over a period of time, which means that an organisation's culture is fairly stable and does not change. Culture is based on shared attitudes, beliefs, customs, and written and unwritten rules that have been developed over time and are considered valid (The Business Dictionary). Culture also includes the organisation's vision, values, norms, systems, symbols, language, assumptions, beliefs, and habits (Needle, 2004). Simply stated, organisational culture is "the way things are done around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). While the above definitions of culture express how the construct plays out in the workplace, other definitions stress employee behavioural components, and how organisational culture directly influences the behaviours of employees within an organisation.

Under these set of definitions, however, organisational culture is a set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organisations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). It affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders. Also, organisational culture may influence how much employees identify with their organisation (Schrodtt, 2002). In business terms, therefore, other phrases are often used interchangeably, including "corporate

culture”, “workplace culture” and “business culture”. Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. Organisational culture is also referred to as a structure that separates the organisation from other organisations with a common meaning held by members. In every functional organisation, organisational culture is a very unique topic particularly in the areas of performance, cultural norms and communication between employees and employers are important.

Organisational culture shows the condition of employment, employee behaviour, etc. thus, a significant determinant of organisational performance is organisational culture and each organisation has an exclusive social structure that serves as a guide towards directing its performances, conduct, and behaviour. At the same time, an understanding of organisational culture is essential for effective management of human resources. Leaders and managers will be better equipped to implement strategies and achieve their goals if they understand the culture of their organisation. Strategies that are inconsistent with organisational culture are likely to meet with resistance and will be more difficult or even impossible to implement, while strategies that are in line with it will be easier to put into effect and more likely to succeed. It is also important to understand the existing culture of an organisation when thinking of introducing changes.

Schein (1985), noted that culture is a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with the problems of external adaptation and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems. While Eldridge and Crombie (1974) defined culture in an organisation to be unique configuration of norms, values, beliefs and ways of behaving that characterise the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done. However, culture is a commonly held belief, attitudes and values that exist in an organisation. Put more simply, culture is ‘the way we do things around here’ (Furnham and Gunter (1993).

Six Guidelines for Culture Change by Cunnings & Worley

Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols-constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.

The guidelines can be look at as follows;

- Formulate a clear strategic vision. This vision gives the intention and direction for the future culture change.
- Display top-management commitment. The top of the organisation must favour the culture change in order to actually implement the change in the rest of the organisation.

- Model culture change at the highest level. The behaviour of the management needs to symbolise the kinds of values and behaviours that should be realised in the rest of the company. Change agents are keys to the success of this cultural change process and important communicators of new values.
- Modify the organisation to support organisational change. This includes identifying what current systems, policies, procedures and rules need to be changed so that the alignment with the new values and desired culture can be achieved.
- Select and socialise newcomers and terminate deviants. Encouraging employee motivation and loyalty to the company will create a healthy culture. Training programmes should be provided to all employees to help them understand the new processes, expectations, and systems.
- Develop ethical and legal sensitivity. This step can identify obstacles of change and resistant by employees, acknowledge and reward employee's improvement, encouraging continued change and involvement.

It is a known fact at this juncture to define culture as the general pattern of behaviour, shared beliefs and values that members have in common. The effectiveness of an organisation is also influenced by the organisation culture, which affects the way the managerial functions of planning, organising, staffing, leading, and controlling are carried out.

The Components of Culture

Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape the behaviour of individuals within the organisation. It influences the way people interacts, make decisions, and solve problems. Thus, organisational culture can best be described in terms of its values, norms, artefacts, and management styles. Viz;

- **Values:** values are beliefs in what is best or good for the organisation and what should or ought to happen.
- **Norms:** norms are the unwritten rules that guide human behaviour.
- **Artefacts:** Artefacts are the visible and tangible aspect of an organisation that people hear, see, or feel and which contribute to the understanding of their organisation's culture. It includes such things as work environment, the tone and language used in e-mails, letters or memoranda, etc.
- **Management style:** Management style is the approach managers or leaders adopt to deal with human resources.

Characteristics of Culture

As noted above, culture represent the 'social glue' and generate a 'we-feeling', thus counteracting processes of differentiations that are an unavoidable part of organisational life. Organisational culture offers a shared system of meanings which is the basis for communication and mutual understanding, and if these functions are not fulfilled in a

satisfactory way, it might significantly reduce the efficiency of an organisation. However, Furnham & Gunter (1993) gave the following characteristics of culture;

- It is difficult to define (often a pointless exercise).
- It is multi-dimensional with many different components at different levels.
- It is not particularly dynamic and ever-changing (being relatively stable over short periods of time).
- It takes time to establish and therefore time to change a corporate culture.

At the same time, some analysts are of the opinion that culture possesses the following characteristics as noted below;

- Culture is learned and acquired: Culture is acquired in the sense that there are certain behaviours which are acquired through heredity. Individuals thus inherit certain qualities from their parents but socio-cultural patterns are not inherited. These are learnt from family members, from the group and the society in which they live. It is thus apparent that the culture of human beings is influenced by the physical and social environment through which they operate.
- Culture is shared by a group of people: A thought or action may be called culture if it is shared and believed or practiced by a group of people.
- Culture is cumulative: Different knowledge embodied in culture can be passed from one generation to another generation. More and more knowledge is added in the particular culture as the time passes by. Each may work out solution to problems in life that passes from one generation to another. This cycle remains as the particular culture goes with time.
- Culture changes: There is knowledge, thoughts or traditions that are lost as new cultural traits are added. There are possibilities of cultural changes within the particular culture as time passes.
- Culture is dynamic: No culture remains on the permanent state. Culture is changing constantly as new ideas and new techniques are added as time passes modifying or changing the old ways. This is the characteristics of culture that stems from the culture's cumulative qualities.
- Culture gives us a range of permissible behaviour patterns: It involves how an activity should be conducted, how an individual should act appropriately.
- Culture is diverse: It is a system that has several mutually interdependent parts. Although, these parts are separate, and they are interdependent with one another forming culture as whole.
- Culture is ideational: Often it lays down an ideal pattern of behaviour that is expected to be followed by individuals so as to gain social acceptance from the people with the same culture.

Clearly, therefore, culture implies some level of structural stability in the group. When we say that something is "cultural," we imply that it is not only shared, but also stable because it defines the group. Once we achieve a sense of group identity, it is our major stabilising force and will not be given up easily. Culture survives even when some members of the

organisation depart. Culture is hard to change because group members value stability in that it provides meaning and predictability. No wonder Nazi General Hermann Goering was once quoted as saying, 'When I hear anyone talk of culture, I reach for my revolver'. The inevitability of the term "culture" makes it impossible for each member of a group to depart fully from some sort of cultural affiliations.

In this stratum, Hofstede et al., 1990; Trice and Beyer, 1993) made the following assumptions about cultural phenomena;

- they are related to history and tradition;
- have some depth. Are difficult to grasp and account for, and must be interpreted;
- they are collective and shared by members of groups;
- they are primarily ideational in character, having to do with meanings, understandings, beliefs, knowledge, and other intangibles;
- they are holistic, inter-subjective and emotional rather than strictly rational and analytical.

Viewing culture broadly as a shared and learned world of experiences, meanings, values, and understandings which inform people and which are expressed, reproduced, and communicated partly in symbolic form is consistent with a variety of approaches to the conduct of concrete studies (Mats Alvesson, 2002).

Summary and Conclusion

Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behaviour, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behaviour. Culture does not exist in isolation neither it is an individual phenomenon. It is a product of society. It originates and develops through social interactions. It is shared by the member of society. Man becomes man only among men. When one brings culture to the level of the organisation and even down to groups within the organisation, one can see clearly how culture is created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated, and at the same time, how culture constrains, stabilises, and provides structure and meaning to the group members (Edgar H. Schein, 2004).

Under these set of analysis, therefore, we can deduce organisational culture as a set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organisations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations. Organisational culture affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders. Also, organisational culture may influence how much employees identify with their organisations. In business terms, however, other phrases are often used interchangeably, including "corporate culture," "workplace culture," and "business culture." Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the

distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values. Organisational culture is also referred to as a structure that separates the organisation from other organisations with a common meaning held by members. The author concludes that organisational culture is a very unique topic particularly in the areas of performance, organisational culture and communication between employees and employers as well.

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