

STUDY OF CULTURAL ORIENTATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY STAFF

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Introduction/background: Organizational culture is manifested in ingrained values, attitudes, normative behaviors, aspirations, and needs. For the shaping of effective employee development processes and efficient human resource management processes, active engagement in organizational activities and a sense of identity along with the values characteristic of the existing organizational culture are important. Organizational culture is one of the more significant phenomena directing behaviors of people in various types of organizations, including higher education institutions.

Aim of the paper: The aim of the article was to analyze the changes that have occurred in the perception of university organizational culture over a span of 6 years, in the arrangement of perceived and preferred culture. The text compared two time perspectives; the first study took place in 2016, the next in 2022.

Materials and methods: The research was conducted using the Cameron-Quinn questionnaire, among employees of two private universities. The questionnaire was distributed directly to respondents or sent by email.

Results and conclusions: In the arrangement of perceived culture in both study periods, a hierarchical approach dominates, indicating the subordination of employees to the development strategy of the university, the level of choices for an adhocratic orientation has slightly decreased, the arrangement of clan indications has practically not changed, which means a lack of predisposition to building advanced forms of group work, whereas the perception of organizational culture as a market has increased, meaning that there is a shift towards the entrepreneurial university. In summary, it can be observed that there is a need to focus on changing the current delegation of authority towards partial decentralization and autonomy of academic and teaching staff, for functioning in executive teams. Such an approach provides an opportunity to build overlay organizational structures of a task or project type, depending on the needs, which will strengthen the position of the university in the external environment.

Keywords: organizational culture, university culture, management of university organizational culture, perceived and preferred culture.

1. Introduction – Definitional Aspects of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is one of the more significant phenomena directing behaviors of people in various types of organizations, including higher education institutions. Universities differ from each other in organizational culture, which in turn conditions the ability to adapt and respond to changes taking place in the educational market at the higher level.

In simple terms, organizational culture defines social norms and value systems that stimulate employees. However, many different definitions of organizational culture are identified in the literature. Kroeber and Kluckhohn argue that organizational culture "consists of patterns, both explicit and implicit, acquired by behaviour and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their contributions to artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically delineated and selected) ideas, and especially the values associated with them; cultural systems may on one hand be recognized as products of actions, but on the other hand, they can be perceived as elements that condition further actions" (Kroeber, Kluckhohn, 1952). A more synthetic definition describes organizational culture as "a set of values, traditions, aspirations, beliefs, attitudes, which are the essence of everything that is done and thought in an organization" (Kuc, 2008).

In turn, A. Schein proposed a definition stating that organizational culture is: "A pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that have 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 those problems" (Schein, 1985). Furthermore, Schein points out that organizational culture is determined by three components: basic assumptions (the organization's relationship to its environment, time, and space; the nature of humanity, professional activity), norms and values (the system of commands and prohibitions, ethics of conduct, service standards), and artefacts (physical – dress, organization's decor, logo; behavioural – the way people address each other, rituals; linguistic – linguistic formulas, stories, myths). For the purposes of the article, the definition by Cameron and Quinn is adopted, seeing culture as: "unwritten, often subconsciously adhered to principles that fill the gap between what is written and what actually happens. Culture concerns shared views, ideologies, values, beliefs, expectations, and norms" (Cameron, Quinn, 2003). Cameron and Quinn identified 4 types of organizational culture: clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market.

Table 1.*Types of organisational cultures according to Cameron and Quinn.*

Type of culture	Characteristics
Clan oriented culture	The place of work is perceived as a friendly place, people work together willingly, team work is appreciated. Supervisors act as advisers, teachers and they care about their employees. Organisations are able to survive due to their employees' loyalty and attachment to tradition.
Adhocracy oriented culture	It is dynamic, entrepreneurial and creative. In this culture risk-taking and experimenting are a daily occurrence, people are not afraid of taking up challenges and leaders are innovative and are not afraid to introduce changes and experiment with new ideas.
Hierarchy oriented culture	It is characterised by integrity and gradation of subordination relations. The scope of work and expected behaviours of people are defined in very seriously treated procedures and regulations. Organisation's integrity is ensured by the emphasis on formal rules and regulations. Coordination and systematisation are a challenge for leaders, strong emphasis is put on efficient functioning of the organisation, following time schedules and gradual, continuous cost reduction.
Market oriented culture	This model focuses on results and task implementation. People are driven by ambition and orientation towards goals whereas leaders are ruthless, demanding and focused on competitiveness. Organisation's integrity is ensured by expansion and desire for victorious competition.

Source: own analysis based on (Cameron, Quinn, 2003).

Summarizing the above definitions, it can be said that organizational culture defines social norms and value systems that stimulate employees. Organizational culture also encompasses shared meanings and symbols, ways of behaving, cognitive patterns, the proper organizational climate, and management style (Kiwak, 2016).

Organizational culture fulfils various functions within an organization by delineating its boundaries, providing a sense of distinctiveness to its members, shaping the framework of the organization's identity facilitating employees' engagement, defining norms of behaviour, allowing better control and shaping of members' behaviors, and enabling the integration of organization members (Dohn, Lyp, 2017).

Organizational culture is shaped by many factors, including the national culture in which the organization operates (Hofstede, 2007).

Determinants of organizational culture formation found in the literature can be divided into 4 groups:

1. Characteristics of organization members – it is people who create the organization. Every employee entering the company brings their own values, customs, communication style, and conflict resolution methods, has specific education, uses a specific language, etc.
2. Characteristics of the organization itself – the history of the organization, its vision of operation, goals, management style, organizational structure, or adopted communication method significantly matter.
3. The state of the environment – i.e., the adopted national culture in which the organization operates, legal regulations, economic situation, state system, political situation.
4. The nature of activity – the profile of activities, industry, scale of operation, or degree of cooperation with other entities.

In the case of higher education institutions, the impact of these individual elements on organizational culture has its specificity, which results from the character of their market-social activity.

Among the environmental features of universities, particular importance is given to: how the university is perceived by the social environment; the values attributed to universities as entities with a certain prestige; the average power distance in Polish national culture, reflected in the mutual relations between students and staff as well as among employees of different academic degrees and functions; regulations of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, which impose the framework for the functioning of universities; unfavourable demographic changes - low birth rate and aging society, which force competition for students; increasing influence of the labour market and business entities, requiring universities to adopt a more flexible approach to education.

Regarding organizational characteristics, significant aspects include: the mission and objectives of the university, where, unlike in business, the main goal is not profit but the realization of statutory assumptions; the history of the given university - long-standing operation in the market of public universities is on one hand their strength and distinction, on the other hand, it may cause difficulties in quickly adapting to changes; established patterns of mutual references among employees of different degrees and academic titles; hierarchical structure, top-down management style, and significant dependence on central authorities' decisions; specific communication system with employees.

Nature of activity: The specificity lies in offering services by universities that are inherently intangible and related to the persons performing the service, thus heterogeneity is manifested by a large dependency of the service quality on the person providing it. Universities try to introduce uniform education standards, but considering the specificity of lecturers' work, it is difficult to unify behaviours; changes are occurring in the way services are provided, with increasing opportunities for offering services indirectly – e-learning platforms; accessibility to partnership programs is growing, which allows staff and students to go to foreign universities; the grant system that enables conducting research with various entities, including internationally; a strong emphasis on research and commercialization of research results, shifting the focus from teaching to scientific activity.

Organization Members: In the case of universities, the characteristics of members will largely be determined by the profile of the university (technical, humanities, arts, etc.). At technical universities, men still dominate both in the power structures and among academic and teaching staff, while administration is overwhelmingly female. This is not only due to the internal conditions of the organization but also the prevailing socio-cultural system (Koszembar-Wiklik, Krannich, 2016).

Organizational culture, by giving meaning and direction to individual activities, allows for the achievement of organizational cohesion, eliminates states of uncertainty, but can also create an effective barrier to changes, especially when changes violate the existing status quo or when they force a violation of culturally established behaviour patterns.

Significant cultural change cannot be accomplished if it is led by only a handful of people at the top of the organization. Cultural change leaders are initiators who create meaning and set the pace, challenging existing patterns and opening new perspectives. However, a transformation at various levels of the organization is required for change to occur. Cultural changes are not always driven by top management. Individuals at every role and position can initiate cultural change efforts (Boonstra, 2013; Marcisz, 2017). Different generational characteristics may be significant for organizational culture (Opalińska, 2018). This is particularly evident in universities, where representatives of different generations are present. Changes in organizational culture can result from both generational differences among staff and the new characteristics of the student generation. Generational differences mean that a certain flexibility in approach to norms is increasingly important, while at the same time trying to retain certain established patterns among older employees.

2. Research Assumptions

The aim of the research presented in the article is to determine selected cultural orientations and, based on them, identify the dominant type of organizational culture of higher education institutions in the arrangement of perceived and preferred culture. The research was conducted in two private universities. The authors also aimed to compare the results of studies from 6 years ago (involving both public and private universities) with the current research. The comparison concerned cultural models in private universities (Koszembar-Wiklik, Krannich, 2016). In the current research, only respondents who are academic teachers employed at a private university were considered. The subject area of the research is the analysis of the relationship between perceived and preferred organizational culture and the adopted forms of communication in various functional contexts. The method used in the research was a direct and online survey. The tool used to study organizational culture was the Cameron-Quinn questionnaire. The study involved 57 lecturers from two private universities. The universities have a similar teaching profile in the field of management and quality sciences. In the 2016 study, 32 lecturers from a private university participated. The research was conducted based on the OCAI (Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument) questionnaire, developed for the purpose of determining types of organizational culture by K.S. Cameron and R.E. Quinn. An attempt was made to generalize the obtained results and their graphic presentation. From the point of view of the usefulness of measurement methods, the definition of

organizational culture by Cameron and Quinn, which they describe as a set of values considered obvious, common expectations not spoken about, is relatively the most popular among researchers. According to this definition, organizational culture reflects dominant views, defines employees' sense of identity, and provides undocumented, yet essential assumptions for behaviour in the workplace. Undoubtedly, the widespread acceptance of this definition has been facilitated by the fact that the Cameron-Quinn team developed a comprehensive, yet uncomplicated tool for studying culture, namely the OCAI questionnaire. This questionnaire is based on the assumption that although organizational culture is specific to each organization, in this diversity, some patterns can be found that are common or at least similar, allowing for the identification of certain characteristic types of cultures. Such typologies have been recognized by practitioners, allowing for a quick and relatively accurate identification of a company's culture. Cameron and Quinn proposed to distinguish based on a coordinate system four main types of culture: adhocracy, market, clan, and hierarchy. The dimensions – axes create quadrants, each describing a different set of organizational effectiveness indicators defining what is good, advisable, or right. These dimensions are opposites or compete with each other. The pairs of opposing values are: flexibility (typical for task culture) and stability (hierarchy culture) as well as an internal focus (clan culture) and an external position orientation (market culture). The universality of these dimensions and the capacity of the quadrants are associated with the type of culture that represents the basic assumptions, views, and values.

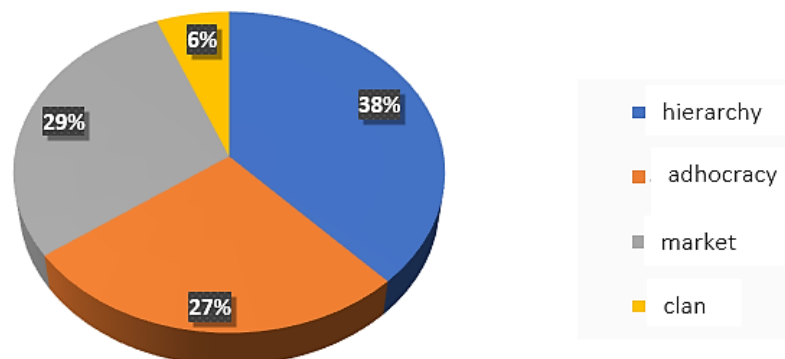


Figure 1. Perceived cultural orientations in the studied private universities.

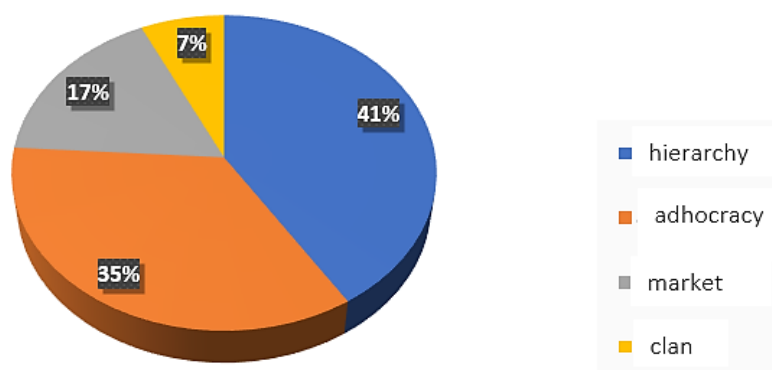


Figure 2. Perceived cultural orientations in the study of a private university 2016.

In both study periods, a hierarchical approach dominates – 41% (2016) and 38% (2022), signifying the subordination of employees to the university's development strategy and operational management models. The level of adhocratic orientation choices slightly decreased from 35% to 27%, which may signal a lesser focus on innovation and creative employee engagement. This could directly result from the decreasing participation of private universities in grant systems and participation in dedicated European Union funds. The market arrangement has strengthened to a greater extent, where the development thinking paradigm is associated with reflections on relationships with university stakeholders and building one's position in a dynamically changing environment. Such a choice may also indicate a fuller orientation towards students' needs in terms of educational programs and adjusting teaching directions and specializations to market demand. The arrangement of clan indications has practically not changed, decreasing from 7% to 6%. This means there is still a lack of predisposition to build advanced forms of group work. Group work, understood as the ability to collectively carry out complex scientific projects and collectively prepare a comprehensive system of matrices and educational programs, remains not a priority. There is still a dominant attitude of subordination to university authorities, and loyalty to the organization does not have the character of a direct sense of long-term bonds with the university, in the sense of great opportunities for personal development, treated as a long-term benefit in the outlined, personal career path of academic and teaching staff. Teamwork, multi-faceted participation in university activities, and a general consensus on the main development goals still do not constitute priority choices in the actions of the studied universities, both in the long-term and short-term perspective.

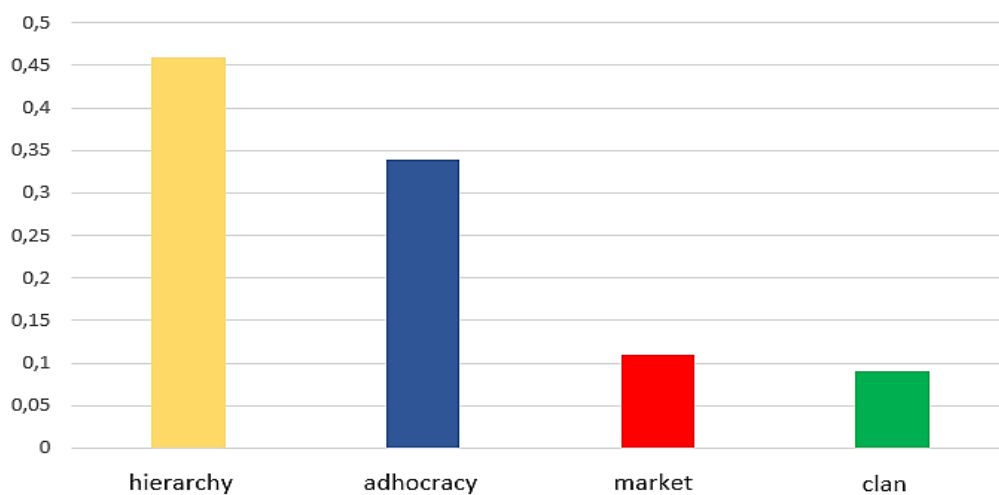


Figure 3. Preferred cultural orientations in the study of a private university 2016.

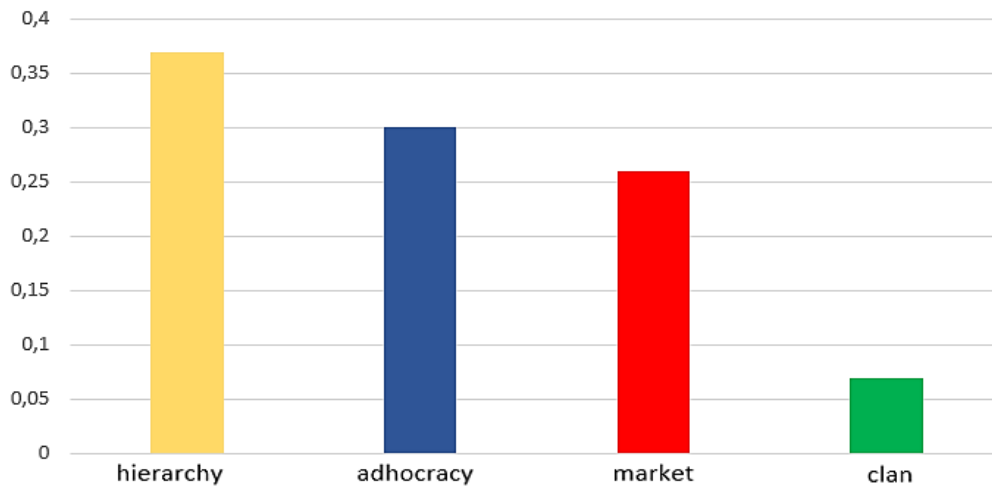


Figure 4. Preferred cultural orientations in the study of a private university 2022.

In the current studies, the preference for hierarchy still prevails, yet it has significantly decreased from 46% to 37%. This may indicate a change in employee attitudes, where the dominant role of hierarchical supervision and efficient execution of commands are no longer seen as strongly as an element of fitting into the work team and shaping behaviours that treat subordination as a condition for being perceived as a valuable individual in the personnel management process.

Adhocratic indications decreased from 34% in 2016 to 30% in 2022. The decline is slight, and there is still visibility of adaptive action possibilities, including greater flexibility and creativity in uncertain, ambiguous situations, where autonomy of choice will be possible despite the uncertainty associated with the excess of information.

There was a significant increase in market orientation (jumping from 11% in 2016 to 26% in 2022), which indicates a desire for much greater adaptation to environmental volatility, which may manifest in:

- The willingness to respond to comments and demands of students regarding the implementation of classes.
- A greater focus on aligning educational programs with labour market expectations.
- The desire to use diversified forms of conducting classes in the educational process (using case studies, gamification, etc.).
- Greater flexibility in creating cooperation between students and conducting additional activities such as scientific clubs.

Market orientations of 9% in 2016 and 7% in 2022 show that employees do not regard full group integration based on the complete well-being of the employee and a "familial" relationship as an important aspect of their personal development. Interpersonal trust cannot be considered sufficient for practicing more modern management methods, such as management by delegation of authority. At the same time, indications in the market and adhocracy areas provide an opportunity to think about greater team integration and building task teams in the

implementation of research projects, also in cooperation with scientific teams from other universities.

3. Summary and Conclusions

Organizational culture is manifested in ingrained values, attitudes, normative behaviors, aspirations, and needs. Active engagement in organizational activities and a sense of identity, along with the values characteristic of the existing organizational culture, are important for shaping effective employee development processes and efficient human resource management processes. A platform of shared values creates a kind of informal control mechanism, informing employees about the organization's expectations of them. Strongly established values can positively impact the organization's functioning by selecting the right employees in the recruitment process, then appropriately shaping their career paths, and building individual commitments in competence management and talent management processes. Organizational culture builds a catalogue of less or more formal, but clear to employees, expectations and beliefs shaping the final organizational behaviours.

As a basic recommendation, being a synthesis of analytical thoughts in the area of conducted research, it can be stated that the starting point for the strategic reorientation of universities is building a modified organizational culture. This entails forming new patterns and values, beliefs, and attitudes to develop engaged, pragmatic, and utilitarian employee behaviors from the perspective of the assumptions and directions of the changes being made. In practical, application terms, this means using organizational culture with built-in trust as a stimulator, modifier, and correlative amplifier of behaviours constituting the form of a specific organizational culture, as a tool for stimulating internal activity.

It is clear that there needs to be a focus on changing the current delegation of authority towards partial decentralization and autonomy of academic and teaching staff for functioning in executive teams. Such an approach provides an opportunity to build overlay organizational structures of a task or project type, depending on the needs, which will strengthen the university's position in the external environment. The mental change necessary for the reevaluation in organizational culture refers to focusing on long-term processes and their shaping, including the processes of organizational modification, improvement of work organization, and enhancement of individual employees' actions. The change should be incremental, constituted by systematic steps focused on improving the process and collective organizational effort, implemented through conventional, low-cost, well-known methods.

Perhaps it would be advisable to introduce active coaching into training activities for university staff, in terms of solving group problems and building trust in task teams. Coaching can be conducted individually or in teams, allowing concentration on oneself,

on one's reflections and actions, thereby improving the quality of functioning of workgroups and executive teams. Improving internal communication in the university may mean an increased number of meetings and consultations of the university's management with employees, not only as a form of discussion but as constructive conclusions that systematically change internal relations. Knowledge from these meetings should be stored in some report form at the universities.

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