

Research Paper



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PROFILING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN VELLORE, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Higher education system in India is one of the largest sector in the world. It is the shared responsibility of both the Central and the State Governments. The state of Tamilnadu in India is one of the most developed states in the field of higher education. It considers knowledge as the prime mover of development and aims for quality and excellence. This revolution has caused much interest in the application of culture to the management of institutions of higher education. The study aimed to realise the culture and style of management practiced by arts and science colleges in Vellore District, Tamilnadu. The instrument on Organisational Culture Profile by Udai Pareek dealing with eight cultural variables was used in this study. Data from 150 respondents from various colleges were analysed to measure the four cultural profiles: autocratic, bureaucratic, technocratic and entrepreneurial cultures. The study revealed that most colleges practiced technocratic culture (ranked 1) followed by autocratic (ranked 2), entrepreneurial (ranked 3) and bureaucratic (ranked 4) cultures. The technocratic culture prevalent in most colleges are expressions of the following variables: values are shared throughout, people believe that too many external constraints, chief executive is given the highest importance, communicate to solve problems, leaders set standards of performance, meetings are held with top managers, top management celebrates good performance, large working tables provided for all, and a lot of attention is given to updating technology.

KEYWORDS: Institutions of higher education, autocratic culture, bureaucratic culture, technocratic culture and entrepreneurial culture.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is often seen as a shared meaning system. This definition has important implications for cross cultural management research (Ronald Fischer, 2009).

Hofstede divided culture into four layers (or four main elements): symbols, heroes, rituals and values. An onion diagram model of organizational culture developed by Hofstede et al. (1997) is presented in Figure 1. The onion diagram shows that values form the core of culture, which are the deepest level of culture. Values are intimately connected with moral and ethical codes (Brown, 1988), and determine what people think ought to be done, and identify 'likes' and 'dislikes' for both employers and employees. Rituals are collective activities which are considered socially essential, and heroes are persons who possess characteristics which are highly prized and are often the "winners" or those who get on in an organization. According to Deal and Kennedy (1982): 'the hero is a great motivator. The magician, the person everyone will count on when things get tough ...' Symbols are the most overt element of culture and are the gestures,

objects, words or acts that signify something different or wider from the others, and which have meaning for individual or group.

Similarly, Johnson and Scholes (1999) presented a cultural web given in Figure 2. The cultural web is actually a useful ideal tool to make links to with the political, symbolic, and structural aspects of the organization, and it can be guided the development of strategy. Generally speaking, the cultural web is useful to identify a culture within an organization.

In the cultural web, there are seven key elements that are inter-linked (Johnson and Scholes 1999). These elements are:

- 1. Stories** – The past events and people talked about inside and outside the company. Who and what the company chooses to immortalize says a great deal about what it values, and perceives as great behavior.
- 2. Rituals and Routines** – The daily behavior and actions of people that signal acceptable



behavior. This determines what is expected to happen in given situations, and what is valued by management.

3. **Symbols** – The visual representations of the company including logos, how plush the offices are, and the formal or informal dress codes.
4. **Organizational Structure** – This includes both the structure defined by the organization chart, and the unwritten lines of power and influence that indicate whose contributions are most valued.
5. **Control Systems** – The ways that the organization is controlled. These include financial systems, quality systems, and rewards (including the way they are measured and distributed within the organization.)
6. **Power Structures** – The pockets of real power in the company. This may involve one or two key senior executives, a whole group of executives, or even a department. The key is that these people have the greatest amount of influence on decisions, operations, and strategic direction.

At the centre, are the paradigm or commonly held beliefs and values of the organization, and the seven elements (routine, rituals, stories, symbols, control systems, power structures, and organizational structure) could be formed in the different developing period of an organization. In practice, these assumptions, beliefs, and values are most established by leaders of the organization and present a powerful set of forces, such as the seven key elements, which are deep, broad, and stable. They result in behaviours that serve as a guide to employees about what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour in the organization.

One of the bases of classifying culture is distribution and concentration of power. Organizational cultures can be of the following four types: Autocratic (or feudal), Bureaucratic, Technocratic and Entrepreneurial (or organic and democratic). Autocratic culture is characterized by centralized power concentrated in a few persons, and observation of proper protocol in relation to the person(s) in power. Bureaucratic culture is characterized by primacy of procedures and rules, hierarchy, and distant and impersonal relationships. Technocratic culture emphasizes technical/professional standards and improvement. Entrepreneurial culture is concerned about achievement of results and providing excellent service to customers.

OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the cultural profile of higher education institutions in Vellore District.
2. Identify the dominant culture prevalent among these institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The population for the study was college professors working in Arts and Science colleges in Vellore District of Tamilnadu state, India. The nature of the study is descriptive. The study is based on both secondary and primary data collected from 110 colleges by means of simple random sampling technique was employed to administer the

instrument. From 175 questionnaires that were sent out 161 were received representing a response rate of 92% after eliminating incomplete questionnaires 150 questionnaire accepted for the study and evaluated.

Udai Pareek's Organisational Culture Profile instrument was used to measure four organisational culture: autocratic, bureaucratic, technocratic and entrepreneurial. The instrument has eight sets dealing with values, beliefs, symbols, primacy, communication, leadership, rituals and celebrations. The respondents were requested to rank the four statement in each set in terms of their applicability to the organisation concerned. The statement describing most closely the organisation was ranked 1 and that which was describing least accurately was ranked 4. The lower the score the higher the value given in that culture. (Udai Pareek, 2002, p 804) The results of the analysis are presented in the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Organisation is concerned with grouping of activities, establishing authority- responsibility relationships between them and creating accountability for the accomplishment of the enterprise goal. The organisational cultural profile describes four cultures across eight factors. The four cultures are: Autocratic organisation, Bureaucratic organisation, Technocratic organisation and Entrepreneurial organisations while the eight factors are: values, beliefs, primacy, communication pattern, leadership practice, rituals, celebrations, and furniture. The analysis of data is presented in the following paragraphs. Table 1 presents the type of organisations respondents belong.

It is inferred from Table 1 that 37.33 per cent of the respondents belong to self-financing colleges, 30.76 per cent of the respondents belong to government colleges. Respondents from aided- colleges were 21.33 per cent. 10.67 per cent of respondents belong to autonomous colleges.

An organisation structure explains the positions and official relationships between the various individuals in an organisation that helps to understand an organisation better. Table 2 presents the designation of respondents taken for the study.

It is inferred from Table 2 that 49.33 per cent of respondents were Assistant Professors, followed by 24 per cent of respondent were Associate Professors. Professors who responded were 21.33 per cent followed by Guest Lecturers to the extent of 5.33 per cent.

Values in an organisation: Values are the core of an organisation's being. They define nonnegotiable behaviours. More and more studies show that successful companies place a great deal of emphasis on their values. Table 3 shows the opinion of respondents regarding values in their organisation. In a typical autocratic organisation, no consideration is given to values and 20 percent of the respondents have ranked this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation values are not shared and 20 percents of the respondents have ranked this variable. In a technocratic organisation values are shared at the top level and 16 percent respondents have ranked this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation values are shared throughout and 14.7 percent have ranked it.

The results of the weighed scores reveal that values are ranked high in the Technocratic organisation and least in Bureaucratic organisations.

Beliefs in organisation: Culture consists of beliefs and behaviour. This alignment of beliefs gives direction to the firm and has important implications for incentives and

coordination. Table 4 shows the beliefs held by the respondents in their organisation.

In autocratic organisation, people believe that most things depend on top management and 18.7 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation people believe that there are too many external constraints which are difficult to fight and 15.3 percent respondents ranked this variable high. In a technocratic organisation people believe that the major constraints are managerial and 20.7 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, the belief is that things don't happen; you make them happen and this was highly ranked by 12.7 percent respondents.

The results of the weighed scores reveal that beliefs in the organisation are ranked high in the Technocratic organisation and least in Bureaucratic organisations.

Primacy in organisations: Culture is a product of such factors as history, product, market, technology, strategy, type of employees, management style, and national culture. However, each organisation gives eminence to a particular factor. Table 5 shows the opinion of the respondents regarding primacy in their organisation.

In autocratic organisation, the Chief Executive is the most important person and 23.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation rules and regulations are given high importance and 28 percent respondents ranked this variable high. In a technocratic organisation good service is given high importance and 31.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, the student is considered as the most important person and 29.3 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that primacy are ranked high in the Autocratic organisation and least in Technocratic organisation.

Communication in organisation: The main function of communication is to inform, persuade and promote goodwill among all stakeholders. But the way it is performed will depend on the culture of the organisation. Table 6 shows the communication pattern in various organisations.

In autocratic organisation, most communication is generated at the meetings of top people and 10 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation all communication is in writing and through memos which was ranked high by 21.3 percent respondents. In a technocratic organisation there is not much work related communication among people and 29.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, people communicated with one another to solve problems and 29.3 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that communication patterns are ranked high in the Autocratic organisation and least in Bureaucratic organisations.

Leadership in organisation: Good leaders get good results through their followers. But how they influence followers also depends on the culture of the organisation. The practice of leadership in various organisation is given in Table 7.

In autocratic organisation, the leaders expect implicit obedience and 13.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation people are expected to follow the proper channels that have been laid down which was given high rank by 14.7 percent respondents. In a technocratic organisation leaders set the standards of

performance and 22.7 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, leaders are role models for their people and 47.3 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that leadership is ranked high in the Autocratic organisation and least in Bureaucratic organisations.

Rituals in meetings: All organisations have rituals and these reinforce the values of an organisation. Rituals create order and a sense of community. Specially, the study related to rituals during meetings in the organisation. Table 8 shows the practice of rituals in meetings held in their organisations. Meetings in autocratic organisation are generally not held without top managers and seats for those at the top are fixed. In this study 22 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation there is an implicit hierarchy in the seating pattern at meetings. 32.7 percent respondents ranked this variable high. In a technocratic organisation people are indifferent to meetings and try to avoid them and 31.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, people sit wherever they can find place and 15.3 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that rituals during meetings are ranked high in the Entrepreneurial organisation and least in the Bureaucratic organisations.

Celebrations in organisation: Celebration is an opportunity to reinforce the values of the organisation. In fact celebrations are insight into an organisation's culture. The heroes are highlighted, symbols are afloat, ties are strengthened and youngster are imbibed with the culture. Table 9 expresses what celebrations take place in different organisations.

In autocratic organisation, the top management have parties to celebrate good performance of the organisation. In this study 14.7 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation people are busy streamlining rules and regulations and 8 percent respondents ranked this variable high. In a technocratic organisation a lot of attention is given to updating technology and 5.3 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, high performance is celebrated with everybody joining in and 12 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that values are ranked high in the Technocratic organisations and least in Bureaucratic organisation.

Rooms and Furniture in organisations: Office rooms are workplaces that boost employee productivity and satisfaction. They are designed to meet multi-functional spaces and are furnished with furniture and fittings appropriate for the need. However, they reveal the culture of the organisation. Table 10 shows the opinion of the respondents. In autocratic organisation, each senior member has a room with a large table and space for holding meetings. In this study 22 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In a Bureaucratic organisation the size of the room and its furniture is according to a person's rank and 22 percent respondents ranked this variable high. In a technocratic organisation large working tables are used and 32 percent respondents gave high rank for this variable. In the Entrepreneurial organisation, small tables are used by managers and 16 percent respondents have given high rank to this variable. The results of the weighed scores reveal that

rooms and furniture are ranked high in the Entrepreneurial organisation and least in the Autocratic organisation.

Overall Cultural Profile

In this study four types of cultural organisation were studied: Autocratic organisation, Bureaucratic organisation, Technocratic organisation and Entrepreneurial organisations. The autocratic organisation is characterised by centralised power concentrated in a few persons, and observation of proper protocol in relation to the person(s) in power. Bureaucratic culture is characterised by primacy of procedures and rules, hierarchy and distant and impersonal relationships. Technocratic culture emphasises technical/professional standards and improvement. Entrepreneurial culture is concerned about achievement of results and providing excellent service to customers.

The overall cultural profile of institutions of higher education in Vellore District is worked out and presented in Table 11. The total for each cultural type varies from 8 to 32. Table 11 revealed that most colleges practiced technocratic culture (ranked 1) followed by autocratic (ranked 2),

entrepreneurial (ranked 3) and bureaucratic (ranked 4) cultures. The technocratic culture prevalent in most colleges are expressions of the following variables: values are shared at the top level, leaders set standards of performance, people believe that major constraints are managerial, there is not much work-related communication among people, large working tables are used, people are indifferent to meetings and avoid them, good service is given the highest importance and a lot of attention is given to updating technology.

CONCLUSION

Organisation culture has achieved high prominence in recent years. It is the acquisition of values, beliefs, attitudes and expectations by the employees of an organisation. Every organisation has a unique culture. More specifically we find great changes in higher education sector which has caused great interest in the application of culture. This study shows that colleges in Vellore District practiced technocratic culture and a lot of attention is given for updating technology, but there was not much work related communication among the workforce. This study will provide researchers and practitioners with important input about organisation culture.

FIGURES, TABLES AND REFERENCES

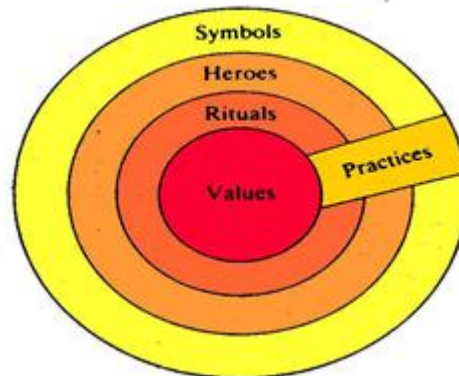


Figure 1 Onion Model of Organisational culture



Figure 2. Culture Web , Source: Johnson and Scholes (1999), P. 74

Table 1 Type of Organisation

Organisations	Frequency	Percentage
Government College	46	30.67
Aided College	32	21.33
Self –Financing College	56	37.33
Autonomous College	16	10.67
Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 Designation of the respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Professors	32	21.33
Associate Professors	36	24.00
Assistant Professors	74	49.33
Guest Lecturers	8	5.33
Total	150	100.00

Source: Primary data

Table 3 Values in organisations

Organisational Culture	Measure	No consideration for values	Values are not shared	Values shared at top level	Values are shared throughout	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	30 (20%)	48 (32%)	36 (24%)	36 (24%)	378	2
	Weighed score	120	144	78	36		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	48 (32%)	30 (20%)	46 (30.7%)	38 (25.3%)	412	4
	Weighed score	192	90	92	38		
Technocratic	Frequency	36 (24%)	30 (20%)	24 (16%)	44 (29.3%)	326	1
	Weighed score	144	90	48	44		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	36 (24%)	42 (28%)	44 (29.3%)	22 (14.7%)	380	3
	Weighed score	144	126	88	22		

Source: Computed Data

Table 4 Beliefs in organisations

Organisational Culture	Measure	Most things do not happen	Depends on top mgt	Too many managerial constrains	Too many external constrains	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	33 (22%)	28 (18.7%)	55 (36.7%)	36 (24%)	360	2
	Weighed score	132	84	110	36		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	66 (44%)	18 (12%)	42 (28%)	23 (15.3%)	425	4
	Weighed score	264	54	84	23		
Technocratic	Frequency	32 (21.3%)	28 (18.7%)	31 (20.7%)	57 (38%)	331	1
	Weighed score	128	84	62	57		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	19 (12.7%)	76 (50.7%)	22 (14.7%)	34 (22.7%)	382	3
	Weighed score	76	228	44	34		

Source: Computed Data

Table 5 Primacy in organisations

Organizational Culture	Measure	Customer	Good Service	Rules and Regulations	Chief Executive	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	42 (28%)	52 (34.7%)	22 (14.7%)	35 (23.3%)	403	4
	Weighed score	168	156	44	35		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	30 (20%)	37 (24.7%)	42 (28%)	38 (25.3%)	353	2
	Weighed score	120	111	84	38		
Technocratic	Frequency	34 (22.7%)	47 (31.3%)	24 (16%)	27 (18%)	352	1
	Weighed score	136	141	48	27		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	44 (29.3%)	14 (31.3%)	62 (41.3%)	50 (33.3%)	392	3
	Weighed score	176	42	124	50		

Source: Computed Data

Table 6 Communication pattern in organisations.

Organizational Culture	Measure	Meetings of Top Management	Through writings and memos	Not much work related communication	Communicate to solve problems	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	15 (10%)	56 (37.3%)	31 (20.7%)	30 (20%)	320	1
	Weighed score	60	168	62	30		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	60 (40%)	32 (21.3%)	31 (20.7%)	32 (21.3%)	430	4
	Weighed score	240	96	62	32		
Technocratic	Frequency	41 (27.3%)	26 (17.3%)	44 (29.3%)	44 (29.3%)	374	2
	Weighed score	164	78	88	44		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	34 (22.7%)	36 (24%)	44 (29.3%)	44 (29.3%)	376	3
	Weighed score	136	108	88	44		

Source: Computed Data

Table 7 Practice of leadership in organisations

Organisational Culture	Measure	Leaders expect explicit	Leaders are role models	People expected to follow proper	Leaders set standards of Performance	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	20 (13.3%)	19 (12.7%)	67 (44.7%)	55 (36.7%)	326	1
	Weighed score	80	57	134	55		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	70 (46.7%)	20 (13.3%)	22 (14.7%)	22 (14.7%)	406	4
	Weighed score	280	60	44	22		
Technocratic	Frequency	42 (28%)	40 (26.7%)	22 (14.7%)	34 (22.7%)	366	2
	Weighed score	168	120	44	34		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	18 (12%)	71 (47.3%)	39 (26%)	39 (26%)	402	3
	Weighed score	72	213	78	39		

Source: Computed Data

Table 8 Practice of rituals in meetings

Organisational Culture	Measure	Seating plan not fixed	People are indifferent and avoid Meetings	Seating plan in meetings have hierarchy	Meetings are held with top managers	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	50 (33.3%)	37 (24.7%)	28 (18.7%)	33 (22%)	400	3
	Weighed score	200	111	56	33		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	42 (27.3%)	36 (24%)	49 (32.7%)	43 (28.7%)	417	4
	Weighed score	168	108	98	43		
Technocratic	Frequency	35 (23.3%)	47 (31.3%)	30 (20%)	44 (29.3%)	395	2
	Weighed score	140	151	60	44		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	23 (15.3%)	30 (20%)	43 (28.7%)	30 (20%)	298	1
	Weighed score	92	90	86	30		

Source: Computed Data

Table 9 Celebrations in organisations

Organisational Culture	Measure	Attention to updating technology	Top Management celebrates good performance	High performance celebrated by everyone	Busy to streamline regulations	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	20 (13.3%)	22 (14.7%)	82 (54.7%)	28 (18.7%)	338	2
	Weighed score	80	66	164	28		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	80 (53.3%)	42 (28%)	12 (8%)	12 (8%)	482	4
	Weighed score	320	126	24	12		
Technocratic	Frequency	8 (5.3%)	6 (4%)	38 (25.3%)	100 (66.7%)	226	1
	Weighed score	32	18	76	100		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	42 (28%)	80 (53.5%)	18 (12%)	10 (6.7%)	454	3
	Weighed score	168	240	36	10		

Source: Computed Data

Table 10 Rooms and Furniture in organisations

Organisational Culture	Measure	Room size and furniture according rank	Room with a large table and space for meetings	Small tables are used by managers	Large working tables for all	Grand Weight	Rank
Autocratic	Frequency	33 (22%)	33 (22%)	69 (46%)	17 (11.3%)	386	4
	Weighed score	132	99	138	17		
Bureaucratic	Frequency	33 (22%)	50 (33.3%)	31 (20.7%)	37 (24.7%)	381	3
	Weighed score	132	150	62	37		
Technocratic	Frequency	52 (34.7%)	22 (14.7%)	26 (17.3%)	48 (32%)	377	2
	Weighed score	208	69	52	48		
Entrepreneurial	Frequency	32 (21.3%)	45 (30%)	24 (16%)	48 (32%)	359	1
	Weighed score	128	135	48	48		

Source: Computed Data

Table 11 Overall Cultural Profile of Organisations

Organisational Culture	Rank								Total Rank	Overall Rank
	Values	Belief	Primacy	Communication	Leadership	Rituals	Celebrations	Furniture		
Autocratic	2	2	4	1	1	3	2	4	19	2
Bureaucratic	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	29	4
Technocratic	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	12	1
Entrepreneurial	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	20	3

Source: Computed Data

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