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Communication and Organizational Culture

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Abstract: The hypothesis upon which our approach is built is that, within an organization, managers' acts, the premises of decisions and the conduct of the personnel are significantly influenced by the organizational culture. In this paper we propose to identify and analyze the fundamental components of organizational culture within the "Danubius" University of Galati. The internal integration and adaptation to socio-economic and cultural environments are the desirable finalities, based on values, principles, beliefs, symbols and specific customs, which are shared by organization members. We aim at proving that the symbolic dimension and the one showed within the organization are mutually reinforced, they are perceived, understood and interpreted by the staff as a single and indivisible entity.

1. Introduction

Any organization requires specific configuration of specific structural arrangements, which emerges as the basis for the interaction of a set of values, beliefs and common representations of a group of individuals, all configuring the organizational culture.

One of the most important activities of an organization is the communication. This is the dominant process by which employees carry out exchanges of information, create relationships, build meanings and an organizational culture. This process is a combination of messages, meanings, practices, and objectives undertaken by members of the organization. (Berger, 2009, p. 2), which enhances the organizational capacity.

Thus, communication helps individuals and groups to coordinate their activities to achieve goals and is vital in the process of socialization, decision making, problem solving and management changes. Communication can help motivate employees, build trust, create a common identity or increase the personal involvement, it gives people a way to express their feelings, share their hopes and ambitions, to celebrate and remember the achievements. The agreement and support of performance management is a useful and indispensable tool for performance management (Cismaru, 2008, p. 127). Organizational Communication holds performance benchmarks, values and culture. It increasingly requires as being multi-directional and as well as having the ability to provide continuous feedback for learning and processing fundamental organizational changes.

A final consequence of organizational communication is the organization's image capitalization (Marcenac, Milon & Saint-Michel, 2006, p. 133). For any organization, differentiating its image from that of similar organizations, it requires the necessity of creating and maintaining a certain visual

identity (David, 2008, p. 174). The identity of the organization is a significant component of organizational culture.

2. Organizational Culture

Traditions, values, beliefs, and specific routines in an organization are brought together in the organizational culture, in its hypostasis of collective system of symbolic meanings. Culture exerts a significant influence on decision premises, on conduct and acts of managers and staff (Stanciu & Ionescu, 2005, p. 15). Managers and staff at all levels of hierarchical organization are equipped with various capacities, knowledge and specific skills. They permanently interpret organizational events always behaving according to the assumptions and expectations from their own interpretations. Depending on the status and hierarchical position, individuals may contribute to changing the culture and structure of the organization (Stanciu & Ionescu, 2005, p. 15). The company that defines the legal and socio-economic context according to which the organization will have to guide, the organization's history and the specific circumstances to whicih the organization had to adapt also influences the type of culture and structure that takes place within it.

Individuals assimilate and assume the symbolic material of the organization, it gradually adopts the hypothesis, starting to have a worldview that no longer affects their behavior and decisions, but it models also the mental structures. On a *spiritual level*, culture includes beliefs, values, knowledge, meanings, symbols, and rules. At *behavioral level* of culture it includes the lifestyle, interaction, and organization. *At the artifacts level*, from the material point of view it lies in tools or buildings (Stanciu & Ionescu, 2005, p. 44).

3. Horizons and Dimensions of Organizational Culture within "Danubius" University from Galati

The "Danubius" University of Galati, operating in a specific academic field, along with other similar institutions of higher education, public or private, have a similar mission, that of learning and research in order to train specialists.

Setting the identity of the organization begins to be made by name, its own architectural style; specific colors (very dark navy); logo. Developing an appropriate logo is a key issue for an organization because the chosen symbol must work both inside and outside of the organization. *The Torch*, the central element of the Danubius University logo, is the emblem of science lighting the world. Its symbolism derives from fire and light. (Evseev, 1999, p. 153). In the background there are designed the Danube waves, directing both to the university's name and the river. This provides a special relationship between a promise (torch) and a sense of belonging (Danube). So, *the logo* has a metonymic and metaphoric feature, being designed to achieve a quasi-permanent relationship between the organization and its publics.

The social environment in which the "Danubius" University was founded in 90's Romania, there has been an emergence of private free initiative. The University was accredited by the Law no. 409/2002. It is specific the organizational history as well, whose analysis can be a rich source of information for the analysis of organizational culture. This history is presented on the university *website*, the written texts, through photos and video clips. Thus, the students and new employees can form an idea about

the meaning of norms, values, attitudes, behavior and organization members in order to adapt to the organization.

The organizational history analysis is a method that tries to explain to a large extent the characteristics of organizational culture in a given period, based on its mode of formation and, in particular the special role that the founders had, about which they assume that brought with them a certain cultural heritage manifested in the form of values, symbols, attitudes and behaviors (the study of *curriculum vitae* of the Rector of "Danubius" University provides information to that effect). However, managers at all levels (Rector, Vice Rector, Dean, etc.) must transmit the values of the organization, both in their behaviors, and through their daily activities. The history of this organization anchors the past and provides explanations and legitimacy for the current practices.

On the same *site* there are most significant organizational rituals ("Open Days", graduation ceremonies, starting a new academic year or for granting the title of Doctor Honoris Causa (Academician Razvan Theodorescu). The ceremonies are considered a number of rituals connected by a single event. In these circumstances we rely on a specific clothing, which reveals the solemnity and respect for the academic, institutional stability and prestige in the community. Along with clothes, we can identify as material symbols the furniture arrangements. Rites is a series of actions, developed activities, dramatic, planned, which consolidates various forms of social expression in a single event, which is provided through social interaction for the benefit of the audience. Rituals are a set of techniques and behaviors that produce detailed and standardized results of practical importance. (Ziliberberg, 2005, p. 84)

Thus, *rites of passage* involving students in the university area are:

(A) Admission to a program for a Bachelor Degree or B.A. Degree;
(B) examinations during the sessions;
(C) Bachelor's Degree Examination;
(D) Dissertation.

Rites of passage in which teachers can be trained:

(A) Competitions for job promotion;

(B) Admission to a doctoral school;

(C) Competitions of accession in leadership positions.

The rituals of intensification may be, for example, joining or participating in conferences or scientific sessions, book launches, etc. or meetings.

The rituals of renewal, introducing new content and processes of university relations, so we can mention the implementation courses of quality management courses and management courses of Danubius Online platform, which was attended by all teachers in the university, and ensuring a sense of unitary and valued achievement. We believe that *relationship rituals* are very important, in which organization members are celebrating birthdays, having non-formal meetings **outside of work hours,** talking about their concerns etc.

The rites and rituals are also symbolic activities that increase the degree of organization members' integration by getting the loyalty effect. (Mucchielli, 2008, p. 155) This effect reinforces the conditions under which formal and informal channels of communication convey management philosophy, as a set of values and norms that define permanently the desirable and consistent professional and social behaviors. At the same time, employees are required a correct positioning

towards the assumed values and norms, among which we identified at "Danubius" University: integrity, responsibility, reliability, performance, acceptance of difference, dialogue, commitment, quality, cooperation, transparency, competitiveness, assuming change, participative management, etc. All these values are based on modeling intellectual activities of students and assuming skills.

Once in place, the culture is maintained in the organization by a set of procedures, in that it gives employees a set of familiar experiences such as: process of selection, performance appraisal criteria, career development activities, and promotion procedures; it ensures the cultural integration of employees (Ziliberberg, 2005, p. 82).

The rules that are shared and supported by working groups from all organizations are stipulated in the Declaration of Principles (for example University Charter or Code of Ethics), in regulations and procedures that show what is and what is not allowed. However, these documents are meant to ensure relevance and consistency of the university's activity, which are actually the desirable behavior patterns.

4. Conclusions

At "Danubius" University level we identified a humanistic-encouraging culture centered on the outcomes. The organization is concerned with human resource development and values, employees who set and achieve their own objectives. Thus, the tasks are solved and the students and master students receive appropriate educational services. The Management is participatory and focused on the individual. The members of the organization, in turn, show commitment to the organization.

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