UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI

TRADIȚIE ȘI EXCELENȚĂ

Faculty of Sociology and Social Work

PHD THESIS

(Summary)

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PhD. Candidate

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Cluj-Napoca
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Organizational Culture in Romanian Public Organizations

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Key words:

Organizational culture, public organizations, public management, local public administration, Daniel Denison model

Introduction

Large private companies (multinational corporations), to which we turn whenever we seek performance benchmarks, in their constant pursuit of profit and hence performance and efficiency, began to value the human resource so much and the role that the organizational culture can play in the success of the organization that, when recruiting, they put more emphasis on the compatibility between the individual and the organization's values than they do on the education, experience or skills that that individual has.

Often, these organizations prefer to recruit (especially for entry level positions) young people, just out of university or even students, individuals in training without a value system yet fully formed, immature, without their personality traits fully contoured. The dream of any organization of this kind is to have a place in which employees share the values of the organization and even identify with them (and the organization itself), where employees talk about the organization in terms of "we", not "them", in which individuals understand the organization's objectives and the role each of them plays in achieving these objectives, an organization in which these individuals see the connection between the work of each of them and the results achieved and personal satisfaction.

Therefore, organizational culture (the construction, the maintenance and its development) has become one of the most important aspects of the corporate management. Organizational culture refers to the symbolic side of the organization, the less visible part of it, the side which is more difficult to understand, but which has a vital role in the success of the organization. Organizational culture is for the organization what personality is for an individual, it defines it; it is hidden, hard to understand, defined by the experiences it went through since its appearance, hard to change and has a key role in achieving all the objectives.

Nowadays this aspect of organizations came to be so important to the success of the organization that large companies make considerable efforts (including financial efforts) to build and maintain a culture that supports performance: from how they recruit and select human resources (they create a psychological profile, they check the compatibility between the individual and the organization's values, etc.), to how they organize the work environment, and interact with their employees, to how that involve them in decision making , and even go as far as to offer them facilities that allow them to develop within the company and allow them to engage in charitable activities or develop their own projects to implement their own ideas.

As in many other areas, the concern for organizational culture first emerged and developed better in the private sector because they always seeks ways to increase their profits, thus becoming more effective, making them more prone to use their assets in order to maximize

their return investment. Once with the change of paradigm in public administration (the development of the New Public Management), characterized in particular by the desire to take over some ideas, concepts, techniques, tools from the private sector in order to adapt them to the public sector began an increased interest in organizational culture in the public organizations. However, we cannot see the same effort in the public sector as we do in the private sector regarding organizational culture and its role in the success of the entire organization. Although other countries, western and especially northern ones, are much better than Romania (and Eastern Europe in general) in using the principles of organizational culture, there are still differences in which this theory is regarded in the public sector versus the private one.

The concern of the corporations for organizational culture has developed an increase of the academic interest on this subject also, which began researching this aspect in an effort to better understand what it is, how it works and what connection exists between it and organizational performance. As usual, in the social studies field, there were heated debates on the subject, such as from which perspective should organizational culture be studied (sociological, psychological, anthropological etc.) or what methods should be used in its study (quantitative, qualitative). The literature presents several models of analysis of the organizational culture, some based on simple models, such as the Edgar Schein (1990) model which presents three levels of the organizational culture starting with a level that we can see and ending with the level that holds all the values and the basic assumptions which is more difficult to approach and reaching models such as Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn (2011), which claim that there are four major types of organizational cultures (clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchy) or that of Daniel Denison (1990), which identifies a single type of organizational culture, but characterized by four main features (adaptability, mission, involvement and consistency), each of the four having three sub-dimensions which lead to the study of 12 dimensions that help us have a complete picture of the culture of an organization.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze organizational culture (based on Denison's model) of the local public administration from Romania, focusing especially in three types of institutions: the County Council, City Hall and Prefectures. All three types of public institutions belong to the local administration (there are other types of institutions that are a part of the public administration system, but I chose only these three types because they are the most important ones), these three types of institutions are very different one form the other, both in features and form and size, and also in aspects regarding their subordination, the legislation they must obey, the are they service, and their target audience, etc.

External Focus

ADAPTABILITY

Organizational Learning

Strategic Direction & Intent

MISSION

Customer Focus

Goals & Objectives

Creating Change

Vision

Flexible

Beliefs and Assumptions

Stable

Empowerment

Coordination & Integration

Team Orientation

Agreement

INVOLVEMENT

Capability Development

Core Values

CONSISTENCY

Internal Focus

Daniel Denison's Organizational Culture Model (Denison, 2005)

The first chapters of my thesis (Chapters I, II and III) define the concepts used and lay out the most important theories on organizational culture and these chapters are accompanied by a research on organizational culture in the local public administration system from Romania (Chapter IV)

Chapter I is an introduction that establishes the general theory, and it establishes the general outlook on which we will conduct an analysis of the organizational culture: organizations (public vs. private), management (public vs. private), citizen-client, local communities, public administration etc.

Chapter II is entirely devoted to the concept of organizational culture and, without claiming to have exhausted the subject entirely it aims to build a more complete and complex picture of the idea of organizational culture. This chapter starts with the history and definition of the concept and then presents topics like the functions of organizational culture, the issues of the culture change, the relationship between organizational culture and the national culture, the relationship between organizational culture and performance, or organizational culture and organizational climate, organizational culture in bureaucratic organizations or organizational culture in public administration.

Chapter III focuses on the four most important theories regarding organizational culture: the theory of the three levels of culture (Edgar Schein), The national culture model (and organizational) of Geert Hofstede, The competing values (Competing Values Framework) of Cameron and Quinn and The Daniel Denison Organizational Culture Model.

Chapter IV is the research that I did on the organizational culture from the public administration from Romania. This chapter also contains a small sub-chapter on previous research done in the field, the research objectives, methodology, data collection and research results.

Research objectives

The goal of this thesis is to analyze organizational culture (based on Denison's model) of the local public administration from Romania, focusing especially in three types of institutions: the County Council, City Hall and Prefectures. All three types of public institutions belong to the local administration (there are other types of institutions that are a part of the public administration system, but I chose only these three types because they are the most important ones), these three types of institutions are very different one form the other, both in features and form and size, and also in aspects regarding their subordination, the legislation they must obey, the are they service, and their target audience, etc.

Without claiming that the results of this thesis are representative for the entire local public administration in Romania, mainly because the research is not exhaustive (I analyzed three types of organizations in just five of the 41 counties of Romania: Cluj, Sălaj, Bistrița Năsăud, Satu Mare, Covasna), it is however particularly important given that in Romania there is no research on organizational culture of the local public administration (there are only a few research papers done related to the academic environment).

Research questions

The research aims to analyze the organizational culture of the 15 local institutions previously mentioned and based on this analysis to identify:

1. The type of organizational culture of each kind of organization (County Council, City Hall and Prefectures) - which of the 12 dimensions have higher values, what characterizes the culture of each organization?
2. The differences between the three types of organization (if any) and which may be causes. I started from the premise that the different nature of the three organizations (different tasks, different sizes, different subordination etc.) should be reflected in significant differences in their organizational culture.

3. The differences in organizational culture between organizations from different counties. Are any of the counties more prone to certain values? I started from the premise that the national culture and the local culture influences organizational culture and therefore should be significant differences between the culture of organizations in Bistrița Năsăud, for example, and Covasna, the two areas being culturally different.

4. The similarities between the 15 organizations. Is there a common profile of organizational culture of local public administration institutions? Can we speak of a specific organizational culture in the public administration from Romania, whatever the type of institution we might be referring to?

Methodology

My research is based on a quantitative method using a sociological survey based on a questionnaire. The questionnaire I decided to use is a version translated and adapted by me of the one developed by Daniel Denison and his organization. The instrument was offered to me, at my request, by the organization led by Daniel Denison (Denison Consulting) together with their agreement to allow me the use the tool for academic purposes.

The questionnaire includes a total of 60 questions and the responses to each of them vary on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means *strong disagreement* and 5 – *strong agreement*. Each of the 12 dimensions of the Denison's model is measured by 5 of the 60 statements from the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises eight more questions related to age, sex, education level, work experience etc.

Data collection

The questionnaires were distributed to a large number of employees from the 15 selected institutions; the sample is one of convenience because it was not possible otherwise (due to the lack of human resources, poor cooperation from the institutions, the reluctance of employees etc.). The number of questionnaires received is 2,442 questionnaires which represent approximately 22% of the total number of employees from the 15 organizations. In some organizations I have managed to cover a large number of employees (such as 77% - from the County Council of Bistrița, 70% from the Salaj Prefecture, 52% from the County Council of Cluj), but in others the response rate was very low (8% in the City Hall of Satu Mare, 10% in the City Hall of Bistrița, 13% in the Cluj-Napoca City Hall).

As discussed in the methodology, the questionnaire has a number of 60 statements, each with five possible answers (1-strong disagreement, 2-disagree, 3 neutral, 4-agree, 5 strong agreement). Each of the 12 dimensions of Denison's model is measured by 5 questions out of 60. To calculate the average scores, I did an average for each of the 60 statements and then the average of groups of five questions to obtain a result for the 12 dimensions and then an average for the three dimensions to obtain a result for the four traits.

Conclusions

Surprisingly, the first hypothesis (which stated that the organizational culture is influenced by the local culture and local specificities) was not confirmed; in all three types of organizations (County Council, City Hall and Prefectures) I have identified similar traits of organizational culture regardless of county of origin. The small differences that I found are not significant.

The second hypothesis, that said that the type of organization (purpose, tasks, structure, size, etc.) influences organizational culture, was not confirmed either; the paradox is that in each of the five counties, the organizational culture from the County Council, City Hall and Prefecture is similar, sometimes almost overlapped, all revolving around the median, and the differences are not significant at all. Even if the three institutions are different in so many ways (goals, tasks, procedures, subordination, size, number of employees, coverage etc.) their cultures are similar.

The analysis of all 15 institutions from the perspective of this model reveals that they are very similar. Not only do we have 15 cultures that almost merge with each other, but all 15 are cramped, considering the scores they got, in the same range (2.9 to 3.9), the medium value range. All cultures are balanced without very high or very low values, without a striking feature, to define them.

We cannot find any differences in terms of the type of institution (County Council, City Hall and Prefectures) or based on their geographical location (different counties). Romanian local public administration seems to have a common culture; perhaps a bureaucratic culture is more specific to the entire system rather than a specific institution or a particular region of the country.

At a more in depth analysis, we find that the Prefecture of Covasna County stands out a bit more from the rest of organizations testing the higher values at 9 from the 12 dimensions described in the questionnaire while the City Hall from Satu Mare and the Prefecture of Cluj are at the opposite side of the range with a higher number of small scoring.

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