

A STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AT ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY IN IRAN

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Abstract: Organizational culture is comprised of the shared values and attitudes of an institution's members, and effective organizational culture is a necessary aspect of any successful institution and its governance. Often the term is used in a corporate context, but the concept is an equally important element of academic life and management.

Islamic Azad University (IAU) in Iran, established in 1982, is among the primary cultural-educational participants in the crucial task of growing Islamic culture and humanistic development among faculty members, students, scholars and staff at more than 400 branches nationwide and internationally. Clearly, the effectiveness of the organizational culture of IAU will affect its relative ability to achieve this task. Thus, the objective of this study was to determine the dominant organizational culture type based on perceptions and preferences of faculty members at Islamic Azad University (IAU) branches in Iran. This is a descriptive and exploratory research enacted through a nationwide survey. Based on the competing values framework (CVF), Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) was employed to assess the research objective. By using random sampling, 357 questionnaires were distributed among 7 selected IAU branches and 329 were considered to be valid. The findings revealed that the current dominant organizational culture type at IAU branches in Iran was hierarchy culture and the preferred dominant culture type was clan. Furthermore, the current culture type was reasonably congruent. The findings also indicated that there were no significant mean score differences among current organizational culture types and demographic characteristics with respect to gender, marital status and work experience; however there were mean scores differences between current organizational culture types and demographic characteristics with respect to age, education, position, and work fields.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Competing Values Framework (CVF), Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), Islamic Azad University, higher education

Introduction

Organizational culture has been defined and addressed in various ways in the literature, yet the importance of the shared ideas has been a constant (Cameron &

Quinn, 1999). Organizational culture is a dynamic concept which can be defined as a collective and shared pattern of values, beliefs, attitudes, symbols, norms and regulations which influences all levels of organizational vision, missions and employees. It can influence personal and professional goals, as well as employee engagement and individual performance, both consciously and subconsciously. Schein (2004) defined organizational culture as "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 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 those problems" (p.17). He also declared that organizational culture, which is based on regulations, values, rules and norms, is created by leadership style, and it is further shaped by interactions among the people in an organization. In accordance with this, Cameron (1991) believed that leaders can create and shape certain dynamic culture to develop effective new capacities for action to fulfill organizational objectives. Many studies have indicated that organizational culture is positively and significantly associated with organizational success and the effectiveness of leaders (Bikmoradi et al., 2008; Cameron & Quinn & Degraff, 2007; Chin Loy & Mujtaba, 2007; Chin Loy, 2003, Martin, 2002; Deshpande and Webster, 1989; Daft, 2001; Rahimnia & Alizadeh, 2010; Tierney, 1999). According to Robins and Judge (2009) the core functions of any organizational culture are to create a sense of identity within the organization, to improve stability in the community structure and to operate as the social glue to hold the organization together. Cameron et al. (2007) noted that organizational culture creates both stability and adaptability by acting as glue; and continuity and consistency by fostering a clear set of agreed shared values in the organization.

Organizational culture in higher education is not a new concept; it was posited by Burton Clark more than forty years ago (Toma et al., 2005). Clark (1980) defined academic culture in specific disciplines, academic professions, institutions, and national systems of higher education, and concluded that the strength of academic culture varies in line with the size, cohesiveness and age of the institution. According to Norton (1984) academic culture plays an important role in defining the characteristics of institutions. Austin and Gamson (1983) believed that higher education institutions were places where a collective of administrators, faculty members and staff

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