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The Organizational Culture in Public and Private Institutions

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Abstract

Every organization, regardless of region, country or sector, has a culture of its own. The organizational culture of a public institution, as opposed to the organizational culture of a private organization, is developing within a broader spiritual matrix. The objective of the case study was to identify the type of the organizational culture within two Romanian institutions, i.e. a public (Calarasi City Hall) and a private (ACTIVE TRADING SRL) one, for a comparative perspective on their organizational culture. Regarding the research method, a questionnaire of 10 questions was applied and the answers were subject to a statistical analysis.

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1. Introduction. The organizational culture in Romanian institutions

Every organization, regardless of region, country or sector, has a culture of its own (Russu, 1989, p. 7). If in terms of the private sector, we can say that there are significant differences in their organizational culture, we cannot make the same statement about the organizational culture of the public sector. Although there are many differences of values, depending on their areas of activity, public organizations also have a set of values common to all organizational cultures. According to specialist Linda Smircich (1989), culture is strong and consistent, and, often, it has an overwhelming influence on an organization and on the employees' behavior (p. 21). Thus, we believe that the organizational culture in public organizations involves all the distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features entailed by the employees' ways of thinking and feeling, and by their personality, manifested in the work processes that significantly determine the mission and fundamental objectives of public organizations.

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Although the organizational culture as a concept is very little known in Romanian organizations, in general, and almost unknown in the public sector, in particular, elements of the organizational culture can be found in various public institutions through special investigations. Beyond what Romanian public managers, politicians and civil servants believe about culture in general, and about the organizational culture, in particular, they have a major influence on the management of the public institution, on the leadership style, on the concept of management, on the public servants' behavior, on the attitude towards the organization and on the customer-citizen. The former is always at the latter's service by the social mission of these types of institutions (Hofstede, 1996, pp. 30-31).

The organizational culture of a public institution, as opposed to the organizational culture of a private organization, is developing within a broader spiritual matrix. The culture of the public institution controls all the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of its members. However, the process by which public servants learn how to control the internal and external environment involves all the cognitive and emotional elements. The more we live within a culture, as the culture grows older, the more it will influence our perceptions, thoughts and feelings. The changes in the environment in which these institutions operate significantly and culturally marked the public institutions in Romania. Reality shows that if an organization is constantly changing its public managers and a part of its public servants, such a public institution is at the risk of weakening its organizational culture. This is the first step before triggering a cultural identity vacuum, which, on a medium term, can lead to the gradual loss of cultural identity and can affect the overall balance of the public institution (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 54-55).

2. Objectives and research methodology of the study

The objective of the case study was to identify the type of the organizational culture within two Romanian institutions, i.e. a public (Calarasi City Hall) and a private (ACTIVE TRADING SRL) one, for a comparative perspective on their organizational culture. The hypothesis of our study was that there are significant differences in the organizational culture of public and private institutions, as the former is developing within a broader spiritual matrix. The changes in the environment in which public institutions operate significantly influence the public institutions in Romania. Moreover, if an organization is constantly changing its public managers and a part of its public servants, its organizational culture weakens.

In terms of the research method, in order to identify the type of the organizational culture within Calarasi City Hall and SC G&D ACTIVE TRADING SRL, we applied a questionnaire composed of 10 closed format questions, in the form of multiple choices, limiting thus the responses to stated alternatives. We chose this type of questionnaire as it is easier and faster for respondents to answer and the answers are easier to compare, code and statistically analyze. The answers provided by the respondents were subject to a statistical analysis. The questionnaire was applied individually, without time limit. However, the average time for completion (20 min) was specified. In order to avoid the peoples' resistance or tendency towards dishonesty in answering some questions for fear of repercussions, the questionnaire was not presented as an instrument of detecting the problems and grievances that they personally have on the system or on a particular person. It was presented as a simple questionnaire in which they have to circle the most appropriate answer that corresponds to the way they behave on the job and to the concrete problems encountered at the workplace.

Calarasi City Hall has 793 positions (2 officials, 19 local councilors, 32 management staff members 761 executive staff members). Calarasi City Hall, as a public institution, monitors the compliance with the legal framework for carrying out community work. Moreover, it ensures the resolution of municipal and household problems, the maintenance of public order and respect for and protection of human rights, ownership, and it has other duties within the competence of the organic Law no. 215/2001 on local government and other special laws on regulatory areas. The lot of subjects consisted of 80 participants, chosen randomly, aged between 25 and 53 years old, married and unmarried, residing in urban areas. In its turn, SC G&D ACTIVE TRADING SRL was founded in 2000 and its main field of activity is represented by the distribution of food products. It has 90 employees, aged between 25 and 45 years, and they all represented the lot of subjects within our research.

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