Original article

The essence of organisational culture in a uniformed organisation – a diagnosis and the desired state

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper was to determine the type and profile of the organisational culture present in a selected uniformed organisation and to indicate the desired type of culture in light of its employees' opinions. The methods used in the research include a critical literature review, the heuristic method, the comparative method, participant observation, as well as the quantitative method: a survey questionnaire composed according to K.S. Cameron and R.E. Quinn. An analysis of the results indicated that the dominant culture in the organisation nowadays is the hierarchy culture. However, the employees would like to see changes towards reducing the impact of the hierarchy culture in favour of formulating another type of organisational culture. Yet there is no clearly marked direction of changes in which this culture is supposed to evolve. Further insightful research is needed in this respect. Hence, it could be presumed that managing this type of organisation should not be based primarily on the hierarchy culture. Whereas there must be rules and procedures in place, it is also necessary to remember that the development of an organisation and, first and foremost, its employees, can be achieved by going beyond the established patterns.

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Introduction

Organisational culture is created over a long period of time. It defines the way of thinking, perception and behaviour that, when shared, absorbed and assimilated by employees, enables them to understand and accept the adopted organisational solutions [1, p. 11]. This is of fundamental importance for maintaining stability, which is necessary in everyday work. *Therefore, do not expect that culture can be changed just at once. It is not going to work* [2].

This quote very accurately relates to organisations that have been in existence for many years and boast their long history and outstanding tradition. What is more, it is often the

case that organisations are bureaucratised and centrally managed. They may be subject to higher authorities, which involves specific restrictions imposed on them. This paper is an attempt at preliminary assessment of the organisational culture of a selected uniformed organisation in Poland.

1. The essence of organisational culture

In addition to the established rules or principles, there exists the so-called *personality* of a company, referred to as its organisational culture. It is manifested by, i.a., employees' behaviour, symbols of the organisation, as well as interior furnishing of its premises. It could be assumed that organisational culture is a collection of values and norms of conduct that have been adopted in a specific organisation and are characteristic of it [3, p. 15-6; 4].

Organisational culture may also influence particular persons' performance, organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction and commitment. It is also true for the strategy of planning and carrying out tasks, recruitment and selection of employees, and acceptance of employees by the organisation. This may have an influence on the scale of organisational conflicts and resistance to changes, *the nature of interactions, innovation and development of new products, as well as marketing and sales* [5].

E. Shein lists *three levels of organisational culture in respect of their sustainability and visibility:*

– *basic assumptions, which form the foundations and relate to such issues as the essence of existence, human nature, reality and perception of truth,*

– *norms and values, which are a collection of rules based on which the members of the organisation function on a daily basis, shaped under the influence of the dominant values,*

– *artifacts, which are an indicator of organisational culture (linguistic, behavioural, physical)* [6, p. 7].

Interest in the issues of organisational culture results from the wide influence of this culture on different areas of not only organisational life but also its environment. Organisational culture depends on a number of external and internal factors. The primary factors that influence organisational culture include: the type of environment and type of organisation, characteristics of the organisation and characteristics of the participants [7]. Organisational culture has a considerable influence on the performance of individuals, *organisational efficiency*, as well as job satisfaction and commitment to work [5].

Management based on culture [3, p. 10] is the most modern, and perhaps even the most controversial, theory associated with the organisation. It is through its culture that one can see an enterprise – people collaborating with each other, carrying out tasks, lasting in that place, and trying to overcome everyday problems. Sometimes older employees are not aware that while working together with their younger colleagues, they pass on to them elements of the culture embodied in the organisation.

Correct functioning is contingent on achieving the balance between organisational culture and other elements of the organisation. It is often highlighted that culture is linked to the organisation's strategy and structure. This makes it possible to determine whether the organisation is able not only to survive but also to thrive. As already discussed, the assumptions

and goals contained in a company's strategy must be aligned with the values and norms accepted by the employees. Otherwise, it will not be easy to implement such a strategy. On the other hand, forms of behaviour imposed by a selected operation strategy will turn into an element of organisational culture only when they are passed on to newly hired employees by the members of the organisation. The established organisational structure determines *the style of managing employees as well as employees' behaviour towards each other and towards their superiors* [8, p. 148-9].

The main research problem was formulated in the following question:

Which type of organisational culture exists in the researched organisation and which one would be desired by its employees in the future?

2. Research methods

To reach a relevant diagnosis, the following methods were applied: a critical literature review, the heuristic method, the comparative method, the descriptive method, participant observation, as well as the quantitative method. As for the latter, a survey questionnaire was used with a view to establishing the type of culture present in the organisation at a given moment as well as the type of culture desired by its employees. It is imperative that the research methods applied make it possible to achieve the research aim.

According to K.S. Cameron and R.E. Quinn [9, p. 13], there emerged a method of researching organisational culture which distinguishes four culture types: *clan*, *adhocracy*, *hierarchy* and *market*, on the basis of the competing values framework: *flexibility and freedom versus stability and control* and *internal focus and integration versus external focus and differentiation* [10, p. 85]. This made it possible to determine the characteristics of organisational culture in the researched organisation.

The research tool used in this method is a questionnaire called the *Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument*. As pointed out by the authors, this tool is most commonly used for organisational culture assessment. With its use, it was possible to study the links between organisational culture and such factors as effectiveness of management processes, teamwork and organisational effectiveness.

The use of this questionnaire (Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument, OCAI) was justified by the fact that it has been used in many sectors of the economy, including healthcare and education, as well as local government authorities, post-secondary schools, universities and the military [9, p. 34].

The OCAI is comprised of six questions concerning the main dimensions of organisational culture in a given organisation: dominant characteristics of the organisation, organisational leadership, employee management style, coherence criteria and success criteria. Each question is provided with four answers, and it is necessary to distribute 100 points among them, depending on the degree to which a given answer reflects the situation in the organisation. The highest number of points should be assigned to the answer which corresponds best to the existing situation. The above questionnaire is used for researching the existing organisational culture and the desired one, i.e., a culture the organisation should embrace in several years' time so as to efficiently carry on business. To calculate the results, it is first necessary to total all the points assigned to answers A in the "now" column and then divide the sum by 6; in this
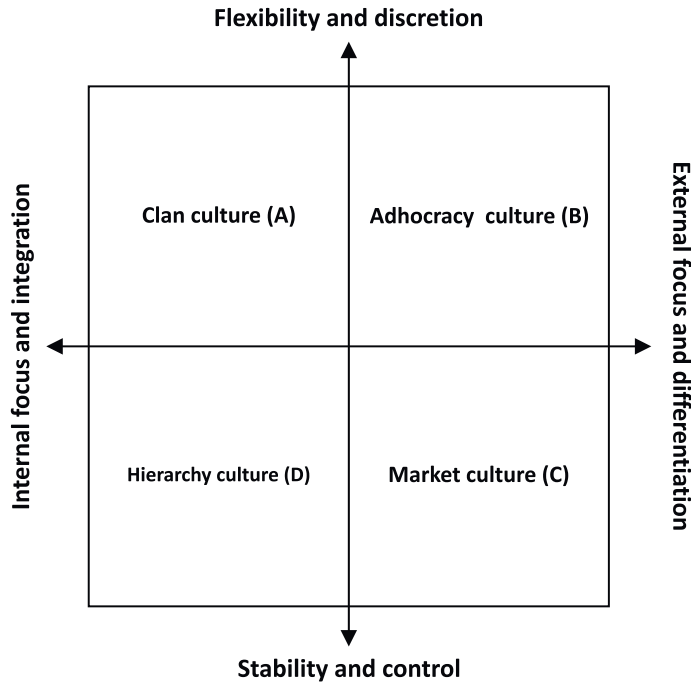
Flexibility and discretion

Clan culture (A)   Adhocracy culture (B)

Internal focus and integration   External focus and differentiation

Hierarchy culture (D)   Market culture (C)

Stability and control

Fig. 1. The competing values framework
Source: Own work based on: [11, p. 40].

way, the arithmetic average is obtained for answer A – "now". The same procedure applies to answers B, C and D. In the next stage, results for the "preferred" column are calculated alike. Each of the figures obtained relates to a given type of organisational culture:

    – answer A value – the clan culture,

    – answer B value – the adhocracy culture,

    – answer C value – the market culture,

    – answer D value – the hierarchy culture [12].

The clan culture is characterised by teamwork and strong commitment. Its features are also empowerment and the organisation's sense of responsibility for its employees. Friendly atmosphere at work and personal development are important as well. On the other hand, the adhocracy culture is dominated by flexibility and creativity demonstrated in conditions of uncertainty. The enterprise is focused on implementing innovative products and services. The third type of culture is the market culture, which is focused on rivalry and performance. It also concentrates on external elements of the environment. The hierarchy culture is the most formalised type of culture. The organisation functions chiefly owing to the established rules of conduct, which define clear employment conditions for the workers. Efficiency and swiftness in action are important here [13, p. 23-4].

An analysis of the results has been presented in a coordinate system specifically dedicated to the OCAI questionnaire. Based on the results obtained according to the method explained above, profiles of organisational cultures (existing and desired ones) relative to particular groups of respondents have been determined.

3. Organisational culture – a research report

3.1. Organisational culture profiles in the respondents' opinion

The study was conducted in the period from December 2017 to February 2018. The study utilised a nonprobability 48 percent sample. Both civilian and uniformed employees took part in the study. Due to this, there is a high probability that the research was reliable, and the respondents' opinions, feelings and experiences will make it more possible to correctly determine the existing organisational culture and indicate the desired culture.
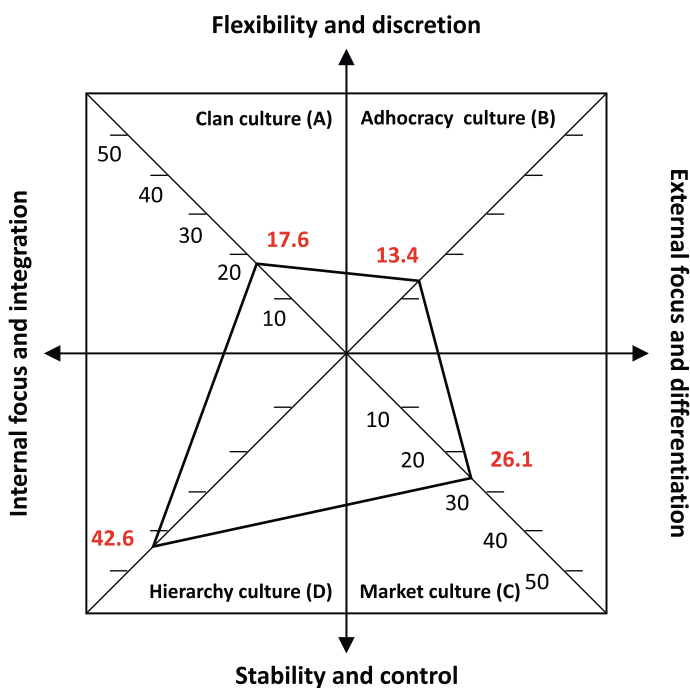

Fig. 2. The profile of the existing organisational culture according to the employees
Source: Own work based on own research.

It is possible to notice a high prevalence of one of the four cultures, i.e., the hierarchy culture (42.6 p.).

The above drawing confirms that due to its peculiar nature, the organisation embraces the hierarchy culture; the way of management the hierarchy culture involves is an important element of the functioning of this organisation. In addition, there is high formality and the employees' activities are subject to procedures. This should prevent any unexpected situations and also means that decisions in the organisation are made in accordance with applicable regulations.

Besides the hierarchy culture, the market culture scored high (26.1 p.). This may demonstrate that the organisation is laying stress on improving work effectiveness. An important element is developing partnership and enhancing the organisation's competitiveness in the market.

Financial performance counts, but it is also significant to adjust personnel strategy to the strategy of the organisation, in which a vital role is played by strategic leadership.

Two cultures with the lowest score were the clan culture and the adhocracy culture. Supposedly, the need for improving employees' qualifications was not spotted in the previous period, and, in addition, there was no search for innovative solutions. A characteristic feature of the organisation is the lack of quick response to the changing environment. There is no place for flexibility and creativity in ambiguous situations accompanied by information overload. One may not apply non-standard solutions, and there is no room for risk. However, it means that there is a single power centre in the organisation and that the employees accept the activities undertaken by the organisation.

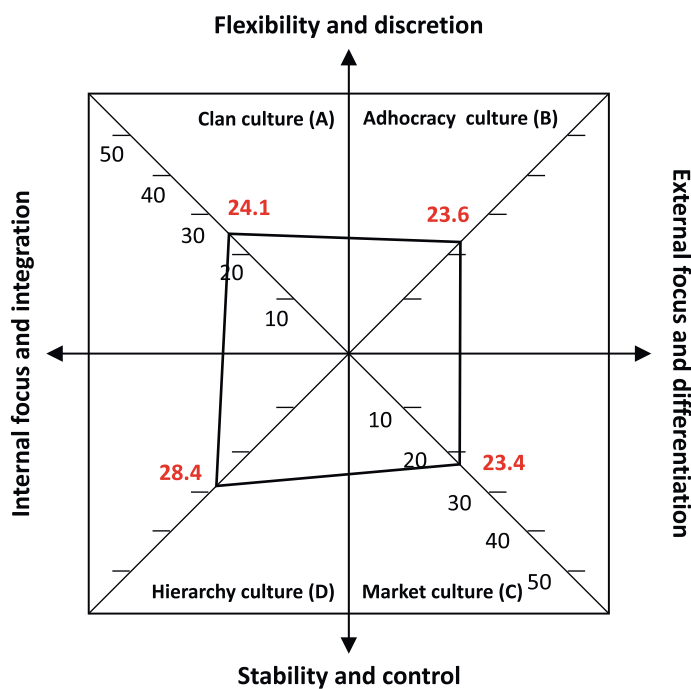The next figure (Fig. 3) illustrates the desired organisational culture profile.

Fig. 3. The profile of the desired organisational culture according to the employees
Source: Own work based on own research.

The above figure (Fig. 3) demonstrates the need to change the current profile and type of organisational culture in a not yet specified direction (into the clan, adhocracy, market or also partial hierarchy culture) – the distribution of points in the coordinate system is very similar. Therefore, it could be presumed that the researched organization is in the phase of search for new methods of management and organization of an organisational structure that would let it adapt to the changing internal and external conditions. In accordance with the current trends, employees are the most important capital of each organisation.

In a uniformed organisation, employees work according to the adopted procedures and in line with the established rules. The obtained research results imply that it is also in a uniformed

organisation that employees need greater autonomy in activities which would support the functioning of the organisation. Their competencies and skills would be utilised to a greater degree. In this way, managing this type of organisation would be compatible with the established goals and development strategies.

3.2. A comparison of desired organisational culture profiles broken down into civilian and uniformed employees

The next figure (Fig. 4) presents responses given by uniformed and civilian employees. Based on them, it is possible to compare whether the two researched employee groups have concurrent opinions regarding the gradual change of the autocratic management style related to the hierarchy culture.

The drawing shows that the answers given by the researched employee groups are concordant (the presented charts overlap). In the case of both civilian and uniformed employees, the scores are distributed in a similar way. The hierarchy culture had a slightly higher score in these groups of respondents (D – 25.9 p. a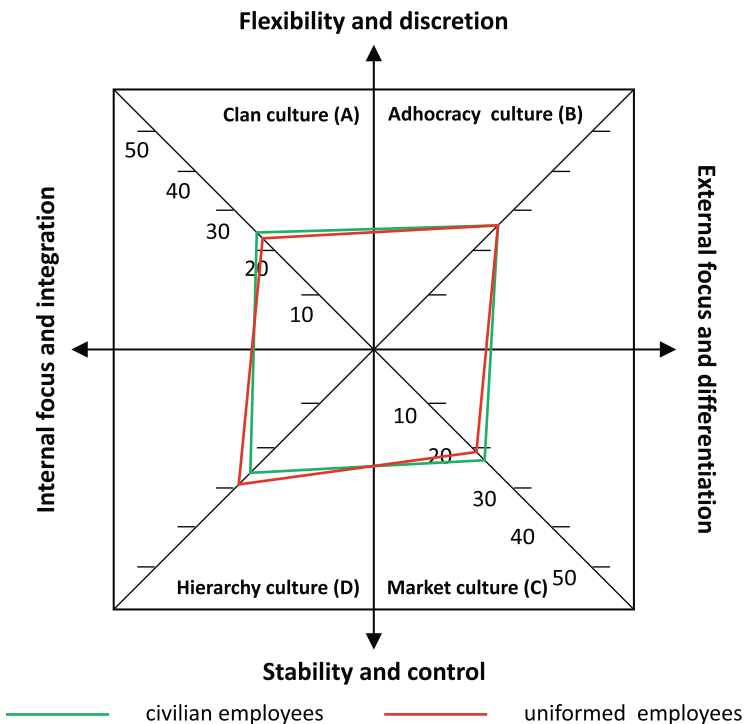nd 28.2 p.). The market culture ranked the lowest. Due to the fact that differences between the results are negligible, it is difficult to ascertain a single type of culture that prevails.

Fig. 4. The desired organisational culture according to the responses of civilian and uniformed employees
Source: Own study based on own research.

Conclusions

To summarise, the following conclusions could be drawn from the analysis of the presented data, gathered by means of survey questionnaires:

- the currently prevalent organisational culture is the hierarchy culture, whereas the least perceptible ones are the clan and adhocracy cultures,
- the profile of the desired organisational culture is distributed more or less evenly among uniformed and civilian employees hired in the researched organisation: each culture type has almost the same score, with the hierarchy culture ranking slightly higher.

The hierarchy culture is undoubtedly present in a uniformed organisation; it is characterised by the autocratic style of management, which is centralised in a single power centre of such an organisation. There are specific rules, norms and values in this workplace. The organisation is bureaucratised, and employees are often controlled. Employees' qualifications are raised thanks to a variety of additional training or courses.

As for the desired culture profile, besides following the established norms, which are an important element of the organisation's functioning, the employees need more freedom to act, which would make the organisation more dynamic. It is also important to use the employees' creativity to possibly enable implementation of innovative solutions. Furthermore, the organisation should be a friendly place for the people employed there; it should be a place where workers willingly cooperate with each other and become involved in their tasks. The employee's personal development is also of significance.

Hence, it could concluded that managing this type of organisation should not be based primarily on the hierarchy culture. As already mentioned, while there must be certain rules in place, going beyond the established patterns will enable development of the organisation and its employees. Certain procedures are an obstacle to the correct functioning of the organisation, mainly hindering communication between employees. Changes in the world are accompanied by the emergence of new technologies. Therefore, it is crucial for an employee to develop in order to acquire additional skills. Thereby, their work will become more effective. It is also important to remember that management will become easier if employees associate with the organisation – by sharing similar values, striving for common goals and also by satisfaction with their working conditions. It should not be forgotten that in this specific type of organisation, it is impossible to allow great flexibility in actions; however, since the functioning of an organisation can always be enhanced, it is sometimes worth taking a chance on the employees' creativity as well as searching for new organisational solutions. The authors realise that changes taking place in this type of organisations need more insightful and detailed research, which is not easily available. The present paper is therefore a welcome contribution to the discussion and, at least to a small extent, fills the information gap in this research area, which is extremely interesting from the scientific perspective as well.

Conflict of interests

All authors declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Biographical note

Danuta Mierzwa – prof. dr hab., works as an academic teacher at General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław. She teaches micro and macroeconomics in most majors at the University. She has done numerous foreign internships in France for a few months each, deepening her knowledge in the field of modern methods of enterprise management. Her scientific interests also include globalisation and macroeconomic problems in the modern economy, agribusiness and management of agricultural and food markets.

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Istota kultury organizacyjnej w organizacji mundurowej – diagnoza i stan pożądany

STRESZCZENIE Celem artykułu było ustalenie typu i profilu występującej kul-tury organizacyjnej w wy-branej organizacji mundurowej oraz wskazanie typu kultury pożądanej w świetle opinii pracowników. W badaniu wykorzystano metody: analizy i krytyki piśmiennictwa, heurystyczną, komparystyczną, obserwacji uczestniczącej oraz ilościową – kwestionariusz ankiety skomponowany wg K.S. Camerona i R.E. Quinna. Analiza wyników wykazała, że obecną dominującą kulturą w organizacji jest kultura hierarchii. Pracownicy jednak chcieliby, ażeby zmiany podążały w kierunku zmniejszenia oddziaływania kultury hierarchii i formułowania innego typu kultury organizacyjnej. Nie występuje jednak wyraźnie zaakcentowany kierunek zmian, w którym miałaby ta kultura ewaluować. Wymaga to dalszych pogłębionych badań. Można więc domniemywać, że zarządzanie tego typu organizacją nie powinno się głównie opierać na kulturze hierarchii. Zasady i procedury muszą obowiązywać, jednak trzeba pamiętać, że rozwój organizacji, a przede wszystkim pracowników można osiągnąć dzięki wyjściu poza przyjęte schematy.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE zarządzanie, kultura organizacji: klanu, adhokracji, rynku, hierarchii

How to cite this paper