

*Culture and Leadership in Educational Institutions /  
Культура и лидерство в образовательные институции*

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: THEORY AND REALITY

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**Abstract.** The article analyzes the different approaches of Russian and foreign researchers to understand the essence of the organizational culture. It detects the place of this definition among similar ones according to the meaning of categories and notions. The types, functions, specific features of the socio-pedagogical phenomenon are regarded. The presented empirical data reveal the attitude of employees of various social organizations to the type of culture which is dominant in these institutions. Based on a comparative analysis of the survey results, strategies and specific tactics to improve the organizational culture in social institutions were identified.

**Keywords:** types, structure, functions, the influence of organizational culture, attitude to the components of organizational culture, social organization

Analysis of well-known foreign and domestic educational systems (Waldorf education, schools of Leo Tolstoy, Montessori, S. Freinet, communes of A.S. Makarenko, J. Korczak's Houses of orphans, V.A. Sukhomlinsky's schools and others) assures that the most important component of these models is a special unit of the educational process, values, and special "spirit" of the school. We find arguments about the influence of the organization's "spirit" on the well-being and development of the child, on the professional development of teachers in works of Leo Tolstoy and P. Lesgaft, A.S. Makarenko and V.A. Sukhomlinsky.

The matter concerns the daily school life, its lifestyle, a special atmosphere, explicit or implicit rules of the organization, which are enshrined in the actual regulations. The notion of the "structure of the educational institution" in educational theory and practice has been introduced by a remarkable teacher A.N. Tubelsky. He considered the lifestyle of the organization as a result of the educational process agreement, the construction of social organization as a working model of an open civil society. According to A.N. Tubelsky, the school structure involves election of the organization bodies, democratic style of relations between the subjects of life, encouraging initiative and independent activity.

Foreign researchers commonly use the term “*institutional context*” of education. In the works of J. Miller, U. Sellev, H. Daniels, this term is referred to the characteristics of the different processes in school, the specificity of communication between teachers and children, between students, and between their parents. In 1970 American educator N. Overley drew attention to the fact that there was a phenomenon in the educational institutions which he described as “unteachable curriculum.” The essence of the phenomenon is better disclosed by the term *hidden curriculum* which is used by many foreign teachers and psychologists. This phenomenon reflects the structure of the real power in the school (totalitarian or hierarchical, democratic or liberal); language of the class or one of school (according not to formal grounds but to a really effective phenomena – semantics, tone, style and scope of the vocabulary); established practice to respond to the teacher what to expect, and not what the student thinks; behaviour peculiarities in a situation of control, of exam (the existing rules of cheating, spying, guessing, etc.).

Today double standards in regard to a social and educational reality (problems exist but they should not be noticed in certain situations) flourish in many educational institutions defining professional consciousness of the teachers, educators, social workers.

In the current social and pedagogical theory the notion of “*organizational culture*” institutions is widely used along with the terms *lifestyle of the organization*, *latent content*, *atmosphere of the organization*.

The notion of the organizational culture is complex, ambiguous and multifaceted.

Among the definitions of organizational culture of institutions, the definition of R. Daft is most successful: “The set of basic values, beliefs, tacit agreements and norms shared by all members of a society or organization.” The definition of F. Lutens introduces “observed regular behaviour, norms, attitudes of employees to their work, the organization's relationship between the employees, attitude to customers, rules, organizational climate” into the content of organizational culture in addition to the dominant values.

In other definitions (K. Cameron and Robert Quinn), it emphasizes that the organizational culture is referred as everything that is valuable to the organization and determines its uniqueness. Researchers include there leadership styles, language and symbols, procedures and everyday norms, definition of the organization success.

Thus, it can be asserted that the core of organizational culture is defined by the system of values and attitudes, norms, artefacts that can withstand the test of time, and forms rather unique psychology which is common for the subjects of socio-educational institution. A certain role is played by the ideology of management, which is manifested in the mission, goals, objectives of the organization.

According to modern teachers, psychologists, and sociologists, organizational culture is closely related to concepts such as corporate culture, business ethics, business philosophy, organizational behaviour. Organizational behaviour is usually regarded as the behaviour of the individual in the organization, group behaviour, intergroup and interpersonal relationships, as well as the relationship between the individual and the group. Subject areas of organizational behaviour and organizational culture intersect: thus, “organizational behaviour” as a scientific discipline is engaged in search and establishment of general laws of behaviour and relations of individuals, groups in organizations; organizational culture establishes the rules and standards of conduct; business ethics is an ethical behaviour of the individual, of organization. “Organizational Behaviour” is interested in issues of leadership and power in organizations, structure and motivation of the personnel. Organizational culture is defined by formal and informal leaders, at the same time it has a strong impact on the motivation of employees. Many researchers consider organizational behaviour as the outward manifestation of organizational culture, which, in turn, is largely determined by it.

The famous American scholar Edgar Schein identifies three levels of organizational culture. The first one is the most superficial level – artefacts and external manifestations of organizational culture: the architecture of buildings, language, and manner of employees to dress and to communicate. The second level is the declared values (strategy, objectives, philosophy). The third one (a basic understanding) is the most profound level of organizational culture – opinions, beliefs, ideological positions.

The majority of researchers describe four basic types of organizational culture: family; innovation; performance; role-playing. Each type of culture describes the organization from the perspective of its structure: values; purpose, mission; prevailing ways of activity; peculiarities of power and power distance; nature of formal and informal relations; norms, behavioural models of employees; speed of response to external changes.

Family organizational culture regards the place of work as very friendly and comfortable, where employees have much in common. Social organization reminds a family. Leaders and managers are perceived as wise mentors or even caring parents putting goals, determining the necessary resources to achieve them, outlining specific tasks, bearing the main responsibility for their implementation. Employees are held together by mutual loyalty, friendship, and traditions. The degree of obligation is high. It focuses on the long-term benefit of personal improvement of employees; it attaches importance to the high degree of team unity, the value unity, and moral climate. Success is considered as warm interpersonal relationships, well-being of the subject in an educational organization, taking care of each member of the team. In

the socio-educational organizations, they encourage collective forms of work, development of common solutions, cooperation, mutual support and consent of employees.

**Innovative** organizational culture is related to the fact that the socio-educational organization is perceived by employees as a dynamic and creative place of work. Teachers are willing to experiment and take risks. Leaders are regarded as innovators capable of professional search and ready to stimulate the participation of other members of the team. The teachers' devotion to the spirit of experiment and innovation acts as an educational organization connecting mechanism. The necessity of educational activities at the forefront of psychological and pedagogical science is underlined. In the long term, the school focuses on the acquisition and development of new educational approaches, science-based technologies and methods. Success means the development of new technological, methodological, content products, providing teachers and students with modern innovative educational services. Social organization aims to be a theoretical and technological leader among similar institutions. Individual initiative, independence, creativity, criticism and freedom of teachers and students are encouraged.

**Efficient** organizational culture is focused on learning outcomes; the main concern of the teaching staff is a strict compliance of training and educational problems. Teachers are noted for dedication, hard work; competition and rivalry often arise between employees. Leaders are firm, demanding managers capable of tough decisions for the cause, for the sake of success. Educational organization binds together with the desire for positive results. Reputation and success of the organization are the common concern of every employee. Prospects of strategic development of educational institutions are associated with the task solving. Success is measured by a high rate and competitiveness in the education market. The school style is a hard line pursued to achieve a high students' educational level.

**Role** organizational culture is a rigidly formalized and structured place to work. The activities of teachers submit to the requirements of the Charter of the organization, clear rules and unambiguous instructions. Leaders and managers take pride in the fact that they are rationally minded organizers and coordinators. It is particularly important to maintain a smooth flow of all school affairs. Employees' commitment to follow the rules and developed the official educational policy unites the school. Long-term cares of a social organization consist in ensuring planned character and stability of the educational process and of all its life. Success is defined as the stability of the organization; and, to avoid all sorts of problems and conflicts, the Administration is concerned about the predictability of changes in the external situation and the provision of guarantees of long-term professional staff's employment.

Each of these types of organizational culture has both positive strong sides and negative ones. In social organizations of various kinds, all types of organizational cultures are always present but, at the same time, one of the types is certainly dominant.

The content of the organizational culture is manifested in its functions:

- axiological – the formation of a system of values which allow to choose permissible methods of goal achieving;
- goal-setting – the identification of strategic objectives, of specific tactical and operational tasks;
- communicative – stimulating ways of intellectual, emotional, financial communication, formation of the internal communications system;
- preventive – prevention of unwanted behaviour, situations of risk, danger, and destructive conflict;
- psychotherapeutic – ensuring the physical and psychological safety and security of each subject of social organization;
- stimulating – strengthening of the involvement of each subject in the affairs of the organization and the formation of the devotion to it;
- regulatory – formation of norms, values, rules and requirements;
- cognitive and informational – formation of knowledge system of the organization's subjects;
- game – the formation of the organization image, attributes, symbols and traditions.

Based on the theoretical ideas on the essence, content, types, functions of the organizational culture, we tried to determine the actual characteristics of culture in different social and educational institutions. Questioning of employees (pedagogical university lecturers, school teachers, teachers and educators of children's homes, social workers and psychologists of crisis centres for women and children, caregivers of children's homes) on materials developed by B. Kriviradeva made it possible to obtain important and useful information.

A significant majority of respondents tried to give socially approvable answer. All employees (100%) of social organizations indicated that they were aware of the purpose of the organization where they worked. All employees are virtually aware also of a presence of the symbol, the brand name of organization and understand their meaning. Positive answers to these questions show not so much a real meaningful awareness of the organization's subjects as their positive attitude to the organization, emotional and value perception of belonging to its team.

Only in 75% of social and educational organizations there is the Code of Ethics determining the moral norms of relations between people. Thus, one third of the organizations' managers do not think about the need to harmonize and formalize values, rules and norms of the team's life. It would be useful to involve all team

members to the creation of the Code of Ethics: discussion in a team would help not only to formulate the basic ethical standards, but also to make them personally significant for each employee.

Slogans and mottos that reflect the mission of the organization, are absent in most social organizations (58.5% of respondents say that they do not have them, 17% know nothing about them). This is a substantial omission because the selection and approval of a concise, expressive, understandable to every organization's member motto promotes the formation of the value unity, an employees' sense of belonging to the organization.

Almost all employees (91.67%) indicate that the decisions are taken in their organization by the leaders of organization or organizational unit. Competence and commitment of ordinary employees are not taken into account in a decision-making situation. However, an authoritarian style of leadership suits many employees; they perceive it positively; it gets rather high scores (8.17 to the leader's style and 7.92 to the style of the head of unit on a ten-point scale). At the same time, the organization's atmosphere is also positively evaluated by the survey's participants – 7.26 points on the scale. Nevertheless, such a placid assessment promotes stagnation of the institution, the pace of development of the organization slows down; there is no realization of the potential of employees, the institution loses its position.

According to the traditional typology of organizational culture, productive and role cultures dominate. A few social organizations could be attributed to an innovative type of organizational culture according to the totality of identified characteristics.

A significant majority of the employees participating in the survey perceives organizational culture of their organization in a positive way: 83.33% says that they like the rules and regulations of the organization. Only 8.33% indicate that they do not like the rules and regulations of the institution they work.

In my opinion, unexpected information is received in response to the question: "How does the organizational culture affect you in the workplace?" The positive impact of organizational culture was noted by nearly half of the respondents who indicate that organizational culture "helps to better perform work tasks" – 50%; it "makes develop" – 41.87%; it "inspires confidence" – 25%; it "affects in a creative manner, forces to search answers to questions that have not existed so far" – 33.3%.

At the same time, the negative impact of organizational culture on employees was also noted – it "puts pressure on me, I did not feel comfortable in the workplace" – 8.33; I "do not feel comfortable in the workplace" – 8.33%.

Assessing organizational culture of the institution, the majority of respondents mark out as leading factors:

- “safety and care of the family” – 91.67%;
- “inner harmony, freedom from internal conflicts” – 58.33%.

Unfortunately, such an indicator of assessment as self-esteem is significant only for 41.57% participants of the survey.

These data agree with the information received on the issue of conflicts in the organization. A quarter of all employees state that “conflicts are controlled by the interference from the leaders and are often encouraged by them to support their own authority.” 16.87% underline that “conflicts are suppressed by leaders referring to the rules, procedures and specific duties”, 8.33% indicate that “conflicts are ignored because of personal indifference.” Under such attitude there is no constructive conflict resolution and the constant threat of escalation and intensification of the conflict situation negatively affects the psychological atmosphere of the organization.

Half of the surveyed employees of social organizations point to the conflict resolution with the help of the open and in-depth discussion on the values and needs. Unfortunately, the responses of social organizations’ employees did not have any references to the presence of the conflict commission or specially trained mediators to resolve conflicts in their institution. The lack of competence on conflictological matters of the leaders of social organizations seems obvious. Considerable difficulties are caused by the choice of productive behavioural strategy in a conflict situation; analysis of conflicts, their classification; implementation of developmental potential of conflicts; turning of destructive conflicts into constructive ones.

Participants of the survey realize that not all factors are fully utilized by leaders of the organization to improve the efficiency of employees. First of all, the creative potential of employees is not realized, that is marked by the 41.67% of organization’s employees. Such response is considered as natural and logical as the authoritarian style of leadership and strict role culture do not stimulate the activity, independent activity, initiative, creativity of each member of the organization. The expected responses on factors that are not used to increase the success of employees, as follows:

- “effective wage system” – 25%;
- “task execution timeliness” – 41.67%;
- “team spirit presence” – 25%;
- “availability of information necessary to solve strategic problems” – 16.67%.

When considering the responses of survey participants, there is an impression that all of them are lucky with the leader who “evokes positive emotions can motivate employees to perform tasks in the best way” – 58.33%, who is “organized and disciplined” – 58.33%.

Half of the respondent’s stress that the leader “can effectively communicate with people, be polite, cordial, and care about others.” However, the 16.67% of

survey participants believe that the leader is rude and unable to work in a team”, and at 8.33% of employees the leader causes “negative emotions and makes them feel uncomfortable.”

Responding to a question about the ideal leader, half of the respondents choose the option “strict, honest, supportive, generous and indulgent.” The third of the respondents believe that a good leader “respects and takes into account the personal needs and values of employees.” Only 8.33% indicate that good leaders are “fair and reasonable, does not use power for their own benefit” as well as they “are on a level with their employees and agree easily with their views on operational issues.” According to half of the survey participants, a perfect employee “contributes at the most to the problem solution, is open to new ideas and suggestions, and ready to give leadership to others when those show great abilities.” A third of surveyed employees believes that good employees are “responsible, reliable and diligently perform their duties.” Only 8.33% stresses that good workers are “interested in their own development and learning, ready to get help when it is necessary and respect the needs of others.”

The same number of survey participants chooses the answer “work a lot to achieve the objectives of the organization, protect the interests of their leader.”

The original data are obtained in response to the question: “Why do people in your organization work as a team?” The fourth part of the employees chooses the option “The cooperation satisfies the team members, encourages or evokes positive emotions for faster and more efficient problem solving” and “the coordination and exchange of information are part of the formal system.” “Their work leads to better accomplish tasks” – this option is chosen by 33.33% of the employees of social organizations. “The leader requires it” – this answer is chosen by 16.67% of survey participants.

Conducted survey shows that spontaneously established culture of social and educational organizations does not identify the employees’ creative potential in a sufficient way, does not use to improve the efficiency of many internal reserves, and does not have any stimulating effect on workers.

Thoughtful and insightful analysis of the survey results will help the organization to identify the main promising lines, to choose a leading vector of development, to more fully realize the potential of each subject of the organization.

One of the most important areas of work with leaders of social and educational organizations can be a targeted training for their planning of types of cultures that are most adequate to the specificity of the organization. Information on the negative and positive potentials of role, family and productive cultures, styles of leadership and management, and functions of the organizational culture would be useful.



The implementation of psychotherapeutic function requires educational institution leader's special attention, i.e. the physical and psychological safety and security of each subject of social organization as well as the implementation of the preventive function – prevention of unwanted actions, situations of risk, danger, and destructive conflicts.

In any case, it would be useful to consider the resulting survey data not only as some food for thought but a guide to action.

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