Diagnosing the Organizational Culture of Higher Institution of Learning Using the Competing Values Framework

Jenkins A. Asaah¹, Bernard Effah², Francis Kwame Sam³

Abstract

The Competing Values Framework is a tool that can be used for many purposes, including identifying the organizational culture of an organization. According to this framework, there are four main cultures, namely, Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy. Knowledge of the organizational culture of an institution is very important if the managers of such institution are to succeed. The purpose of the research was therefore to identify the existing dominant organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic as perceived by its staff as well as the preferred organizational culture of members of staff. The members of staff of Kumasi Polytechnic were grouped into; senior members, senior staff and junior staff. Members of staff who had attained a minimum of one year of service with the Polytechnic were randomly sampled to answer the organizational culture assessment instrument. Based on the analysis, the existing dominant organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic is Hierarchy. However, the study revealed that the preferred organizational culture is Market. The implication is that for managers of the Polytechnic to be effective and successful, their leadership style should be that of a coordinator or organizer or rule-reinforcer. Also, their management style should be characterized by security of employment, conformity and stability in relationships.

Keywords: Kumasi Polytechnic, Organizational Culture, Hierarchy, Market, Clan, Adhocracy.

1. Introduction

In many parts of the world, there is recognition that schools require effective leaders and firm organisation culture if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners to meet the global economic pace, and as such more governments are realizing that their main assets are their people and that remaining or becoming competitive depends increasingly on the development of a highly skilled workforce. This requires trained and committed teachers but they in turn; need the leadership of highly effective Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Principals and the support of other senior and middle level leaders to calve an all-inclusive culture for their organisations to thrive in the present competitive education sector.

Kumasi Polytechnic is a tertiary institution which awards Bachelor of Technology (B-Tech) degrees, Higher National Diplomas (HND), Ordinary Diploma and other certificates. The Polytechnic currently has a student population of about 10,000 and staff strength of 765. The Polytechnic has expanded significantly over the years. It has a strategic plan which aims at positioning it to become a Technical University in the near future. The literature is full of several definitions of Organizational Culture. Organizational Culture is simply the way things get done in an organization (DeWitt, 2001). It is the systematic set of assumptions that define the day-to-day working behavior of employees of an organization (Schein, 1992; Kotter et al.1992).

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According to Hagbery and Heifetz (2001) and Smart et al. (1996) Organizational Culture is the shared beliefs, values and norms of an organization. The identification and understanding of the organizational culture of an organization is crucial if it is to be successfully managed. Every organization has its strategic goals and objectives to achieve. To be able to achieve these goals and objectives call for the identification and understanding of the prevailing culture whether it supports and drives the actions necessary to achieve the goals (Hagbery and Heifetz, 2001; Zammuto et al.1981).

The Competing Values Framework has many applications ranging from leadership development to organization change and culture (Quinn and Kimbely, 1984; O’Neil and Quinn. 1993; Cameron and Quinn, 2000). It has been developed into a model/tool that can be used for several purposes including identifying the existing and desired organizational culture of an organization (Cameron and Quinn, 2000). It helps leaders of organizations to work more comprehensively and more consistently in improving their organizations’ performance and value creation (Tony et al.2006; Goodman et al. 2001; O’Neil and Quinn. 1993).

**Purpose of the Study**

As an institution of higher learning of almost 22 years of existence, there is no empirical research done to identity its organization culture. Since managers of the Polytechnic would want to achieve its goals and objectives, it is important that the existing culture of the Polytechnic is empirically identified so as to know which Management and Leadership Styles are required in order to succeed in such a culture. It is against this background that this research was carried out with the following specific objectives:

i) To identify the existing dominant organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic as perceived by its staff

ii) To identify the organizational culture preferred by members of staff of the Polytechnic.

**Significance of the Study**

It is envisaged that the research would be of interest to the managers of the Polytechnic as the study does not only identify the current organizational culture of the Polytechnic but also the preferred organizational culture of the majority of staff of the Polytechnic. Managers of the Polytechnic therefore have the option of putting the necessary strategies in place to realize the change or maintain the current culture.

2. **Literature Review**

**Competing Values Framework**

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) emerged from a series of empirical studies on the question of what makes organizations effective (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983). It is a conceptual framework developed for understanding organizational effectiveness. It is useful in helping to organize and interpret a wide variety of organizational phenomena. It has been tested in many organizations over several years and is named as one of the fifty most important models in the history of business (Cameron and Quinn, 1999; O’Neil and Quinn, 1993). The framework consists of two basic dimensions that are usually visible or inherent in most organizations. The first dimension focuses on the degree to which an organization emphasizes centralization and control over the organizational process versus decentralization and flexibility. The second dimension focus on the degree to which the organization is orientated towards its own internal environment and processes versus the external environment and relationship with outsiders (rivalry). The framework has been called Competing Values Framework because the criteria seem to be carrying a conflicting message. For instance, we want our organization to be adaptable and flexible, but we also want it to be stable and controlled. Cross-classifying organizations on these two values dimensions results in four cultures, namely Clans, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy with varying characteristics (Cameron and Quinn, 1999).
Characteristics of the Four Cultures

The figure below shows the characteristics of each of the four dominant cultures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexibility and Discretion</th>
<th>Stability and Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLAN</strong></td>
<td><strong>ADHOCRACY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Team work</td>
<td>- Growth and entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It is like an extended family</td>
<td>- Flexibility and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Corporate commitment to employees</td>
<td>- Creative workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Employee involvement</td>
<td>- employee willing to take risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIERARCHY</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARKET</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear lines of authority over organizational processes</td>
<td>- Corporate competiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respect for formal hierarchy</td>
<td>- employee concerned with getting the job done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Formal rules and policies</td>
<td>- Results oriented workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Centralized decisions</td>
<td>- Customers focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Management and Leadership Styles Required Being Successful In Each Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAN</th>
<th>ADHOCRACY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Style:</strong> Facilitator /Mentor</td>
<td><strong>Leadership Style:</strong> Visionary or Entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management theory:</strong> Participation fosters commitment</td>
<td><strong>Management theory:</strong> Innovativeness fosters new resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIERARCHY</th>
<th>MARKET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Style:</strong> Coordinator/organizer</td>
<td><strong>Leadership Style:</strong> Competitor /Hard driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management theory:</strong> Control fosters efficiency</td>
<td><strong>Management theory:</strong> Competition fosters productivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cameron and Quinn (2000)

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopted the quantitative approach. This was because the research sought to identify the current and preferred organizational culture of the Polytechnic as perceived by members of staff of the Polytechnic. Therefore the collection of data and its analysis in numeric form was an appropriate way of investigating such an issue. The members of staff of the Polytechnic were grouped as; senior members, senior staff and junior staff. Those who had served a minimum of one year with the Polytechnic were randomly selected to answer the culture assessment instrument (questionnaire). This was to ensure that staff had good knowledge about the Polytechnic to be able to fill the instrument. The organizational culture assessment instrument (questionnaire) consisted of series of questions specially designed to identify the existing as well as the desired culture of an organization. A sample of 450 staff was drawn from a population of 765 staff strength by clustering them into; senior members (180), senior staff (150) and junior staff (120).
The allocations were done with regards to seniority. The distribution of the instrument was widely done. The breakdown of the respondents was as follows:

- Senior members: 159
- Senior staff: 128
- Junior staff: 108

A total of 395 out of 450 samples (98.75%) answered the questionnaire. The results were analyzed and presented in pictorial form using bar charts. The methodology adopted is depicted diagrammatically below.

4. Results

In all 395 members of staff responded to the questionnaire, and this represents 51.63% of the total staff strength of the Polytechnic.

The results show that the majority of the respondents (staff) had served the Polytechnic between 1-5 years. This was followed by 6-10 years group. Six percent (6.0%) of members of staff had served the Polytechnic between 11-15 years and 16-20 years. Only 1.5% of staff had served the Polytechnic above 26 years. The implication is that these members of staff had significant knowledge of the culture of Polytechnic, having served the institution for such number of years.
More than half (56.9%) of senior members of the Polytechnic were of the view that the existing organizational culture of the Polytechnic is Hierarchy. Similarly, 52.2% and 47.2% of senior and junior staff respectively supported this view. However, 25% of senior members were of the opinion that the organizational culture of the Polytechnic is Clan. Also, 22.3% of senior staff and 25.6% of junior staff confirmed same. To some staff, the organizational culture of the Polytechnic has some elements of Adhocracy and Market. This view was held by 17.5% (7.9 + 9.6) of senior members, 25.5% (14.0 + 11.5) of senior staff and 27.2% (10.0 + 17.2) of junior staff. The least dominant culture as perceived by both senior members and junior staff is Adhocracy. However, senior staff held a different view. To them the least dominant culture is Market. Therefore, the results show that in the opinion of majority of staff of the Polytechnic the dominant existing organizational culture of the Polytechnic is Hierarchy.

Members of Staff were asked to indicate their preferred organizational culture for the Polytechnic if the Polytechnic is to achieve its goal of becoming a Technical University. Of the total respondents, 67.2% of senior members preferred the organizational culture of the Polytechnic to be Market. Majority (62%) of senior staff also held the same view. However, majority (28.9%) of junior staff preferred the organizational culture of the Polytechnic to be Clan. While majority of junior staff (28.9%) were in favour of the Clan culture type, senior members of the Polytechnic held a sharp contrast view as none of them (0%) preferred the clan culture type. However, 11.5% of senior staff preferred the Clan type of culture.
The least preferred organizational culture of senior members of the Polytechnic was the Clan culture type whiles that of senior and junior staff is Adhocracy and Hierarchy respectively. Therefore the dominant preferred organizational culture of members of staff for the Polytechnic is Market. This shows that majority of members of staff want the organizational culture of the Polytechnic to change from Hierarchy to Market if it to achieve its goal of becoming a Technical University.

5. Discussions

The research sought to identify the current and preferred organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic as perceived by its members of staff. The discussion, therefore focuses on these areas.

Current Organisational Culture

The results showed that the majority of the staff of the Polytechnic were of the opinion that the dominant current organizational culture of the Polytechnic is Hierarchy. This agrees with most authors in the literature (Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983, Cameron and Quinn, 2000) who found out that the organizational cultures of most government organizations tend to be Hierarchy. This means that the Polytechnic is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures govern the behaviour of members of staff. There are clear lines of authority and respect for the formal chain of command with centralized decision making. Under such culture what it means is that the majority of the staff do not work as a team and there are lack of creativity and innovation at the work place. Members of staff are not willing to take risk. There is a lack of customer focus as well as lack of results oriented and competitive minded staff.

Although there is no good and bad organizational culture, what is important is whether the current organizational culture really supports the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Polytechnic. This is crucial because the attainment of the objectives of the Polytechnic seriously depends upon the way members of staff work as well as their attitude towards work. It behaves on the managers of the Polytechnic to occasionally undertake assessment as to whether the Polytechnic is achieving its goals and objectives as enshrined in the Act that established it as well as the strategic plan of the Polytechnic. If the Polytechnic is making headway in the achievement of its goals and objectives, then there is no cause for concern. If not, then the current organizational culture does not drive and support the achievement of its goals and objectives and therefore the need to take a second look at it.

Each type of culture has the appropriate leadership and management styles that go with it if managers under such culture are to make the necessary impact. In the case of Kumasi Polytechnic having identified its culture as Hierarchy, the implication is that the appropriate leadership style to be adopted by managers of the Polytechnic is that of a Coordinator or Organizer or rule–reinforcer. In other words, to be able to succeed in such a culture, they should be good at organizing, controlling, monitoring and coordinating. Ensuring
efficiency at the workplace should be their hallmark. Therefore the corresponding management style that ensures predictability, conformity to rules and regulations and stability in a relationship should be adopted. Also the Human Resource (HR) department of the Polytechnic has a role of strengthening the hierarchy culture by becoming administrative specialists with focus on reengineering processes and creating an efficient system.

**Preferred Organisational Culture**

The results showed that the preferred organizational culture of the majority of members of staff of the Polytechnic is Market. According to Cameron and Quinn (2000); Hagbery and Heifetz (2001), the hallmark of this culture is that members of staff are concerned with getting the job done. There are corporate competitiveness and the focus is pleasing the customer. Members of staff are results oriented and focus on outpacing competitors.

It is interesting to note that majority of members of staff of the Polytechnic prefer this culture to the Hierarchy. The reasons for this are not far fetch. In this era where there is serious competition among sister polytechnics and the universities (both private and public) for qualified fresh students for their various programmes calls for an organizational culture such as Market. In this case the focus will be on pleasing the customer (i.e. the students) and therefore the state of the art facilities, qualified and committed staff and good academic environment that produce graduates with employable skills for industry will be the focus of the managers of the Polytechnic. Students’ welfare will be the underlying principle behind all major decisions of Management of the Polytechnic so that the Polytechnic will be attractive to fresh students.

Also in its quest to become a technical university, there is no doubt that members of staff would have to change their attitude towards work. Staff should be concerned with getting the job done and above all be results-oriented.

In addition, in this era where government financial support to subverted organizations has declined significantly, the Polytechnic will have to raise funds by itself to keep the Polytechnic running. The current attitude of staff towards work undoubtedly will not help the Polytechnic achieve this. Hence, the need for change in organizational culture as indicated by members of staff of the Polytechnic. Changing the organizational culture of an organization is a complex, long-term and expensive venture. It calls for a strong leader with a shared vision who has the power to drive the change throughout the organization. This is not a simple task that Management of the Polytechnic would want to pursue though it is possible. Perhaps the loopholes associated with the Hierarchy Culture should be tightened and the positive traits of the Hierarchy culture strengthened.

6. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The objective of the study was to identify the dominant existing and the preferred organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic.

It was revealed that the existing organizational culture of Kumasi Polytechnic is Hierarchy but the preferred organizational culture is Market. This means that majority of staff are not happy with current organizational culture (Hierarchy) and wished it could be changed to the Market type of culture. The hallmark of this preferred culture is that staffs are results oriented. Their attention is on getting the job done focusing on pleasing the customer (students and other stakeholders) and outpacing competitors (sister polytechnics, universities) in the educational industry.

In this era of serious competition among tertiary institutions for qualified fresh students coupled with government increasingly reduction of financial support for the polytechnics, perhaps such a culture will help the polytechnic survive in the midst of the numerous challenges. Changing the organizational culture of an organization to the preferred culture is very desirable but it is a complex, long-term and expensive venture which calls for a strong leader with a shared vision and power to drive the change.
Recommendations

1. The current organizational culture of the Polytechnic should be taken into consideration by Management of the Polytechnic when thinking of embarking upon any venture as its success largely depends on the mindset and attitude of staff towards work.

2. Management of the Polytechnic should adopt the matching/corresponding leadership and management styles that are required of the Hierarchy culture type so as to be effective.

3. Changing the organizational culture of the Polytechnic is desirable, but it is very expensive and complex in nature. Perhaps the bad traits/characteristics associated with the Hierarchy type of culture should be dealt with and the positive traits of it strengthened.

References


