Chapter 11
Organizational Culture in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Universities are higher education institutions with an academic and autonomous structure have created a unique organizational culture while performing their functions such as education, basic scientific researches, and community services. The organizational culture that a university has makes it different from other universities by its values, basic assumptions and norms, leaders and heroes, symbols and language, stories and legends, ceremonies and customs. In this study, first the terms “organization” and “culture” were explained and then “organizational culture” and “organizational culture in the higher education” were thoroughly examined.

INTRODUCTION

Today, it is seen that a rapid change have been experienced, it has been getting harder for some organizations to keep up with this change, while others have been the determiner of the change. It has been observed that organizations experiencing difficulty to keep up with the rapid change are weak because there is an uncertainty about what is good what is bad for them, what is aimed and what is not aimed and what should be done and what should not be done (see Table 1). When we have look at the organizations determining the rapid change, it’s clearly seen that they’re strong to have determined this change not by chance, but in accordance with the hypotheses, norms and the values they have. In this study, first the terms “organization” and “culture” were explained and then “organizational culture” and “organizational culture in the higher education” was thoroughly examined.

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First of all, organizations are small society models formed by people. Today, people spend most of their life in various organizations. An individual’s every action is connected to an organization or occurs in it. Social or personal needs cause formation of new organizations. Organization that keeps an important place in people’s lives has been tried to be defined by different philosophers. Barnard (1994) described organization as “A system of two or more people’s power or activities that have been coordinated consciously” (cited in Morgan, 1998). Schein (1970) explained organization as “the rational coordination of the activities of people who come together for a mutual aim or to achieve that aim under an authority or responsibility hierachy by making and sharing jobs (cited in Terzi, 2000). In broad terms, the organizations are the basic tools constituted to solve the problems and the tasks which people can’t come over by themselves; these tools defines the way a society functions. In the past a number of metaphors were used to describe organization. Although machine and organism metaphors are mostly used, these are found insufficient to clarify the abstract and special dimension of the organizations since they mostly evaluate the physical features and dimension that can be obviously seen. According to new approaches that explain the abstract dimensions, the organizations are accepted as the social constructions, cultures, and symbol systems that are formed by shared meaning systems. Organizations are open systems which have their own particular cultures; they get input from the community and serve it by giving output. They are in continuous interaction with their environment, so the structure and the features of the environment they are in is getting more important. Organizations attain their goals by the actions people perform. The first condition of organizational activity is human power, for this reason; organizations are meaningful with the existence of people (Açıkalın 1994; Atay 1998; Morgan 1998; Terzi 2000; Güçlü 2003; İşik & Gürsel 2009; Şimşek 2014).