Chapter 17

Value Statements in Web Pages of Turkish State Universities: A Basic Classification

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ABSTRACT

Values are significant in terms of creating behavioral outcomes both at individual and organizational level. The value statements determined at the organizational level reveal the basic policies and principles that the organization would adopt and make visible for its stakeholders during its operations. Values have the quality of reflecting cultural context. Therefore, the analysis of values is suitable for making cultural elements visible. In the present study, values will be addressed in the context of higher education institutions operating in Turkey. Several studies were conducted that scrutinized the use of organizational studies and higher education institutions in conjunction. The scope of the present study included the values determined by 102 state universities in their respective strategic plans that were obtained from the Council of Higher Education (YOK) data. The objective of the present study is to identify the basic tendencies in the value statements of the universities and to investigate which expressions were frequently used, using the content analysis method.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a concept that represents models and contents about values and ideas which play a role in shaping the behavior after it was created and transferred from the outside. Values are an important part of the culture, they reflect what is desirable in that culture and are they are conceptualized accordingly (Fischer & Katz, 2000). Individuals share the values they learn from the culture that commonly influence them (Wheeler, 2002). Individuals form culture with the help of values they preserve in their lives.
and take into their world (Chen, 1995). Therefore, culture is one of the most important features affecting individual attitudes and behavior. Cultural values differ from one society to the other, and values in a society stabilize over time (Boer & Boehnker, 2016). In this context, Rokeach (1973) explained values as a cultural experience and cognitive programs learned as a result of life.

Higher education institutions are a type of organization and as in other organizations; organizational culture in universities reveals the identity of the university (Erdem, 2003, p. 58). Culture in these institutions is produced through the interaction of cultural teaching members, students and management subculture and includes assumptions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and practices that are influenced by the characteristics of education work (Erdem & İşbaşı, 2001). Values that function as determinants of what is desired and what is not desired in an organization refer to the standards of higher education institutions.

This chapter primarily aims to discuss literature review and the conceptual framework and to identify main aspects of the topic. Definitions of main notions, structure of human values, related disciplines, value measurement tools and the relationship between value and behavior would be the context of literature research. Chapter will continue with the presentation of the study on the values of Turkish higher education institutions. Chapter ends with recommendations for future studies and the conclusion.

BACKGROUND

Values in the Literature

In social sciences, a great deal of research has been devoted to personal values. The values are difficult to define since they share similar characteristics with concepts such as attitudes, preferences and opinions. In the literature, values have been defined in several studies (Ghazieh & Soltani, 2016, p. 74). Wiener (1988, 535) stated that values were “internalized normative beliefs.” According to Rokeach (1973, p. 5), “a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence.” Hofstede (1980) defined values as “the tendency of preferring certain situations over others” and stated that values are belief standards that individuals define about what is right and what is wrong. In other words, values are concepts accepted by individuals such as selection or preference criteria, judgments or behavior styles and they are the choices made between normative standards on judgments and alternative behavior types (Ericson, 1969; Elizur et al., 1991).

Values are increasingly significant in establishing how individuals interpret “things,” how they make choices and how they decide (Westwood & Posner, 1997). According to Allport (1961), “a value is the belief upon which an individual acts based on her or his choices.” Values are linked with individual’s beliefs and emotions (Hansson, 2001, p. 15) and in-group belonging (Heaven, 1999). Values, as guiding principles in individuals’ lives, are social representatives of objectives that motivate individuals in life (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992; Rohan, 2000). These guiding principles could be expressed as individuals’ choices, their criteria in assessing other individuals and cases as well as methods they utilize to explain their own evaluations (Schwartz & Sagiv, 2000; Gandal & Roccas, 2002).

The function of values is clarifying the meaning of life by explaining what is important for individual and basic existential questions (Mc Laughlin, 1976; Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Weber, 2015). Therefore, individual differences in value priorities can be linked to differences in attitudes, behavior and background