

# RISKS RESULTING FROM THE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

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*Leadership is the art of obtaining maximum support and effort from a group of people, of stimulating them to want to do things which they normally would not do. Leadership is the art of creating a vision for the future of the organization and increasing the level of performance above the normal level. Nevertheless, none of these things could happen if the leader's values and vision collide with the culture of the organization.*

**Key words:** *culture, leadership, performance, leaders, goals, objectives.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is increasingly perceived as one of the key factors for organizational performance. In most cases, the best results are associated with the leaders' ability to create, maintain and develop a "strong" organizational culture, which will lead its members towards achieving the goals. It is a set of conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, individual and group elements which develop strong connections with a dynamic impact upon organizational performance [1].

The military organization has a distinct organizational culture, often, with an unwritten set of rules, regulations and operating procedures. Like any other organizational culture, it changes over time in response to changes in society's culture, the evolution of technology and the impact of leadership. This culture is

based on the unique tradition, mission, structure, and leadership of military history. Leadership and the military are strongly connected and leadership was and continues to be a defining characteristic of this organization. The military organization develops leaders through formal education and practical activities in order to fit its culture and mission. There is a strong link between the military organizational culture and the leadership and efficiency of the organization. Using the position and status the leaders /commanders have in the hierarchy of the organization they can shape attitudes and influence their subordinates' decisions and behaviors.

The leadership culture appears as an integral part of the organizational culture and it can have a positive or negative influence upon the latter. The culture of an organization reflects the vision and perspectives on how things are and should be done. Its importance

granted by the individuals who act in accordance with their shared values and those promoted by the organization influencing thus organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

## 2. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & PERFORMANCE

There are three aspects of the organizational culture which are important when analyzing the impact the culture has upon an organization and its performance: direction, penetration and strength. **Direction** - is the extent to which a culture supports the achievement of the organizational objectives (setting the direction is often the attribute of the leadership, but the culture can have a great influence on the efficiency of the organization). **Penetration** shows the spread of the culture among the members of the organization. Force refers to the degree to which values and other aspects of culture are supported by members.

The military is part of a global system whose transformations it takes over and reflects. Like any organization, it has its specific culture with norms, values, beliefs, a culture which features a mix of specific elements (discipline, respect, control etc.) and elements common to all bureaucratic organizations. Along with discipline and control comes focus. Focus is important to mission success, and the services teach every new member how to focus in challenging situations, situations where they lack sleep, are physically exhausted, or are under extreme stress. Learning to stay focused, in control, and disciplined in all situations are skills that members use throughout

their military careers as they are faced with uncertain and often dangerous situations. The armed forces are conservative in terms of rules and regulations, they focus on values and traditions, and still they have to fulfill the present day requirement of being efficient. The environmental and social changes and challenges have had a major impact upon processes and phenomena taking place in the organization, thus forcing some changes in the organizational culture and leadership methods in order to achieve a more efficient leadership.

The culture of an organization is crucial to the way the leader works because it establishes restrictions on what they can do and the ways in which they can influence the organization's members so that they can perform their tasks efficiently. The culture influences the perceptions of the leader, his thoughts and feelings. Great military leaders are rigorous, determined, selfless and they see themselves as a part of a great mechanism, the armed forces. The more the culture develops, the more strength it gains, it becomes more influential and leaves its mark on every thing the leader undertakes, including the manner of thinking and the leading style. Leadership decisions are based and reflect the history of the organization and the agreed manners to accomplish the tasks. It can be said that a strong organizational culture will restrict the commander's views on how to take decisions for the organization and it will influence the organization's performance.

Culture is increasingly accepted by leaders as a tool for improvement and obtaining the desired outcomes because by using it they can influence

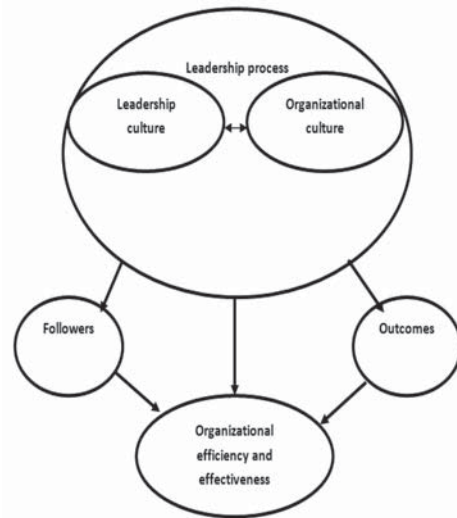
organizational relationships and operation. Culture influences and solves two basic needs of the military organization: the need to adapt to the external environment and the need for internal integration of its members. Understanding the specific organizational culture facilitates the promotion of strategies consistent with the principles and values of the members, which can result in better performance. If there is a discrepancy between the two, neither objectives nor performance can be achieved.

### 3. LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The leadership process and culture cannot be separated. Once created, a culture can limit the activity of the leader. In order to efficiently manage an organization it is necessary to avoid a conflict between the two forces: the culture and the person in charge with the organization.

Leaders can turn into a symbol of the organization thus determining its effectiveness so, every contradiction between the leader's vision and the organizational vision will hinder the activity and the efficiency. Without a culture shared by most people in leading positions, the success the organization would be difficult.

It is important to begin to see culture as a context for creating interpretations and meanings, to notice that organizational leadership issues are closely related to the organizational culture. Organizational culture can help clarify many phenomena that occur in organizations. It is thus a key element in the formation and development of an organizational culture conducive to efficiency as in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Leadership – culture- efficiency

The first actor of this process is the leader and leadership is nothing more than the ability to read, interpret and operationalize the organizational culture in order to drive the organization towards knowing and understanding its own identity, to determine the organization's members to know and to use this "force"[2]. From this perspective, culture and leadership are factors underlying the success of the organization. Thus, culture must be the source of competitive advantage.

The research in this field has led to the question whether organizational culture can be managed in terms of exercising influence and control in organizations. If so, then we can conclude that it is possible to manage the organization's norms and values in order to obtain desired behaviors and organizational effectiveness. Consequently, the leaders are the people with the greatest impact on culture. They can become a powerful symbol of organizations but the impact of this symbolism is given

by the way organizational culture is decoded and viewed by other members.

Leaders are those people who motivate by example. One of the leaders' responsibilities is to create and maintain organizational characteristics that reward and encourage collective effort and this depends very much on the culture of the organization. This is what helps the organization to adapt and cope with the environmental change. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, which unfortunately are characteristics of the environment, cause situations that no longer fit in well known patterns.

Many of the problems the leaders face are due to their inability to analyze, evaluate and understand the culture of the organization. Many of them, especially those who have just taken over this responsibility try to implement strategies without analyzing if they fit or not the culture. A common mistake made by those in charge with leading an organization arises from the desire to make radical changes abruptly, which will trigger staff resistance. This is due to the lack or minimal understanding of the existing culture and often leads to failed initiatives.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In the current context, characterized by dynamism, volatility and permanent changes, leadership style and culture are closely related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Thus, any discrepancy between them will have negative consequences upon organizational success. Often, leadership values, particularly of top leadership, have a

remarkable impact on the evolution of the organization, they are favoured, they are communicated and displayed throughout the organization, in order to give new momentum, to push the efforts of all the individuals in a new direction. Effectiveness and efficiency are closely related to the leadership style. The leader uses his influence to reach the objectives, to obtain performance and to keep the organization moving.

The activity of leading an organization is not an end in itself, but a decisive factor for obtaining increased organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Modern leadership requires a transformation process that will combine the personal qualities of the organization members with those gained from education and practice, so that gaps in the functioning of the organization will be eliminated and the performance will be achieved under the best conditions of time, materials and quality.

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