

Exploring Organizational Culture Under the Context of the International School of Hospitality Management

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Abstract

This study aims to explore some cultural problems among students, Chinese teachers as well as foreign teachers in the International School of Hospitality Management (ISHM), and to find effective and specific ways for faculties and students, in order to overcome the difficulties in this organization. In particular, it is critical for this organization to integrate into priority strategic initiatives in ways that are consistent with the preferred culture and develop strategies for achieving ISHM's vision, mission and goals. The specific suggestions for ISHM to improve its organizational culture will be valuable in helping the researcher plan professional promotion in the teaching career or to be a leader in the future. Combining the theories of organization culture and context of ISHM, hence, the ISHM leaders can play four roles, vision planner, motivator, analyzer and taskmaster. These four roles can be placed in a large four areas: the future, the organization, the student-employment market and the school respectively.

Keywords

Organizational Culture, Challenge, Vision, Strategic Initiatives, Leaders.

1. Introduction

The aim of ISHM is to cultivate a new generation of international hospitality leaders, therefore, the dean hired a number of foreign teachers. They come from the United Kingdom, the South Africa and the Spain, etc. They also specialized in teaching the main courses, such as Hospitality Today, Food and Beverage, and the Art and Science of Culinary Preparation, etc. What's more, there are still several specialized teachers who have been worked in this department for more than ten years and about five administrative faculties who mainly work for teaching affairs, or party and government affairs, classroom and student issues. As such, a number of problems have been occurred in ISHM. For example, how to create and plan the college's vision and goal in accordance with the vision of the whole university? How to deal with cultural difference in the teaching area or the requirements of professional construction under the development of hospitality? How to balance the different concepts of management between group leaders? How to cultivate the awareness of deep change for teachers and administrative faculties? Being of such importance, this study investigates some cultural issues and organization leadership in ISHM in order to determine the most suitable and effective ones for faculties and students.

1.1. About the Organization Context

The ISHM is one of departments in a Chinese private language university, which is an important carrier of China's tourism, hotels and other services. This university takes the advantages of various subjects to establish this college and meets the demands of the state of inbound and outbound tourism in the area of high-level foreign service industries and talented person in the hotel management.

The College has established an experienced team of full-time and part-time teachers, which is led by experienced experts both in academics and industry. It has twenty full-time teachers, which includes one professor, two Doctors, five teachers who are good at tourism and the remaining ones who come from the industry. The aim of ISHM is to cultivate a new generation of hospitality industry leaders. It is an international program that can lead you to international career development. It also has three professional features, including effective integration of professional teaching and foreign language teaching, theoretical teaching and practical teaching, domestic education and overseas education.

In order to realize the goal of school's construction, ISHM makes efforts to implement talent cultivation system which is based on the rich resources of multilingual language subjects, to introduce advanced international hotel management that has a high starting point of educational resources and feature all-round foreign communication and cooperation, to develop distinctive high-level hotel management talents as a goal with international hotel management personnel training mode as a platform.

1.2. About the ISHM Organizational Culture Background

Firstly, compared with other departments, ISHM has its own characteristics. Firstly, the department of ISHM has been established for approximately three years. Faculties and students work, experience and grow up together in this unit in order to create its own ISHM culture. It seems to be that culture is the "behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular organization" in an organizational context. These behaviors and beliefs emerge over time, usually as a result of a strong founder of this department's influence, a "near-death" experience and a work ethic. As Levin (2009) believes that one of definitions of organization culture is the shared beliefs and values of members of one organization, which could provide meaning to and influence daily work life. All of these facts consist of organization culture and gradually become a strong corporate culture.

What's more, Debra and Quick (2010) state that values are the deeper, level of culture. They manifest that a person's inherent beliefs of what should be or should not be. Also, values in one organization can be easily expressed, both in talking and an organization's mission or planning report. On the contrary, there are some difference between an organization's espoused values (what the individuals say they value) and enacted values (values stated in the way that members actually behave). Values also can be showed in the behavior of individuals that is an artifact of culture. Take ISHM for an example, the dean of this department was a foreigner who came from Philippines. She hired a number of foreign teachers and gave them good opportunities in teaching when she firstly came to college. Although she would treat with each faculty on equal, she tended to create chances and gave assistance to foreign teachers. The inequity between espoused and enacted values is normal or natural. Although such inequities are widely popular, some even totally denied it existed. The reason could be that even though the organization espoused teacher equity as a values, its ways did not enact teacher equity.

Secondly, the dean wanted to change the original culture when she firstly worked in a Chinese organization. She would use the western ways in managing the college. For example, the specialized teachers needed to use group work or pair work in their classroom instead of the whole-class teaching. However, it is difficult to change Chinese ways into what she wanted to be. Because organization culture can be shaped gradually by subsequent generations of leaders, culture forms and develops over time, which becomes deeply embedded and layered in each faculty's psyche and would probably influence how this department perceives and grows. Moreover, as Debra and Quick (2010) reckon that it is hard to change one organizational culture, which has the characteristic of a strong culture. That means an organizational culture with a consensus on the values which drives the company and with an intensity that is easily perceived even to outsiders. Therefore, a strong culture is widely and deeply recognized and shared.

Additionally, in terms of ISHM, several Chinese teachers have been worked here for nearly ten years and their English oral level seems to be not good because their major is tourism and hospitality management. Hence, it is not easy to communicate with the dean and even cannot understand dean's ideas properly. And it is resistant to change their traditional methods into the new ways. Levin (2009) has explored this thought in detail, he believes that in most cases, culture tends to be formed by successful responses to past experience challenges and effective organizational and group problem-solving, which becomes a self-reinforcing force that is difficult to change smoothly.

Thirdly, as Kotter (2009) explains that a number of successful organization culture change begin with when employees or group members make efforts to work at a company's competitive situation, market position and technological advancement. They are eager to find opportunities or ways to communicate with some markets or business that seems to be ignoring. As for the circumstance of ISHM, there are rare chances for teachers to improve their professional skills, which make teachers reach a plateau. Hence, it is not good for this college to develop in a well-round way. As a result, a number of teachers have no motivation to go ahead. Without motivation, people won't help and the effort goes nowhere. It is essential that making a great transformation requires the aggressive cooperation of many individuals and leaders.

Another thing is that the leaders also didn't give chances to the newcomers who just in the school of ISHM for no more than one year. It is common that newcomers learn the culture by organizational socialization, which means they would transform from the outsiders to the members who are effective and participating (Debra & Quick, 2010). Some effective stories can not only reinforce organizational values, but can motivate newcomers, strengthen culture and create renewed energy as well. As leaders, they should make sure that telling the right stories which can stimulate the change they are trying to drive (Wortmann, 2008). In terms of ISHM leaders, they probably can tell the story to the new teachers in the area of teaching. For example, peer observation can be carried out among the novice teachers and the experienced teachers. It indicates one of the benefits in a work team, especially as a novice teacher at a Chinese university.

Fourthly, it is widely believed that having a vision is important in an organization. Kotter (1995) explains this one in details, he reckons that a clear vision is something that the direction in which an organization needs to move. In ISHM, at the beginning of each semester, the dean would have a meeting for all the members in order to let everybody know the aims of this college rather than launch out a vision. However, although they have aims, not each one knows the details clearly and is willing to take actions in their daily work. In my opinion, if you cannot communicate the vision to other and get reaction that indicates both agreement and interest in five minutes, you are not prepared with the transformation. What's more, ISHM usually has plenty of plans and directives and programs, but no clear vision. Although the leaders have a sense of direction, the direction probably is too complicated or blurry to be useful in real work. As such, faculties have no clear awareness of vision of the college.

After this explanation of ISHM organizational culture context, the next section will present the challenges that the leaders, faculties and students have faced and then analyze the reasons among them in ISHM.

2. Leadership Challenges in ISHM

In this chapter, it mainly focuses on the challenges that the leaders, faculties and students face in this multi-cultural context. Organization and environment are interdependent and influence each other. Especially in the 21st century, new technology, new social phenomenon, new values and ideas sustained impact the traditional organizational structure, which probably gives rise to a series of challenges for leaders and employees.

2.1. Preservation of Harmony as the Ultimate Aim of Communication Between Teachers and Administrative Faculties

The professional teachers and administrative teachers have some conflicts. To be more specific, specialized teachers tend to engage in teaching, scientific research and academic seminar. Their main goals could publish a number of essays in some famous journals and make great contributions for society. However, they may neglect the importance of administrative instructions. What's more, as for administrative faculties, they mainly focus on the importance of finance in the area of organization survival and development. Meanwhile, they stress the image of themselves in order to improve their status and make this organization develop in a healthy and stable way by their own leadership. Their main responsibilities are for the student management, teaching management, research management, all of them consisting of the administrative work. They pay more attention to effectiveness and responsibilities instead of taking professional teachers consideration, which could probably establish images of "lonely hero".

Based on the issue of teaching and administrative affairs, it can be easily concluded that the specialized teachers and administrative faculties rarely communicate with each other which make the process in a vicious cycle. The reason may be that Chinese people are born to live in harmony with each family member, to get along well with neighbors and colleagues, to be respect with the aged, leaders and teachers, and to make peace with other nations (Liang, 2010). In ISHM, if one individual pretends to be a role of a leader and make decisions by himself or herself without any agreement by leaders, which means destroying the harmonious situation. It also indicates that taking the leaders' place is detrimental to the harmony of one organization. As such, seeking and keeping harmony with each other becomes the ultimate goal in Chinese culture. In this context, followers would give priority to harmony when they take initiatives regardless of taking communication or discussion into consideration in their daily work.

2.2. Rare Chances for Some Specialized Teachers

A number of specialized teachers have a great burden on teaching the professional and bilingual courses for students. There are several reasons. To begin with, these teachers are mostly around forty years old. And they are mainly good at teaching tourist courses but cannot able to have the bilingual courses. The main reason could be that they don't have a good knowledge of English and greatly rely on the Chinese version of professional courses. In their minds, they have no motivation and courage to learn the second language. Additionally, the leaders of ISHM didn't create any opportunities for these teachers to improve their language ability and professional skills as the development of hospitality industry. Because leaders think that these aged teachers didn't have an awareness of learning new things and label them as "passive individuals". Hence, if ISHM had opportunity to have a seminar with Marriott, like China Hospitality Education Initiative (CHEI), leaders tended to provide new teachers with platform instead of offering chances to the aged teachers. Without have any opportunities to improve themselves, the aged probably cannot understand or describe the importance of connecting educators with the hospitality industry; and may not help students indentify ways to engage them in careers and lifelong learning. It can be concluded that lacking of specialized knowledge in the area of hospitality can create a vicious circle of this process, which can have a bad influence on the improvement of this department.

2.3. A Lack of Organizational Integration

ISHM is a secondary school and a new organization. Hence, there is a big challenge of organizational integration. To be more specific, it reflects the school's goals in the area of organizational integration. As Schein (2010) states that culture information is a striving toward patterning and integration. Although in some organization, their original experiences or history

prevent them from attaining a clear unambiguous paradigm. Originally, ISHM consists of the School of Management, the College of Tourism, the Department of Computer, the Department of Fundamental Arts, several administrative faculties and professional teachers. Also, it is common that each department or college has its own goals or vision. When they gathered together and integrated into the ISHM, the school needed to formulate and establish a new regulation to achieve its goals. However, it was difficult for new faculties to change their minds to learn the new rules or paradigms. They seemed to be afraid of changing. Therefore, they would recognize their original behavior. As Quinn (1996) has explored this issue in detailed, he states that if one organization uses the old map and continues to drive the behavior of someone who is left, that is, the old governing rules are still in place. The issue of ISHM might represent some pattern of old and comfortable behavior---a job, a habit or any other pattern. The present self is tied to this established pattern. Therefore, without the pattern, the self would no longer exist.

Based on the situation in ISHM, it needs to break down the original regulation and then to rebuild to new forms or make initial rules in this department. The ISHM aimed to build the hospitality industry as the main objective, base on tourism and management discipline, integrate subjects such as politics, economics, management and language. As such, the professional teachers who came from different departments and majored in various disciplines, needed to make some change of their original subjects in order to adapt to the development of ISHM. If these teachers didn't have an awareness of changing the direction of the research, it will have a bad influence on the organizational goals.

2.4. Heavy Pressure from Outside

Because of the high demand of qualified and professional teachers, the leaders employed around five teachers from several hotels, for instance, Hangzhou Shangri-La Hotel, Sofitel Westlake Hangzhou, and Hangzhou Radisson Hotel, etc. They worked in those hotels as general managers in the department of catering service, human resource, marketing, or housekeeping, etc. Therefore, their working experience corresponded to the ISHM's course requirements. However, it had conflict with the aged teachers because they didn't have any courses in this department. The aged teachers who have the master degree think that it is not fair to allocate the specialized courses for those teachers who came from the hospitality industry. In their minds, those teachers didn't have the high educational degree or university-teacher certificates compared with them.

The second pressure comes from the environmental issue as the fast growth of the hospitality at home and abroad. It is common that the globalization 2.0 is the study of pursuing liberal and free market in the contemporary economic world (Vielmetter & Sell, 2014). As the word changes and gets smaller, the technology advances, the eastern companies will transform the workforce from east to west; In the same way, the western companies would also operate in the east. Also, the new middle classes who have different demand will emerge. As such, international corporations, especially for ISHM, it needs to have an awareness of globalization. And it requires the ISHM leaders act global and think global because of the intensification of complexity under the circumstance of globalization 2.0. At the same time, the concept of contextual awareness and conceptual thinking should be enhanced. One organization can encourage diversity of thought and carry out the appropriate structure for their organization.

Based on the fast speed of Internet and globalization, updating the Internet technology constantly is the force driving for the construction and improvement of ISHM. It is common that all systems should be expand and grow, or they will contract and fall into a state of decay (Quinn, 1996). Hence, in my view, that is the external change processes in the ISHM. They face the challenge of updating and improving the professional talent training scheme. Meanwhile, Quinn (1996) states that organizations are coalitional. The dominant coalition in one organization is

seldom interested in making deep change, Therefore, deep change often occurs, but not always driven from the outside. As for ISHM's internally driven change, leaders and faculties tend to meet the need of their students. This means that they will have to meet a wider and competing set of expectations for graduates, i.e. developing schemes for student employment, designing practical courses or cooperating school with enterprises.

Having explored the organizational culture issues in ISHM and illustrated the importance of organization culture for each faculty, the researcher firmly believes that it is necessary to take some effective actions to plan a clear vision, communicate the vision, embed beliefs, values and assumption.

3. Specific Suggestions on How the Leaders can Improve Organization Culture in ISHM

3.1. Communicating the Vision

First of all, creating a clear and specific vision according to the fact of ISHM is crucially important to the leaders and administrative faculties. Because of the globalization, the vision could be cultivating a new generation of professional and international, especially cooperating with some famous hotels at home and abroad and establishing the collaborative relationship. As such, ISHM students have several opportunities to plan the internship programs in advance and then make efforts to attain their ideal goals. Moreover, communicating the vision is significant for the ISHM. To be more specific, leaders can call for the faculties to take actions to achieve the goals rather than just taking about it. That is to say, it is possible to use every channel to communicate the vision and strategies. Leaders can also set examples or make the joint coalition to develop the ISHM culture.

Also, the leaders of ISHM can broadcast the vision by using various channels, for example, Wechat or Official Account, in order to let a larger number of people understand its vision. Like in some successful companies, executives would use all existing communication methods to transmit their vision. They change tedious and unread company newsletters into vivid and stimulating articles about the vision (Kotter, 1995). As for ISHM, they can turn boring and conventional management meetings into lively and interesting group discussion of the vision or transformation. They can also have lectures or courses for faculties which focus on management issues and the new vision instead of the school's generic management education. In a word, they can make full use of every possible channel, especially some information which is probably being throwing out.

It is important that communicating the vision by behavior. A good example occurs in one successful company, most of the executives often "walk the talk" in some cases of main change (Kotter, 1995). In terms of ISHM, leaders firstly become a part of the guiding collation and the vision-creation and discussion team. They need to set examples for the whole faculties and remind themselves of the preferred behaviour by communicating and exchanges views with each individual. They can also have a feedback meeting which is from their peers or subordinates. It can help them to reflect on when they become involved in that behavior. In a nutshell, although communication is important which comes from the words or deeds, the deeds tend to be the most influential style.

3.2. Model, Coach and Observe

The ISHM leaders could carry out a number of activities to help the aged or the novice teachers to improve their teaching expertise or have some teacher development training. As Schein (2010) states that founders and leaders in one organization generally believe they need to know their own behavior has great value for communicating assumptions and values to fellows. Leaders also need to be involved themselves in everything in a detailed way by frequent

coaching and teaching. Like in ISHM, leaders can create peer observation for newcomers and the experienced teachers, and leaders can give appropriate and useful suggestions for subordinates. Through peer observation probably could provide the novice teachers with opportunities to listen and watch the classroom interaction for the reasons of professional development rather than assessment or evaluation.

For a novice's professional development, it needs to have observations frequently, which can build a great deal of trust. For instance, if members have built the spirit of trust, when faced with awkward questions concerning teaching, the questions could be solved easily. Such trust could be established through "reciprocal peer observation", which refers to the observers and the teachers observe each other's lesson and help each other to improve the professional development. In this way, the ISHM team members could keep a good rapport and collaborate with each other as to create "ISHM culture" under the guidance of leaders.

Expect for training activities, organizational leaders should be the first pioneers and sponsors of culture realignment (Gottlieb & Levin, 2009). The ISHM leaders need to model the desired behavior of the preferred culture, teach followers how to act out the behaviors that this organization rules, and make sure that some formal and informal practices need to imbed such behaviors in their daily work are put forward. As such, subordinates would observe and learn from their leaders' behaviors, then let themselves know what's significant and satisfied. Additionally, organizational leaders need to sustain their original change, acting the ways they hope others to follow and in consistent with the new behaviors. They also should explain the reasons why they change in time and provide them with the convincing vision of the change, both of them could make great contributions to successful future.

3.3. Managing with Four Different Roles: Vision Planner, Motivator, Analyzer and Taskmaker

It is often said that personal change is a significant event for oneself. A number of successful senior executives have experience of being individuals then transform to managers. They also tend to believe that personal change greatly contributes to their work life. However, Quinn (1996) reckons that some possible transformation would be the shift from manager to leader. The same situation occurs in the organization of ISHM.

As described in the previous section, the subordinates have no motivation to go ahead, no opportunities to develop themselves, even no courage to do some research in their spare time. In my opinion, the main problem could from the ISHM leaders' angles. They can assign pieces of management work to the different departments and start to deal with the long-term issues, for example, a cultural transformation in one organization. Hence, the role of leaders is crucial for leadership in an organization. In a word, leaders need to set good examples to change organizational culture for others and the most important thing is they should engage themselves in the deep change process.

The ISHM leaders can play four roles, vision planner, motivator, analyzer and taskmaster as shown in Figure 1. Also, these four roles can be placed in a large four areas: the future, the organization, the student-employment market and the school respectively.

To be more specific, in the domain of the organization, leaders could focus on creating chances, launching out training programs and stimulating fellows to develop themselves. At the same time, school's values and principles should be implanted. And sometimes leaders can challenge subordinates with new aims and aspiration. When leaders play roles of the vision setter, it is important to plan a good map of the future plan in these coming years, design the up-to-date schemes of school's development and pay attention to organizational purposes and goals.

Table 1. Different Roles for Leaders

Domain: The Organization Demand: Faculties Role: The Motivator	Domain: The Future Demand: Transformation Role: The Vision Planner
Domain: The Student-Employment Market Demand: Students Role: The Analyzer	Domain: The School Demand: Performance Role: The Taskmaker

As an analyzer role in ISHM, the main purpose for leaders is that designing new forms of collaboration concerning students' employment, not only the brother universities at home and abroad, but including the competitors as well, because of the coming of the technological convergence, at the same time, it will give rise to a new phenomenon which is "organizational convergence". That means each corporation needs to break the traditional methods and make joints to cooperate with other universities to exchange knowledge and skills. In terms of the role of taskmaker, the leaders should emphasize subordinates' performance, results, value each department's efficiency. Totally, if the leaders desire to success in one organization, they need to integrate the points of four domains (vision planner, motivator, analyzer and taskmaker).

3.4. Deep Change for the Top Leaders

It is common that an enthusiastic team could be that each individual need have a role in the area of teaching hospitality, take an active part in activities that well-prepared by school, work together with unity and trusting relationship, handle issues with efficiency, practice with strict discipline and make efforts to cooperate with leaders and colleagues (Quinn, 1996). If a team works well with those traits, its performance would surpass the organization's expectations. Therefore, the total outcome of a team is greater than the individuals.

The top leader teams need to recognize that their organization should have a deep transformation from the current situation to a high level. Each leader must view it and take actions to face the change. And they can try their best to attain the common goals collectively. This deep transformation needs everyone's communication, training, effort and collaboration. What's more, a good leader can have a good awareness of analyzing and sensing when the appropriate time is right and then start with to call on team members to sustain the change. Finally, the feedback and support are crucial for each colleague. The top leaders should listen to employees' opinions and then give aid to them if needed. During this process, they may confront with risking, uncertainty or failure.

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