Putting into practice of non-essentialist model of culture: Understanding corporate culture and fostering ‘employeeship’

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Introduction

Mainly based on the article published:


SIETAR Valencia presentation

One of the main references:

Outline

- Introduction – the issue with essentialist notions of culture
- A non-essentialist model of culture
- Implications for agency and identity
- Understanding employeeship and self-respect
- Challenging the notions of corporate culture often equated to national culture and implications for change and leadership
- An organizational model (3P2S)
- Putting into practice – how to foster employeeship?
The paradigms of essentialism vs. non-essentialism

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<tr>
<th>ESSENTIALIST PARADIGM</th>
<th>NON-ESSENTIALIST PARADIGM</th>
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<td>Rooted in human nature</td>
<td>Rooted in human conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Dynamic (with continuity and change)</td>
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<td>Homogeneous</td>
<td>Heterogeneous</td>
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<td>Holistic</td>
<td>Internally riven</td>
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<td>Deterministic</td>
<td>Changeable</td>
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The issue

The paradigm of 5-7-9 cultural dimensions tends to essentialize national culture and ignores agency and identity – these have implications for organizational culture!

The paradigm of 5-7-9 cultural dimensions

- Hofstede’s model (5)
- Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s model (7)
- GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness) research (9)

  - Also included: Schwartz’s model: 7 value orientations
Impacts of undermining agency and identity within culture in relation to work and organizations

- Assumption of a singular identity implicitly or explicitly equating to the national culture ignores individuals’ multiple intersecting and shifting identities over time and space
- It restricts individuals’ ‘ethical horizons’ (Nathan, 2010)
- National identities are not fixed in time (and space)
- Therefore, such a notion of identity can lead to ossify individuals; cultural conformity and stereotyping can lead to reinforcing certain social injustices within organizations and restricts agency for choice and change!
Implication

 If individuals in an organization are expected to behave, and are treated, with descriptive value orientations that ignore agency for choice and change along with normative value orientations, then it is not clear how one might embark on an organizational cultural change according to certain ethical norms.
A model of culture within the paradigm of non-essentialism – a point of departure

- We need to understand ‘culture’ as dynamic intersecting ‘cultural systems’ and interacting social institutions/organizations in which persons individually or collectively interact with others, directly or indirectly, to pursue their complex of purposes (see Nathan, 2010 based on Dilthey’s works)

- Such an understanding rejects essentialist notions of culture being static, bounded and holistic within internal uniformity

- It also effectively move away from the ‘false debate’ of dichotomy between ‘institutions’ and culture’ (see Jackson, 2013)
What does it mean?

- It gives significance to agency for change and allows meanings to be given from the agency perspective by the individual who participates with the social world comprising these systems and institutions.

- The individual who stands at the intersection of these myriad intersecting systems and interacts with institutions with multiple intersecting collective identities as well as individual identities, give and derive meanings individually and collectively.

- Therefore, such a dynamic concept of social interactionism and meanings does not reify culture and ossify individuals with a singular identity within culture.
Meanings and identity

‘cultural identities do not carry a pre-given meaning that people passively enact, as is sometimes assumed, but become infused with meaning in organizational actors’ interpretations that are embedded in specific social contexts’ (Ybema and Byun, 2009:339).

We need to take into consideration the individuals’ ideas of life and lived experience, which is the philosophical position of Dilthey – ‘idealism-realism (Idealrealismus)’. This aspect captures both descriptive and normative value orientations, the context and change.
One’s worldview

➢ One’s context is not solely determined by one’s membership in one’s culture, whether it is a national culture or subculture of one’s ethnicity; it is an intersection of many cultural systems and common institutions.

➢ One’s worldview (*Weltanschauung*) is formed gradually through one’s ideas of life and lived experience (Nathan, 2010).
Implications for organizational culture: Agency, identity and structure

- Meanings should be understood from the participant’s perspective who is at the intersection of intersecting various cultural systems and interacting institutions — do not ascribe meanings from the observer’s perspective

- Agents have multiple intersecting collective identities and personal identities — be wary of ascribing a singular identity and pre-given meaning within all contexts (can lead to misrecognition and non-recognition in their identities)

- Diversity management should move beyond ascribing singular identities of nationality as cultural identities, religion, race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality — consider the implications of multiple intersecting collective identities and asymmetrical power relations
Meaningful work and well-being

Activities are meaningful when they are in accord with one’s worldview – ethical convictions

However, one may be mistaken on their ethical convictions due to unjust social conditions

One’s well-being is constituted by engaging in meaningful activities
Leadership and organizational culture

It should not be about ‘management of meaning’ (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009)

It is important to understand the meaningful work from the perspective of the employee
Meaningful work

- An employee engage in activities of work that are according to one’s ethical convictions
- One can be authentic to oneself in his or her work
- One can maintain one’s self-respect
How should we identify employees?

- Employees are not cultural dopes as resources to be managed -> consider them as stakeholders with agency for change and choice;
- Recognition of employees *in their multiple intersecting collective identities as well as personal identities*
- Within the context of intersecting ‘cultural’ systems and interacting ‘institutions’
Employeeeship and self-respect

Three conditions for employeeship:

- autonomy
- ownership
- responsibility

This will foster personal responsibility and allow employees to maintain their self-respect constituted by autonomy, character and conduct.
Self-respect

A self-respecting individual has the responsibility and moral duty to reflect on himself/herself as a moral being. The concept of self-respect should highlight autonomy, character and conduct as essential components (Nathan 2010).

**Autonomy:** Essentially it entails taking responsibility for oneself

**Character:** Enables people to communicate and interact with the social world

**Conduct:** Social participation and engagement, taking into consideration others’ interests while pursuing one’s own interests – no blocking or burdening or arbitrary interference
Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a ‘subjective measure’, an emotional response to self evaluation in terms of liking or feeling good about oneself; it depends on how one feels about one’s capacities, performance and perception of others’ opinions.
Self-respect as a moral foundation

will enable:

◦ taking responsibility for one’s failures without blaming others
◦ giving due credit to others on their successes
◦ failures to be taken not as a shame on oneself (lowering self-esteem) but as learning with self-confidence – no loss of self-confidence
◦ mutual recognition (no need to demand for respect)
◦ diversity to be embraced as a source of growth – (no need to develop us vs. them syndrome)
◦ pursuing one’s interests whilst allowing others to pursue their interests – no blocking or burdening or arbitrary interference
◦ not to take pride on what is given by birth or to be ashamed of
Model of impact and model of challenge

Model of impact
◦ It is about the impact one makes to the society
◦ One may have ethical conviction about making a positive impact

Model of challenge
◦ It is about performing facing ‘fair’ challenges
◦ It may or may not have an impact

Ref: Dworkin, 2000
Minimal and common conditions for employeeship

- **Non-domination**
  - No arbitrary interference

- **Recognition**
  - In their identities
  - Listening to their viewpoints
  - Endorsement of viewpoints (which shall not impede the above conditions)
3P2S organizational model

Organizational Culture
- Internal stakeholders
- National culture
  - Intersecting systems
  - Interacting institutions

External stakeholders

- Leadership
- People
- Process
- Structure
- Products (services)
Resources vs. capabilities

- Resources are not capabilities
- Capabilities require both resources and ability to utilize resources
- Formal and informal rules can impede capabilities
- Informal rules (culture) can be cognitive and normative
Human resource management or employee stakeholder capability management?

- It is about managing employees’ capabilities not about managing them as resources!

- Employeeship will enable development and execution of capabilities facing fair challenges

- Leadership, culture and structure should foster employeeship

- These should provide those minimal and common conditions — recognition in three dimensions and non-domination

- Both formal and informal rules — institution based view as well as resources — resource based view need to be taken into consideration
How can we re-humanize employees instead of de-humanizing with essentialist notions of culture?

Foster dignity at workplace

- focus on employee-ship instead on leadership
- diversity management should go beyond traditional notions of identity that are rooted in essentialist notions of culture and even gender – consider intersecting multiple group identities and personal identities
- organizational culture and systems – not reducing to national culture and identity
- how employees give meanings and derive meanings within their organizations? Consider intersecting systems and interacting institutions
- how can we implement the minimal and common conditions? What kind of organizational structure, culture and leadership will enable?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND REFLECTIONS

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