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Cameron, Derek, Gore, Julie, Desombre, Terry and Riley, Mike

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THE COMMITMENT OF CHEFS WITHIN 4-5 STAR HOTELS FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIZATION AND OCCUPATION

Derek Cameron

IHTTI School of Hotel Management
Avenue de la Gare 15-17
CH-2000, Neuchâtel, Switzerland

A doctoral study (first author)

Julie Gore, Terry Desombre, Mike Riley

School of Management for the Services Sector
University of Surrey
Guildford, Surrey, GU2 5XH, UK

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Introduction

As part of a series of work in progress papers, this study is now at the stage of conducting a pilot questionnaire that seeks to explore the level of commitment chefs are prepared to give to their occupation and/or organization. Briefly, the previous papers presented at CHME explored organization culture within the domain of cultural anthropology and sociology (Cameron *et al* 1999). The study by way of an in-depth literature review focused on culture and identity relationships. In addition, this research included the pressures and effect organization climate has on differing organizational sub-cultures. For example, from a management perspective, organization climate aims to moderate work perceptions and norms so that organizations are better placed to serve an adaptive society (Cameron *et al* 2000). The difficulty however, can arise with the inability of climate to either cope with, or recognise the restraining role cultural values have on sustaining long-term change criteria. To elaborate, Verbeke *et al* (1998) recorded category frequencies between the definitions of culture and climate from a sample of articles and books from 1960-93. In the Verbeke *et al* paper it was noticed that all 32 sampled definitions of 'organization climate' failed to recognise the importance of cultural values but, instead, provided category descriptors that imply 'what is to be learned'. This goes some way to support Denison's (1996) view that organization culture and organization climate share the same phenomenon but not necessarily the same methodology. Notwithstanding, Denison (1996) suggests that there still exist contentious issues as to the labelling of some previous research methodologies with respect to whether it pertains to culture or climate.

Distinction between organization culture, corporate culture and occupation culture

Organization climate does however, go some way to explain the distinctions between organization culture, corporate culture and occupation culture. Organization climate, through the process of implementing discontinuous change is arguably an operational agent by way of policy, objectives, vision, etc, for sustaining corporate culture and identity. In the words of Turner (1987) “I suppose corporate culture is looking for control through cultural anthropology” (cited in Hassard 1999, p. 573). Conversely Turner, like many writers, for example, Hunt 1989; Pettigrew 1979, ‘is sceptical about the unitary organization culture concept and culture-driven programmes...’(Hassard, 1999, p. 561). Here, by using the example of chefs, it is possible to emulate the importance of recognising the diversities of multiple cultures within an overall organization culture. To briefly illustrate, chefs as an occupation, are able to project an out-group identity that is often seen as ‘ethnocentric’ in behaviour to others. Operationally, management in most cases, ignore the strategic integration of out-group cultural-identities in spite of the retrospect that chefs, for example, exist as a distinctive occupation. Instead, management would prefer to deal with the policies of a one-culture organism. With the notion of increasing levels of commitment, management would be wise to recognise that climate is not all exclusive to the images of corporate culture. All descriptors of culture engage some way in intra-group cultural values. These derive principally from social and ideational cultural systems. With this view in mind, the occupation of chefs will invariably enact identity on organization culture. Furthermore, this would suggest chefs through sub-cultural governance are capable of dictating the pace and conditions in which norms, practices and beliefs, etc, contribute to change within organizational climate.

Comparative commitment to organization culture and occupation culture

Abbott (1989) remarks that there is generally a lack of information and knowledge about ‘real’ occupational commitment. To elaborate, Abbott (1989) speaks of organizations increasing supremacy in the world of work that ultimately undermines the basis of occupational solidarity. However, research directly pertaining to occupation and commitment are in Morrow (1983) a study that focuses on the attachment that one gives to an occupational group or profession. In a more recent paper Riley *et al* (1998) relates commitment with organization and occupational culture to the implications of labour turnover and moreover, the intention to stay. In contrast, earlier works such as Becker and Caper (1956) compare commitment with elements of identification and occupation. In addition, Becker (1960) compares commitment to attributes of ‘side bets’ - an expectancy that is subjected to consistent or deviant behaviours. In the case of chefs, ‘extracted cues’, (an agent of ‘sensemaking’ Weick, 1995), to consistent and deviant behaviours (e.g., an expectancy), may be expressed through acts of occupational rhetoric. This would imply the occupation of chefs, as an intra-organizational group, has its own climate for which there are limits as to how much change; temporarily of otherwise, management can impose. It is therefore, proposed to explore culture, identity and climate as ‘integrated processes’ to social construction and cognition. The purpose, at this stage will be to examine the commitment of mutual-equivalence between chef-occupation and organization.

The questionnaire

Rhetoric, as a player within social and cognitive construction, can infer complex discourses, which can be displayed as persuasive actions, both in spoken and written form. Moreover, rhetoric can behaviourally exhibit overt and covert mannerism. The questionnaire, based on a 5-point *Likert scale*, has been designed to measure two dependent variables; that is, to explore the level of commitment chefs give to (a) their organization and; (b) their occupation. The question constructs to commitment and organization are within the conceptual parameters put forward by Mowday and Steers (1979). The question constructs for occupation contain similar parameters in that both dependant variables will reflect cultural and identity dimensions. For example, attachment levels reflecting practices and norms that may pertain to one of affective, normative or calculative commitment typologies. It is envisaged that the pilot questionnaire will highlight a series of committal relationships that reflect and contrast 'an adaptive organization climate' with, arguably, a 'less adaptive occupation climate' with the latter, constrained by complex cultural values.

Workshop objectives at CHME

An initial quantitative analysis based on a sample of hotels operating in England and Scotland will be presented. The data will relate commitment indicators to organization and occupation. Drawing from these preliminary findings the more contentious issue pertaining to cultural values will also be raised with regard to the next methodological step.

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