

## CORPORATE CULTURE : THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE ORGANISATION .

The concept of culture is something that has a very strong sociological significance .It is used for group relationships. This is so because culture encompasses every thing that a particular group share together that makes them unique from other groups of people.

In defining culture, Edward Tylor (1871) who also saw culture as civilization said culture was **“that complex whole which includes the knowledge, beliefs ,art , moral, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society ”**. Perhaps a document published in 2002 by UNESCO made the definition more apt by calling culture **“a distinctive set of spiritual, material, emotional and intellectual features of society or a social group and it encompasses in addition to arts and literatures, lifestyles ways of living together, traditions and beliefs.”**

In a compilation of over 200 definitions of culture made by Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952), it was made clear that culture had the following features:

- A. It is acquired
- B. It is not isolated from a people’s peculiar experiences.
- C. It is a people’s way of life.
- D. Cultures are peculiar to an environment even though they may be transferred to other environments where they may have been re-acquired through acculturation.
- E. It includes the values and norms of a people

Simply, we may say that culture is the sum total of a people's way of life. Some aspects of a people's culture may seem strange and horrible to people of other cultures. This should be understood in the light of the fact that a culture only makes sense to those who practice that particular culture. As advised by missionaries, no culture is completely bad; cultures are only different from one another.

Since society is made of more than 2 people in different groups or groupings, it is then definite that different cultures will be apparent everywhere even in the same school or even on the same street. For instance in the same stream of class in the same school, the A Class may have ways or habits completely different from the B Class. In the same vein, you can see children of the same parentage having different thought patterns or even different accent of English Language. Why? They have acquired or have been exposed to ways of life that are different from that of their parents through acculturation.

So, culture can not be ascribed to only tribes and nations. Culture is so generic that wherever two or more people are gathered together; there is a habit, a way of life that is so uniquely different from other groupings.

This thinking gives rise to the study of corporate or organizational culture. It must be admitted that for some organizations, their culture was something that grew out of an 'accident' while for some organizations their culture is something that was born out of a careful crafting of a sense of vision, mission and direction. These eventually gave birth to a distinct corporate culture.

## CORPORATE CULTURE:

Corporate culture is defined by Wikipedia as the “**attitudes, values, norms, beliefs and customs of an organization.**” It is so easy to describe and draw an organizational structure, it is on the other hand difficult to see or measure corporate culture. Deal and Kennedy defined organizational culture as “ *the way things get done here*”

In an organization, every worker comes with his experiences, beliefs and values. Work groups or departments in an organization have their way of doing things that affect the whole system. For instance engineers have peculiar ways of doing things that in form of language usage or slang may influence other people in the corporation thereby a new culture will be formed. Mostly the culture of an organization is determined by senior or management staff who may want to impose certain values that are reflective of the company's objectives.

## WEAK OR STRONG CORPORATE CULTURE.

Corporate culture may be either weak or strong. A corporate culture is said to be strong when staff respond to stimulus because of their alignment to corporate values. In this kind of setting, **groupthink** is a common phenomenon. Everyone does things almost without asking questions because the corporation's values are understood and accepted. People think so much alike that they do not challenge organizational thinking or dogma.

A strong corporate culture is reinforced by a reliance on a strong charismatic figure in the organization or an evangelical belief in the company's values by almost everyone in the organization. The only short coming of a strong corporate culture is that there is reduced capacity for innovative thought or *out of the box* thinking. Individuals shy away from saying or doing anything different from the perceived norm of the corporation. Doing anything contrary may portray such individuals as being rebellious. It must be known that a strong corporate culture is not an indication that the organization is doing well.

A weak corporate culture is a result of extensive bureaucratic control and extensive procedures which members of such organizations find to be disturbing to the effective doing of their jobs. This is a case of many governmental agencies particularly in Africa and some parts of Europe.

In a weak corporate culture, there is no room at all for innovative thinking because procedures can not and must not be challenged.

### HOW CORPORATE CULTURE IS BUILT

Certain elements come into play when corporate culture is being built. As said earlier, corporate culture can be built deliberately or by an accident .In '*Rethinking Incrementalism*', Johnson (1988) outlined the following as elements of a corporate culture: **The Paradigm, control systems, organizational structure, power structures, symbols, rituals and routines, stories and myths.**

These same elements can be used when corporate culture is being evolved. It can also be said that these elements will *always* come together to influence any organization that will be formed.

Simply the Paradigm explains the reason for the being of a corporation, what it stands for, its goals, values and mission. Nowadays it is becoming commonplace to see a company's framed statement of that company's vision and goals when you enter its premises. This is a deliberate attempt to build pride into staff and customer alike that the organization is worth doing business with. Ultimately, members come to see the vision of that company as something that is *shared, worthy and worth striving for.*

**Control systems** are the processes in place to monitor what is going on in the organization. Certain things have to be in place for there to be an effective control system. For instance most organization make it mandatory for their members to sign certain documents when they are appointed, they sign the attendance register every morning. The control

system may be seen as a rule book system which must be obeyed by everybody.

In determining the culture of an organization, there must be an understanding of its organizational structure. This structure refers to the reporting lines, hierarchies and the way things flow in the organization. The structure of an organization can only be determined by the founder of the organization and members of that organization must learn to work within the frame work given to them. It will be difficult to change the structure of an organization.

**Power structure** refers to the distribution of power in an organization. This structure is hinged on who makes decisions and the kind of decisions he can make, the spread of that person's power and what his powers are based on. Responsibilities or schedule of duties are things that primarily determine a person's power.

A very silent element in building corporate culture is the symbol or symbols that are identified with the organization. These symbols may be logos, particular slogans, colours and designs. These symbols may be aptly termed the brand of that organization. On the other hand, there are also symbols of power in the organization which the employees have come to accept and respect. For instance the executive toilet is a no go area for junior staff. Also in some corporations no body shares the elevator with the chief executive when he wants to use it .These are some of the things that determine corporate culture.

There is no organization without its own sets of ritual and routines. These are activities that are done regularly without thinking because they have been engrained in the minds of staff as unchallengeable and unchangeable. These include management meetings, board reports, staff prayer meetings and so on. These are done routinely more than they are necessary.

In every organization you hear the *heroic* deeds of some members of staff and stories about some events that are told over and over again. These stories implicitly or explicitly convey a message of what is valued. As a result, current members of the organization will strive to repeat such deeds or even attempt to surpass them. These are the stories that are repeated during a departing staff's send forth party or at the company's annual staff award day.

These elements may overlap but the main idea is that they are the ingredients of a corporate culture.

### **INDIVIDUALS OR THE ORGANISATION: WHO WINS?**

No culture gets practiced in a vacuum. It is either enforced or accepted. It is the role of the organization to determine what it wants get done and how to get it done. It is the duty of the individual to accept the values of the organization or reject it.

No serious organization must allow any individual to determine for it what it should look like. Doing that will be disservice to the vision of that organization (if there is any at all). No single individual is greater than the organization and so the organization must have in place several acculturation processes for grafting new members into its fold. An absence of these spells chaos and anarchy in that organization.

When an individual finds certain practices of an organization abhorrent to him, he should do the honourable thing – leave. Corporate culture can only be influenced by an individual who occupies a very senior position in the organization. He may not be able to change everything. He will only be able to influence some things. This is the reason why when a company wants to see a change, vanguards of its culture must be relieved of their positions and be replaced by new people in order to build new thinking and culture.

The individual's role is to carry out the mission of the organization in a way that his duties will enhance the values of his organization and also bring pride to his work .He must strive work in tandem with other participants in his company to ensure the success of the company's mission.

The organization must as a matter of principle ensure that its culture is enforced and accepted by all. It must provide tools to its members that will ensure that its culture is accepted morally rather as authoritatively. In doing this, the organization will build for itself an army of workers who believe in it.

From time to time, management (who are the vanguard of the company) must do an appraisal of its objectives and how these objectives are being pursued by staff. Certain reward system must be in place for staff that has done well in ensuring company's success.

There will be chaos when the management practices are not consistent with the objectives of the company. Individuals will find this confusing and may become individualistic with those members of staff with enormous power or larger responsibilities becoming tyrannical. When this happens, culture can not be built because ideals are not commonly shared.

## CONCLUSION.