ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: MONITORING THE SATISFACTION OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN AN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The environment where a person performs his daily work and his relationships with other actors impacts on the satisfaction of the individual and the community.That is, the organizational climate of a workplace reflects the emotional conditions under which the activities take place daily. Given the characteristics of the academic population of a top level educational institution and administrative population and infrastructure that are available, it is considered important to obtain perceptions that reflect the organizational climate and mark the strategic lines for the improvement thereof, which undoubtedly will manifest in fulfilling the mission, vision and organizational goals. For this reason, establishing a monitoring of the satisfaction of stakeholders involved in an educational institution is a long-term investment, since people who are satisfied generate better results. Considering this, one can detect positive and critical aspects on which plans can be designed for continuous improvement, which are also those that direct individual and collective efforts towards institutional sustainability.

Keywords: *organizational environment, higher education institution, degree of satisfaction*

When speaking of organizational environment, we are referring to the internal environment of an organization and the psychological environment that it describes (Robbins, 2009). Knowing this climate or environment will allow for an understanding of the relatively permanent perceptions and interpretations that individuals have regarding their labor structure, and also will also give an institution its own identity. (Anzola, 2003).

Through conducting a study on perceptions of social actors who are part of the same institution, a number of subjective reactions are reflected. Therefore, monitoring of the organizational climate must be carefully assessed in relation to physical or structural aspects- i.e. You must have elements that allow the objectification of the reality that is being observed. Conducting a study of organizational climate therefore allows for the detection of key issues that are likely to be significantly impacted by the work environment of the organization (Robbins, 2009), in as much as a positive as negative manner, and which provides elements for strategic planning for continuous improvement .

This document bases its analysis on the Gestalt school of thought, considering that individuals understand the world around them based on perceived and inferred criteria, so that they behave according to the way they perceive their world (Perls and Baumgander , 2009). Not putting aside that to every action there is a reaction, the thinking and behavior of an individual depends on the surrounding environment.

We consider that organizational climate is the shared perceptions of organizational members about the organizational processes, such as policies, leadership style, interpersonal relationships, remuneration, cordiality and interrelationships between actors (Rodriguez, 2005).

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Currently the organizational climate of educational environments, specifically in higher education, becomes an complex integrated by the internal environment, the context, behavior and structural approach of the institution. For this assessment, the study adds three variables: A) environmental variables; size and structure of the organization, management of human resources. B) personal variables; fitness, attitudes and motivations of the subject; and C) resulting variables; satisfaction and productivity, influenced by environmental variables (Brunet, 1999 and Rodriguez 2005).

But what is the main objective of monitoring the organizational climate of a university? The answer is logical. Working with these variables of analysis allows for the strategic planning of the development of the institution. In other words, directing efforts in the search for quality organizational processes that will benefit both the institution and its employees, as well as the individual and the collective. All of this will lead to lifelong learning, in academic and administrative processes (Murillo, 2004), as well as optimizing the potential of each area of development and of each social actor immersed in the same institution.

One of the variables of greater interest in the processes of analysis of organizational environments is communication. It is an essential element of the work environment which impacts workers, productivity and performance. In this regard, Gomez-Mejia et al (2000) considers that the existence of adequate broad-spectrum communication channels is key to achieving its development. It is then that communication helps stakeholders to achieve individual and common goals, coordinate activities and behave in an appropriate manner in order to achieve an institutions objectives, vision and mission (Ivancevich, 2006) .

In these types of studies in educational institutions, they are applicative in nature and allow for the diagnosis of the functioning

of the organizational structure, allowing for the identification of assertive factors or elements and those with deficiencies and inadequacies, facilitating the identification of causes and levels of involvement. For these reasons, Gan and Ferbel (2007) consider that such studies should be used preventively.

Due the previously mentioned factors, there is presently interest at educational institutions in conducting these types of studies that consider the benefits of seeking educational quality. This paper focuses on showing the results of a study of the organizational climate of an institution of higher education, where the process of formation goes beyond the purely academic emphasis on social responsibility- For educational institutions, the formation of quality human capital.

METHODOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

The model used in this study is one that was developed by Reyes-Guillen et al (2008), a holistic vision for the analysis of perceptions, considering an inter stakeholder scenario, that is, to analyze the perceptions of all social actors involved in the same process .

The model in question allows for the analysis of the perceptions and interactions between actors involved in a determined event or situation and their influence in decision-making. For this case study, the structure and perceptions of this inter stakeholder scenario which allowed for the description in a timely manner the organizational climate of the institution, recognizing the social actors as teachers, students and administrators.

OBJECTIVE

Develop an organizational environment study as a way of monitoring stakeholder satisfaction in a higher education institution.

METHODS

This qualitative and quantitative study was conducted in the period August 2013 to January 2014 in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the UNACH which is located in the city of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas.

The university population is characterized of being comprised of a multi-ethnic population, where the mother tongue of 35% of the students is different from Spanish (18% Tzotzil, Tzeltal 10% and 7% Chol) (Guillen Reyes et al, 2014).

The study population was comprised of stakeholders that include teachers (Full time, part time, and adjuncts), students and administrative staff with equal proportions of men and women.

Sampling was done by proportional allocation in each of the strata classified by the investigator, faculty, staff and students; considering a sample of 10% of the total population by strata and gender.

The survey process included a total of 250 questionnaires which were applied in a personalized manner with the interviewer filling out the format. The evaluated items were:

a) Knowledge of the goals and organizational structure of the institution.
b) Knowledge of the functions, rights and obligations of the organization.

c) Perception of the environment in terms of inter stake-holder relationships, material resources and needs for improvement.

Upon completion, the survey information was captured into computerized databases (Microsoft Office Excel 2013), followed by a statistical analysis of the information obtained through SPSS v 20. The analysis was carried out qualitatively and quantitatively with differentiation for stakeholders.

RESULTS

General information. The study was conducted with a sample of n = 250. Of those interviewed, 34.3% speak a language other than Spanish, the most frequent Tseltal (15.3%) and Tsotsil (8.5%) followed by Chol and English (5.1% in both cases).

Regarding the knowledge of the goals and organizational structure of the institution. 53% of respondents were unaware of the mission, vision and goals of the institution. 66% did not suggest mechanisms to improve their dissemination. 67% of respondents did not know the organizational structure of the faculty; however, 79% recognize the Director of the School as the highest authority. Regarding the administrative functions of the administrative secretary and academic secretary, a high percentage had no knowledge of these roles (43% and 63% respectively).

Regarding the roles, rights and obligations of the organization, 57% of the respondents know their roles, rights and obligations within the faculty.

As for inter stakeholder relations 64% of respondents perceived the existence of limits on the relationship between each individual that makes up the faculty. The existence of apathy, lack of communication, divisiveness, ideological diversity and lack of interest were mentioned which are elements that hinder communication and teamwork by marking inequalities.

Regarding the perception of the material resources that are available, 82% agree in saying that they are insufficient for university life. They claim that this condition would improve if financial resources for infrastructure and training for teachers and administrators were obtained.

When asked about the way in which these resources are available, 80% said that through the negotiations with the university central administration, as well as by way of externally funded projects, with both actions involving teachers, students and administrators.

Regarding the perception of the environment and possibilities for improvement, the most frequent responses were related to infrastructure and academic needs. As for the possibility of achieving these improvements which were identified as necessary, 75% of respondents believe that it is feasible since it is a question of will to propose good projects and to find ways of managing them. To achieve these improvements, they consider it necessary to organize through assemblies, as well as manage and evaluate processes to achieve specific objectives (79%).

If we talk about the results that were obtained with respect to the active participation in the search for improvements to the university faculty, 51% would participate in the search for improvements, mainly by commitment to the institution and society; while 45% would not due to lack of interest and the constant expression that it does not correspond to their functions.

DISCUSSION

In the case of this higher education institution, the work environment is constituted by the interaction between teachers, students and administrators who were interviewed. A picture of a heterogeneous, complex, work environment in a predictable and rigid bureaucratic continuum is visible.

According to Chiavenato (2011), the environment is a direct influence that generate a more or less favorable conditions for the development of activities and emotional health of workers. Institutions adjust and adapt to environmental demands, and survive and grow (Chiavenato, 2011). For the case study, it is clear that efforts must be directed to change the landscape and provide access to opportunities to quality livelihoods.

It is important to refer to the contextualization of the institution. In this case, slightly more than half of Mexicans are comfortable with the type of work they do for a living and a significant percentage do not know or are not comfortable with their job (Diaz-Guerrero, 2005). A criticism of each stakeholder to their environment is also plausible, as well as the unwillingness to propose improvements and to further engage in the process of building and strengthening of the institution. These elements are far from being seen as impediments, and should be seen as elements of attention when strategically planning lines of development in the medium and long term.

When speaking of energy sources for the existence and development of an organization, they can be 1) people (human resources) and 2) material resources. In this case they both energy sources and major findings were analyzed and recorded, such as ignorance of the mission, vision and goals of the institution for more than 50% of the study population. Over 60% are unaware of the organizational structure; however the figure of the director as the highest authority was recognized.

The perceptions of the environment and the inter stakeholder relationships are crucial in the analysis of staff satisfaction in an organization. The results show that communication channels do exist and inter stakeholder relations are generated (45%); but a lack of motivation, apathy, divisiveness, and disinterest are pervasive; elements which, moreover, hinder communication and teamwork by highlighting inequalities (64%). Clearly, this is one of the main interests to be taken into account in the planning of institutional development.

At this point, it is interesting to quote Likert who considers human organization to be directly related to effectiveness at work through variables such as quality of life at work, confidence level and interest, motivation, loyalty, and communication (Likert 1975; Chivenato 2011). In the case of the institution that was studied, we must address these issues in order to achieve an organization with a foundation of development and strengthening.

Efficiency and quality are the result of the way in which activities are done to achieve the objectives of an organization and the effectiveness and satisfaction of the stakeholders of the organization (Chivenato, 2011).

In this document, it is important to make clear the results of monitoring the degree of satisfaction of the stakeholders involved in an educational institution, explaining the results of an analysis of the organizational environment through the modelling of perceptions.

One of the main reasons that justify the lack of cooperation is the failure or lack of material resources. The institution of this study was no exception in this case. Most of those interviewed agree in saying that the available material resources are insufficient for university work, and we recall that students, faculty and staff were interviewed which assists in not bending this perception for the concerns of one group.

Complementing the above, the stakeholders believe that this situation can be addressed with the participation of the university

community, taking into account on the one hand the central university administration and on the other, externally funded projects.

In identifying priorities for development plans, the first related to infrastructure, followed by academic needs.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study and in accordance of the results found after identifying the organizational environment such as the monitoring of satisfaction of stakeholders in an institution of higher education, we conclude the following:

The educational institution where the study was conducted is formed by the interaction between teachers, students and administrators, and a picture of a heterogeneous, complex, predictable work environment in a bureaucratic and rigid continuum can be observed, impacting heavily on the academic productivity of the institution. There is not an environment full job satisfaction since it is perceived as a negative environment, where apathetic, divisive and intolerant of ideological behaviors are perceived.

Those who participated in the study perceived and shared criticism about the conditions regarding the environment, organization and material resources. They also gave suggestions for improving these processes or conditions but, paradoxically, lack the will to actively participate in them.

The designing of a Strategic Improvement Plan for the institution is essential, with the involvement of all of the stakeholders through the facilitation of communication channels, thus making it an assertive process between teachers, academic and administrative directors and students which achieves the goal through teamwork and leadership.

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