International Faculty's Perspectives on Organizational Culture and Management: A Three-Step Action Plan

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Abstract— The present study explores organizational culture and management practices at a Japanese university. The study employed a qualitative approach to gain insights into the organizational culture and leadership strategies employed in diversity management. Semi-structured interviews were held with adjunct international faculty members to reflect on their personal experiences under the current leadership and its implications on diversity management. Findings revealed that top-down management approaches were counter-effective in the university's efforts to promote diversity. Thus, the author proposed that inclusive leadership practices should be implemented to create a new organizational culture and harness diversity.

Keywords— diversity, inclusion, leadership, management, organizational culture.

INTRODUCTION

The main reason why organizations exist is to maintain their long-term continuity (Burke, 2016). However, the highly unpredictable and discontinuous external environment makes it difficult to achieve this long-term aim (Singh, 2005). Especially, given that advances in knowledge and technology drive innovation and reshape the external environment, the need for continuous adaptation is self-evident (Egitim, 2022). The fast changing global economic and demographic circumstances made it necessary for Japanese organizations to manage global workforces (Bebenroth & Kanai, 2011). Many universities in Japan are also introducing new policies to adapt to such external changes.

The goal of this study is to understand Japanese academic institutions' change efforts to promote diversity in their organizations. Eight non-tenured Japanese university faculty members were interviewed. The teachers were all responsible for teaching content and language integrated learning (CLIL) courses (Egitim & Garcia, 2021). They were also involved in various academic research projects on English language education. During the interviews, the participants were asked to comment on organizational culture and leadership practices to promote diversity.

Globalization and Change Efforts

The long-term continuity vision of organizations nurtures a culture influencing the way people act and behave (Schein, 2010). Deeply embedded espoused belief, values and tacit assumptions are embraced by all members (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). This is because culture forms habits in people and habits are difficult to abandon (Egitim, 2021a). Due to the rapidly changing global economic and demographic factors, Japanese

universities had to step up their efforts to promote globalization (Egitim, 2022). However, adapting to the global environment meant conservative Japanese organizations had to make large-scale organizational changes. As a result, a number of Japanese universities went under restructuring and implemented major curricular changes in recent years (Egitim, 2021b).

In this regard, the participants suggested that their universities also increased their efforts to promote globalization. The biggest indicator was that the number of foreign faculty in their departments have drastically increased. However, since those values, beliefs and assumptions were so deeply engrained, everyone coming from outside was expected to fit in with the existing culture. Dawson (2010) argues that when organizations are capable of establishing strong organizational culture, a high level of commitment and appreciation from employees can be achieved. The participants' responses were also consistent with this notion. In their organizations, everyone's role was well-defined and employees' commitment was unquestionable.

The interview results pointed to a contradiction between the intended change efforts focusing on globalization, and the existing working culture. While both organizations aimed to promote globalization, the newly hired foreign faculty members are forced to adapt to the existing culture. The participants mentioned that the language barrier makes it difficult for them to fit in with the existing culture (Egitim, 2021b)

In the academic institutions the participants belonged to, administrative procedures were still handled in Japanese despite the signigicant expansion of non-Japanese staff members who are not able to read and write the Japanese language. Instead of changing the system,

administrative staff adopted a reductionist approach by offering assistance to the those who were not competent enough in the language. This type of breakdown results in superficial learning and instead of a mental model shift, only behavioral adjustments take place (Kim & Senge, 1994). In addition, the responses suggested that since all meetings were held in Japanese, the international faculty were excluded from them. As a result, they were deprived of any potential roles to influence decision-making.

According to Burke (2017), Japanese organizations generally prefer to implement cumulative changes with a strong focus on maintaining stability and growth. These continual cumulative changes are considered far less risky than large-scale changes where a period of uncertainty is often unavoidable. Hofstede's (2001) country comparison tool ranks Japan 92 in terms of risk avoidance. Since large-scale changes bring a period of uncertainty, discomfort and conflicts within organizations become inevitable (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Thus, even if a large-scale change is needed, resistance is built to maintain those tacit cultural assumptions (Egitim, 2021a; Hawkins, 2008).

However, Weick and Quinn (1999) claim that continuous changes are an indication of organizational instability and alert reactions to daily contingencies (cited in Poole & Van de Ven, 2004, p.6). In other words, if an organization takes prolonged inward-oriented steps to maintain their deep-rooted cultural attributes, real issues will still remain. As a result, the organization may eventually fail to respond to the demands of the external environment. According to Burke (2017), such organizations are destined to disappear in the long run.

Maintaining Power and Status Quo
The majority of Japanese organizations operate based on a strict hierarchical structure where all decisions are made by a singular body of power at the top and communicated down to the subordinate units (Bebenroth & Kanai, 2011; Egitim, 2021a; Egitim, 2022). Cameron and Quinn's (2006) organizational culture model suggests that hierarchical organizations operate on the basis of rigid rules and policies. This assumption is consistent with Hofestede's (2001) power distance scale which regards Japan as a highly hierarchical society.

The participants suggested that their organizations operate on the basis of a strict hierarchical structure where all decision making takes place at the top and they are communicated down through the hierarchy.

Hofestede (2001) argued that Japanese people are generally aware of their hierarchical position in any setting and act accordingly. However, due to the expanding international work force, an increasing number of people may have difficulty understanding their role in the hierarchical organizational culture (Comfort and Franklin, 2014). Although the participants' organizations are attempting to promote globalization by diversifying their workforces, their diversification efforts were focused on the bottom level. This accounts for the lack of tenured international faculty members.

In another study conducted by Morrison and Milliken (2000) suggests that in organizations with cultural dissimilarities, it is likely that top management would view subordinates from different backgrounds with suspicion and thus, they may exclude them from decision-making. Such attitude from the top management is particularly common in hierarchical organizations. In such organizations, it is believed that management knows best and disagreement is considered bad. As a result, there is no room to allow upward information flow (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Since the minorities in Japanese academic institutions are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, it is possible to assume that there may not be any upward communication channel for them to communicate their suggestions and concerns to the upper management. On the other hand, the top management's efforts to maintain the status quo could be attributable to their resistance to sharing their decision-making power.

Although none of the participants seemed to be discontented about their own situation, they mentioned that the minorities in their organization faced cultural hurdles and hence, they are left outside the loop. Since the participants work in English departments of their respective organizations, it wouldn't be wrong to assume that some of the members are from western nations where flat or bottom-up organizational culture is prevalent. In such organizations, everyone's opinion is taken into consideration during the making decisions process. Also, when there is an intention for change, reasons are clearly communicated at all levels (Comfort and Franklin, 2014). Therefore, the adaptation of the minorities to an unusual organizational culture may prove daunting.

Lockwood (2005) suggested that in order to successfully manage cultural diversity in organizations, leadership needs to nurture a culture where all employees can share their knowledge to its maximum potential and feel included. When diversity is effectively managed, it is

possible to leverage different perspectives and skillset brought by people from different cultural backgrounds. As a result, organizations place themselves in positions to succeed in the rapidly changing global environment.

The Need for Culture Change

Although the participants suggested that their organizations strived to promote globalization, the culture of their organizations still remain intact. Both organizations operate on the basis of a hierarchical system where all decisions are made by a single authority and communicated down through the hierarchical order. The foreign faculty is considered to be at the bottom of the hierarchy while the full-time Japanese faculty remains in control of all management activities and decisions. Foreign faculty are not involved in the decision-making and have no direct communication channels with the full-time Japanese faculty. As a result, they remain disconnected from their organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When change is large in scale and transformational in nature, leadership must come from the top of the organization. Otherwise, chances are that planned organizational change may not be recognized (Burke, 2016). Bryman (2009, p.66) emphasizes a need to "create an environment or context for academics to fulfill their potential and interest in their work". Therefore, the participants' organizations may need a new leadership model based on respect for everyone's beliefs and values, supporting one another and promoting the interests of subordinates while encouraging autonomy within the organization (Egitim, 2022). According to Egitim (2021b), leadership based on collaboration may be an effective way of harnessing diversity. The leaders of the organization need to reflect upon their own actions and behaviors influenced by their own beliefs, values and assumptions (Driskill & Brenton, 2011; Egitim, 2021c).

Such deep reflections can help them recognize the issues facing their rapidly diversifying organizations. Researchers must research self in relation to others to gain a thorough understanding of their own perception and biases as well as those of others around them (Franklin, 2014; Egitim, 2021b).

They should unpack what they have in their backpacks to understand and accept their own biases and limitations. This self-reflection process should enable researchers to view issues through others' perspectives and gain a better understanding of their problems and challenges (Lew & Schmidth, 2011).

According to Maxwell (2018), leadership requires getting things done with and through other people. Thus, "one needs to spend less time personally producing and more time working with others to produce more" (Maxwell, 2018, p. 127). In order to achieve this objective, one needs to see the world through the lenses of others. In other words, the management of the two organizations may need to spend more time in the shoes of their foreign faculty members to understand the challenges and problems facing them.

The process of self-reflection should also urge the tenured Japanese faculty to remove the cultural barriers between them and the foreign faculty (Allison, 1999). As a result, they could feel more willing to create opportunities to interact with minorities and thus, build rapport. Strong rapport and continuous interactions are key components of an autonomous working environment (Raelin, 2016), where everyone would first seek to understand one another (Covey, 1989) and allow each other enough room to take leadership for their respective roles.

The participants suggested that a bottom-up communication channel may prove beneficial to convey the wishes and concerns of the foreign faculty members to the top management. If the foreign faculty realizes that their suggestions are given serious consideration, it may be possible to improve their satisfaction with the organization. However, as Bebenroth and Kanai (2011) stated, in order to understand, value and mobilize complex cultural workforce, cross-cultural adaptability skills are needed. Consistent with this assumption, Syed and Ezbilgin (2010) also argue that compatibility of the organization's culture with its diversifying workforce is essential for the long-term success of organizations.

However, in order to nurture an open organizational culture, leaders need to be willing to let go of control and allow others around them to step into leadership roles (Kramer & Crespy, 2011). According to Raelin (2011), collaborative leadership is key to acheive deep, genuine and collective interactions based on a mutual objective within a group. In other words, it is possible to make everyone feel valuable for the organization by engaging them in the leadership roles. The participants suggested that the main role of the foreign faculty is to teach the majority of English language classes. Therefore, their impact on lesson quality, student satisfaction and consequently, the university's success as an organization is indisputable. Therefore, recognizing them as leaders in their own field of expertise would be an essential step toward their successful integration into the department. This process involves minimizing power differences between

different hierarchical levels to increase opportunities for collaboration and promote cultural diversification at the top.

One way to promote cultural diversification at the highest level is to form a more culturally diverse committee in the department by integrating foreign faculty members into the committee (Egitim, 2022). This process would allow them to take part in decision-making. A study performed by Nielsen and Nielsen (2013) suggests that creating diversity at the management level may help with the successful integration of a culturally diverse workforce. In fact, the researchers also concluded that culturally diverse top management team may lead organizations to superior performance.

An additional benefit of involving foreign faculty members in committees is that the language barrier would be eliminated and opportunities to create direct communication between the upper management and the international faculty would emerge. Since foreign faculty would be present in committee meetings, materials could also be printed in English. As a result, minutes from each meeting can be announced directly to the adjunct foreign faculty.

However, as Kotter and Cohen (2002) noted, workers need to be engaged in the change efforts to let them embrace the intended change. The first step is to clearly communicate the purpose of the change and its potential effects on workers and the organization (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Therefore, establishing clear communication between the top management and the foreign faculty is essential to ease the worker anxiety and establish mutual trust. Furthermore, receiving foreign faculty's feedback could help to ease their adaptation process to the department and lead to improvements in management and administrative procedures. A study performed by Jaaskelainen and Uusi-Rauva (2010) concludes that bottom-up communication improved efficiency and productivity in Finnish public organizations. The findings of the study also suggested that paying serious attention to feedback received from subordinates resulted in increased business efficiency and productivity in organizations in the long-term.

Once the feedback is received from the foreign faculty, regular termly meetings could be held to give them another opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns regarding class management and administrative procedures. According to Piderit (2000), the success of organizational transformation depends on employee support and enthusiasm. Therefore, it is important to show employees that their involvement in the change effort matters for the successful execution of the intended changes. However, cross-cultural adaptability needs to be mutual in order to build trust in the wake of organizational culture change. Tan and Atencio (2016) emphasize the significance of cross-cultural understanding when teaching in a foreign cultural context. Foreign language teachers may need to invest their time and energy in learning the local language, history and culture if they are to build deeper connections with locals (Tan & Antencio, 2016).

Hence, enhancing the cross-cultural understanding of the minorities would be an effective way to help them with their adaptation process. Based on Japanese ministry's globalization scheme (2014), an increasing number of Japanese higher education institutions are offering Japanese language lessons and Japanese cultural awareness workshops to international students. It would be beneficial to offer those workshops to foreign faculty members at Japanese universities. In order to stimulate foreign teachers' interest in learning the local language and enhancing their cross-cultural awareness, the two organizations may offer all foreign faculty members a cultural awareness support incentive. By means of this incentive, minorities can be urged to take Japanese language lessons and cultural awareness workshops. This type of investment could be beneficial in the long term. Firstly, gaining cultural awareness would help to accelerate the foreign faculty's adaptation process (Tan & Atencio, 2016). Secondly, enhanced cultural awareness would help foreign language teachers build stronger rapport with their students which should also reflect positively in the teaching and learning outcomes (Hammond, 2007).

CONCLUSION

The findings from these interviews indicated that organizational culture needs to be compatible with the diversifying workforce. Therefore, nurturing a new organizational culture would be beneficial to make intended change efforts worthwhile. The study also made a number of recommendations to the leadership of the organizations. The organizations may need to adopt an open leadership approach based on respect for everyone's beliefs and values, supporting one another and promoting the interests of subordinates while encouraging autonomy within the organization (Egitim, 2017). If the leadership can achieve deep, genuine and collective interactions based on a mutual objective, it is possible to make everyone feel valuable for the organization. However, As Kotter and Cohen (2002) noted, taking gradual steps under the guidance of the leadership is essential for smoother adaptation to the

newly nurtured organizational culture. Finally, both the leadership and the minorities should make an effort to promote inter-cultural awareness within their organizations so that they can embrace diversity at all levels.

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