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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PRECURSORS AND OUTCOMES OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of culture in higher educational context. Research aimed to identify and discuss the properties of academic culture and examine how cultural concepts can be used to describe practices in private colleges and universities of Delhi/NCR. We came up with the factors that contribute to shape culture, and its results into a framework, to encompass manifestations of organizational culture in relation to academic excellence. By canvassing the literature, tried to develop a picture of academic culture and its contribution to academic practices and excellence.

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Introduction:-

Numerous researchers have studied the culture concept in HE specially its relation to the ways of perceiving governance of colleges and university, performance driver, student and faculty culture and information and knowledge management etc.

Culture impacts most aspects of organizational life, such as how decisions are made, who takes the ownership, how people are rewarded, how people are promoted, how people are treated, how they respond to the environment, and so on. Culture influences people's belief, attitude and behavior at work.

According to Needle (2004[1])...

"Organizational culture represents the collective values, beliefs and principles of organizational members and is a product of such factors as history, product, market, technology, and strategy, type of employees, management style, and national culture".

Culture in Higher Educational Context:-

Research on OC in academics can be traced back to the 1930s (Trice & Beyer 1993[2]). This concept began to receive serious attention since the 1980s with the work of Peters and Waterman (1982a) and Ouchi (1981) [3, 4]. Initially the research in HE resulted in ethnologic studies of universities and colleges (Clark 1960a; Trow 1960; Barton 1961[5, 6, 7]). Researchers were interested to investigate the culture influence on students as indicated by Pace (1962[8]). Instruments were developed to analyze culture like College Characteristics Index (CCI) by Peace and Stern (1958[9]).

In 1960s and 1970s area of culture studies in HE was limited to its impact on student. A shift was noticed. During 1980s researchers struggled to define OC and climate and how organizational culture improves institutional effectiveness.

Burton Clark's (1972a [10]) work on organizational saga is even the only literature stemming from the field of higher educational literature. He introduces higher education culture as study of environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership. Other authors who have attempted to conceptualize OC in HE, Dill (1982[11]), Masland (1985[12]) and Bergquist (1992[13]). The concept of OC has been recognized as a critical element in the study of HE (Peterson & Spencer 1993[14], Hardy 1990[15]) argued that 'the research in HE is far behind the management literature in terms of its understanding of culture'. One of the landmarks in the studies of HE institutions as cultural entities is the work of Riesman and Jencks (1962[16]). For them, college appeared not only as an organization, but as a subculture "with its own idiosyncratic customs and concerns". They also suggested that there is a need for anthropological field work to investigate not only students, but also "the student culture", "the faculty culture", and other subgroups that make up the college.

The mentioned studies provided the theoretical evidence on the process of culture formation in colleges and universities. After so many years of emerging culture concept in academic or HE, comparatively a small numbers of studies have tried to look in to the concept of culture-academic practice in general. In particular, there are few researches identified the influence of psychological empowerment and commitment as individual characteristics, and the influence of OC as organizational factors on it. We found this to be a serious research gap. As the depth and speed in change of today's business environment due to globalization, technological innovation, and the knowledge-based economy, jobs have become more complex, challenging. Thus, it is culture that may have an influence on employee efficiency, performance, psychological empowerment and commitment to organizations. It is also possible that the uniqueness of the culture has an impact on the market or economical performance. This study intends to fill this research gap, focusing on the role of culture in HE.

Literature Review:-

When we talk about the cultural perspectives in general, we focus on various cultural properties, such as language, stories, belief systems, values, rituals, ceremonies, or a set of basic assumptions. George D. Kuh, Elizabeth J. Whitt (1988 [17]), Identified the ways cultural perspectives have been used to describe college life, examines intellectual foundations of culture, institutional subcultures and implications for practice.

Culture, therefore, is a result of group's social learning influenced by its history. It is an outcome of the group learning experiences. Once a group acquires a history, it also acquires a culture (Schein, 1985, 1987[18, 19]).

Becher (1984[20]) define culture....

"The traditional and social heritage of a people; their customs and practices; their transmitted knowledge, beliefs, law, and morals; their linguistic and symbolic forms of communication, and the meanings they share".

Uttal (1983[21]) defined culture as: "...

A system of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with a company's people, organizational structure, and control systems to produce behavioral norms".

External environment is an active environment, changes, events and trends in the external environment effect internal environment too. When one confronts the external environment with the (internal) cultural factors one would be able to portray how HE can fulfill needs and ambitions as defined in the external environment (S.Beltman 2009 [22]).

The ecological –adaptation school of thought depict culture as a system of socially transmitted behavior that serves to link individual, group or communities to their ecological system. Environment has an active and significant role in challenging evolution of culture. Clark (2004[23]) asked two fundamental questions: How are entrepreneurial universities formed? How do they sustain themselves? In discussing these questions, Clark emphasized that such universities are constructed through a combination of structural and cultural factors providing these universities with a distinctive identity that also enables them to maintain a steady and adequate state of change in a shifting environment.

In HE, culture is formed through many complex influences both in the organization and as the result of the environment. Within the organization, culture is the result of an organization's unique history (Clark 1972 [24]), its leadership (Schein, 1983, 1984 [25, 26]), and critical events (Pettigrew, 1979[27]).

The country's environment form a ground within which an organization operates. The extent to which government and its bureaucracy supports and contributes resources to the institution, institution's involvement with legal context as institutions require specific legal status to operate, external funding etc, whether the conditions are friendly or hostile affects institution's functioning.

Schein (2004a [28]) believes that.....

Culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin. When organizations start there is always a leader who has a preferred way of doing things, and those preferences by definition are going to be imposed on the group members. The leader's values and preferences are the first ways that a group or organization does things and if that works it becomes eventually the culture of that group. So in a very real sense, founders and leaders create culture."

Richard Barrett (2006[29]) interpreted that...

"The culture of an organization is either a reflection of the personal consciousness of the leadership group (conscious or subconscious) or is inherited from previous leadership groups".

Culture is made up of organizational history, formal structure, strategies, policies, management process, vision, goals, objectives, authority and power structure.

The interpretation taken by the organizational literature appears to be a response to the sociological, psychological and anthropological perspectives. Such a perspective promotes a definition of culture as, "the deep structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions, held by organizational members" (Denison, 1996[30]).

The academic culture is a great tapestry, where the beliefs and practices of trustees, senior administrators, faculty members, campus community members, Students, competitors, and society shape the academic culture. A strong and deep understanding of tradition and history is necessary for an academic social system to thrive; Vision, goals, hierarchies, structure and policies can comprise a shared mental model that allows all faculty and staff to give meaning to external and internal occurrences.

Tiemey (1988[31]) said that....

"To study OC in HE, that is environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership, are no operationalizations of cultural concepts, but are claimed to be 'key dimensions of culture' themselves".

Social psychology aspects comprise of scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to other, sociology and psychology of institutional life must attempt to understand the dynamics internal to the institution as well as external factors and forces that influence the behavior of faculty, students, and administrators. Social psychology and communications, all contribute to shape and understand institutional culture.

Social cognition is a growing area of social psychology that studies how people perceive, think about each other. People think about other people or object differently. The study of how people form beliefs about each other while interacting is known as interpersonal perception.

The term psychosocial refers to the close connection between psychosocial aspects of our experiences (e.g. our thoughts, emotions, and behavior) and our wider social experience (e.g. our relationships, tradition and culture). Learners and teachers are psychologically affected by the surrounding social conditions that may disrupt or enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning.

Ravasi and Schultz (2006[32]) wrote that....

"Organizational culture is a set of shared mental assumptions that guide what happens in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations. It is also the pattern of such collective behaviors and assumptions that are taught to new organizational members as a way of perceiving and, even, thinking and feeling. Thus,

OC affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders. In addition, OC may affect how much employees identify with an organization”.

Artifactual manifestations of culture, such as architecture, customs, ceremonies, and rituals reflect culture of the organization.

The physical environment reflects distinctive values and aspirations of those who live and work in a college (Sturmer 1972[33]). Sometimes additions to the physical structure have been made in an effort to change an institution's external image. Culture is carried and reflected by the academic program, social environment, and artifacts such as language, ceremonials, stories, and heroes. All such artifacts have an impact to form employee's perception towards the organization. Sociology and the sociocultural tradition in anthropology address the rational aspects of a college or university and underscore the importance of formal organizational structures and subcultures in transmitting values and beliefs and influencing the behavior of faculty and students.

Institutional culture is both a process and a product. As a process, culture shapes by, the ongoing interactions of people on and off campus. As a product, culture reflects interactions among history, traditions, organizational structures, and the behavior of current students, faculty, and staff. Artifacts are observable manifestations of culture, such as the institutional mission statement, architecture, academic program, language, myths, stories, symbols, rites and rituals, and ceremonials. Culture revealed core values, beliefs and assumptions shared by institutional leaders, faculty, students, support staff and other members, such as alumni and parents.

Culture develops from interplay between the external environment and internal institutional features, such as an institution's historical roots, including religious convictions of founders, philosophy, vision statement, power structure etc, and external influences, particularly the society, legal structure, global influences etc. The academic program; faculty, administrators; and other stakeholders determined cultural artifacts, such as architecture, customs, stories, language, and so on; distinctive themes that reflect core values and beliefs and make up the institution's ethos.

Key elements that contribute to a college or university's culture include mission and goals of the institution, governance structure and leadership style of administrators, curricular structure and academic standards, student and faculty characteristics, student-faculty relations, size and location, and physical environment. The characteristics of each element and their interactions with each other create a unique culture for each college and university (Peterson, Cameron, Jones et. al. 1986[34]).

Organizational culture emerges as a major research area in HE. Higher educational institutions in many ways operate similar to other organizations and also function in environments that are characterized by government, market forces, globalization, internationalization, paradigm shift from teaching to learning , new technologies, global competition (Levine, 2000; Middlehurst &Woodfield, 2004 [35, 36]).

Before we developed a conceptual model for academic, it is necessary to examine how cultural has been applied to HE in general. Most of the literature on OC arose out of the corporate sector; eventually academic culture is an almost neglected concept in Indian context in both aspect literature and practice. Universities and colleges do not operate in a wholly profit-cantered environment. Out of this environmental approach institutional cultures evolves a uniquely structured setup with its multifaceted goals, multitude of offerings it's require a malleable framework for assessment.

Culture in HE is considered as a collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus.

A number of scholars have adopted more rational approaches and tried to explain the functioning of universities and colleges interpreting the structure and nature through analyzing the impact of disciplines on attitudes, values and behaviors of academics employed by these institutions, Becher (1981 [37]).

Zsóka(2007[38]) define.....

“Organizational culture is the system of assumptions, values, convictions and beliefs accepted and commonly interpreted by the members of the organization. It reflects both the real and the declared values of the company and its members”.

Bartell (2003[39]) culture at university level.....

“Is described as a values, believes and common objectives between the faculty members, managers, student and the university employees. These values and believes affect the process of the decision making at the universities to a large extent and shape personal and organizational behavior”.

Values, organizational norms, guidelines, or expectations that prescribe appropriate kinds of behavior by employees in particular situations and control the behavior of organizational members towards one another (Black & Richard, 2003[39]).

Schein (2004b [40]) defines organizational culture....

“As a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way they perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”.

Organizational culture is generally considered to be, at its deepest level, a cognitive phenomenon, “the collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 2011 [41]). However, though OC may reside in the collective minds of organizational members, it is manifested in tangible ways, such as behaviors, throughout the organization (Detert, Schroeder & Mauriel, 2000[42]).

Thus, OC is viewed as the pattern of basic assumptions, beliefs and meaning that guides organizational behavior (Martin 2002[43]), and he identified three different perspectives on OC: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation, but Schein (2004c [44]) integrative, No study portrays each perspective in its ideal type, but each study stresses different phenomenon. Therefore, to categorize a research study, one must look at what phenomena are foreground and background. In differentiation studies, multiple subcultures are described and differences between them are stressed, while in integration studies, organization-wide consensus is stressed and subcultural differences are of secondary importance (J.C. Smart 2010 [45]).

OC comprises of values, assumptions, stories, collective memories, Culture itself manifests several characteristics and affects people’s understanding about it. It’s socially constructed, its core lies in social, historical interaction within society or institution among people and the way they perceive and interpret the world around. Culture develops in long run as a result of the result of social interaction, tradition, history, leadership and several other internal and external forces. Culture is shaped by subcultures, including at the broadest level the subcultures of faculty and administration (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984[46]).

The integration perspective assumes consistency, organization-wide consensus, and clarity on the other hand differentiation perspective assumes that culture is manifested by differences among subunits, and that consensus only occurs in subcultures. This perspective can be clearly seen in Clark’s book Academic Life: Small Worlds, Different Worlds (1987[47]). Within the integration perspective, culture is the shared understandings in a given organization and multiple cultures will probably share some elements of the dominant culture. There is a consistency across cultural manifestations (Meyerson and Martin, 1987[48]).

Knowing differentiation and integration aspects can help to understand institutional behavior.

Culture and its Impact:-

The concept of culture has recently been widely used in the context of organizations. Numerous researches have been done to analyze culture dimensions and its impact on various aspect of academic life. Cameron and Quinn (2006[49]) stated that most organizational scholars and observers have recognized the powerful effect of culture on the performance and long-term effectiveness.

Although there is no consensus as to what actually culture is and how pervasive it is in academic, there is a general agreement that culture is a major force affecting employee behavior, motivation, commitment and organizational effectiveness, it may be one of the decisive influence for the survival or fall of the organization (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993; Schein, 1985a, 1990, [50, 51, 52]).

Numerous factors influence the ultimate performance of any education institution. One among these factors is the prevailing culture of an institution. Schein (2002[53]) has cautioned that researchers have underestimated the extent to which culture contributes to the performance of an organization, as either an asset or a liability and as the explanatory construct underlying numerous organizational phenomena.

Raduan et. al. (2008[54]) observes, A high degree of organization performance is related to an organization, which has a strong culture with well integrated and effective set of values, beliefs and behaviors. Moreover studies done by Denison and Mishra (1995[55]), Kotter and Heskett (1992[56]), contributed significantly to the field of culture and organization performance.

There is no doubt that the type of culture prevailing in an institution has a great bearing on its performance, M. James (2002[57]) addressed a positive relationship between culture, employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance. It has been widely argued that culture has a considerable influence on organizational behavior, particularly in areas such as performance and commitment (van Vianen, 2000[58]). Ramsden, (2005[59]) stated that culture affects universities performance and effectiveness.

Marta-Christina et. al. (2012[60]) considered, trust, cultural identity and cooperation as 'soft concepts', intellectual capital as a source of "long-run sustainability", and also a competitive advantage for the knowledge-based organizations. Ellinger et al. (2002[61]); Gilley and Maycunich (2000[62]); presented culture in academic as a source of organizational competitive advantage.

Shapiro (1988[63]) focuses on customer orientation as culture, In other words, customer focus is a sort of OC that leads to the creation of customers' best value in the most efficient and effective manner.

Cheng YC, Tam WM (1997[64]), Today's challenges of quality and customer focus improvement and systems development in HE are important and inevitable.

Lewis and Smith (1994 [65]) observed that "every college and university has a mission but very few fully identify who they serve". Rinehart, 1993[66], Employers expect colleges and universities to produce well-qualified and trained graduates who could work efficiently and effectively in the jobs for which they have been hired. They need workers who have communication and problem-solving skills and are willing and able to learn their specific jobs quickly and effectively. There are some highly competitive challenges among educational institutes, including accountability to social needs, increasing costs of education, diversity in educational methods and consequent increasing competition, and the need for adaptation of new information and knowledge to focus on students as the main customers.

Today's crisis in the quality of learning in HE is fundamentally a problem in culture. The existing culture in college or university -- the shared norms, values, standards, expectations and priorities -- of teaching and learning on most campuses is not powerful enough to support true higher learning. As a result, students do not experience the kind of integrated, holistic, values that truly transformative higher learning.

The concept of empowerment was first introduced in 1980s (Blanchard et al., 1996; Whetten and Cameron, 1998[67, 68]). However, in 1990s substantial interest has been generated towards this concept among researchers, university lectures, and management specialists (Conger and Kannungo, (1988[69]); Bowen and Lawler, (1995[70]); Thomas and Velthouse, 1990[71]; Spreitzer, 1995[72]).

Empowerment develops professional growth in abilities and skills, self-efficacy and performance and decreases turnover of employers (Biron & Bamberger, 2010; Logan & Ganster, 2007; Yang & Choi, 2009[73, 74, 75]).

Employee empowerment is one of the most successful ways to improve employee motivation, organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and a great deal of effort has been expended to explore empowerment in organizations (Henkin & Marchiori, 2003; Laschinger, Finegan, & Wilk, 2009; Manojlovich & Laschinger, 2002; Wang & Lee, 2009[76, 77, 78]). Empowered teachers encourage colleagues to improve student achievement and teacher's leadership is become a mean of coping with change more meaningfully and successfully (Anderson, 2004[79]). Teacher empowerment creates a positive learning environment which encourages risk-taking, personal commitment and involvement, decision-making and professional growth will enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Martin, Crossland, & Johnson, 2001[80], O'Connor & Korr, 1996; Ashton, et al., 1983 [81]). According to Hoppock (1935[82]) job satisfaction is "any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person to say, I am satisfied with my job.

A large number of researchers, link job satisfaction with organizational culture; it increases the satisfaction level of the employees and decreases the turnover ratios from the organization. (Taber 1975 [83]), (Jiang and Klen 2000[84]), (Rad 2006[85]), (Arnold 2006[86]), and (Chang and Lee 2007[87]) etc.

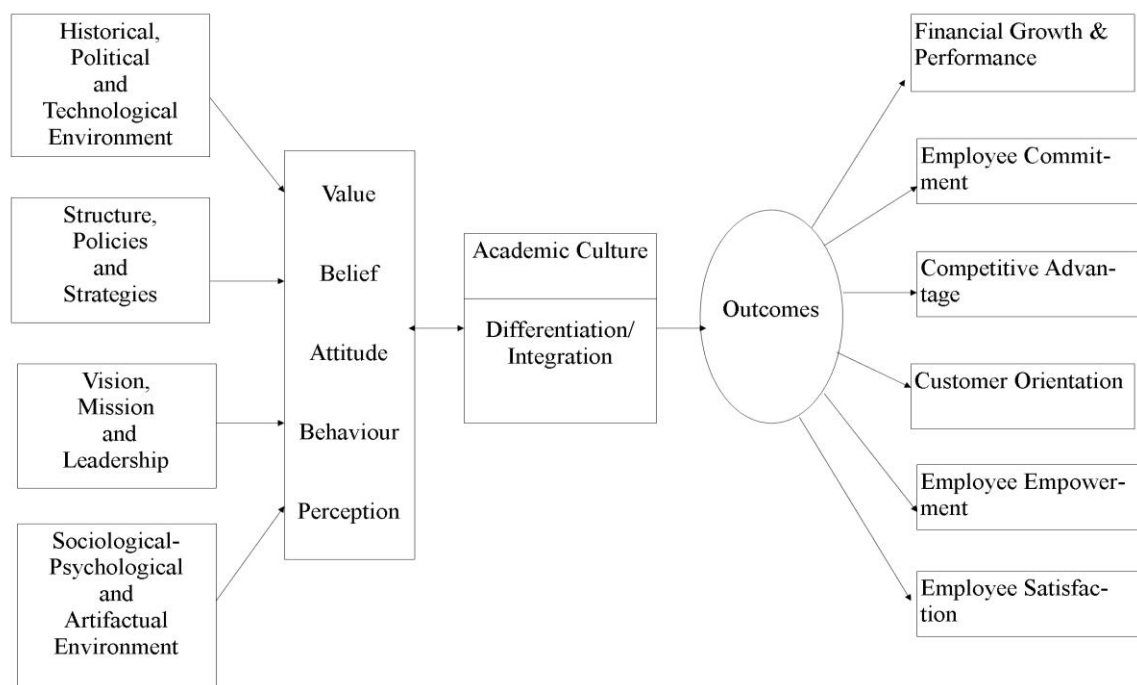


Figure 1:- Organizational Culture: Conceptual Framework.

The above insights of literature make us to conclude that organization culture influence organization functioning in many ways. The literature also shows a lack of study about the relationship between organizational culture and psychological empowerment and commitment among academicians in universities.

Discussion:-

Traditionally various methods and approaches have been applied to study culture aspect. Socioculture, ecological, structural, symbolic and cognitive approach provide a deeper insight of culture emergence and its association with value creation, as shown in figure 1. Social science research is not well suited for identifying properties of institutional culture. Cultural perspectives help in examining and understanding events in an institution and the behavior of faculty, students, and administrators. History, Political & legal environment, Goals, internal policies and procedures, strategies, routine practices and leadership activities I more complex meaning in if viewed as cultural phenomena.

Organization concept is being used in a wide field and it is getting great importance day by day. This is why most of researchers study this concept.

The literature highlights a number of tools and methods useful in studying, analyzing and assessing organizational culture. Among them we can mention: literature review, observation, interview, questionnaire, additional investigations. The instruments listed can be classified into two broad categories: qualitative and quantitative methods.

A first qualitative method used in analyzing organizational culture is also the literature review. It is based on deciphering the elements of the company by researching certain historical, financial reports, procedures, various press releases, annual report, organizational diagrams and charts etc.

The other methods include observation, structured and unstructured interview, questionnaire survey etc. Various instruments have been used for exploring organizational culture:

Assessing Learning Culture Scale, Competing Values Framework, Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) (Cameron and Quinn), Corporate Culture Questionnaire, Culture Gap Survey, Culture Survey, The Cultural Audit, Cultural Assessment Survey, Denison Organizational Culture Survey, Hofstede's Culture Measure, Hofstede's Culture Measure of Organizational Culture, Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument, Organizational Culture Inventory. Competing Values Framework and Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument has been extensively used by the researchers to explore academic culture.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research:-

Despite the wealth of research linking organizational culture with job satisfaction, commitment, performance and effectiveness, there is an absence of research that examined effectiveness, commitment and empowerment at the subunit level. In addition, literature also lacking pertaining to historical, legal political and environmental effects on institute/university's functioning mostly researcher focused on dimensional approach to analyze culture. To gain a better understanding of how culture work and influence various units, research needs to be done to explore institution's culture at various level and its influence on various subgroups functioning.

Additional studies may also be done which examine how gender affects leadership behavior and its impact on organizational culture, performance and decision-making? It's Dominating culture or subculture that has greater impact on employee commitment? The impact of university or institution's philosophy, values, on student's performance. Explore employee psychological empowerment in various academic units. There's an absence of literature addressing organizational culture and effectiveness for minority institutions, specifically at the sub-unit level.

Ultimately, the report demonstrates the alternative ways of thinking about education in order to shift thinking away from education as a place of getting degree, toward the social purposes and importance of higher education in reforming the educational system. Institutions can be given new frames and reformers can activate a different set of cultural models, the public will be better positioned to think about and understand the broader societal benefits of education and the need for educational reform.

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