

Chapter 4

Soft Systems Methodology for Organizational Culture Analysis

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the interlinkage of soft systems methodology (SSM) and organizational culture. Often, organizations find themselves within a problematic situation connected with cultural issues. Analysis of such issues is complex because of the numerous stakeholders involved and the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of the culture. This chapter focuses on organizational culture, which is among the most important assets on which an organization rely, particularly for the sake of change management. Here the authors begin with a review on the concept of organizational culture and proceed to discuss the factors affecting the organizational culture and then present a model of organizational culture, cultural aspects of SSM, and a real-world application of SSM in the form of a case study of corporate ethical culture analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of ethical culture roots in not only the increased complexity of today's world, but also the recent dilemma indicating the decisive role of cultural aspects in the performance and life cycle of an organization. The future directions followed by an organization are affected by the changes

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to which the organization is exposed by both internal and external factors. This is so significant that necessitates a change management system wherein cultural influences are well addressed. The problem is so complicated, calling for simultaneous contributions from the human minds, political-economic structures, and the environment – a goal that cannot be realized unless a system of change is established.

The above-mentioned issues highlight the need for a systems approach to cultural analysis, which is known to be a complex task to undertake. Such an approach provides the analyst with the ability to characterize the organizational culture at a larger scale, and hence formulate an action list to establish a widely participated culture when planning for the future. Despite the technical and strategic problems emerged upon founding the systems management on this systems approach, one will end up with bunch of useful systems solutions as well. The soft systems methodology (SSM) has been designed not to be implemented linearly (i.e. in a sequence of steps), but rather in the form of a holistic instrument dealing with the cultural in a wide scope. In combination with other theories and tools, it can address the change management comprehensively to achieve an organizational culture providing for extensive participation of all stakeholders when planning for the future.

Following the SSM, managers must acknowledge a relatively broad set of goals and prepare different solutions to approach the goals. The SSM further provides the managers with a body of understand about the elements of society: human beings. In this respect, managers should scrutinize perspectives, intentions, worldviews, and standard of judgments. In an organization, SSM deals with such issues as conflicts, arguments, mutual understanding, and the so-called change. For this purpose, it keeps focusing on not only the cultural issues (people's viewpoints, mutual values, and norms), but also the political issues (identifying the individuals' class and status according to their perspectives) (Goksoy, 2017).

Presenting a modification to the classic SSM, Kartowisastro *et al.* (1994) went for studying the problematic situations encountered more frequently with the eastern cultures. They came to focus on this topic with the initial aim of implementing the SSM to address a cultural conflict raised when an Indonesian institute of research and development (R&D) faced with modern technologies. Provided that the communicative competence represents a requirement for the SSM, the modification proposed by these authors (*i.e.*

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