

Transformations of Organizational Culture in the Public Sector

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Abstract

Nowadays, Chinese society is marching into modernization in a pluralistic way, and China's reform and opening up has entered into a more profound and cultural level. So how the public sector to keep up with this pace is a question people pondering. With the rapid development of modern society and corresponding adjustments of the political and economic structure, the public sector is lying in a flux and reflux environment. The organizational system bureaucratic, closed and conformist can not cope with the rapidly changing external environment, then only emphasizing an open organization personality, innovation, circulation and interaction can a strong coordination and resourceful ability possess. The progress of high technology and the acceleration of knowledge update frequency not only has exacerbated the complexity of public organization system, but also increased the demand for creative talent. Therefore whether there is personalized and competent working personnel have become the basic conditions of public organizations to respond to challenges of the current period, thus requiring the public sector pay close attention to the growth of "complete", "personalized" and "independent" persons, and encouraging staff member mature autonomously. The human resource management of modern public sector has also proposed the concept of "conscious management" and "career development" and so on, in order to stimulate workers to achieve self-worth via their professional career, thereby to gain feeling of self-satisfaction. Through properly handling with relationships between formal organizations and "informal organizations", along

with the institutionalized managements, we will do realize emotional managements, and finally by human managements to maximize organizational effectiveness.

Key words: Public sector; Organizational culture; People-oriented management

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, China's reform has entered into a more profound and cultural level. So how this culture change to reflect in the public sector is a question people concerning. This paper will explore organization culture and human management of Chinese public sector from sides of organization culture, management philosophy, "conscious management", "career development", and "informal organization" of the public sector in order to raise our pondering, thus promoting the transformation of organization culture in the public sector.

ORGANIZATION CULTURE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

"Organization culture" exists in the development process of administrative activities of the public sector, including both the written rules and regulations in the administrative organization, and also the unwritten ethics and habits of the organizational system; both the external conduct code of the administrative organization, and inner thinking characteristics, moral tendency, and value notions of the organizational system. British E. Jaques interprets "organization culture" as the habits

and traditional methods of doing things, and to some extent all members of the organization mutually accept (Makin, Cooper & Cox, 2000, p.273). American E. Schein takes "organization culture" as a "hypothetical model", creation, discovery or development by the group handling its problems of external adaptation and internal conformity, to be considered effective during applying, therefore forming a right way in the "perception, thought and emotion" relationship (Makin *et al.*, 2000, p. 273). Taiwan scholar Zhang Jinjian calls "organization culture" as "administrative culture", and sums up as "behavior patterns, life styles, crowd relations and value notions that government officials or civil servants should jointly abide"(Zhang, 1984, p. 292). Chinese scholar Wang Huning generalizes "administrative culture" as "a subjective sphere of political activities...including attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values when people facing administrative activities", specifically involving "administrative and political awareness, national temperament, the psychology, ideology, principle, ideal, notion of administration and so on" (Wang, 1989, p. 105).

Generally speaking, "organization culture" is a kind of value orientation accepted by the people in the organization, which forms a kind of cultural atmosphere to dominate and control organizational behaviors, its formation links closely with value orientation of management personnel in the organization. When "organization culture" to a greater extent shows its inclusiveness and most members of the organization more recognize their organization's value orientation and management culture, organizational members will feel the ease of mind and adopt a more positive attitude to do the work, the organization's harmony and cohesion also be enhanced, so that the energy of the organization strengthened, the operation of organizational system will be more effective. Conversely, when the majority of organizational members take an aversion for cultural atmosphere of the organization system, not accept and agree with the value orientation of organization, there may bechance some sort of inner conflict during organizational systems to hinder the development of organization and the realization of organizational goals. A new type of organizational culture put the good communication-means to establish an open, frank, trusting, and harmonious inter-group relations between organization members, organization members and managers--as a precondition; take organization members' effective participation--the reflection of managers' sincere and the embody of the democratic mechanism in the organization --as a basis.

The development of modern society requires the management more effective and aggressive, and also demands the development of public sector with modern organizational culture. The rapid development of modern society and the adoption of modern science

and technology impact upon the old organizational and interpersonal patterns, ask the managers to pay more attention to human factors, the interests and needs of the employees in the management, neither show no solicitude for extrinsic goals of organization, nor ignore "intrinsic" targets of organizational system, namely, the psychological needs of achieving personal values. Based on intently creating a good cultural and psychological atmosphere and training a sound personality to pursue organizational effectiveness and promote organizational development.

The management of public sector itself is also a kind of cultural activities reflecting the organizational culture model. Such "organization culture" stems from social cultures, blending with the social culture formed by long-term historical heritages, which become an "invisible hand" in public sector management, supporting and maintaining the public sector management, influencing and restricting all aspects of public sector management. As the social culture, this "hand" of "organization culture" is relatively stable, but as the society changes, and demands corresponding changes of organizational systems, it presents a pattern of dynamic and transforms simultaneously with social change.

PEOPLE-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In order to realize the transformation of organization cultures in the public sector, an important issue is to understand the essential characteristics of humans, thereby having a correct cognition to public sector staff as well as their status and role in the public sector. From this point of view, one can develop and change the management of public sector.

There is a long time to probe human essential characteristics. As early as the Renaissance, the westerner had began to investigate the issue "what is human being", and revealed the essential characteristics that people have relative independence and possess a certain initiative in the process of interacting with the objective world during the long-term study. Nevertheless, in the course of development of human society, whether in East or West, there was, to varying degrees, the tendency valuing material but underestimating people. In the evolution of Western modernization, once emerged the phenomenon that fragmenting human nature, treating people as appendages of modern technology and parts of modern machine, also to be dominated constantly by the "objects". In China, for a long time, ignoring the subjective personality and suppressing human individuality was becoming a mainstream culture, the culture traits of self-suppression had shaped introversion temperament of Chinese national character. For China had always been a lack of enlightenment of the human self-

consciousness, a lack of an inherent profound revolution in the ideological field, so there was a distortion on understanding persons, combined with institutional factors, which had led to significant repression of human personality and independence conscious, such a cultural atmosphere had permeated society and the public sector. Although the reform and opening up, in large part, broke all kinds of taboos, provided space for people to expand their own capabilities and self-development, there is still the situation suppressing human nature and disregarding personal interests, needs and values in the public sector, the phenomenon ignoring the individuality and creativity of working personnel is still everywhere. Such a culture is a kind of fetters, impeding the modernization process of public sector.

In modern society, the public sector should establish a “people-oriented” management philosophy and mechanism, the so-called “people-oriented”, to begin with, is the respect for the human and humanity. George Elton Mayo, the famous American management expert, once said that if we want workers as members, first of all make them as the human (Timm & Peterson, 2004, p. 7). Specifically expressed in two aspects: on the one hand, to give due protection to the interests of organization members; on the other, to respect their personality and initiative. Organizational culture of the modern public sector should be a cultural structure holding “individual” and “personality”, including legitimate individual interests and personal capabilities. During the new era, public sector’s managers should have the acquaintance that the modern person is not the abstract one discarding individual interests, everyone survives into reality, so that each person has their own individual interests. Individuals in the community, first and foremost, are ones with self-interest, then with self-consciousness. Only when the social and organizational development can satisfy people’s basic profit demands, on this basis, the development of the individual have also reached the fettle beyond the purely self-serving, can a harmonious relationship and a situation of common development between the individual and entirety appear.

In addition, public organizations should still accommodate individual ability, which reflects the organizational system admit its members self-will and self-development. The theory of human assumptions of modern Western scholars proposes:

(1) People themselves with the subjective initiative, owning the need of strive to maximize capitalizing their talents and resources, when their basic physiological requirements are satisfied, they will seek a higher level demand and search for meaning and self-satisfaction at work.

(2) Individuals pursue mature by degrees at their work, they exercise a certain degree of autonomy to develop their own capacity and possessing the ability to adapt to

the environment.

(3) The persons have the ability to control themselves, sometimes, external stimulation and control may be a threat, and thereby reducing the adaptability and controllability they had originally (McGregor, 1990, p. 321-322).

The basic meaning of such assumptions is that people themselves have the inherent driving force to exert self-potential, self-developing and self-realizing, then as modern people, seeking themselves is a growing trend and continuous lifelong process. The task of the manager is, therefore, to recognize humans’ needs and capabilities pursuing autonomy, greeting challenges, self-development and self-realization, to provide conditions suitable for growth and development for the organization members, to develop a cultural atmosphere of “support” and “achievement” in the organizational system, and to encourage workers self-shaping and self-development.

American scholar, Nicholas Henry called for public sector managers concerning about the staff members’ ability of “self-management”, he linked personal self-potential and self-realization with the liberation of humanity, appealed to establish “open” management model protecting “self” and “personality” in the public sector, and advocated to create a culture everyone retaining their individuality during the development process of modern organization ...(Henry, 2002, p. 58) John Cowan, American management expert, believed the liberation of individual’s psychological emotion needs such an organizational culture tolerating the habit of all people, while some habits can be very useful for this organization. He criticized some managers remove people’s horns by using skills, deemed those horns are often crucial elements ..., and the results is making the organization senile (Cowan, 1992, p. 92-93). Modern management practices show that there are no contradictory between personal self-realization and the organization’s objectives fulfilled, under appropriate conditions, the two can gain consistent perfectly, and personal self-realization will enable organizations to achieve greater performance.

With the rapid development of modern society and corresponding adjustments of the political and economic structure, the public sector is lying in a flux and reflux environment. The organizational system bureaucratic, closed and conformist can not cope with the rapidly changing external environment, then only emphasizing an open organization personality, innovation, circulation and interaction can a strong coordination and resourceful ability possess. The development of modern society needs persons personalized and competent, therefore whether there is personalized and competent personnel have become the basic conditions to respond to challenges of the current period. Under the condition of higher development of modern science and technology, the acceleration of knowledge update frequency and the

exacerbation of complexity of public organization system increase the demand for creative talent, thus requiring the public sector to pay close attention to the growth of “complete”, “personalized” and “independent” persons. The new situation requires internal environment diversity and contacting richness of organization development, with the result that organizational systems can survive, develop, and meet the challenge in the process rich, lively and interactive.

The development of modern civilization is the process awakening human ego and developing their self-consciousness. The process of modernization is also the individual's. The purpose of china's reform and opening up is liberating and relaxing the man, then releasing people's enthusiasm, initiative and creativity. Marx said, “the responsibilities, mission and task of everyone is developing comprehensively all their own abilities”, “only when the individuals themselves can control the impetus of actual development of personal intelligence played by outside world, comprehensive development of the individual has not yet the ideal ...”(Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, 1972, p. 330) Based on this, for the public sector, it should establish a management philosophy of “people foremost”, reduce the external restrictions on talent development, encourage the development of subjective consciousness of the staff, and establish and perfect the management mechanism in favor of exploring the potential, encouraging character development and motivating the activeness of workers. Building a culture atmosphere accommodating individual and overall and compatible with personality and common to cause the public sector can be an entirety connected by the living and real individuals. The practices of modern organization management state clearly, only when the characteristics and potential of each person in an organizational system can be played and used by this organization, when the personal value of the organization system members can be achieved to the utmost extent, can the extent of realizing organization goals maximize and the development of sector more smooth.

“CONSCIOUS MANAGEMENT” AND “CAREER DEVELOPMENT” OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The “people-oriented” management philosophy of public sector emphasizes the combination of human and organizational needs in organization management, which is an important part of organizational culture change in public sector. In recent years, the concept of “working life quality” was put forward. This concept contains two meanings: the first refers to a series of objective organizational conditions and practical situations, including the circumstances of work diversification and sector democratization, as well as the extent of the

management involved by workmen. The second is the sense of security, accomplishment, development and degree of satisfaction for personnel in the course of their work. Clearly, this concept means organizational environment conditions of the staff and the resulting emotions. A good organizational environment appeared as operation mode sufficing the needs of self-development of workers, so that the staff has a higher “working life quality” and be able to maintain a psychological and physiological health status in the organizational system. These requirements challenge to leaders and managers of public sector, asking them look on working personnel by a new perspective as the key body of the department and should be given to due respect and heed.

The scholar of former Soviet Union B. r. Afanasyev study the function of persons in the management and bring forward, “people in the past, present and future will always be a central component of the social system, the main objects and subjects of management”. He believes that the role of the management object is not negative; this role can not be only attributed to that object completes the higher level decision or not. The role of the object should be more extensive, profound and multifaceted. For example, ...object can not adopt obviously incorrect, baseless and unrealistic decisions. Object can require subject modify or simply cancel the decision-making. Object can make decision beyond their area, not subject to the limitations of requirements and targets specified above ... Object can demonstrate initiative and independence in terms of exploring and using specific ways and means on tangible decision-making and can make their own options and so on (Afanasyev, 1983, p. 3 & p. 58). In view of this, society management is not a unilateral role that management system to managed system, but the interaction--constituted by various kinds of direct contacts and feedback contacts--between management subject and object.

Now, in the public sector management, it should see the management to people is a form of social management, the subject and object of management are persons dynamic, seeking a certain purpose and be able to think. In particular, the management object don't simply implement the decision made by the managers passively, to the contrary, they are positive and proactive executors owning relative independence and initiative, and be capable of choose specific ways to achieve the decision. Based on this, the concept of “conscious management” is advanced, that is, working personnel themselves ensure production conditions and the order of “social life”, and take the initiative to make proper arrangements for all aspects (Afanasyev, 1983, p. 59). Without a doubt, the realization of “conscious management” depends on the degree of social maturity and how much odds can society provide for achieving people's initiative.

In the human resource management of modern

public sector, it also proposed the concept of “career development”, which refers to the process constantly success, self-worth, and self-gratification for the staff in his career life. Helping workers succeed is the important task of work sector, particularly the management staff of work department, behaving at different stages and aspects of workers development in specific management. For one thing, at the early stage when a staff member entering organizational systems, give him (or her) a challenging work, make one engendering a strong interest in the work of department at the beginning, which inspire the work enthusiasm and beget a vision and ambition to their own career development. For another, helping staff accept the challenge in his career and likely get ahead. The management activities associated with workers’ “professional development” includes vocational training helping them improve the level of quality and profession and enhance their work adaptability and professional competence through training. Thus broadening the development space for staff members and promoting their process of “professional development”.

In modern society, in fact, everyone run one’s own career. According to interests and expertise, people search for their own position, then often to be valued by themselves to adjust constantly to their needs and development goals. In this process, the task of organizational system is to encourage personnel self-management and help employees make more accurate valuations on their own, thus determine development goals suitable for them and help employees achieve their goals under conditions permitting. When it is consistent between the direction of the organization promoting staff professional development and the direction of staff self-development, can organizations and workers development both reach the best condition.

As everyone in the organization system has own special educational and technical level, thoughts and feelings, interests and requirements, all these are not always consistent with the interests of the organization. Therefore, in order to achieve organizational goals, not only requires a reasonable allocation and job placement, but also need to have an effective stimulus to make people aware of the symbiotic nature of individual and organizational interests, from this to promote the development of organizational systems.

“INFORMAL ORGANIZATIONS” OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In the modern public sector management, an important aspect of organizational culture change is to understand and treat correctly the “informal organization” referring to the informal structure pattern formed by the people based on emotion and interaction in the organization. For this type of structure, the theorists have all kinds of

summary. Chester I. Barnard, the American management expert, maintains that the informal organization is an organization combined naturally, without a specific purpose and adventitious formed by personal contact and interaction in the office. This organization has no formal structure and often can not consciously recognize the common purpose. It gradually formed with work-related contacts and thus establishes certain attitudes, habits and norms. Roethlisberger and Dick account the “informal organization” is an invisible relationship--built on the basis of personal interactions, not the authority of formal organizations, but spontaneous combinations among people--existing among formal organization members (Zhang, 1990, p. 168). Taiwan scholar Zhang, Jinjian proposes “informal organization” is the interactive behavior and common consciousness generated by a number of personnel in the formal organizations due to life contacts, emotional exchanges, similar tastes, consistent interests without artificial design. Then which forms a natural relationship that has neither legal status, nor specific purposes or fixed form, which turns out intangible benefit, limitation or inhibition and impact for the objectives and functions of formal organizations (Zhang, 1984, p. 249).

The former Soviet Union scholar Afanasyev calls “formal organization” as “the visible structure”--prescribed by the Act, rules or regulations, or has not yet documented, but it is determined by the traditional prevailing rules. Such a rule involves the allocation of rights, obligations and responsibilities, relates to the business contact, mutual relations and work schedule, and clearly defines the role of each unit and individual in the organization. So the physical structure is the basis for achieving organizational functions and developments. He calls “informal organization” as “the invisible structure”--the system based on people’s mutual touching, reciprocal sympathy and relations, formed spontaneously according to common characteristics such as occupation, personality, interests, ambitions, live and study place, gender, age, nation and so on. Of which also have “leaders”, showing a spiritual power, due to its prestige rather than appointment. No matter what principle of an organization to establish, it can separate from the visible structure and invisible structure (Afanasyev, 1983, p. 164-165).

The “informal organization” is members of the organization coming together basing on some kind of symbiosis, such as common interests, common needs or common inclinations, forming a combination of natural human relationships in which we exchange and influence mutually, impact on the operation of the formal organization. In the running of the organization, such informal structure morphology shows a variety of functions.

Firstly, such structures have the function of meeting social and friendship needs for people. Social

characteristics of people make them have dispositions of seeking contacts based on similar habits, interests and perspectives. Especially when people are rich, such needs will be further strengthened. The interpersonal association of non-utilitarian and owning friendship can give rise to psychological satisfaction for people. During the process of members of formal organizations "joining" the "informal organization", it achieves "the socialization of organizational roles", and its inherent social needs are sufficed.

Secondly, people have psychological requirements seeking to be understood and identified. People will be successful or encounter difficulties and setbacks in social life. When succeeding, we want to share happiness with others and hope to get the praise and encouragement from others; while failing, hope to obtain understanding, compassion and inspiration from others. In the operation of the formal organization system, "informal organization" is becoming the social form fulfilling above psychological needs of people.

In addition, people hunt for being protected and helped to protect their own rights, hunt for respect, status and reputation to appease the demand for "self-realization", which is one of reasons for the existence of "informal organization". "Informal" group can give the appropriate support to organization members in public opinion, their recognition on some organization and management issues sometimes even take pressure to the formal organizations.

In modern society, the role of "informal organization" has gradually raised, such a role is becoming more and more obvious in the operation of organization system. Such linkages with psychological color reflect human nature. In this "invisible" interactions, social management relations have been established in the organization are clearly personified to become some kind of communication relationships, during the process, people support and promote each other. Such "intangible" relationship structure and thus the emotion as well as unity will often far beyond the scope of purely psychological and personal relationships, infiltrate into activities of formal organization, and impact on the rule-based unify. In the actual management of public sector, management functions are sometimes fulfilled by invisible ways, especially for organizations conducting scientific research and creative work, this invisible link is more obvious. In these places, prestige, knowledge, talent, insight and skill have an important affect. This invisible link becomes a significant complement for tangible relationship, enriching and promoting the effects of formal organization management.

The facts show that the formal organizational structure can not cope with all the problems of organizational systems, nor is it the only effective means to solve a variety of special problems. Any organizational structure can not fully formalize, and the relationship between

people can not be fully integrated into the rules and scopes strict and physical. In the wheeling of organizational system, formal organizational structure often need to resort to more flexible, informal and invisible structural style, because it may help a formal organizational system to solve problems and complete tasks. Effective management in reality is trying to link visible structure and invisible structure, so that the two are intertwined to form a management structure, on this basis better achieving organizational goals.

During the actual operation of public sector, the "informal" structure of organization system can make both positive and negative roles for the operation of formal organization. On the positive side, it has the function enhancing the sense of identity and belonging of organization members, maintaining the unity of organization interior and strengthening organizational cohesion; in favor of protect employees' self-esteem and make up for the deficiencies of the formal organization to meet the needs of employees; in favor of divert dissatisfaction of members, coordinate disputes, strengthen organizational supervision and maintain organizational ethics; in favor of expand the channels of information transmission and promote of communication and coordination of relationship between formal organizations and "informal organizations". The "informal organization" is a vent providing a place for workers to confide and unburden their dissatisfaction, conducive to reducing employees' smoldering feeling of discontent, facilitating to adjust their sentiment, maintaining their mental health, and also helping managers to identify problems and solve them. However, if guided unfavorable and managed ill, it may also turn to reverse function, confronting formal organizations, thus impeding the normal functioning of formal organizations. Therefore, having a correct understanding of "informal organization" and using such "organization" effectively has become a task of public sector managers who need take the initiative to approach such groups and understand their interpersonal law, to know the feelings, opinions and views of members, enhance the emotional communication with members and coordinate their relationships via such "informal" form.

Based on the inherent laws of human nature, any organizational systems will have a tendency and specific appearance constituting the "informal" groups. The key problem is how managers recognize the presence and role of such groups. In the management of modern public sector, the managers accept "informal" organizations and groups has become a new management mode owning democracy and "humane" atmosphere and the embodiment of modern management culture. Such acceptance not only admits objective reality of existing "informal" group, and simultaneously should tolerate and accept their dissatisfaction and complaint on organizational managers

and management process. “Informal organization” is the place open-minded, expressing will and emotion for members, so listening to the voices of people sent in such places has extraordinary significance for management and operational process improvement of “formal organization”.

Therefore, the task of the formal leaders is striving to make informal structures and leadership side with them, along with considering members’ views of informal structures, trying to use this force to solve the tasks faced by the formal organization in order to promote the realization of organization aim. Thus making the formal organizational system form a good moral and psychological atmosphere, informal organization and formal organization work together and public organizations turn into a collective fraternity, all revealing an ideal organization pattern.

In a word, our society is marching into modernization in a pluralistic way, so how the public sector to keep up with this pace need to transform the organizational cultures, truly orient towards people and protect the dignity of department staff. Modern society is more and more diversity and personality to require a corresponding change of the public sector. People-oriented is not an empty word, which reflected in every aspect of society and also in the running process of public sector. Public sector management is an institutional management, but also an emotional management. Any kind of organizational culture without emotion and contrary to rules of people’s development is impossible to maximize organizational effectiveness, which becomes a kind of performance on anti-human. As a way of thinking, this paper hoping to be able to cause people’s attention in the public sector.

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