



Work culture in Indian industry: An evaluation

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Abstract

Meaning of work culture and its origin - Work culture in industry in India - Role of Trade Unions – Remedial measures.

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Introduction

Culture is a complex and vague term not easy to define. More than 66 years back Kroeber and Kluckhohn compiled a list of 164 different definitions of culture. The origin of the concept of culture lies in the ethnographic studies of anthropology, where specific tribes or societies are observed and a set of observations about their norms, rituals, language, physical structures storics etc are noted. Thus culture denotes a set of common theories and behaviors or mental programs that are stared by a group of individuals. The word “Culture” with its modern, technical or anthropological meaning was established in English by Tylor in 1871, though it seems not to have penetrated to any general or complete, British or American dictionary until more than fifty years later – a piece of cultural lag that may help to keep anthropologists humble in estimating the tempo of their influence on even the avowedly literature segment on their Society. Tylor, after some hesitation as against civilization, borrowed the word “Culture” from German, where by his time it had become well recognized with the meaning here under discussion by a growth out of the older meaning of cultivation. Work culture is a concept which deals with the study of beliefs, thought process, attitudes of the employees, ideologies and principles of the organization. According to Layman “work culture refers to the mentality of the employees which further decides the ambience of the organization”. An organization is said to have a strong work culture when the employers follow the organization’s rules and regulations and adhere to the existing guidelines. There are also certain organizations where the employers do not follow the rules and regulations and are made to work only by strict procedures. Such organizations have a weak culture. Work culture plays an important role in extracting the best out of the employees and making them stick to the organization for a longer duration. Generally organizations are formed to achieve certain goals and objectives by bringing individuals together on a common platform and motivating them to deliver their level best. The work culture is a combination of qualities in an organization and its employees that arise from what is generally regarded appropriate ways to think and act. The work culture of an organization is a product of its history, traditions, values and vision. A clear understanding of organisational culture is

important for all organisational managers and leaders because it influences the way their organizations react to the changing demands of the business environment. Work culture in Indian context is a matter of great importance. India is a first growing economics in Asia.

A number of organizations outside India showing their interest in the country as it has a rich culture from the ancient days but not much research has been done so far to throw light on effective management practices in the Indian Context. Indian work culture indicates that the high power distance, collectivism and affective reciprocity are major culture values of Indian managers. The business culture of India is a reflection of the various norms and standards followed by its people. Indians have various cultural yardsticks which extend to their business/work culture too. Thus it is important that a person visiting the country has an idea of the business culture of India. Apart from business culture aspect, in the organisations/establishments, the office environment plays a pivotal role in the business world in our country. For example the relationship between the boss and the subordinates is more formal and hierarchical in India. People in power openly display their ranks according to which importance is given. Employees are not supposed to expect clear guidance from the managers and they are often not assigned with important work. Subordinates are expected to take the blame for things that go wrong. The relationship between the boss and the subordinate is rarely close/personal. In company meetings also only few people dominate even though their decisions are wrong. Whereas in western work culture the relation between boss and subordinate is not more formal and hierarchical, superiors that subordinates with respect and do not demonstrate ranks. Subordinates are entrusted with important assignments. Blame for things that go wrong is either shared or is often accepted by the superior due to it being their responsibility to manage. For hierarchical attitude of Indian managers and/or superiors, the employees are demoralized and as a result of which the productivity level is affected. Research shows that if employees are committed and having the same norms and values per organization have, can increase performance towards achieving the overall organization goals. To overcome the issues regarding work culture in an organisation, the employees be given freedom in decision

making and suggesting their ideas and the management may also encourage all the employees to participate in decision making process. Regarding the problem of employees often misunderstanding each other can be rectified by the managers through motivating the employees to maintain a good interpersonal relationship with their peer group members. The knowledge and skills of the employees can be increased by practical training. The work culture in respect of customer satisfaction can be removed by maintaining good customer relationship and by enhancing the service quality. Work culture is one of the key themes in human resource management. In absence of work culture proper utilization of human resource is practically impossible. Indiscipline, military, rowdyism and irresponsible trade unionism characterized the worker's activities. The top leadership capitulated all too easily. It adopted an appeasing attitude, disregarding organisational goals and objectives and even undermining the authority of lower level managers.

There are two types of work culture e.g. soft and synergetic. In soft work culture, work received a lower priority than social personal obligations. Non work interests and activities displaced work from its central place in the life space of managers. They neither work hard nor felt positive about their jobs nor derived any satisfaction from their work. Notwithstanding the Gita's exhortations, work is not intrinsically valued in India because of the culture of "aram" (rest and relaxation). The managers in synergetic work culture, on the contrary, perceive that their organization rewards hard work, recognizes merit, establishes clear norms of performance and gives the employers adequate workload. The synergetic work culture led to the use of sociocultural values for mobilizing human resources to get the best out of employees. The soft work culture in contrast rendered the managers so vulnerable that they did not feel comfortable in discharging their legitimate role and workers got among with not meeting their obligations. Indian culture itself has a long tradition of people living with different lifestyles and conspicuous inequality and large power distance. Disparities between top executives, lower level managers and their workers as well as between the organized, unorganized and unemployed labour are some examples of the impact of cultural factors. In our country Trade Unions also play a very important role so far the work culture in the industries is concerned. Numbers of Trade Unions are working in the different industries in the different parts of the country but they have developed very slowly. Most of the trade unions in India have failed to develop work culture which is very much essential for the growth of the industries. The work culture of an industry mostly depends on the relationship between the management and the employees but due to interference of the trade unions, the aspect of the work culture is affected. In our country most of the unions are succeeded by professional politicians who have no experience of the physical work and no association with the work culture of the industry. Moreover, inter union rivalry also affects the work culture of an industry. To overcome all the issues so far the work culture in an industry is concerned, the only way is active participation of the employees/workers in the decision making policy of the organisation and changing of the hierarchical attitude of the management towards the employees.

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