

# Building Consensus: Towards An Integral Definition of Work Culture

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this document is to know the different positions that various authors and researchers have given to the stamp regarding the concept of work climate. In a second instance, we propose to clearly contribute substantive differences between Environment and Culture, both concepts often confused as synonymous, which helps us to construct a methodological proposal that would allow us to improve business management to ensure the success of the organization.

Environment and work culture have been used incorrectly as synonymous. For this reason, the specific interest of this work to elaborate of an own definition, that also serves for the construction of a methodological tool that helps us to the detect and evaluate the work climate in the MIPyMES (MSMEs in English)

Therefore, we propose a comprehensive concept of Work Climate. It starts by having the basic physical elements that the environment provides, but that includes no less important additional factors such as adequate human interaction, that is, effective interpersonal relationships; full knowledge and application of institutional philosophy (mission, vision and values); the unity of purposes and objectives shared by all members of the organization's community; a systematic human development policy (which includes training, training and professional development); as well as the socio-organizational recognition and the realization opportunities that the productive entity grants to its human capital.

**Keywords:** Work Environment, Work Culture (Climate), effective interpersonal relationships, institutional philosophy, systematic human development policy, Socio-organizational recognition.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Despite the difficulty to generate consensus around a common definition that allows us to advance in our knowledge and enter into relative studies, for anyone can escape the importance of today's concept of culture in all organizations. This is true particularly in micro, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), whose relative information shows us that their owners and / or managers do not know or underestimate, the overall importance of an adequate working environment for good management business and the success of their organizations.

Frequently confused with work environment, the work Culture is a concept that transcends these definitions and is majorly important in understanding the development of organizations.

Therefore, in this document we intend to know, firstly, through a quick bibliographic review, the different positions that various authors and research have given to the picture regarding the concept of Work Culture. In this way, secondly, contribute the substantive differences between Environment and Culture. Thus, we will propose a concept of Work Culture that helps us characterize its importance in organizations, in particular in MSMEs, subject to the methodological contribution of this academic work.

## II. METHOD

This contribution, part of a documentary research process that we carry out in a chronological way of various authors and research on the concept of work environment. Based on this theoretical support, through field

work we obtained information on the importance that MSMEs give to this aspect of organizational culture, once which, through collaborative work groups, we build a comprehensive definition of Work Culture.

Without seeking an exhaustive search for the definitions, with your knowledge we seek to delineate the connections that the Workplace Culture has with related nodal issues in the company, such as organizational development, leadership, culture, etc., to use this concept in growth, development and permanent stability of business organizations called MSMEs.

For our first purpose, we follow in this work the logic of continuity and the path that in turn followed by the main approaches Ángel Olaz, in his text published in *Aposta, Social Sciences Magazine* [1].

More than 60 years ago, Lewin (1951) [2] highlighted the importance of the Workplace Culture, stating that the way people behave was influenced by the environment in which people were. In this way, it was recognized as a very important factor in trying to understand various aspects of the organization.

Argyris (1957) [3], says Olaz, notes that “if one of the most prominent elements of the organization is culture, it is possible to understand then that the organizational climate is characterized by a series of components and, more specifically, by presence of specific nuances in each of the different subcultures that make up the organizational map. Another important element in its analysis lies in the relationship of conflict between the system and the individual. By wanting to meet their needs they inevitably enter into conflict with the organization since autonomy and personal self-realization is not always coincident with the severity of the factor that requires the organization when trying to homogenize individual behaviors. ”

Consequently, - always following Olaz - “Tagiuri (1968) [4] and Pace (1968) [5] agree that the work environment is first and foremost a “ quality ”of an organization's environment, which is experienced by its members and influences their behavior, that is, values as a cultural reference are present in the particular way in which the behaviors and actions of individuals are shaped. ”

Meanwhile, “James and Jones (1974) [6] are committed to a definition in which the work environment cannot be understood without an express reference to what can be called psychological culture, which is defined in clear connection with behaviors and motivations of the workers and that, according to the interpretation we make of these authors, refers to the objective behaviors of the individuals. Precisely Campbell (1976) [7], speaking of behaviors, points out that the organizational culture is variable dependent and independent of the organizational structure and of all those different processes generated in the organization that, in the end, end up redefining and drawing the behaviors of Workers.”

Other authors, - Olaz continues - “as Dessler (1979) [8] conceive the culture as the perceptions that the subject has of the organization in which he works and the opinion that of it has been formed in organizational terms (structure and rewards) , of human resources (consideration and support) and cultural (openness), that is, an amalgam of aspects that interact with each other and deconstruct the initial meaning given to the cultures. Again and moving in the field of sensations and subjective interpretation, Peiró (1995) [9] indicates that the organizational culture is connected to that world dominated by perceptions, impressions or images of organizational reality, which is why - from our personal appreciation - the assessment is not always coincident in each and every member of the organization. ”

For his part, says Olaz, “In a more didactic tone, Flippo (1984) [10] relates the work climate with the weather, asserting that this construct refers to the ergonomic-environmental conditions of the organization, attributes, structure and types Leadership, which have an effect on the relationships, behaviors and activities of the different components of the organization, is what Davis (1987) [11] defines as the human environment in which employees work. Following the didactic scheme of Flippo (1984) [10], Chiavenato (1990) [12] suggests that the organizational climate (culture) is an expression of the organizational atmosphere. Among the elements that help their understanding such as: Policies, regulations, leadership styles and the stage of business life, to name just a few, it is not trivial, much less the role of the technological component. Álvarez (1992) [13] also emphasizes the idea of the environment and how it, whether favorable or not for the members of the organization, will end up having an impact on the definition of the concept of climate and, by extension, promoting to a greater or lesser extent the sense of belonging and job satisfaction. ”

Meanwhile, “In an attempt to systematize a plurality of approaches Brunet (1987) [14] points out that the climate reflects the values, attitudes and beliefs of the members and that due to their special nature, they are transformed in turn, in elements of the weather. Again, the climate can be understood as cause and effect of the way in which the organization behaves, according to Campbell (1976) [7]. Already in the 1990s, Reichers and Schneider (1990) [15] appreciate that the work environment is linked to a set of perceptions shared by individuals about their environment and in correspondence with organizational policies, practices and procedures, both formal and informal. In this sense, the incorporation of informal elements is of special interest in the understanding of the phenomenon, since not everything is rationally quantifiable or classifiable as one would like in the beginning. For other authors, climate and culture are two related issues. While the climate is an expression of the personality of the organization - which according to Robbins (1990) [16] can be “measured” in degrees of temperature -, culture allows us to reaffirm traditions, values, customs and practices. ”

Finally, Olaz points out that “Kolb et al. (1993) [17] specified that the organizational climate summarizes the pattern of expectations and the value of the incentive that exists in an organizational environment. Silva (1996) [18] defines three coordinates in his attempt to define the meaning of the work environment in attention to its main protagonists: The person, the groups and the organization, witness that Olaz (2009: a; 2009: b) collects and wide in its theoretical formulations linking it to professional competencies with market value.”

#### **An approximation to an integral definition of labor culture.**

As it has already been said, it is not unknown to anyone that the management of MSMEs often confuse a work environment with a work culture. Both words, environment and culture, have been used synonymously (even by some authors), as if they were one and the same. Nothing is further from the truth, at least for the purposes of this work. Therefore, we propose the elaboration of our own definition, which will serve us to the central objective of the subsequent work of construction of a methodological tool that will help us to detect and evaluate the work environment in MSMEs.

As we have seen in the approaches from the text of Ángel Olaz offer us the varied authors that we have mentioned above, the Work Culture could be built on the basis of an adequate environment in organizations, but under no circumstances is one concept identical to the other. The environment in a productive organization is only the physical elements such as furniture and tools; the spaces and their proxemic distribution; the sufficiency and ergonomics of work instruments; the quality of the material and work inputs; ambient temperature; technological equipment and machinery, etc. All of this is, as we say, basic, starting point, but they do not make up for themselves the adequate working environment that every organization should look for for its best development.

Culture, is a more comprehensive concept that starts from having those basic physical elements provided by the environment, but it is decided when it adds the no less important additional factors such as adequate human interaction, that is, effective interpersonal relationships; full knowledge and application of institutional philosophy (mission, vision and values); the unity of purposes and objectives shared by all members of the organization's community; a systematic human development policy (which includes training, training and professional development); as well as the socio-organizational recognition and the realization opportunities that the productive entity grants to its human capital.

In short, it is a matter of knowing that the work culture means that organizations must take into account and promote environmental and human values. This is the direct link between the objective aspects of the organization and the subjective behavior of the workers. Fostering these values will allow them to grant welfare and quality of life to their human capital within their own spaces and moments of working life, because it goes hand in hand with the satisfaction, fulfillment, development and sense of belonging that is generated in each worker. Which will have a positive impact on productivity and profitability of business organizations.



**Graph 1. Labor climate and its dimensions. Source: self-made.**

In this way, our contribution to an initial definition of Work Climate would be:

It is the construct that includes the ergonomic-environmental factors of the organization, as well as human interaction, unity of purposes, institutional philosophy, socio-organizational recognition and stimulus to individual and group performance of all its members.

From this definition of Work Culture, five substantive dimensions emerge. By means of an adequate measurement or evaluation to know its reality would allow us to promote the necessary and sufficient business management actions and / or strategies to increase labor satisfaction. The sense of belonging, self-realization contribute to business productivity and profitability.

These five substantive dimensions are:

- Work environment
- Organizational philosophy
- Communication and interpersonal relationships
- Training and development
- Performance stimuli

Next, the characteristics and elements that make up each of the dimensions indicated are broken down as follows.

#### ***Work environment***

It is the physical space where work functions are performed. It includes tangible elements such as furniture and tools; the spaces and their proxemic distribution; the sufficiency and ergonomics of work instruments; the quality of the material and work inputs; the room temperature; technological equipment and machinery, among other material elements. Some mistakenly consider these as the only factors necessary. However, these factors are simply the basis on which a favorable working environment is built along with the sum of human values.

#### ***Organizational philosophy.***

An organization that lacks a vision will inevitably lack shared values. Its members will not have a mission that they believe in to work towards and the organization will fail. Hence the importance of all members understanding and apprehending their organizational philosophy. That they internalize it and that it give reason and meaning to their work life. To ensure and guide business management with social and ethical responsibility, it is required that all members of the company share institutional principles, universal and organizational values, aspirations and ideals with which each of them must commit. In short, make the institutional philosophy the essence that determines why and for what of its existence.

#### ***Communication and interpersonal relationships.***

It refers to the various systems of communication and human interaction within the organization. An adequate transfer and understanding of meanings among the members of the group allows the idea that the receiver is the same one that the sender conceived, resulting in perfect communication, essential origin for group effectiveness. Within the organization, these communication processes fulfill four main functions: control, motivation, emotional expression and information. All of which give way to healthy interpersonal relationships. As Stephen P. Robbins puts it: "Communication is effective in controlling the behavior of members by encouraging motivation. It provides an escape for the emotional expression of feelings and satisfaction of social needs that facilitates decision making."

#### ***Training and development.***

In an ever-changing world, with innovative and vertiginous advances, the training and development of the human capital of organizations constitutes the cornerstone to successfully face these changes. Training and development is any activity that organizations carry out to improve the skills, abilities, levels of knowledge, attitude and behavior of staff. It implies not only making the workforce more apt and skilled, but above all giving it the information and training that allows it to overcome itself and be better human beings with greater sensitivity whose spirit is free to innovate and create in the performance of their work.

#### ***Performance stimuli.***

Beyond the economic remuneration and the benefits that the organization must grant the worker by law for the tasks performed, it is necessary to establish processes by which the work performance of those members of the organization that is valued and justified Stand out for your remarkable commitment to your responsibilities. An adequate assessment of performance will be the basis for the granting of incentives, additional stimuli to salary and the benefits of law, which help to meet economic, educational, recreational and socio-cultural needs as suitable factors that boost the productivity of the company and motivate the human talent improving their quality of life, and consolidating the stability and progress of both the organization and the worker.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

With the foregoing, the present consensual proposal of a comprehensive concept of Work Culture will allow us to differentiate precisely the terms of Environment and Culture, to understand the true scope of each of them. In this way, in an upcoming academic work we will announce the construction of a unified methodology to assess the culture of organizations. This methodological proposal would allow us to improve business management. Thus, ensuring the success of organizations based on the recognition that the adequate conditions of human capital constitute one of the most important factors within the institutions and their entrepreneurial activity.

### **I. Study limitations**

As a limitation, we mainly have the lack of cooperation by some employees of the sample companies, as well as, the time in carrying out this investigation.

### **II Instructions for future research**

Continue with future research regarding the work environment.

### **III. Sources of study financing.**

This research was conducted with resources from the National Technological Institute of Mexico Technological Institute of Colima.

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