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**ORGANISATIONAL VALUES IN EMPLOYMENT
RELATIONS. BETWEEN DECLARATION
AND PRACTICE**

**WARTOŚCI ORGANIZACYJNE W STOSUNKACH PRACY.
MIĘDZY DEKLARACJĄ A PRAKTYKĄ**

Abstract: The article concentrates on the role of organizational values in contemporary business. Are they only elements of fashion created by PR departments or specific guidelines leading organization through ethical business conduct? The practice shows that in many cases organizational values become only declarations and they are not reflected in company's operations. The paper specifically addresses the impact of organizational values on employment relations and by using the examples of practices of multinational company

in Polish subsidiary presents the tools and organizational mechanisms in the area of labour standards that can foster the process of building and reinforcing organizational values.

Keywords: organizational values, employment relations, multinational companies

Streszczenie: Artykuł koncentruje się na roli wartości organizacyjnych we współczesnym biznesie. Czy stanowią one tylko element mody stworzonej przez działy PR, czy też są szczególnymi wytycznymi wskazującymi organizacji kierunki etycznego postępowania. Praktyka pokazuje, że w wielu przypadkach wartości organizacyjne stają się jedynie deklaracją i nie są odzwierciedlone w działalności firmy. Artykuł w szczególności sposób odnosi się do wpływu wartości organizacyjnych na stosunki pracy oraz za pomocą przykładu praktyk międzynarodowej firmy w polskiej spółce zależnej przedstawia narzędzia i działania organizacyjne w zakresie standardów pracy, które mogą sprzyjać procesowi budowania i wzmacniania wartości organizacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: wartości organizacyjne, stosunki pracy, firmy międzynarodowe

Introduction

The organizational culture appears to be an ambiguous and difficult to define concept¹. It might be perceived as a “personality” of an institution, organization or company manifested e.g. in behaviours, attitudes, approaches to problem solving of individuals or social groups – members of this organization². The organizational values are part of the organizational culture and reside in relations between people, organizational culture, generally accepted systems of values, as well as ethical systems³. Contemporary business operating in global economy is under intensified competitive pressure, therefore achieving and retaining market leadership and seeking the sources of competitive advantages is continuing challenge faced by contemporary enterprises. According to existing empirical research, among great variety of business development strategies, the organizational culture can be also seen as a source of competitive advantage⁴. Organizational values can be divided into two groups: as norms and values declared and norms and values respected in the organization. Values in this context can be seen as a specific set of guidelines of conduct in particular organization, they should foster and indicate the way of doing

¹ Ł. Sułkowski, *Funkcjonalistyczna wizja kultury organizacyjnej w zarządzaniu – dominujący paradygmat i jego krytyka*, „Problemy Zarządzania” 2013, No. 4, p. 28.

² M. Klimczok, *Wpływ kultury organizacyjnej państw europejskich i azjatyckich na poziom zarządzania w organizacji*, ZN WSH Zarządzanie 2015, No. 1, p. 51.

³ M. Bugdol, *Wartości organizacyjne. Szkice z teorii organizacji i zarządzania*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006, p. 10.

⁴ M. Bogdanowicz, *Organizational culture as a source of competitive advantage – case study of telecommunication company in Poland*, “International Journal of Contemporary Management” 2014, No. 13, p. 54.

business⁵. Companies communicate their values in order to win the trust essential in managing relations with the customers, contractors, suppliers, shareholders and employees. Communication of values does not necessarily mean that they are respected by the members of organisation, but rather creates such an impression. In order to build the trust of company's stakeholders and shareholders, declared organisational values should be put in everyday company practices. This paper concentrates on employees, as they represent an important internal stakeholder whose behaviour may speed up the process of achieving company's strategic objectives or sabotage this process breeding additional operational costs⁶. The aim of this article is to analyze to what extent the organizational values are reflected in management of employment relations and what kind of practical tools are used in order to implement the organisational values in the labour relations.

1. The down of values and their impact on labour

Contemporary global economy characterized by dynamic changes and variety of interdependencies caused by intensified economic internationalization, gradually leads to crisis of values. According to Koźmiński, business ethics and values that should stabilize functioning and operations of enterprises, organizations or societies undergoing the erosion process⁷. As the author claims, for this erosion responsible are globalization and intensification of international competition, new global management practices, conflicts with local norms and values or even abusing domestic norms and ethics with impunity what is particularly associated with multinational companies (MNC)⁸. The Economist described MNC as "the most visible aspects of globalisation"⁹. MNC's through the business expansion to other markets appear to be an important vehicle of knowledge, technology, management tools, innovations but also the culture and values under which they should operate. The nexus MNC, values and labour lies in the fact that multinational companies often expand their business operations to other countries in order to reduce the costs of labour and take advantage of less severe legal system including protection of labour rights. This often leads to neglecting declared values and ethical principles outside of their borders and violations of international and domestic labour standards¹⁰.

⁵ M. Klimczok, *Wpływ kultury organizacyjnej...*, p. 52.

⁶ D. Ambroziak, M. Maj, *Oszustwa i nieuczciwość w organizacjach. Problem anomii pracowniczej – diagnoza, kontrola i przeciwdziałanie*, Oficyna Wolters Kluwer Business, Warszawa 2013, p. 139.

⁷ A.K. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie w warunkach niepewności*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, p. 55.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ *The world's view of multinational*, retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/276872>, 27.01.2000

¹⁰ Trade Union Advisory Committee, Trade Union Cases OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, retrieved from <http://www.tuacoecdmguidelines.org/Home.asp>

This creates dichotomy between values that company declares and values that are reflected in company's operations. This gap between declaration and practice in implementation of values especially in the area of personnel management may have serious impact on organizational behaviour of employees and negatively affect company's performance. Lack of compliance with company's regulations observed by workers among their superiors may result in performing the same attitude towards their responsibilities¹¹. Similarly, disrespect of labour or trade unions rights may significantly raise the level of social unrest eventually resulting in industrial actions affecting negatively the financial performance and pace of work of the company. Corporate misconduct in the area of working conditions, recruitment and dismissal policies, mobbing etc. may lead to continuing anomies at work¹², as well as lower employee engagement and productivity. Moreover, it is worth of noticing that crisis of values and erosion of business ethic has not only negative social impact but also leads to crisis of trust eventually resulting in higher transactional costs. Uncertainty in the area of compliance and corporate integrity among the members of company at various levels, breeds the need of use of costly provisions not only in the area of personnel management but whole company's operations¹³.

2. Communication of values

The organizational values are communicated in various ways. As a part external communication strategy, employer branding and PR strategy they are often presented in organisational mission and vision statement, strategy statement, sustainability reports, codes of ethic, codes of conduct etc. usually published on company's website. The specific tools of internal and external communication on ethical values represents corporate code of ethic(COE) or code of conduct (COC). Those codes consist set of values and guidelines for company's ethical, conduct, corporate prescriptions and injunctions. Usually, they are perceived as specific expression of intentions and declarations of rules of doing business. Very often COEs address the relations with customers, contractors, subcontractors and employees, as well as, other stakeholders. According to Klimczak "they are combination of technical, reasonable and moral rules"¹⁴. Analysis of 49 codes of conducts from the perspective of labour rights in business ethics, as well as workers rights and obligations shows that 12,2 percent of analysed COEs consist a statement say-

¹¹ D. Ambroziak, M. Maj, *Oszustwa i nieuczciwość...*, p. 89.

¹² Ibidem, p. 143.

¹³ A.K. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie w warunkach niepewności*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, p. 55.

¹⁴ B. Klimczak, *Etyka gospodarcza*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 1999, p. 72.

ing that this document is not an obligation of a company¹⁵, 29 percent of COEs consist a declarations that lack of compliance among employees with rules set in COE will breed certain disciplinary repercussions¹⁶. Only 26,5 percent of COEs present the statement on compliance with labour law whereas this declaration is put on 12 place on the list of preferential COE's statements and declarations. In 24,5 percent of COEs companies expressed the approval to existence of trade unions but without explicit approval to collective bargaining, whereas none of 49 analyzed COEs informs about approval to participation in managing processes, even the basic ones, present in Polish Labour Code¹⁷. One of the COE presents the declarations contradictory with Polish law in the area of trade union activity at the workplace. Taking into account employees' obligations expressed in analyzed COEs, the author indicates very high expectations, sometimes even going far beyond employment relations and intrusive for private time and life of employees¹⁸. As author argues, most of analyzed COEs consist sublime statements on employees being the highest good of the company together with other statements (emerging later in the texts of COEs) questioning the dignity and subjectivity of the workforce. Worth noticing is also the fact that next to high expectations towards employees obligations and ethical behaviour there is no such an obligation from company side.

In the course of this analysis author concludes that this asymmetry in employees' obligations and expectations towards corporate compliance between the workforce and management, makes some of analyzed COEs declarations of "ignorance, cynicisms and disregard of moral norms regulating employment relations"¹⁹.

3. Practicing the values – employment relations perspective

As some authors claim it is naive to think that organizations are group of people working together to reach common goals and rarely agreement or understanding on what is common goal desired by people in the organization exists²⁰. Some aims and values of the workforce may differ from goals of the company. However, being aware of that, company can create and implement strategies and management solutions building the area of convergence between some goals and values of the company and its personnel.

Labour standards expressed in domestic Labour Codes and internationally recognized labour rights concerning e.g. working conditions, respecting human rights at the

¹⁵ T. Czakon, *Między paternalizmem a restrykcyjnością. Prawa pracownicze w kodeksach etycznych firm*, Dom Wydawniczy Duet, Toruń 2013, p. 91.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 139

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

²⁰ P. Fleming, A. Spicer, *Contesting the Corporation: Struggle, Power and Resistance in Organizations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 11.

workplace, remuneration policies, the rights to organize and collective bargaining, eradication of all forms of discriminations etc. can be treated by companies as costly and oppressive constraints to freedom of economic activity, whereas for the others they represent the foundations for procedures, policies and solutions serving the long term, sustainable strategy of company development. Managing people has to include systems of organizational values, therefore workers should also care about the values in tasks performed and relations with people in organization²¹. One of the tool for ensuring the corporate compliance is the concept of empowerment based on “delegation of power and control, use of knowledge held by employees”²². Empowerment of the workforce that granted with trust and certain level of independency, performs the tasks without necessity of control and in larger extent, identifies their goals with company aims²³. The idea of empowerment is also associated with participation. In this regard, employee participation is considered. In literature a great variety of understanding and meaning of employee participation can be found, however, the precise definitions of participation has not been developed²⁴.

The idea is based on the assumption that employees of particular organization, who are subject of management process, should be able to influence the decisions that affect them²⁵. According to existing empirical research on impact of employee participation on company performance, findings show that most visible corporate benefits emerge in the area of improvement of quality of product and services, increased labour productivity and reduction of costs of doing business. Furthermore, other outcomes have been also identified i.e. production growth, decrease of absenteeism and increased employee engagement²⁶. It can be said that participation lies in the heart of employment relations and together with dialogue between workers and employer represent effective tools for ensuring compliance with labour standards. This concept correspond also with the idea of Sustainable Company strongly oriented on stakeholder values and stakeholder voice, whereas employees (as stakeholders) are involved in a decisions making process through variety of mechanism e.g. collective bargaining, European Works Councils, board level employee representation or stakeholder advisory boards at companies²⁷. Furthermore, there are also empirical research indicating at positive relationship noted between worker representation and better environmental and social performance of companies²⁸.

²¹ M. Bugdol, *Wartości organizacyjne. Szkice z teorii organizacji i zarządzania*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2006, p. 10.

²² Ibidem, p. 43.

²³ A.K. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie w warunkach...*, p. 145.

²⁴ D. Łochnicka, *Zakres i efekty stosowania bezpośredniej partycypacji pracowniczej w polskich przedsiębiorstwach*, ZN Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej we Wrocławiu 2013, No. 4, p. 152.

²⁵ D. Guest, D. Fatchett, *Worker Participation: Individual Control and Performance*, Institute of Personnel Management, London 1974, p. 9.

²⁶ D. Łochnicka, *Zakres i efekty...*, p. 158.

²⁷ S. Vitols, *What is the Sustainable Company?* [in:] *The sustainable company: a new approach to corporate governance*, ed. S. Vitols, N. Kluge, ETUI, Brussels 2011, p. 24.

²⁸ *Benchmarking working Europe 2014*, ETUI, Brussels 2014, p. 110.

4. Company level practices in the area of dialogue and participation

The values can be understood as ethical principles, social or/and environmental commitments expressed in variety of company documents such as mission and vision, sustainable strategy, compliance, human resource strategy etc. Good example of practicing the values may be presented by the leading European automotive manufacturer operating worldwide with Polish plant set up in 1998. The values relating to labour issues (participation, dialogue, health and safety, personnel development etc.) are expressed inter alia on Polish plant's website in specific section i.e. social responsibility, as well as in Code of Conduct publically available for download. In this document company declares its responsibility for workers, as well as underline the necessity of participation of workforce representatives in the process of creation of COC. This document also determines the commitment of the company to respect human rights including workers rights and international labour standards, commitment to cooperation with workers representation, respect to the right of association and collective bargaining and commitment to creation of organisation culture based on participation and cooperation between workers and employer.

The system of dialogue between employees and employer seems to be well coordinated, and reflects the values communicated by the company. Despite the existence of longitudinal pattern in relation to trade union recognition among MNC's and implementation of union avoidance strategy²⁹, this MNC has applied different standards in terms of respecting the right to organise and collective bargaining. It is also worth mentioning that the right to organise in Poland is guaranteed by the law and is present in many international standards and conventions. In spite of that many MNC's operating worldwide still violate this right³⁰. Furthermore, in many cases even if trade union is recognised, the collective agreement is not concluded. It is not case of this company. Collective agreement is concluded in home country and also in foreign subsidiaries including Poland. This organisation has been developing strong employee representation structure not only in home country but also in global locations. Employees are represented through variety channels i.e. trade unions and company representative body. What is more on the group level European Works Council (a body that bring together employee representatives from countries where MNC operates, the tool for information and consultation³¹) is functioning and at global level-Global Works Council. Specifically interesting seems to be the tool for managing industrial relations i.e. a special charter deter-

²⁹ M. Muller-Carmen, P. Almond, P. Gunnigle, J. Quintanilla, A. Tempel, *Between home and host country: Multinationals and employment relations in Europe*, Industrial relations Journal, 32:5, Blackwell Publishers, 2001, 435-448, p. 440.

³⁰ J. Szymonek, *Prawa człowieka w miejscu pracy. Międzynarodowa perspektywa*, Biuro Komisji Krajowej NSZZ Solidarność, Warszawa 2011, p. 12.

³¹ <http://www.worker-participation.eu/European-Works-Councils>.

mining how social partners proceed with participation and dialogue. The tools has been developed in MNC' headquarters and implemented in Polish subsidiary. This document precisely indicates areas of employment relations covered by adequate type of participation i.e. information, consultation and codetermination. The latter means not only the right of workers to have their voice heard but also take the responsibility and consequences for the impact of the decisions taken in the process of co-determination on company performance. For instance, issues such as remuneration system are covered by co-determination, which means that employer has to agreed all issues related to pay scheme with trade union. In order to implement this document and boost its potential both social partners should have the same knowledge about functioning of the company. According to personnel manager of the Polish plant, the knowledge about functioning of the company is fundamental to build the effective dialogue between employer and employees, so regular meeting and communication between management and workers representatives enable both side to have information about current condition of the company, effectively organise every day operations, as well as identify current problems emerging from company and workers perspectives and finding adequate solutions to solve them³². This example shows that company not only declare some values in labour area but also variety of tools for participation and constructive dialogue have been applied to fulfil the declarations. Moreover, the company has been awarded as III rd best employer in Poland in the Randstad Award 2015, an independent survey assessing workplace quality presented from employees' perspectives³³.

Conclusions

Organisational culture appears to be an essential element for the performance and success of any enterprise³⁴ and according to some authors it offers “fundamental, common vision of world and ethical point of support”, whereas its “ primary function is to reduce uncertainty”³⁵. This seems to be particularly relevant in the light of increasing cases of corporate misconduct and scandals indicating at, dysfunctional, irrelevant and insufficient system of corporate governance practices. This may be also the case of the company that successfully adopted tools for organisational values fulfilment in labour relations but has failed in other areas. The relations between

³² J. Szymonek, *Prawa człowieka...*, p. 25.

³³ *Randstad Award 2015*, Retrieved from <http://www.randstad.pl/o-randstad/randstad-award/o-badaniu/>

³⁴ A. Pandelica, M. Ionica, P. Petrescu, *Study regarding the identification of the key cultural values of multinational companies. A comparative study: Europe, Asia, USA*, Scientific Bulletin-Economic Sciences, No. 11, p. 75.

³⁵ M. Klimczok, *Wpływ kultury organizacyjnej państw europejskich i azjatyckich na poziom zarządzania w organizacji*, ZN WSH Zarządzanie 2015, No. 1, p. 53.

organisational values are very complex and depend not only from employers or management system but they represent element of broadly understood culture, and as social goods tend to escape from total control³⁶. It means that the culture and attainment of organisational values are continuing processes facing emerging ethical challenges day by day. The company, especially MNC is rather complex managerial machine, and in one area of business operations the norms and standard may be respected reflecting the commitments to the values declared, whereas in others they may be ignored and breached. However, negative impact of ethical failure may entail serious repercussions on whole company across the world, breeding the financial costs and resulting in loss of trust of customer, shareholders, stakeholders and those members of organisation who have been particularly committed to achieving the values by respecting all norms and standards of corporate conduct. It is especially negative when the leaders of organisation behave unethically. According to Lachowski "leaders of organisation play decisive role in the process of formulating company's values adequate to its mission and vision and business model. Setting personal example by the leaders is essential, as values are the only sustainable element of company's identity"³⁷. Some author claim that organisational culture tend to be crucial factor preventing crisis situation in companies³⁸.

However, this seems to be particularly difficult to achieve in the light of corporate scandals and misconduct. This approach to culture seems to require a lot of effort and employment of practices that will protect companies from corporate misbehaviour, reinforcing the culture and attaining the organisational values. The crisis-preventive role of organisational culture might be also associated with its effectiveness that can be examined at three levels³⁹. The enterprise level can be measured through performance, market share, sales revenue. The culture effectiveness at group or team level can be examined through performance criteria such as the degree of synergy demonstrated by particular teams. At the individual level the effectiveness of organisational culture is also measured by performance criteria related to workers i.e. satisfaction, development, but also the level of absenteeism or staff turnover⁴⁰. Social responsibility understood as fulfilment by the companies their ethical and legal obligations towards their stakeholders: employees, customers, suppliers, government is also strong measure of the effectiveness of organisational culture⁴¹. Therefore, strong compliance mechanisms and tools for enforcement of

³⁶ M. Bugdol, *Wartości organizacyjne...*, p. 11.

³⁷ S. Lachowski, *Drogowskazy przywództwa przez wartości*, THINKTANK 2013, No. 18 Reprint Etyka Lidera, p. 6-7.

³⁸ M. Huczek, *Organizational culture a company crisis*, ZN WSH Zarządzanie 2014, nr 2, p. 41.

³⁹ J.J. Weiss, *Organizational behavior and change. Managing diversity, cross-cultural dynamics and ethics*, South-Western College, Cincinnati 2001, p. 358.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 359.

ethical behaviour should be implemented and respected by all members of organization. Otherwise values declared by the company will become only empty declarations that may be verified by the customers, markets or competitors causing more or less severe damages for the business.

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