How Do Leadership Practices Relate to Societal Values? A Microanalysis of the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria

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Abstract

This article sets out to compare the organizational culture of the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria (henceforth, UAS UA) with the Austrian societal culture. Leadership practices of the UAS UA are elaborated in the knowledge that they are partly based on personal values of leaders/managers and partly on the perceived organizational set of values. Since it is assumed that societal and personal values translate in managerial practices, the authors seek to investigate how the organizational values of the UAS UA and the societal values of a country that belongs to the Germanic Europe cluster (House et al., 2004) comply with each other.

In a previous study, leadership styles and practices were investigated among 24 heads of study programs and members of top management of the UAS UA. It came to the fore that the respondents were attaching the utmost importance to values in the light of leadership. Among others, values discovered were trust in fellow employees and team solidarity, freedom, autonomy, and self-determination, as well as fairness and respect. Additionally, the respondents stressed the significance of consensus orientation and self-reflection with regard to their own learning capabilities. Interestingly, the UAS UA postulates its organizational values as part of its mission statement, its vision, and strategic objectives.

In this follow-up study, the interrelationships between societal culture, organizational culture, and organizational leadership are explored in more detail. It is hoped that this case study will contribute to a better understanding of the organizational culture of the UAS UA by relating it to Austrian societal values. In doing so, it may have the potential to support managers to reflect and further develop their leadership styles and practices.

The authors of this article seek to contribute to the intercultural discourse by building a conceptual bridge between the leadership literature of higher education and societal norms that underpin organizational values.

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