

A typology of organizational cultures in terms of improvement of the quality management

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Abstract: *There is in the paper, the analysis of research conducted by author's carried out under the Higher Education Grant. There is an original typology of organizational cultures in terms of improvement of quality management. Organizational cultures were divided in their four types: the culture of pro-quality (success), avoidance culture, culture of conservative (stiff) and the culture of enforced changes. The study focuses especially on the culture of pro-quality, for which it had been a detailed characterization.*

Key words: quality management, organizational culture, pro-quality culture, cultural dimensions

1. Introduction

More and more frequently it is believed that quality management improvement is influenced not only by the so-called „hard” management aspects, but also by the „soft” ones, such as organisational culture

or leadership. In this publication the results of studies conducted within the framework of a research project devoted to the influence of organisational culture on quality management improvement have been presented. Taking into consideration the results of detailed analyses, an author's typology of

organisational culture based on two variables – the attitude to uncertainty and status ascription – has been developed. This provided a basis for distinguishing four types of organisational cultures, to which the investigated organisations have been assigned. It has been determined which organisational culture and why has the most pro-quality character.

2. Typologies of cultural dimensions

There is a number of studies conducted to isolate those factors that are most important and the largest contribution to cultural diversity (Ailon 2008; Aniszewska 2007; Aniszewska 2008; Boski 2009; Cameron and Quinn 2006; Glińska-Neweś 2007; Krzemień and Wolniak 2004; Mikuła 1995; Schein 2004; Sikorski 2002; Sitko-Lutek 2004; Sułkowski 2002; Zbiegień-Maciąg 2005). Belong to the most well-known study by G. Hofstede and study Ch. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars A.

There are five Hofstede cultural dimensions (Chiang 2005; Hunt 1981; Jefferson 2002; Korman 1983; Kwek 2003; McSeeeney 2003; Robinson 1983, Sorge 1983):

- **Power distance** - This dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal – it expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us. Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.
- **Individualism** - The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.
- **Masculinity / Femininity** - A high score (masculine) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner / best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organisational behaviour. A low score (feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).
- **Uncertainty avoidance** - The dimension Uncertainty Avoidance has to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the UAI score.

- **Long term orientation** - The long term orientation dimension is closely related to the teachings of Confucius and can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue, the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.

In 1998, management consultants Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner published their "Seven Dimensions of Culture" model to help explain national cultural differences in organisations and to show how managing these differences in a heterogeneous business environment is a major challenge for international managers. In this conception there are seven cultural dimensions (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2002; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2003):

- **universalism versus pluralism** The degree of importance a culture assigns to either the law or to personal relationships. In a universalistic culture, people share the belief that general rules, codes, values and standards take precedence over the needs and claims of friends and other relationships. In a pluralistic culture, people see culture in terms of human friendship and intimate relationships. While rules do exist in a pluralistic culture, they merely codify how people relate to one another.
- **individualism versus communitarianism** - The degree to which people see themselves function more as a community or more as individuals. In a principally individualistic culture, people place the individual before the

community. This means that individual happiness, fulfilment and welfare prevails and people take their own initiative and take care of themselves. In a principally communitarian culture, people place the community before the individual. Thus, it is the responsibility of the individual to act in ways which serve society. In doing so, individual needs are automatically attended.

- **specific versus diffuse** - The degree to which responsibility is specifically assigned or is diffusely accepted. In a specific culture, people first analyse the elements individually and then put them together, the whole is the sum of its parts. People's lives are divided accordingly and, only a single component can be entered at a time. Interactions between people are very well-defined. Specific individuals concentrate on hard facts, standards and contracts. A diffusely oriented culture starts with the whole and sees individual elements from the perspective of the total. All elements are related to one another. Relationships between elements are more important than individual elements.
- **affectivity versus neutrality** - The degree to which individuals display their emotions. In an affective culture, people display their emotions and it is not deemed necessary to hide feelings. However, in a neutral culture, people are taught not to display their feelings overtly. The degree to which feelings become manifested is therefore minimal. While emotions are felt, they are controlled.

- **inner directed versus outer directed** - The degree to which individuals believe the environment can be controlled versus believing that the environment controls them. In an inner-directed culture, people have a mechanistic view of nature; nature is complex but can be controlled with the right expertise. People believe that humans can dominate nature, if they make the effort. In an outer-directed culture, people have an organic view of nature. Mankind is viewed as one of nature's forces and should therefore live in harmony with the environment. People therefore adapt themselves to external circumstances.
- **achieved status versus ascribed status** - the degree to which individuals must prove themselves to receive status versus status simply given to them. In a culture with achieved status, people derive their status from what they have accomplished. Achieved status must be proven time and time again and status will be given accordingly. In a culture with ascribed status, people derive their status from birth, age, gender or wealth. Here status is not based on achievement but it is accorded on the basis of the person's being.
- **sequential time versus synchronic time** - The degree to which individuals do things one at a time versus several things at once. Cultures developed their own response to time. Time orientation has two aspects: the relative importance cultures assign to the past, present and future, and their approach to structuring time. In a sequential culture, people structure

time sequentially and do things one at a time. In a synchronic time culture, people do several things at once, believing time is flexible and intangible.

3. The characteristics of the conducted studied.

The analysis in this paper were made during the reporting of the research project in the field of sustainable development of enterprises in Poland against the experience of selected countries of the European Union 2011/03/B/HS4/01790 PBU10/ROZ3/2012 symbol at the university, funded by the National Science Centre .In order to analyse the influence of social aspects on the improvement of quality management and differences within this scope depending on the kind of an organization, a possibly and wide choice of research tests have been decided on so as not to include only industrial enterprises but also service sector in different branches. Additionally, a wide spectrum of research tests have been used so as to assure a representative nature of research and possibilities for their statistical analysis.

The questionnaires were sent to 2500 companies. 700 of them were industrial companies while 1800 were services ones. 1120 correctly filled -in questionnaires were obtained. The expert-like method was used in order to define variables used in these studies. The characteristics of entire studies were presented synthetically in Table 1. In the research, the concept of improvement of quality management is understood in a given publication as a set of problems, such as: a systemic attitude to quality management, the use of different methods and techniques of managing quality, creating innovative solutions, market position of a company, its financial status.

Table 1. The characteristics of all studied companies

Variables		Number of respondents	Percentage of population
The criterion of division	Interval		
Tape of activity	Industry	385	35%
	Trade and services	725	65%
Business sector	Industry (except for mining)	356	32%
	Mining	29	3%
	Trade	175	15%
	Construction	74	7%
	Transport and logistics	41	4%
	Financial Institutions	41	4%
	Other commercial services	290	26%
	Non-commercial services (education, health)	45	4%
	Administration	59	5%
Size	Micro organizations	235	21%
	Small organizations	268	24%
	Medium size organizations	420	38%
	Big organizations	187	17%

Source: Author's own study.

The following variables were taken into account within a scope of the improvement of quality management:

- **D1** – having a quality management system being in accordance with standards of PN-EN ISO 9001,
- **D2** –attitude to the implementation of standardization in an organization,
- **D3** – having trade quality management systems,
- **D4** – having environmental management systems,
- **D5** – having security management systems,
- **D6** – use of team work ,
- **D7** – involvement in team work,
- **D8** –use of methods and tools of quality management systems (the variable which defines how many methods and tools of quality management is used in a given organization),
- **D9** – number of innovative ideas per an employee,
- **D10** – rewarding employees for their innovative ideas,
- **D11** – pro-innovative attitude of a company,
- **D12** – market position of a company in comparison with the best companies in a given branch of business,
- **D13** – change of market position in comparison with companies in recent years,
- **D14** – financial condition of a company.

The study also included variables discussed in the theory of cultural dimensions. On the basis of factor analysis and proposed his own typology consisting of five dimensions, which will be included in further analyses.

4. Typology of cultural dimensions

The discussed social aspect which has a considerable influence on quality management improvement is pro-quality organisational culture. On the basis of the conducted investigations, the cultural factors have been divided from the point of view of their influence on quality management into four categories: key, useful, useless and harmful. In this case the results should be analysed by using a cultural map constructed in a manner similar to that applied in the case of a leadership map.

In this situation, the vertical axis will contain the above listed categories of cultural factors division, while on the horizontal axis the existence or non-existence of a particular cultural factor in the examined organisations

will be marked. In this way an eight-field matrix is formed, which has been shown in Fig. 1. On the basis of the matrix, the cultural factors can be divided into four categories:

- optimal culture – exists in an organisation in which key factors from the point of view of quality management improvement are present, while harmful factors do not exist,
- good culture – means that factors useful for quality management improvement are present in an organisation, whereas the useless ones do not exist,
- bad culture – occurs in the event the existence of cultural factors which are not useful from the point of view of quality management improvement is observed, while the useful factors are absent,
- very bad culture – the culture of an organisation is characterised by the fact that it contains factors which are harmful from the point of view of quality management improvement, while key factors do not exist.

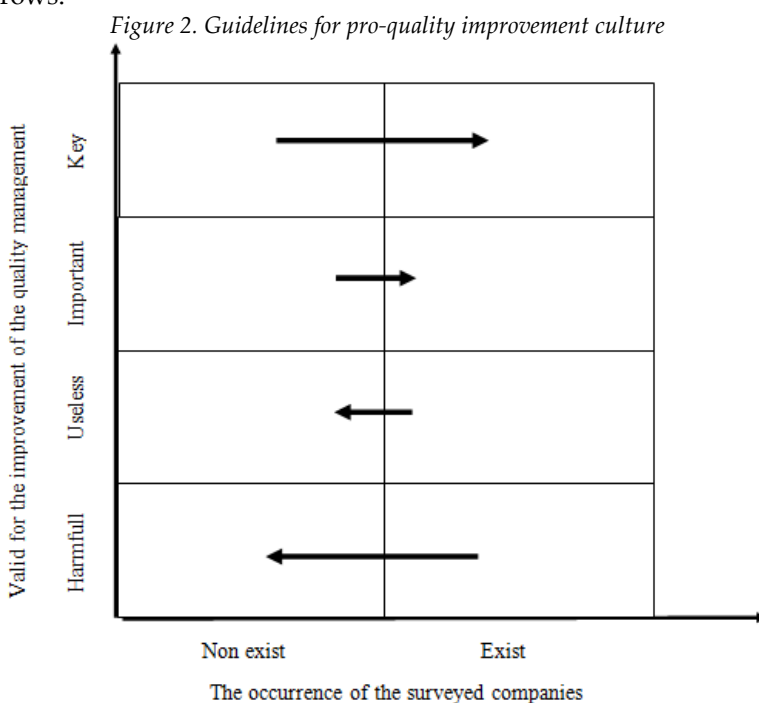
Figure 1. Matrix of pro-quality culture factors

Valid for the improvement of the quality management	Key	Very bad culture	Optimal culture
	Important	Bad culture	Good culture
	Useless	Good culture	Bad culture
	Harmful	Optimal culture	Very bad culture
		Non exist	Exist
		The occurrence of the surveyed companies	

Source: Author's own study.

Basing on the presented concept of cultural attributes division, it is possible to find a direction of changes in the culture of an organisation which can make it more pro-quality in character. To this end, harmful and useless attributes should be reduced in the process of quality improvement, while the key and important cultural attributes should be strengthened, Figure 2 presents suggested directions of cultural changes – the intensity of activities to be taken has been marked with the length of arrows.

The pro-quality culture map can be used for analysis of both single companies and the whole population; then cultural factors dominating in the largest number of the investigated companies will be marked in relevant fields of the matrix. Using the concept presented in Fig. 3, a map of pro-quality cultural factors for the whole examined population has been presented



Source: Author's own study.

The investigated leadership attributes have been included in the previously described categories in the following way:

- optimal culture – CK1A – status achievement;
- good culture – none of the cultural attributes has been included in this category,
- bad culture – CK2B – a considerable aloofness from authority; CK4A – outside control; CK5A – collectivism;

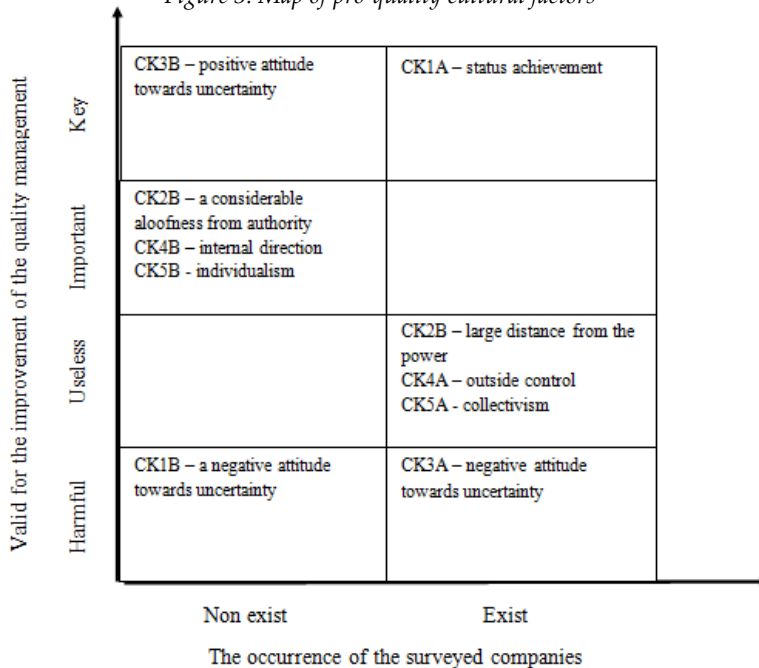
- every bad culture –CK3B – a negative attitude towards uncertainty.

On the basis of the cultural factors' illustration in the form of a matrix it can be stated that the culture of Polish firms does not favour quality management improvement. The discrepancy between cultural factors that are important for quality management improvement and their existence in the examined companies is significant and concerns the following issues:

- the investigated companies' culture is characterised by excessive avoidance of uncertainty, which translates into restrained innovativeness and problems with implementation of new solutions,

- in the investigated companies only the attributes which are useless from the point of view of quality improvement are observed, whereas useful attributes do not exist.

Figure 3. Map of pro-quality cultural factors



Source: Author's own study.

Due to a high level of uncertainty avoidance in Polish companies, having an adverse influence on the application of new solutions, the customer receives a worse product and is dissatisfied, which translates into a worse position on the market and lower profits. Companies characterised by high avoidance of uncertainty cannot make use of chances appearing in their environment, because they cling to well-known patterns, even if this is harmful for them and the changes might improve the company's condition. This is an unfavourable phenomenon, especially nowadays, in a period of big changes resulting from a crisis on world markets, which might provide an opportunity for firms that are able to make a proper use of them.

The problems of the examined companies' culture from the point of view of quality management improvement are related to excessive collectivism, which constrains the innovativeness and creativity of employees. It is worth noticing that excessive collectivism, as suggested by world research analysed in the third and fourth chapter, adversely affects the wealth of a country, which suggests that it restrains the economic activity. However, on the other hand, excessive individualism exerts a negative influence on the implementation of PN-EN-ISO 9001:2009 standard due to the reluctance of individualistically-oriented employees to observe the requirements imposed by the standard.

Another problem observed in the investigated companies is also excessive aloofness from authority, which creates problems in free communication between employees and causes excessive hierarchization of an organisation. This also has a negative effect on innovativeness and leads to a reluctant attitude to standardization on the part of employees, who perceive it as an element of control imposed by the management and fail to notice its advantages. This is confirmed by the results of world research, which suggests that a considerable aloofness from authority has a harmful effect on innovation, certification of quality management systems as well as on the country's GDP. Also outside control, i.e. a situation in which conformist attitudes and accommodation to the group prevail, adversely affects innovative / improving solutions and contributes to the problems experienced by Polish organisations in the area of quality.

In the analysis of problems related to cultural factors from the point of view of situational factors (using a map of pro-quality cultural factors), no bigger differences were noticed, irrespective of the branch, the size of companies, the sources of financing, the degree of organisational structure complexity etc. This confirms the results of investigations conducted by specialists in this field in other countries. They believe that in the case of the examined factors, the culture of a country dominates the organisational culture. The place of our birth has a very big influence on our attitude to work, changes, authority and to many other variables existing in every organisation.

On the basis of his research, G. Hofstede labelled a culture as the programming of the mind. According to him, our behaviour is to a certain degree determined by cultural factors, by the social environment in which we grow up, family, school, group, workplace and the

place of living. He believed that the culture of the country exerts a stronger influence on us than the culture of the organisation we work for. The results of studies presented in this monograph confirm these observations. Similarly to other investigations carried out by Polish specialists, they indicate that specific cultural attributes do not depend on the above mentioned situational variables and remain characteristic of the majority of companies operating in Poland. Even a foreign capital share in the financing of a company has little influence on cultural factors from the statistical point of view.

The conducted studies indicate that two major cultural factors in the examined organisations are: status achievement – status ascription and an attitude to uncertainty. These are key factors for quality management improvement and for this reason they were used in the studies into the proposed typology of organisational cultures from the pro-quality point of view. This typology has been presented in the form of a matrix in which the vertical axis contains the variable of status ascription and status achievement, and the horizontal one contains a negative as well as positive attitude to uncertainty. From this point of view four types of organisational cultures have been distinguished (Fig. 4)

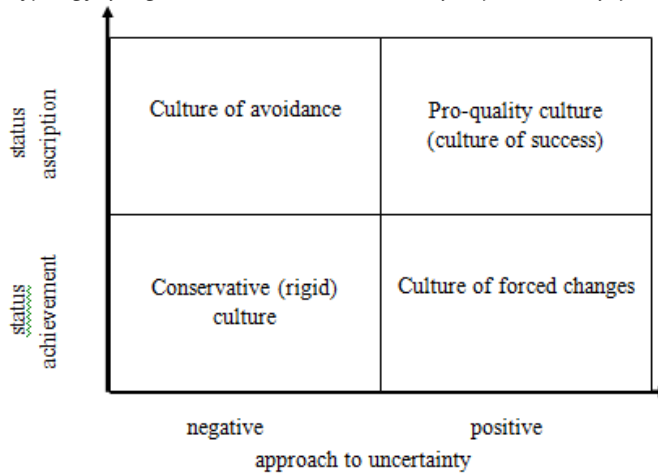
- pro-quality culture (culture of success) – is characterized by a positive attitude to uncertainty and status achievement orientation,

- culture of avoidance – occurs in a situation when status achievement is accompanied by a negative attitude to uncertainty,

- culture of forced changes – a culture in the case of which a positive attitude to uncertainty is accompanied by status ascription,

- conservative (rigid) culture – is characterised by a negative attitude to uncertainty and a simultaneous status ascription.

Figure.4. The typology of organizational culture in terms of improvement of quality management



Source: Author's own study.

In the pro-quality culture, which can also be called a culture of success, the focus is on success, both personal and organisational. In such a culture the emerging changes and new circumstances on the market are treated as a chance which should be taken by an organisation to improve its competitive position. A possibility of achieving a higher position in an organisation owing to good work, commitment and good results triggers employees' creativity and ingeniousness. This way the company becomes more flexible, prone to changes and innovative, continuously improving its products and processes. It is focused on customers and fulfilment of their needs. Enterprises define their targets in a measurable way and employees' promotion as well as bonuses depend on the fulfilment of these goals. Employees account only for the fulfilment of organisational goals, while other factors, such as formal diplomas, age, sex etc. are not taken into consideration in evaluation of their achievements. In contemporary turbulent environments this is a model culture, which should be a goal to strive for by Polish companies.

The culture of forced changes is the one in which changes do take place, but they are usually top-down, forced by the management instead of grass-roots initiatives of the employees. In certain aspects of quality management, such a culture may be favourable – for example PN-EN-ISO 9001:2009 standard implementation is frequently a decision taken by the highest level management, which is next „imposed” on the employees. However, this creates problems related to resistance against changes. If the employees do not accept this decision, and this is a frequent situation in the case of the forced changes culture, they may be reluctant towards some of the management's ideas. In extreme cases, such a culture may lead to strike and discrepancies between the needs of the management and employees. It can be favourable in certain circumstances, if changes are managed in a right way, but due to excessive status ascription this results in restrained creativity. Even an employee who achieves good results cannot be promoted over a certain position. Such a culture is observed for example in

family businesses and in companies with a foreign capital share. A company following the culture in question may effectively function provided that the need for promotion is replaced by some other, for example financial incentives.

The culture of avoidance is characteristic of organisations in which employees, despite being assured of promotion and development possibilities, are not prone to make excessive changes in their environment and undertaken activities. Rewards correspond to the effort put in their achievement, the organisation establishes goals, but most of the employees' effort is focused on a well-known standard behaviour. Promotion is possible only in the event a person is characterised by conformism and adapts their behaviour to the rules followed by the company. Such people are valued when they achieve good results, whereas non-conformist persons trying to make changes in the organisation may be perceived as a threat. A company in which such a culture of avoidance exists may operate effectively on condition that it functions on a stable market, where taking sudden and drastic changes is not necessary. Then its conventionality, accompanied by simultaneous motivating of employees to make a greater effort ensures it success. On the other hand, in a turbulent environment companies managed in such a way may have problems with adapting to quick changes. The discussed culture of avoidance is frequently observed in big companies, concerns etc.

In the case of the last type of culture – conservative (rigid) one, we deal with a combination of two aspects adversely influencing the improvement of quality management. An organisation is very reluctant to changes, any new ideas are immediately blocked by

the management. Its leaders strive to maintain the status quo and keep their positions, so each change is perceived as a threat. This kind of companies frequently get rid of creative and success-oriented employees, as they are seen as a menace to the rigid hierarchy. Also the employees themselves, having understood that promotion does not depend on the achieved results, try to find a job in organisations characterized by a more satisfying culture. Such a culture has an anti-quality character; it should not be applied by any company striving to satisfy the customer, achieve a high quality of products and success on the market.

After defining the typology of culture from the point of view of quality management improvement, it is worth considering what is the culture of the examined organisations in the light of the presented typology. Figure 5 presents the number of investigated organisations classified as a particular type of culture on the basis of research. The pro-quality culture exists in 52 companies, 15 companies are characterised by the culture of forced changes, in 760 companies prevails the culture of avoidance and in 283 – the conservative culture.

Table 2 contains a percentage share of organisations representing a given organisational culture in a system of division into branches. On the basis of collected data, it can be noticed that:

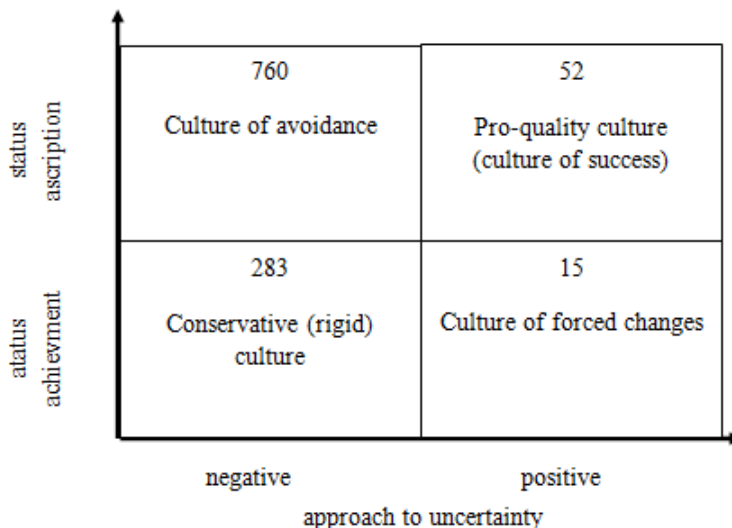
- the pro-quality culture occurs mainly in industry, financial institutions, transport and communications as well as in some of the leading construction companies,
- the culture of avoidance is observed chiefly in trade and building branch,
- the culture of forced changes occurs

- the least frequently of all the analysed cultures; it is present in the mining branch and public administration,
- the worst culture from the point of view of quality management improvement is most frequently observed in the mining branch; it is also encountered in transport and communications, industry, administration,
 - the mining branch is characterised by the largest number of organisations following the rigid (conservative) culture, which leads to the conclusion that the mining industry restructuring, taking place over the last few years, has not enabled the companies in this branch to fully adjust to the market situation, as the research suggests that mining is still dominated by

the traditional culture,, going back to the time of centrally planned economy none of the examined public administration institutions is characterised by the pro-quality culture, which leads to the conclusion that transition into a new model of public administration - focused on customers and their needs - has not really taken place; a reluctant attitude to changes is still observed in administration. Also, we frequently deal with status ascription, excessive hierarchization, the blocking of dynamic young employees' promotion as well as other similar phenomena adversely influencing the improvement of quality management.

Research suggests that the organisational culture of Polish companies is unfavourable from the point of view of quality improvement. The existing cultural practices

Figure 5. The typology of organizational culture in terms of improvement of quality management - the results for the surveyed companies



Source: Author's own study.

Industries									
	Industry	Mining	Trade	Building	Transport and communications	Financial institutions	Commercial services	Other services	Administration
Pro-quality culture	5,06%	6,90%	4,57%	6,76%	4,88%	7,32%	3,79%	6,67%	0,00%
Culture of forced changes	1,40%	3,45%	0,57%	0,00%	0,00%	2,44%	1,38%	2,22%	3,39%
Culture of avoidance	69,66%	48,28%	71,43%	71,62%	63,41%	65,85%	69,31%	62,22%	64,41%
Conservative (rigid) culture	23,88%	41,38%	23,43%	21,62%	31,71%	24,39%	25,52%	28,89%	32,20%

Source: Author's own study.

(conservative culture and the culture of uncertainty avoidance) as well as the attitudes of employees have a negative influence on quality, which leads to problems with Polish products' competitiveness on global markets, where domestic companies have to compete with organisations from countries characterised by a more pro-quality culture. The dominance of the culture of uncertainty avoidance in the conditions of fast global changes is an alarming phenomenon. In this context it seems advisable to devote another chapter to changes that organisations must make in order to shape their culture in such a way that it assumes a more pro-quality character.

5. Summary

On the basis of the conducted studies, different types of organisational cultures have been defined as follows: a pro-quality (success) culture, the culture of avoidance, a conservative (rigid) culture and the culture of

forced changes. Studies indicate that Polish firms are most frequently characterised by the culture of avoidance, while the pro-quality culture is observed relatively seldom (less than 5% of the investigated companies).

This is an unfavourable phenomenon as the pro-quality culture is characterised by the strongest focus on improvement and success. People learn easily, want to introduce changes and new solutions, are flexible and innovative. As indicated by research, Poland takes one of the last places in the field of innovation. Such an outcome of our country can to a certain degree result from the fact that Polish firms are dominated by the culture of avoidance or conservative culture, characterised by a negative attitude to uncertainty, which in consequence leads to restrained innovativeness and creativity. This can only be changed by an attempt to change the organisational cultures of Polish companies. It is, however, a difficult, complex

and time-consuming task, and its detailed discussion goes beyond the scope of this publication.

Questions discussed in the paper are also important from the point of view of corporate social responsibility. Cultural dimensions and behaviour of employees have an

impact on corporate responsibility strategies. In some cultures, these issues are easy to implement, while in others they may encounter significant obstacles. This issue will be further discussed in subsequent publications.

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