Research Culture in Higher Education: The Case of a Foreign Language Department in Mexico

Cultura de la investigación: el caso de un Departamento de Lenguas Extranjeras en México

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In the case of Mexico, until recently, many universities focused mainly on teaching, but recent changes have led to new appointments in research, administration, and community service. There now seems to be, however, a view of the predominance of research in the academic environment. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to examine and identify, through the lens of organizational theory and a current model of research culture in an academic setting, some characteristics of the research culture in the Department of Languages and Education at a public university in Southeast Mexico. Following the international tendencies and models in higher education, we see that the research culture observed in this university resembles more a market culture than other types of culture, although some traits of hierarchy culture provide cohesion in the organization.

Key words: Foreign languages, higher education, research culture.

En México, hasta hace algunas décadas, muchas universidades se enfocaban principalmente en la función de docencia. Sin embargo, recientemente se han dado cambios en la asignación de nuevas funciones: investigación, gestión y extensión. No obstante, la investigación parece tener actualmente un lugar preponderante en el ambiente académico. El propósito de este artículo es examinar e identificar, mediante la teoría de las organizaciones y un modelo actual de cultura de investigación en contextos académicos, algunas características de la cultura de la investigación en el Departamento de Lengua y Educación de una universidad pública del sureste mexicano. Siguiendo tendencias y modelos internacionales de educación superior, la cultura que se observa en esta universidad se asemeja más a una de mercado que a cualquiera de otro tipo, aunque algunos rasgos de la cultura jerárquica permiten la cohesión en la organización.

Palabras clave: cultura de la investigación, educación superior, lenguas extranjeras.

Introduction

In recent decades, an interesting research topic in education has been that of the academic career and the changing academic profession (Blackmore, Brennan, & Zipin, 2010; Brennan, 2006; Galaz Fontes & Gil Antón, 2009; Gil Antón, 2000; Grediaga, 2001; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The university faculty today have a different profile and function than they had in the last century. There seems to be a view of the predominance of research in the academic environment as Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) point out: "A powerful countervailing trend is unmistakable: a clear faculty perception of the increasing importance of research and publication for purposes of promotion and tenure" (p. 129). Similarly, Layzell (1999), referring to the American faculty, claims: "faculty reward structures appear to be heavily geared toward research and scholarship" (p. 3). Others in the literature share this view as well, according to Rhoades (2000).

In the particular case of Mexico, many universities used to focus mainly on teaching, but there has been a drastic change towards and emphasis on research, administration, and community service.[1] Supported by some national and institutional policies (for example, the Program for Faculty Development—PROMEP, for its acronym in Spanish, and the introduction of an annual plan of activities for each professor, which has to be approved by the administration), faculty members in some public higher institutions are not only obliged to develop the four main functions (teaching, research, administration, and community service) but to maintain a balance amongst them. Interestingly, however, economic incentives and rewards are greatly skewed towards research and researchers. The National System of Researchers, (*Sistema Nacional de Investigadores*,

SNI) and the Productivity Reward Program (*Beca de Desempeño al Personal Académico*), for example, encourage faculty to conduct research and train new researchers by providing them with grants, scholarships, funding, and awards. Financial incentives have been the most appealing among faculty and, to some extent, have promoted an increase in research productivity at many universities in Mexico.

These changes, of course, have not been pervasive in all universities and their implications are not alike in every institution. Some, such as the UNAM (Universidad Autónoma de México), have been traditionally strong research universities, and have conducted research since their origins. Nevertheless, largely, public state universities, which do not have a long historical past, are now dealing with these changes in the academic profession. A distinctive situation also occurs if we consider the different disciplines. Clark (1987) highlights the great influence a discipline has on research activity, and Rhoades (2000) claims that the institutional setting, the departmental and college settings shape faculty work. For example, faculty in the natural sciences have always embraced the function of research eagerly. Nonetheless, in other disciplines, such as modern languages, the focus had been traditionally on teaching.

Although research on higher education's changing environment in Mexico is now prolific (Chavoya, 2001; Estévez, 2007; Galaz Fontes, 2002; Galaz Fontes & Gil Antón, 2009; Gil Antón, 1994; Grediaga, 2001; Montero, 2011; Padilla, 2003; Parra, 2002), research concerning professors of modern languages or foreign language education, specifically, had been disregarded in Mexico until this decade when Encinas and Busseniers (2003) and Ramírez-Romero (2007, 2010, 2013) conducted studies which focused mainly on the research productivity of foreign language teaching and learning.

There are very few studies concerning research carried out by modern language faculty and there

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[1]   The term "service" here coincides with the one used by Layzell (1999) in higher education: "Faculty work is comprised of instruction, research, and service activities" (p. 15).

seems to be a gap in the literature regarding the research culture in which they are immersed or the research culture they wish to develop. While discussion in Mexico has revolved mainly around the changing academic career of faculty, there seems to be little concern for how these changes have occurred, how the faculty have responded to them, and what the institutions are doing with these changes. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine and determine, through the lens of organizational theory and the model of the research culture of Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007), some characteristics of the research culture in a particular unit of analysis: the Department of Foreign Languages and Education at a public university in Southeast Mexico (one of the youngest public universities in Mexico). We intend to shed light on the idiosyncrasies of this department faculty and some university administrators with regard to research. Our interest is to clarify how the research culture is being shaped by these professors and administrators by means of an analysis of their responses to the current institutional research policies and agenda, the departmental conditions and the environment for research, the financial support for research, incentives offered, collaboration with colleagues from the same department or external colleagues, and their perception of the needs and challenges in research.

The paper is organized into four sections. The first section examines organizational theory in relation to universities as organizational units. The second describes the research method used and details of participants, instrument, and data analysis. The third includes the findings and discussion of the categories of analysis, such as the policies, research agenda, work climate, incentives, and so forth. Finally, the conclusions are given although these can only be of a preliminary nature as further and more extensive research needs to be carried out.

Organizational Theory

In organizational theory, the interactionist approach focuses on the subjective meanings emerging from social interaction, that is, the organization of reality is interpreted by its members and an intersubjective world is shared and built among these members in the everyday life of the organization (Ahumada, 2001). This perspective emphasizes social action, language and communication, the construction of meanings, and the organizational culture in order to understand the social interaction. For the purpose of this paper, the organizational culture approach was used as we examined the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of some members of two groups (faculty and administrators), who play a very important role in this organizational unit. Additionally, the methodology proposed by this approach is more suitable for this research. Next, there is detailed information about this perspective.

Organizational Culture

Concerning the organizational culture, the concept of culture has been defined and redefined many times by scholars. Cameron (2008) argues that the agreement most discussions of organizational culture (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Schein, 1996) has arrived at is that "culture is a socially constructed attribute of organizations which serves as the 'social glue' binding an organization together. [Culture represents] how things are around here or the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads" (Cameron, 2008, p. 3).

As institutions, universities also develop an identity, values, attitudes, and beliefs. Some of them are explicit, and many are implicit; some are shared and others are group specific. This then means that in an organization, such as a university, culture is not always homogeneous. There are, therefore, different perspectives in approaching the organizational culture and these are discussed in detail below.

Conceptual Frameworks
of Organizational Culture

Schein (1984, 1985, 1991) proposes three different levels for viewing organizational culture:

Level 1. This consists of the artefacts and creations of the organization, such as symbols and rituals.

Level 2. Here we have the consciously held values, beliefs, etc., that guide the behavior of the members of the organization.

Level 3. This level makes up the unconscious ideas and beliefs deep-rooted in the employees of the organization. This is the essence of the organization and has the greatest influence on the individual's behavior.

According to Hatch (1993), Schein's definition and conceptual framework remains the dominant ones for organizational culture studies. However, Martin and Meyerson (1988) claim that this approach has as its shortcoming the absence of comparing and contrasting the manifestation of ideas in actual practices and the perception of these by people outside the organization. Thus, triangulating information obtained about the cognitive component with artefacts and behaviors is recommended.

An alternative paradigm is the *competing values framework* (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), which has been very useful in identifying and profiling the dominant cultures of organizations. This framework consists of two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. The vertical dimension differentiates cultures that emphasize flexibility, discretion, and dynamism from those which focus on stability, order, and control. Concerning the horizontal dimension, there are criteria that distinguish cultures, which focus on an internal orientation, integration, and unity from those which emphasize an external orientation, differentiation, and rivalry. These two dimensions together form four quadrants, each representing a distinct set of organizational culture: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy.

The clan culture is considered, according to Cameron (2008), as

> a friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves. Leaders are thought of as mentors, coaches, and, perhaps, even as parent figures. . . . Success is defined in terms of internal climate and concern for people. (p. 435)

Loyalty, tradition, and collaboration as well as commitment are valuable in this culture. For the organization, teamwork, participation, and consensus are very important.

The adhocracy culture is perceived, following Cameron (2008), as "a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative workplace. . . . Effective leadership is visionary, innovative, and risk-oriented" (p. 35). In addition, commitment to experimentation and innovation are ideas shared by the members. The organization is very concerned about being at the leading edge of new knowledge, products, and/or services. Consequently, readiness for change and meeting new challenges are important. The organization's long-term goal is on growing rapidly and acquiring new resources.

A market culture is "a results-oriented workplace. Leaders are hard driving producers, directors, and competitors. . . . Outpacing the competition, escalating share price, and market leadership dominate the success criteria" (Cameron, 2008, pp. 35-36). Winning is the main goal of the organization.

The hierarchy culture, according to Cameron (2008),

> is characterized as a formalised and structured place to work. Procedures and well-defined processes govern what people do. Effective leaders are good coordinators, organizers, and efficiency experts. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important. The long-term concerns of the organization are stability, predictability, and efficiency. Formal rules and policies hold the organization together. (p. 36)

Given that in an organization such as a university we may observe some specificities or variation (as we are dealing with different people with probably different objectives), it seems that both frameworks—Schein's definition of culture and the competing values framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983)—can complement each other. At a higher institution, students, faculty, and administrators (with different statuses) can form subcultures, although there might also be a dominant culture. In this study, we consider the perspective of faculty and administrators, which can lead us toward identifying a more dominant culture or different subcultures.

Research Culture in Academic Contexts

Based on Schein's (1984) definition of culture, we can say that a research culture is the shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that members of a university hold about research. That also determines how they perceive, think about, and behave with respect to research activities. With regard to research culture in higher education, Meek and Davies (2009) point out that:

> Higher education institutions must provide a supportive environment if research is to flourish. In some developing countries, higher education institutions were originally established mainly to engage in teaching and it will take a good deal of effort and an appropriate policy environment to nourish a research culture. (p. 76)

Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007) conducted a study whose aim was to understand the research culture from the perspective of faculty and how this affects the productivity of the faculty in some higher education institutions in the Philippines. They operationalized the construct research culture adopting indicators from previous studies (Bland & Ruffin as cited in Pratt, Margaritis, & Coy, 1999; De Haven, Wilson, & O'Connor-Ketlestrings, 1998; Dundar & Lewis, 1998). Table 1 lists these indicators below along with their operationalized definitions:

Table 1. Indicators of a Research Culture (Based on Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta, 2007, p. 4)

Indicators	Operationalized Definitions
Institutional research policies and agenda	Research agenda based on the institution's philosophy, goals, mission and vision, as well as its research emphasis and strategies for supporting and promoting research.
Departmental culture and working conditions	Departmental research programs and strategies designed to encourage and sustain research productivity among the faculty and graduate students.
Budget for research	Funds allotted by the institution for research, ability of the institution and its departments to tap external sources and obtain research grants.
Infrastructure	Provision of a research unit, adequate research services, and facilities for the conduct of research.
Collaboration with and access to research professionals in other institutions	Ability to provide means for linkages with other institutions, local or international, in order to create intellectual synergy.
Policies and guidelines on research benefits and incentives	Rules and procedures on the granting of financial and non-financial rewards for research.
Research committee	Research monitoring body that screens the types of research conducted and looks into ethical dilemmas involved, especially in sensitive fields.
Publications	Quality and quantity of research produced by the faculty members.

In addition to these indicators, Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007) point out the need to include three other components in the analysis: faculty workload; faculty knowledge, abilities, and attitudes to conduct research; and the institutional policies for research. All these together seem to be suitable elements for identifying the research culture of a higher education institution. Therefore, the organizational culture perspectives discussed above and these indicators which are particular to the research culture at a university, are guiding this study.

Method

The purpose of this research is descriptive-oriented, and we chose a public university in Southeast Mexico, and particularly the Department of Foreign Languages and Education as our unit of analysis, for this case study. We collected data by using a semi-structured interview whose questions were based on the framework proposed by Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007). Three institutional administrators (the Vice-president, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Dean of Political Sciences and Humanities), and five faculty members (three women and two men; one professor and four associate professors) from our department were interviewed. The five faculty/researchers were selected by analysing first the whole department faculty research outputs, their profiles, and their membership to the two main research groups within the department. Then, only five representative members from the whole faculty were selected to obtain a range.

We triangulated the data by using the interview contents from the administrators and the faculty members, organizational/institutional documents, and data on the faculty research outputs. The analysis and discussion were guided by the theoretical proposals by Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta (2007), Schein (1984, 1985, 1991), and the competing values framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Findings and Discussion

This section is organized into three parts. First, we present and discuss the data obtained from the university administrators. Next, we do the same but this time with the faculty from the Department of Languages and Education. Finally, we compare and contrast both perspectives to shed light on the complex picture of the research culture in this organization. We develop the discussion considering the abovementioned theoretical perspectives.

The Administrators' Perspective

Institutional Research Policies and Agenda

There was no consensus among the administrators about the existence of a research agenda. Nonetheless, the three administrators mentioned the interest of the President and the Planning Office to encourage educational research (by means of financial support) in order to obtain data that are required by Higher Education accreditation organizations. All shared the idea that the research policies are agreed upon as needed, and they vary to some extent according to the authorities (the President, the Vice-president, or the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research), and some have been established differently in the departments; that is, some deans and heads of departments adapt these policies internally. They also agreed that academic freedom can also be observed in the research function.

Departmental Culture and Working Conditions

One administrator did not perceive the existence of subcultures within the institution, nor according to the disciplines, but two administrators believed that some disciplines are more oriented towards research while others are inclined toward

more teaching or community service activities. Two administrators distinguished two sets of professors in the institution: (1) those that have a doctoral degree, have a high level of research output, are more oriented to research, and are members of the SNI; and (2) those who have only a master's degree, limited research skills, and devote more time to teaching or community service. They also agreed that this situation has led the teachers to experience some discontent due to the existing external and internal incentives—mainly economic ones—that are intended to reward and stimulate the faculty's research productivity. We should mention that teaching does not encourage the same level of compensation as research.

To encourage and sustain research productivity, the institution promotes among the faculty their evaluation and accreditation in national programs such as the SNI, the PROMEP from the Mexican Ministry of Education, and the Productivity Reward Program. Although participation in these programs is "optional," the institution values members in the SNI mainly because they conform to an indicator for rankings and for the authorization of federal funds. One administrator mentioned that some faculty are more interested in research because that is the more rewarded function, and she suggested that there should be a balance in the incentives considering also teaching, administration, and community service.

One administrator acknowledged that faculty in the Department of Foreign Languages and Education have traditionally been devoted to teaching and some are now coping with difficulties conducting research because of their limited knowledge and skills. He believes that some need more help and that the more experienced professors can actually integrate them into the research projects, but he thinks that doing research is also of a personal interest and not everyone has such an interest. Thus,

some teachers only do what they are required to do, which is to produce at least one publication a year.

Budget for Research

According to two administrators, professors are expected to obtain financial support from external organizations to conduct research. However, this has been observed to be a difficult task for the faculty. They attributed this situation to the excessive paperwork and the lack of interest on behalf of the professors. Given that some type of research can be carried out with few resources, some faculty members are not motivated to seek this external financial support. However, being the leader of a project with external financial support is highly respectable and is looked upon favorably by researchers and the institution. The Department of Languages and Education is perceived by the administrators as a department with incipient research projects that are externally financed.

Institutionally, there are grants to conduct small-scale research projects for faculty members, and grants for graduate and undergraduate students' writing of their theses. This strategy has increased the rate of graduation, which is highly valued by the institution for rankings, accreditation and funding.

Federal funds are also provided to all the existing research groups in the institution in order to defray the costs of visiting scholars as well as visits to other institutions. All administrators agreed that faculty rarely complain about funding for research.

Infrastructure

Only one administrator highlighted the lack of infrastructure for the graduate programs. A lack of communication between faculty members and the department in charge of infrastructure seemed evident. The university does not have a research building; faculty work in their own offices and some

adequate research resources such as databases are available, although one participant pointed out there are "not enough and most of them are not specialised." However, the administrators said that the faculty do not complain about this situation.

Collaboration With and Access to Research Professionals in Other Institutions

The administrators agreed that collaboration with external colleagues is increasing, but they consider this as part of the faculty's responsibility. There are some grants for visits to other institutions, but they are very limited. Faculty usually invite or visit external colleagues using external financing.

Policies and Guidelines on Research Benefits and Incentives

The participants agreed that incentives are mainly pecuniary, although sometimes they may consist of payment for the publication of a book, grants for travelling, fewer instruction hours, or a better office, among other reasons. However, these rewards are assigned with discretion. With regard to the financial rewards, the national programs have explicit guidelines and rules. All the requirements are clearly stated as well as the procedures of evaluation. These programs classify researchers in different levels or ranks, each one implying different requirements and productivity: the higher the rank, the more money researchers receive.

Research Committee

The administrators acknowledged the absence of a research committee in the institution, which supervises the processes of research and ensures ethical standards of research involving human subjects. They are not aware how researchers in the institution ensure that the rights of research participants are protected.

Publications

There was partial agreement among the administrators that the most common type of publication in the institution is book chapters followed by journal papers. They all perceive a rise in the number of publications of the whole faculty in recent years, but there is a shared belief that proceedings and book chapters (published by the same university) are the most prolific ones because they imply less time and effort.

The Faculty

Institutional Research Policies and Agenda

No institutional research agenda is known among the professors, although they perceive there is an interest in developing educational research, as funding has been lately provided for projects in this field. Two professors are unaware of the university's research lines or its mission and vision with regard to research.

The research policies are associated mainly with budget distribution among the different research groups, and the distribution of instructional workload, research, community service, and administration. With regard to the former, in the Department of Languages and Education there are two research groups which get some funding from the Federal Government. However, not everyone is part of a research group and these people do not have access to these funds. Additionally, professors in a research group can be members or collaborators,[2] and one professor in the interview mentioned that she, as a collaborator, has not received any financial support.

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2   Members are officially registered in the Ministry of Education, and they are compelled to demonstrate productivity and to be evaluated; collaborators are not officially registered.

As to the workload distribution, this varies according to the faculty academic rank. In the Department there are "professors" and "associate professors". According to one institutional policy, the former have fewer student contact hours and can devote more time for research. Associate professors are assigned more instruction hours and the time allocated to conduct research is reduced. Consequently, the institutional demands of research outputs are also different: Associate professors are compelled to produce one publication annually, while professors must produce at least two publications. All the professors interviewed expressed agreement with this policy, but their main concern was the time dedicated to administrative issues, which consume longer than the amount of hours institutionally allotted for this function. This is what one associate professor, who is also a coordinator of a Master's program, said regarding this:

> Out of my 40 hours, 12 or 15 are devoted to teaching; and a similar amount is dedicated to administration. I work all mornings doing that, and I do research at home, at nights or very late at night if I am still in the mood . . . I'd like to have more time for research because, at the same time, that would help me to improve my teaching. (Female associate)

Similarly, the policy regarding the time for course preparation seems to be unacceptable by the faculty since they perceive the time to be insufficient for this task (half an hour per course hour). The policy of distribution of time per function is perceived by most of the interviewees as inefficient, unreal, and unreasonable. The faculty mentioned that some implications of these policies can be observed in a reduction of research output or its quality as well as in the quality of teaching or less student/tutors contact hours. Let us see below two faculty members' reflections:

> I think I should dedicate more time to teaching, and I guess I don't do it because I spend more time thinking about research. (Male associate)

> I devote less time to tutoring and community service...and there are many administration issues that just come up...they hadn't been planned previously and the faculty has to do them with no excuse and at that precise moment. (Female professor)

Given that the institution evaluates the faculty performance every year taking into consideration teaching, tutoring, administration, and community service, and their contract depends on this, faculty feel pressed and find this situation very stressful. This performance contract for all faculties has been a policy in this university since 2005, and faculty in this department did not complain about it.

Departmental Culture and Working Conditions

There is a feeling among faculty that the administration is not supportive at all of their research activity. One of them said, "Nobody cares if I do research or not as long as I meet the requirement of one publication."

Three faculty members agreed they feel motivated to do research and enjoy this activity. They also believe that teaching has been neglected to a certain extent not only because faculty are tending to prefer research, but also because administrative issues and community service consume a lot of time. Two faculty members (both hold masters' degrees) said they do not feel motivated to conduct research; they prefer teaching and feel the need to learn more about how to do research. One notable difference between all these faculty members is their research productivity and the rewards they receive. The first three receive monetary incentives through several programs. Conversely, the second two receive very little or no incentive at all, because teaching is not rewarded as well as research is and this is the activity to which they devote more time.

Mentoring among the faculty members[3] (with regard to research) does take place in the Department, according to the faculty interviewed, but it is not a pervasive practice. They pointed out that factors such as personality, interests, benefits, or drawbacks affect the mentoring, and some highlighted that mentoring is very time-consuming. Two of them agreed that mentoring is very helpful, and they would like this to be institutionalized to avoid the informality and to encourage the "experts" to mentor.

Other subgroups and subcultures identified are the research groups, which derived from a national policy of the Ministry of Education. Faculty members who share one or two lines of research and who work collaboratively among themselves form the research groups at this university. In the Department of Languages and Education, there are two research groups to which most of the faculty belong. However, some faculty members work individually because their interests do not match those of the existing research groups or because of other personal issues. The faculty interviewed perceive collaboration between research groups as non-existent; only some sporadic activities have been carried out together. They all agreed that although both groups share some research topics, they tend not to work collaboratively.

Budget for Research

There is a belief among some faculty that there is a tendency to benefit one research group over the other, or to favor members instead of collaborators. Most of them agreed that the budget allotted for research is insufficient for everyone, but they suggested that with a rotation system everybody could benefit. One interviewee, comparing this

situation with other public universities, emphasized that "here we have much better conditions."

Infrastructure

Some highlighted the need for specialized software or databases. They have solved this problem by getting external financing. In general, they think the infrastructure is adequate in the institution.

Collaboration With and Access to Research Professionals in Other Institutions

Collaboration with research professionals is incipient yet seems to be increasing slowly. Both research groups are working with colleagues from other universities, who they contact or get to know at conferences. Mobility is almost non-existent in the department and they accept the need to do more about it.

Policies and Guidelines on Research Benefits and Incentives

The function of research and the granting of non-financial rewards (e.g., recognition) for research are not important for the Head of the Department, according to the faculty. For her or him, the research activity seems to be a responsibility of the academic unit, the graduate studies and research office rather than that of the department, which concentrates more on teaching, community service activities, and administration. The faculty agreed that the policies and guidelines on research benefits and incentives (external) are transparent and precise.

Research Committee

No research committee exists in the institution, according to the informants. Each researcher individually does or does not consider ethical issues in the conduction of research. The more experienced researchers are more aware of the great magni-

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3   We understand mentoring as the help that a more experienced researcher provides a less experienced colleague to conduct research.

tude of research ethics, and suggest the institution should have a research committee.

All agreed that the most frequently published product is conference proceedings, followed by book chapters, and then peer reviewed or referred articles (mainly national, but increasingly international). They believe that proceedings are a less rigorous academic product and less time-consuming. On the other hand, book chapters are more abundant than journal papers because there is a budget in the academic unit assigned for the publication of books. However, books co-edited or published by other institutions and in which faculty of this department participate, are still at an embryonic stage.

Integrating the Administrators' and the Faculty's Perspectives

Following Salazar-Clemeña and Almonte-Acosta's (2007) model, the research culture in this department seems to be still in process. So far, various factors such as the policies (national and institutional), the rewards structures, and the knowledge, skills and interests of the faculty have been identified as the ones shaping this research culture. Whether interacting with others or alone, each factor seems to have an effect on the research activity.

Some administrators distinguished two types of faculty members: those who favor research more over the others, and those who show a tendency to favor teaching. Similarly, faculty manifested both tendencies: some said they prefer and devote more time to research whereas others expressed a preference for teaching and administration. Interestingly, this preference has to do with their academic rank, academic profile, and the incentives they get. The higher the rank, the higher the academic profile, and the more incentives they

get, the preference is towards research. However, this tendency does not mean a lack of interest in research by those who do less research activity. They acknowledged the need to conduct research and are willing to do it if mentoring and time are provided. Some of them recognized they need more training to conduct research, but very little is done in this regard, institutionally speaking, since provision of courses or workshops with experts, or policies to adjust the workload distribution are not part of the organizational agenda.

Time, precisely, seems to be perceived by all faculty interviewed as the main factor that affects the research activity. The policies on the workload distribution seem not be working for anyone, and one function at least seems to be neglected. It is unlikely for faculty members to have a performance balance in all the functions, as the institutional policy establishes. Those who conduct research claimed they needed to work extra time because it is a very demanding task. All faculty members agreed that administration is usually the function that takes much more time than that allotted by the institution.

With regard to the rewards, most of the financial rewards or incentives are oriented toward research and perceived by the administrators and some faculty as motivating and encouraging. Faculty members feel stimulated to conduct research because, besides the financial reward, they get more recognition and respect in academia. Actually, rewards for teaching are very limited and the institution itself does not have any other way to acknowledge this function. Although one administrator and one faculty member expressed their discontent with these policies and suggested there should be also incentives for the other functions, the general goal seems to be to increase and sustain research in the institution because it is apparently beneficial for everyone: Faculty can participate in

incentives and reward programs, and the institution, in terms of accountability and funding, benefits if more research and tangible outputs are evidenced.

This reward structure seems to be working well for only some of the professors who have the knowledge and skills, although they do not always have all the time needed, and they have to make efforts and work extra time to get the research done. However, there are some faculty members who admit to having a lack of knowledge and skills, and some even lack enthusiasm towards conducting research. For these, some research incentives may be accessible but in a very limited way because they need to compete with other more experienced researchers (there are institutional and national incentive programs), and the research outputs are evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively. Although there seems to be some discontent among the people interviewed, this does not apply for everyone. Two of them mentioned that nobody complains overtly about this issue although they disagree with the type of incentives and the procedures followed.

As to the budget and infrastructure to conduct research, perceptions of faculty and administrators coincided in their saying that although it is by no means the ideal situation, the resources so far are adequate. This response probably has to do, on the one hand, with the fact that the institution promotes faculty participation in national programs, which provide funding for research. Being the leader of a national financed research project entails prestige in the incentive programs and among the faculty and the institutional administration. It is now common practice to see a colleague's picture in the university's newsletter or its web page who garners respect for having received external funding for a research project. Thus, some professors feel motivated to submit proposals to get external financial support and to be able to conduct research that is more sophisticated.

On the other hand, some faculty who do not participate in these programs, or if they do their proposal is not accepted, may just conduct research that does not need a lot of investment: some books or updated papers, fieldwork at the same institution, and ideas from their everyday classes.

Since a research agenda is not explicitly known, no one is obliged to participate or be responsible for a research project, although it is highly recommended and recognized, and faculty are increasingly doing it. This issue is interesting because, apparently, research in this department emerged more because of a national policy or an international trend towards "research universities" rather than because of a conviction of the role and benefits that research can bring to society. Throughout the interviews, nobody mentioned why research became another function for the faculty and an interest for the institution.

Although the Development Plan of the university (Universidad de Quintana Roo, 2013) does highlight some research lines (education is one of them), their scope is so wide that everything can fit in. The fact that some faculty are unaware of these lines tells us how important they are for the institution. Faculty members are free to do research (unless they have a project of a particular national or state program): they choose the topics, the problem, and methodology, the people to work with, the times, and so forth. Although there is an institutional policy for faculty to assess their research activity annually (one publication per year for associate professors, and two for professors), quality is irrelevant as it is not evaluated. It seems, therefore, that the only concern is the quantity, a way to show that the institution is doing research for accountability purposes.

This preoccupation for quantity and not for quality can also be observed in the lack of institutional support for training faculty in research

matters. Faculty members are required to publish and it is taken for granted they know how to do it. However, one administrator and two professors pointed out that, in general, faculty in language programs had been focused traditionally on teaching, but with the new policies, they now have to do research. However, not everybody is interested or has the skills to conduct research.

As the institution seemingly does not help these professors to become researchers, we wanted to know if among the colleagues there was some type of mentoring or help, or guidance from the more experienced ones. However, it was evidenced through the interviews that mentoring is not taking place ordinarily in this department; people are collaborating mainly only with others with similar research experience. Professors claimed that mentoring other colleagues is very time-consuming and this would yield less research outputs (consequently, loss of pecuniary incentives, less prestige, and so on). If this activity were to be rewarded, they said they would do it. Collaboration between the research groups also seems absent, although they may share some topics or research problems.

Considering the competing values framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), the research culture in this department can be identified more as a market culture since it is a results-oriented workplace. However, some features of the hierarchy culture can also be observed. For example, formal rules and policies (derived mainly from national policies) hold the organization together. Although procedures and processes have not been well defined, they govern what people do. The incentive structure can actually be thought of as the guideline for academic life in the institution. There is an emphasis on success or "winning" measured by rates, means, rank, level, and so forth. Competition is not only outside the university, but also inside. High research productivity is considered the most valuable asset and a symbol of prestige and success. Nonetheless, the quality and impact of the research conducted does not seem to be something faculty or representatives think about.

Conclusions

Following the international tendencies and models in higher education, the culture observed in this public university in Southeast Mexico resembles more a market culture than any other type of culture, although some traits of hierarchy culture provide cohesion to the organization.

Overall, research is perceived as just another function of the workload, as more work to be done; there was scarce evidence of a genuine interest in knowledge, in learning, in advancing, in looking at research as something that can benefit society in general.

An attitude of passiveness towards the ongoing changes, the new policies, and regulations in both administrators and faculty could be observed. Decisions seem to be made without consensus, without the inclusion of the different participants, and the decisions are rarely questioned. The structure of incentives (not only institutional but national) plays a decisive role, as well as policies, rules and procedures which are used as instruments to have faculty conduct research and, above all, to have products for accountability reports. Faculty members respond to them according to their individual attributes, which segments the culture into two main subcultures: the set of faculty qualified and inclined to conduct research, and those whose academic profiles limit them for research. However, there is no cultivation of mentoring, coaching or of leaders caring for others. This makes the culture more competitive and individualistic.

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