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# Organization as an Analytical Level for Investigation Organizational Culture

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**Abstract:** This research seeks to show what the mobilization of the concept of organization refers to at an analytical level of differentiated inquiry which should be clarified in each investigation with an interdisciplinarity between sociology and history. To this end, a brief conceptual discussion that seeks to illustrate our position, exemplified by the organizational culture of institutionalization in a boarding school will be conducted. It is concluded that organizational culture is found in perpetual transformation. This results from a combination of factors both internal and external to the organization with the actor whether individual or collective playing a given role in this socio-historical process. What emerges is a relative cultural cohesion in which expressions of consent or resistance always arise and a perfect cultural integration never exists.

**Key words:** Organization, levels of analysis, organizational culture, cultures of institutionalization within a boarding school, interdisciplinarity

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of organization arises, sometimes in a less-than-careful way without a clear explanation. This can generate some indeterminacy in its definition and consequently in the delimitation of the object of analysis. Given that one of the essential concerns in scientific discourse is the rigor of the language employed for its communication, we therefore seek to present a small contribution to this conceptual precision which seems to us necessary and appropriate and that we exemplify it through the culture of institutionalization in a boarding school.

## INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE ORGANIZATION

The concept of institution can assume different meanings. Overall in addition to constituting a codified and socially accepted form of considering and doing things, it can mean a legally defined and/or socially recognized (through the services that it offers) collectivity. Institutionalization can also be considered for example, a process of constituting an institution consistent with any of the perspectives referred to above. It can also be considered from the perspective of protecting minors as a method of assigning a child's legal guardianship to the state through for example, placing a child in the care of a boarding school.

This institutional care by a boarding school, thus consists of a legally established method of protection and assistance for disadvantaged youths and can consist of his or her internment in a collective social unit with a variable duration i.e. an organization. Through their specific characteristics such organizations in which the educational process takes place exhibit idiosyncrasies in relation to non-educational organizations due to various factors including the following: the difficulty in defining the organization's objectives and evaluating its research because that research focuses on people, people's assumption (to a greater or lesser degree) of an active role in this process which generates uncertainty in the organization's research and finally, the fact that for many of its members, the organization is more than merely a researchplace because for them, it is also a home.

Therefore, it is understood that through various collective units of care an institution that responds to the social need created by the existence of disadvantaged children can be established both to house them and to respond to socially accepted, legitimized objectives. These entities can be considered organizations. From this plurality of materializations, methods of care whose proposals (and the research developed therein) find social legitimacy also become institutions in an institutionalization of the organization.

It follows that a boarding school can be regarded as an institution either by its legal recognition or by the social recognition of the services that it provides. However, a collective boarding unit of young girls can equally be viewed as a set of actors researching together with at least a minimum of coordination among themselves and with shared mutual expectations for the pursuit of

goals assumed more or less internally and recognized externally (which are not necessarily the same), thereby influencing and being influenced by surroundings involving a certain period of time that materializes in a visible structure and constituting a totality with its own characteristics in other words, an organization.

## DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES AND DISCOURSES ON ORGANIZATION

In developing a reading at the organizational analytical level, it is important to recognize that there are several ways to consider what an organization is which translate into different perspectives and discourses. From these approaches, the following stand out: the legal, centered on the legislative frame research; the prescriptive with guidelines as examples to be applied; the managerial, a practical perspective on problem solving that is compatible with the leaders' viewpoint and the scientific, focusing on in depth and controlled research of the structures and the processes of collective coordination.

Even in a scientific approach, the form of considering an organization varies depending on the theoretical influences on for example, portuguese researcherss who take a general perspective (Ferreira *et al*., 2004) and as specific embodiments of this variety of influences in the study of predominantly scholarly educational organizations (Costa, 2003; Lima, 1998, 2001, 2006a). Despite, the variety of scientific perspectives that highlight certain features and components an organization can be regarded as the following: a set of two or more persons inserted into an open structure from the external environment, researching together and coordinated to achieve objectives. As open systems organizations are simultaneously social and technical. Social in the sense that they bring together human elements grouped under certain forms to meet specific objectives; technical in the sense that that are constituted by physical structures, equipment, technology and management processes.

Each organization has a structure and a system of procedure formalization and ways of acting a set of ways to organize and to manage organizational objectives individual motivations and expectations as well as contextual characteristics such as size, power, age and technology. This constitutes a part of a larger system with which it interacts and creates interdependent relationships. It is not an autonomous system, because its function and evolution are conditioned by other components of the system (Ferreira *et al*., 2004).

Despite the existence of such a large diversity of perspectives concerning organizations, according to Lima (2006b), the socially constructed and reconstructed dimension of the organization is accentuated in an orientation "in the sense of study focused on the structures for the study concerning practices". As a result, this same researchers proposes the analysis of "organizaction (organization+organizational action)" as "organization in action, i.e., the organization as social unit and as social action" (idem). In other words, an organization is simultaneously structure and organizational action.

Therefore, the organization can be seen as a complex collective unit with a formal dimension and an informal dimension in which there is interaction between (individual and collective) actors with at least a minimum of coordination and reciprocal expectations that employ more or less different roles in the pursuit of goals set internally (not necessarily with the same degree of internal sharing) and generally recognized externally (which are not necessarily the internal goals) influencing and being influenced by the environment, producing for it, over time, characteristics that are both specific and dynamic. These elements are present in any organization and vary from organization to organization in the intensity, clarity and form in which they are combined in their "autonomous dynamic" (Friedberg, 1990), along with the importance that is attributed to each of the various theoretical perspectives.

Whatever the type of organization, it can be classified in various ways according to the aspects considered. As a result, the legal status, the production or the services rendered, the size, the structure, the leadership styles, the levels of participation and the internal democracy, etc. are possible factors to be used to classify organizations.

**The (re)configuration of organizational culture in a boarding school:** Throughout history and across societies, the existence of children and young people (of both sexes) who become disadvantaged or even indigent because they have are abandoned orphaned, homeless, poor or illegitimate has been targeted for special attention by the community. This situation has several explanations which are related to social representations of disadvantaged children and youths that have changed over time (Vilarinho, 2000).

One of the foundations of modern and contemporary social representations of disadvantaged children and young people is found at the ethical-moral level in considering children and young people as human beings with particular frailties without responsibility for their condition and whom are entitled to special help from the community to prepare for adult life. Another basis for

these representations comes from the religious sphere's emphasis on the necessity to help the other. This necessity is asserted for example, by the Catholic Church which exercises great influence on Portuguese society in general and on Azorean society in particular. Likewise, reasons related to the political order underlie these representations in the search for a more demographically and/or economically cohesive, strong state.

Additional reasons that can be posited are economic reasons derived from extreme poverty; cultural reasons tied to feelings of shame and social embarrassment related to children born out of wedlock and even social reasons, because some of these minors' public or private actions defy the established order, transforming those minors into a social problem to be combated, preferably through targeted integration. In many situations, these reasons are joined together through various combinations forming various methods of youth protection and assistance, sometimes in a coexistent situation.

As a result, this youth protection and assistance as a social response to questions posed by the existence of children and young people who for various reasons are particularly vulnerable, have assumed various purposes and specific forms throughout time and have conformed to the social contexts at issue (Caldeira, 2004; Guedes, 2006; Moreda, 1996).

The specific purposes attributed to youth protection assistance initially focused on a caring dimension with a charitable, beneficent and philanthropic foundation with an increasing emphasis not only on care but also on education in the desired direction with a greater emphasis on children and young people's future forms of thinking and acting. These goals may differ in time and in space, but they can emerge together.

The realization of the various purposes of specific forms of youth care initially resulted from private initiatives with a strong religious influence (with a considerable Catholic influence related to Christian charity and the Divine Mercies). Later, those purposes were realized through the increasing intervention of initiatives based on state solidarity. It is from the articulation of those influences that specific methods of youth assistance can be understood.

Methods of youth care by which one can assume guardianship of a child (whether legally or not) can be classified according to their formal or informal character. Methods of informal youth care consist of those situations in which families or women with or without families-assume guardianship. Methods of formal youth care consist of situations in which the protection of children and young people is assigned to the state, even provisionally and is nannies, baby hatches, foster families, temporary families and collective care such as asylums for disadvantaged children.

These methods of youth care which have varied in purpose and form over time, (physical and social) space and situations of coexistence in the same time and space are justified by community representatives of these boys and girls, through interpretations of conditions such as their age, gender and social origin as socially constructed on gender and social class, respectively.

This plurality of materializations, those methods of care that have achieved social legitimacy for their proposals and the research that they have developed, also have become institutions for example in the case of the girls' public boarding school in idiosyncratic organizations.

**The institutionalization of children and young people in boarding schools:** Youth assistance has passed through various phases but since the middle of the 19th century, the state has always increased. As Vilarinho (2000) notes, "in Portugal, since the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century infant protection and assistance stopped having a charitable character and gradually assumed a public duty. With the establishment of the 1st Republic, the secularization of infant assistance was consolidated".

In addition to the importance of the social collectivity, the State assumes the central role in youth assistance, shaping it through formal and/or legal procedures that assume various methods of embodiment. In one legal form, children and young people are institutionalized with their legal guardianship assumed by the State which accommodates them for variable periods in collective units at boarding schools.

With respect to the scholarly integration of children and young people institutionalized in a specific institution institutional care through boarding schools occurs in situations that call into question the development and education of the minor. As Amado assert; "the origin of institutional care is often found in the experience of risky situations within the family; these are families who do not have the (material, social, psychological) conditions needed to give children or young people a balanced bio-psychosocial development, failing in their educational role".

The reasons for institutional care have various degrees of relative influence. In effect, "the need for institutionalization is justified today for psycho-social reasons. Indeed, there came to be many more children with living, ill, drug-addicted, imprisoned or seriously mentally ill parents, the so-called 'orphans of living parents".

With respect to the organizational procedures related to those who are cared for, there is a wide spectrum of organizations from more closed to more open related to both interior and exterior control over its members (or at least some of them). In social care units of children and young people in boarding schools, situations can exist in which the individuals cohabitate in a common residence and they sleep, play and research in a single location that meets their needs (Goffman, 2007), so that in general there is not a sharp rupture between the school and the outside world.

Institutional care with boarding consists, then of a legally established method of protecting and assisting disadvantaged minors and it may consist of boarding in a collective social unit for a variable duration that can cover practically an entire childhood and adolescence, despite deinstitutionalization being provided either through family reintegration, adoption or legal emancipation at the age of majority.

This boarding school naturally exhibits profound positive or negative consequences either now or in the future at the affective, scholarly, professional- integration and social levels for the girls overseen. These vary according to the time in residence, the age at entrance to and departure from the institution and the characteristics of each possible relationship.

A characterization of the purposes and practices of an organization for the care of girls suggests that its consequences vary over time, focusing for an extended period on the care and education of the body, mind/spirit and soul by promoting a normalizing education centered on domestic labor and the Catholic faith, reducing scholarly expectations and aiming for controlled social inclusion which is always justified by the resident's social membership.

The effects of this institutionalization are conditioned by factors that may take effect either before institutionalization (i.e., pre-institutionalization characteristics such as life condition, life history and personal characteristics) or during institutionalization (age at entrance, time within the institution and conditions of the stay) with consequences for young people's physical, cognitive and emotional development.

Accordingly investigations seem to show consequences (whether during or after institutionalization) for both genders. The level of the institutionalization experience as Amado state, "arise from the repeatedly confirmed finding that this type of children and youth when removed from their natural family environment, rarely escape critical schooling paths and that their integration in scholarly environments involves organizational, relational and interactional difficulties".

On the subject of level of schooling which is one of the effects of time in a home, Diogo (2008b) states that "young people with more time institutionalized are those with higher educational aspirations and less failures, concluding that "the longer the institutionalization, the lower the rate of failure and the higher the school aspirations are".

With respect to future consequences institutionalized children (i.e., those at a boarding school) tend to develop problematic behavioral patterns. In particular, difficulties in holding back frustration (which can represent a basic block to their psychological development), difficulties in interpersonal relationships, feelings of depression and self-deprecating images, elevated levels of anxiety and destructive aggression, academic failure or notorious mood swings, emotional instability and fragile self-esteem are noted.

Thus institutions that care for children who have been removed from their family and social environments and that attempt to socially rehabilitate them have functions that relate to either social control or the promotion of social cohesion (Martinez, 2005).

As Diogo (2008a, b) states, "the research performed by childcare institutions is in large part a process of construction of a social space for each child or young person in the society in which he or she is part". This brief analysis of the consequences of a stay at boarding school shows that there is a need to prepare for a gradual, progressive and successful reintegration with the outside world with greater upward social mobility.

All of this leads to proposals of a social, scientific and political character to change this situation as can be seen in Amado's diagnosis of institutionalization processes and academic and social integration in a care institution for children and young people. The researcherss recommend that "If the home has to be the last resort. Let the Management be strongly committed. Let the Home's staff be selected, trained and stable.Let the monitoring be multidisciplinary Let the relationships with the community be cooperative. Let there be a good relationship established between the School and the Home. Let the young residents be involved in the politics of Home management. Let the creativity of the young people and children be promoted. Let family roots be maintained".

Another proposal is presented by Rocha (2008) who take stock of the situation of homes for institutionalization of minors in the Azores for persons between 0 and 25 years of age as along with those children in Azorean boarding schools under the preview of the Institute of Social Action which also covers CISA

Saint Anthony Children's Home. They consider it necessary to invest in decreasing the rate of institutionalization; in higher qualifications for the professionals researching in these homes; in downsizing the institutions; in enhancing the relationship with the community; in increasing the relationship with the family; in increasing the participation of the residents both within the institution and in planning their futures; and in greater autonomy and social integration.

Currently, care institutions progress toward the greatest reductions possible in the duration of stay of the institutionalized minor, along with helping to bring the functioning of these organizations closer to that of a family structure. Of the most common trends in Western Europe in the last 10-20 years, Martinez (2005), stresses, among other factors, the incidence in individual preventive intervention in the context of the extended family (between 7 and ten people) in residential units such as a house (if possible) with an increasingly short duration of stay for both the children/young people and the increasingly qualified employees. In this sense, the role of the State emerges as a dominant element in the institutionalization of minors: "In addition to localized and individualized actions, the social issue requires interventions at different levels and scales.The State cannot produce an apologetic discourse of participation and local autonomy, abandoning its role as provider and becoming only the supervisor and assessor (Ferreira, 2004, 2008)".

In sum, youth assistance has varied over time and space and in the same time and space with various methods coexisting. In one of these methods the care (whether or not it is of an institutional character) of children and young people in a boarding school with collective units variations in the processes and purposes from organization to organization, over time and space and within the same organization over time have been observed. How are idiosyncrasies in the organizational culture of these collective units of care now translated What happens to the culture of an organization of this type What are some of the factors underlying this change We will seek to answer these questions by mobilizing the concept of organizational culture.

**Organizational culture in a boarding school**:B eing certain that the legal and normative context envelops every institution beyond its formally instituted dimensions, what is the organizational culture of care organizations that involve boarding? Do variations exist whether among organizations, over time or even in the same organization over time?

Speculating on organizational culture generically as patterns of practices, artifacts, values and assumptions, a culture of institutionalization to protect and assist children and young people will be able to form over time. From here emerges the following question: will a culture of institutionalization exist in the sense of a common, generic form of thinking and acting related to the children and young people cared for in organizations? Or will the existence of more profound differences in the culture be seen from organization to organization, to the point that we will not be able to speak of a single culture of institutionalization as a "generic culture" similar to all others?

Diogo (2008a) helps answer this question through an extensive character analysis of institutional homes in the Azores. There, she was confronted with differences at various levels, i.e., "internal dynamics, those related to external relations and those of human and physical resources," and concluded that "the analysis performed allowed the identification of groups of homes with operational dynamics that differ among themselves, constituting themselves as environments of differentiated socializations for the minors with potential repercussions for the minors' future social integration."

On this thread, it is perceived that in the context of this article, the conception of the existence of a "culture of institutionalization" as a "generic culture" (Prosser, 1999) which is considered a common and widespread form of thinking and of doing things as a more or less generalized paradigmatic archetype of all care for children and youth in boarding schools, can obscure the specific idiosyncrasies of the experience of those organizations.

This results from either the autonomy that such organizations hold in relation to the entire institutionalization system or the relative autonomy that members of each organization manifest in relation to the system of institutionalization. This same organizational and individual autonomy is formative of a "perceived culture" i.e., how organizational members experience and live through these processes, thus contributing to form a "unique culture" (Prosser, 1999) with the result of an emerging culture with greater or lesser variations from the generic culture.

Prejudicially, the organizational cultures within a particular type of organization exhibit a common generic culture. However, to nitpick, one can find a unique organizational culture that varies from organization to organization, resulting from the effect of external and internal contacts in the construction and reconstruction of organizational culture.

Thus, the conception of the possible existence of a culture of institutionalization as a potential way of

thinking about and practicing the institutionalization of children which perhaps is similar to a widespread paradigm for all care organizations that involve boarding schools for children and young people cannot obscure the specific characteristics of each collective unit resulting from the active autonomy that actors hold and that provides opportunities for more or less freedom which may culminate in the formation of a culture that exhibits idiosyncrasies from organization to organization. The relationship with the exterior takes place at two levels: at the level of management and organization members' relationships from outside to inside be they what those members bring from the outside, upstream of their entry into the organization such as elements of class culture and/or professional cultures or be they contacts established during the period of membership in the organization and at the level of the organization from the exterior over the course of time, through the institutional contacts established. An example of this is noted by Diogo (2008b) who comments, "this opening at the departure of the minors is not matched by the entrance of others in the institution," which for the issue being discussed here, has consequences at two levels: first for the minors; and, second for the organizational culture.

With respect to internal links to the organization, the members of an organization experience those links (more or less actively) consciously, desirously or successfully with more or fewer ties to the collective learning processes and socialization in the organization, depending on the places they occupy in this social unit: socialization or resocialization for the children and young people cared for and professional or occupational socialization for the other actors including but not limited to staff and administration.

All of the members of an organization including children are involved in organizational learning. With respect to the possibility of the existence of a specific culture, even among the children, Ferreira (2004) shows the formation of a youth culture (aged 3-6 years) in the kindergarten context through the children's own social orders with a peer culture characterized by a way of doing things, shared by children who belong to the group and who follow "Behind and parallel to the processes of integration in the adult institutional order these routines of peer culture reproduce interpretively the adult institutional order and its rules in some aspects, it being that others, created by individual actors or subgroups of children go on or do not go on to be reproduced among peers".

The researchers resolves, however, "it only makes sense to speak of a childhood culture if one considers the existence and the pragnanz of an adult and dominant reference culture" (Ferreira, 2004).

However, the time of permanence, the passage through various organizations and the characteristics and ages of the actors are factors that can enhance the success of this socialization in the organization. However, socialization in the organization hypersocialization is never complete, taking into account at least two sets of factors: first, socialization is an active adjustment of the subject and second, it is a process that never happens in an exactly identical way. At any rate, these organizational lessons, although not determinant, favor the emergence of shared ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

## CONCLUSION

Each entity engaged in youth protection and assistance in the form of a collective coordinated unit of care with boarding can be considered either as an institution or as an organization each perspective encompassing different analytical levels. One of the possible understandings of the first case is that of demonstrating the regularity of the major common principles legitimized by society and tending to the resolution of social needs. In the second case, the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies that are manifested in the specific action of a given social collective unit are emphasized.

Thus, it is seen that the conception of the possible existence of a culture of institutionalization, considered in this context as a form of thinking and practices related to the institutionalization of minors as a paradigm that is similarly generalized to all of the organizations that care for and board children and young people in a common residence, cannot obscure the specific characteristics of each collective unit (Rocha, 2008) because of the active relative autonomy that actors individuals and groups retain which provides greater or lesser freedom taking into account their different motivations and powers. These specific characteristics can culminate in the formation of idiosyncrasies either between organizations or within a single organization over time.

The culture itself is formed in organizations and reconfigures itself over time because "the sociological understanding of the processes of construction and reconstruction of the culture of an organization requires its historical, social and political re-contextualization, so we can capture the morphology of the continuities and discontinuities" (Torres, 2010).

From all that has been stated above, it follows that it is possible to find organization members subject to patenting different perspectives, affinities and deployable resources in a formative or transformative process of the collective and organizational culture, beyond the formal dimension, depending on the organization's size and complexity.

The mixture of connections with the outside and inside the organization can result in cultural collectives that function as culture, subculture or even counterculture in a relative cultural cohesion in which manifestations of agreement or of resistance on the part of the actors can always emerge, a perfect cultural integration never existing. In this temporal sociohistorical context which has an interdeterminacy and indefiniteness, the founders and leaders act in the processes of constructing and reconstructing organizational culture. Organizational culture is found in permanent transformation, resulting from a combination of factors both internal and external to the organization with the actor whether individual or collective playing a specific role in the process.

Despite this myriad of definitions and forms of institution and organization, the mobilization of some of these concepts implies the need to apply a conceptual and theoretical perspective not only in constructing the subject matter organization but also in maintaining a certain interdisciplinary, acknowledging that with respect to social processes, "the present is no more than an extension of the past from which it cannot be separated without losing much in its meaning" (Durkheim, 1994), reinforcing that "with the goal of understanding any contemporary phenomenon, we should return our gaze toward its origins and toward the process that produced it" (Sztompka, 1993).

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