

# Institutional Excellence Reloaded: A 17-year, Two-phase In-depth Study of Corporate Culture Change in the Health Care Sector

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**Purpose:** This ethnographic revisit of a general hospital aims to critically re-analyse a much-lauded corporate culture. Rather than accepting the managerial and academic claims concerning the mobilisation of corporate culture at face value, this ethnographic revisit again builds upon a labour process analysis and takes a close look at how it truly seems to work.

## How is institutional excellence facilitated and constrained by everyday management practices ?

This ethnographic revisit addresses the following **research questions:**

1. What long-term effect has the idea of mobilising corporate culture had on nursing professionals and their health care work?
2. What kinds of changes have taken place in the hospital and how have these intended and unintended changes registered in the workplace?
3. How do employees, hospital management practitioners and nurses alike, experience the outcomes of continuing corporate culture initiatives?
4. What impact have the health care employees had upon the hospital, its management and patient clientele?
5. What is the most crucial problem facing the selected hospital organisation within its broader economic systems, what is the source of this problem and which strategies might best resolve this problem?
6. How are workplace problems related to changes and problems in other aspects of nursing professionals' life; e.g. the capacity for individual and collective forms of resistance?

**Design/methodology/approach:** By means of an ethnographic revisit, this research work explores and describes once again how management practitioners still seek to design and impose corporate culture change and how it affects the nursing employees of this hospital organisation. This was achieved by means of a five-month field study of day-to-day life in the hospital's nursing division.



## Labour Process Analysis in the Health Care Sector:

- Private sector management and state sector management is based on accumulation-legitimation framework
- Health care sector organisations are not governed by the logic of maximising profits, although they are dependent on the revenues derived from profits and the prosperity of the private sector.
- It is possible to recognise that productive work within the health care sector is generally unproductive of surplus values even though these organisations provide the social and political conditions necessary for the process of capital accumulation and reproduction to take place.
- Even though the labour process in state and private sectors are sometimes similar, each is governed by a different mode of rationality.
- Consequences for the strategies adopted by management, trade unions and professionals. A call for labour process analysis...

**Data collection** includes the use of participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, free conversations and documentary material.

**Originality/value:** The research work considers ethnographic data from a labour process analysis of corporate culture change in a general hospital and revisits the ways in which contradictory expectations and pressures are experienced by nursing employees and management practitioners.

**Findings:** Using labour process analysis and ethnographic data from a general hospital, the researcher represents the corporate culture as faceted, complex and sophisticated and brings results into play which still lend little support to the official claims that if managerial objectives are realised, they are achieved through some combination of shared values, beliefs and practices. The findings lend more support to the critical view in labour process writing that modern managerial initiatives lead to tightened corporate control, advanced employee subjection and extensive effort intensification. Drawing on ethnographic data and using labour process analysis, the way in which the employees enthusiastically embrace many aspects of the managerial message, yet at the same time, still remain suspicious and distance themselves from it through misbehaviour and adaptation, and in some cases, use the rhetoric against management for their own ends, can be demonstrated.

**Financial Support:** Major financial support for this ethnographic revisit was given by the PMU-Forschungsförderungsfonds (PMU-FFF) in Salzburg, Austria which awarded a research grant by contract No. E-14/19/100-SAR for the academic months from November 2014 to March 2017.