Abstract

The metaphor elicits the hidden and implicit values of organisational culture. Metaphors are revelatory devices that create meaning of the subjective perceptions held by personnel as they experience and negotiate the daily activities of work and what it means to be in the workplace. The paper responds to the challenge of finding way in which the lived experiences of the workers can be incorporated into theorizing about organisations. Metaphoric expressions are communicative acts that contain deep seated beliefs and values reflective of internal and subjective interpretations of work. As stated by Tsoukas and Knudsen (2005:11) “our work rarely adheres to idealised paradigms”, however, how far work transgresses from the ideal is significant to research. It is within the transgression space that issues relevant to equity, exclusion, capacity and progress are evident. The paper presents study of 74 mid career female academics across three universities in Australia. The participants in the research revealed their metaphors to best describe how they see themselves within the broader university organisation. Metaphors are constructed as general text of the workplace and the cultural conditions are clarified through the modes of signification. By deconstructing and analysing the metaphors, the paper will broaden the perspectives on the hidden aspects of organisational culture and attempt to enhance understanding and insight about how that culture influences and shapes women in academia. The purpose of the paper is to categorise the metaphors as they refer to self and to the organisation, reveal the characteristics and images which represent the experiences of mid career women, and suggest what these metaphors may mean in terms of how female academics conceptualise their organisation, interpret their roles within their organisations, and how their skills and knowledge are utilized within their organisation and their daily work practices.