An Organisational Culture Model for Comparative Studies and Assessment of IT Projects

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ABSTRACT

The research supports the notion that values affect work practices. It develops a comparatively simple organisational cultural model based on four work practices: support orientation, innovation orientation, co-ordination orientation, and rules orientation. For validation, it was operationalised into a 21 item survey questionnaire that mainly used a Likert scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” This paper presents the validity and reliability of the items with Cronbach alpha values of between 0.8 and 0.9. Both positive and negative values like trust, honesty, and selfishness affect work practices which are presented as good reflections and measures of organisational culture. The four work practices are reliable and valid reflections of organisational culture. Though not yet extensively tested, the model can be used by IT professionals for assessing IT projects from organisational culture perspective. It also constitutes a useful platform for other research, e.g., effect of organisational culture on knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Coordination, Innovation, IT Professionals, Organisational Culture, Rules

INTRODUCTION

Organisational culture is an important but a complex concept of organisational science. Its significance is apparent in organisational functions and activities like creativity and innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003); productivity and quality (Mathew, 2007); and knowledge transfer (Lucas, 2006). Organisational culture is complex to describe because it scopes from deeper layers like beliefs and assumptions to visible layers like structures and practices (Fey & Denision, 2003). An extensive amount of research has been performed on organisational culture but still different aspects of it need to be explored. One of such aspects is measuring organisational culture quantitatively which would facilitate comparative organisational studies (Reigle & Westbrook, 2000).

The research reported in this paper tested a model that is performed on organisational culture. The model consists of four orientation components: support, innovation, co-ordination, and rules.
and rules. The rest of this paper will present the background, organisational culture, IT professionals and organisational culture, research model, methodology, data analysis, discussion and conclusions, and summary of the research.

BACKGROUND

Some of the key studies that attempted to measure organisational culture are Cooke and Lafferty (1987), Hofstede et al. (1990), Denison and Mishra (1995), Van Muijen et al. (1999), Cunha and Cooper (2002), Wilderom et al. (2004), Glisson (2007), MacIntosh and Doherty (2009), and Shim (2010). A common problem with most of these studies and others not mentioned here is that they were context specific; thus it is difficult to generalise their work (Keshavarzi, 2007). Keshavarzi (2007) also criticises some of the studies with regards to other aspects of their methodologies.

While context specific and qualitative study can unearth very rich aspects of organisational culture, a quantitative approach is needed to enable comparative studies with context freedom (Park et al., 2004; Eldridge & Crombie, 1974, p. 89). This is the aim of this study.

Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has been researched widely but there is still no agreement on a standard definition of the term. Most of the definitions of organisational culture contain elements like work practices, values, assumptions and artefacts.

Usoro and Kuofie (2006) indicated that organisational culture dimensions can broadly be classified into valued-based and work-practice based. Hibbard (1998) and White (1998) focused on values to dimension organisational culture. Martin and Terblanche (2003) define organisational culture in terms of values as the deeply seated values and beliefs shared by personnel in an organisation. The value-based approach has been criticised. For example, Wilderom et al. (2004) pointed out that organisations differ more in work practices than on values. Moreover, it is argued that values can be measured from work practices as significant aspects of values are often acted out in organisational practices.

Kostova (1999) defines organisational culture as “particular ways of conducting organisational functions that evolved over time.... [These] practices reflect the shared knowledge and competence of the organisation” (p. 309). Following Kostova’s (1999) approach, Wilderom et al. (2004) define organisational culture as a shared perception of organisational work practices within organisational units that may differ from others. The current research adopts work practice based approach in defining organisational culture. The organisational culture definition in the following is based on Kostova (1999) and Wilderom et al. (2004) definitions:

The set of particular organisational functions that are carried out by organisational members in a specific way that makes it different from other organisations or from other units within an organisation

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND IT PROJECTS

Humans have naturally the ability to learn from their environment. In an organisational context, this environment is provided by culture of that organisation. Staff of an organisation, including IT professionals, learn from their surroundings of the organisation they worked in by different ways, e.g., asking questions from their colleagues, attending training and workshops. Generally, IT professionals using their knowledge and complying with organisational culture perform things to achieve their organisational objectives. Salaheldin, Sharif and Qatari (2010) describe that organisations invest a lot of money and other resources to accomplish their projects. Despite the ongoing challenges in the global economy the spending in IT projects have increased. Organisational culture can be very useful enabler to fulfill their IT projects.

A lot of research has been performed to understand organisational culture and IT (Hof-
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