

## A Review on Cultural Dimension Models

Leithy El W\*

Adjunct Associate Professor of Management, Maastricht School of Management, Endepolsdomein 150, 6229 EP Maastricht, The Netherlands

\*Corresponding author: Leithy El W, Adjunct Associate Professor of Management, Maastricht School of Management, Endepolsdomein 150, 6229 EP Maastricht, The Netherlands, Tel: 1223240667; E-mail: [Valid.elleithy@aim-eg.org](mailto:Valid.elleithy@aim-eg.org)

Received date: June 14, 2017; Accepted date: July 13, 2017; Published date: July 21, 2017

Copyright: © 2017 Leithy El W. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited

### Introduction

Assessing, diagnosing and measuring organizational culture is the start point in developing organizations as organizational literature reveals. Therefore, different cultural dimensions models have been developed to portray organizational culture, identifying cultural attributes of a specific organization, or sub-cultures within the same organizations, and recognizing the dominant culture and the preferred culture that an organization should change to. According to Denison [1], there are several reasons that made us assess organizational culture: (1) New business applications, (2) new mergers and acquisitions, (3) a new president or CEO on a board, (4) organizations that may be facing decline and (5) new strategic initiatives. In this regard, to start any new strategic initiative or decision, an organization should start first to assess its culture in order to see if its current culture is capable of supporting such new strategic initiative or not. Meaning that part of the decision making process with regards to new strategic initiatives should include assessing current organizational culture. Meanwhile, part of the remedy plan for organizations that face problems and declining is also to measure its current organizational culture and to uncover the different cultural aspects that hinder the organization from achieving good results and maintaining its existence. According to Cameron and Quinn [2], three strategies are available to measure culture at the organization level of analysis, such approaches could be seen as a mixture between both qualitative and quantitative approaches, as the first two strategies are qualitative while the third one is quantitative. These three strategies are as follows: (1) a holistic approach that is the culture assessor becomes highly involved in such organization under assessment by both in depth observation and active participation; (2) metaphorical or language approaches, that is through using or culture's manifestations and visible aspects like the language patterns, available reports, stories and conversations between managers and employees, managers among each other as well as employees among each other to uncover cultural patterns and the cultural identity of the organization under assessment and (3) quantitative approaches in which the investigator uses questionnaires or interviews to assess particular dimensions of culture. Hence, one of the major controversies in the study of organizational culture centers lies on the issue of methodology in developing such cultural dimensions or types models. According to Kwan and Walker [3], there is a debate between the researcher's with regard to using either the qualitative or quantitative approaches in classifying organizational culture types. They argue that researchers using qualitative measures believe that quantitative surveys cannot identify those underlying aspects of culture which lie deeper or are hidden and invisible, and that the items and questions found either in questionnaires or interviews may not cover all cultural aspects and dimensions that might be relevant to a particular organization. Meanwhile, Thompson and Strickland [4], argue that although there is quite a lot of cultural dimensions models and frame works that classify organizational

culture into different types, the development of such types falls in two categories: Some were developed rationally through a conceptual framework defining relevant dimensions of organizational culture, while others were developed empirically through in-depth interviews of large samples of organization members. Meaning that, in this development process, some instruments dimensions are supported by empirical data, while others are exclusively speculative depending on the author's rationalization reached through his/her readings of cultural literature. Similarly, Delobbe et al. [5] believe that there is no consensus, among current organizational culture instruments, on a finite set of key dimensions that are able to describe and to compare organizational culture across a large range of organizations. Yet, they argue that there are four basic dimensions or conceptual domains appear to be common to most questionnaires. First, a "people orientation" reflecting perceived support, cooperation, mutual respect and consideration between organizational members is prevalent. Second, an "innovation" dimension, indicating general openness to change and propensity to experiment and take risks is also apparent. Third, "control" is another significant component. It focuses on the level of work formalization, the existence of rules and procedures and the importance of the hierarchy. Finally, "results/outcome orientation" is another core dimension that measures the level of productivity or performance expected inside an organization. In this regard, they conducted a research that aimed at identifying core culture dimensions in current questionnaires and synthesizing them into a new instrument through deep and complicated statistical analysis. To realize that, an initial pool of items (355) was generated to reflect the main cultural dimensions identified in the literature. The specific items of each core dimension were adapted from other culture questionnaires (e.g., Hofstede practices questionnaire; Organizational Norms Opinionnaire). The outcome of such research was the development of an organizational culture questionnaire-known under its French acronym ECO (Echelles de Culture Organisationnelle). This instrument is developed to focus on inter-organizational differences and acculturation processes and is consequently formulated in terms of patterns of thinking and behaving. The new cultural instrument (ECO) identifies five fundamental core dimensions of corporate culture as follows: (a) recognition-support, (b) commitment-solidarity, (c) innovation-productivity, (d) control, (e) continuous learning.

### Methods

A comparative study about similarities and differences of the outcomes on the seven most popular and widely used cultural dimension models has been conducted as follows: (1) Harrison's type of organizational culture model [6], (2) Deal and Kennedy's type of organizational culture model [7], (3) Quin and Rohrbaugh's Types of Organizational Culture model [8], (4) Hofstede's Types of Organizational Culture model [9], (5) Denison's Types of Organizational Culture model [10], (6) Rollins and Roberts's Types of

Organizational Culture model [11], (7) Goffee and Jones's Types of Organizational Culture model [12]. Furthermore, the outcomes of this step resulted in developing a new comprehensive cultural dimension model that combines different dimensions developed by authors. Meanwhile, this model has been compared to the outcomes of the empirical study conducted by Delobbe et al. [5] as a second step, and then a modified cultural dimension model has been proposed as an outcome of this study.

## Results and Discussion

After reviewing the seven types of cultures models, it is obvious that there are a lot of similarities among them. However, the only culture dimensional model that is quite different than any other types of culture is that one suggested by Denison [10]. Meanwhile, we believe that the most effective type of culture is the Communal Culture recognized by Goffee and Jones [12] as it combines two opposite types of culture mentioned in the same type of cultures model; the first one is the Networked Culture that is characterized by high sociability and low solidarity. Networked cultures are extremely friendly and light-hearted in style, and the second one is the Mercenary Culture that is characterized by low sociability and high solidarity. Mercenary cultures involve people who are highly focused on pulling together to get the job done. Therefore it is a results oriented culture, where people of this type of culture can highly differentiate between their business relationship and personal relationship. Accordingly, the outcomes of this comparative step resulted in developing a new comprehensive cultural dimension model that combines different dimensions developed by authors as follows.

### System: Oriented culture

This is a type of culture that mainly concerned about systemizing all work flow processes and manages all tasks and jobs through well-defined and clear policies and procedures. Thus every employee knows his job and what the organization expects from him and takes his decisions with great certainty and confidence. Thus clear rules and agreed systems govern each and every work steps that are being controlled through well-defined measurements. So all work judgments are based on objectivity rather than subjectivity. Successful people of such culture are expected to abide by their organization's rules in facing any circumstances that might occur. In view of the above, we can classify some of the cultural types found through literature under such category as follows: The Role Culture by Harrison/the Process Culture by Deal and Kennedy/the Hierarchy Culture by Quinn and Rohrbaugh/the Process Oriented Culture by Hofstede/The Tight Control Culture by Hofstede/The Normative Culture by Hofstede/The Functional Culture by Rollins and Roberts/The Process Driven Culture by Rollins and Roberts.

### Result: Oriented culture

This is a type of culture that mainly emphasizes on results, achieving goals and objectives. Organizations are very demanding, and they put a lot of pressure on their employees and ask for high demands that consume their people's energy and time. Meanwhile, to achieve such results organizations do not give much care to their people, thus a business like controls the relationship between such organizations and their employees where there is no room for feelings and sympathies. Successful people of such culture are expected to be hard workers; results oriented who should express no emotions while achieving their targets and objectives. In viewing the above, we can classify some of

the cultural types found through literature under such category as follows: The Achievement Culture by Harrison/the Work Hard Culture by Deal and Kennedy/the Market Culture by Quinn and Rohrbaugh/the Result-Oriented Culture by Hofstede/the Pragmatic by Hofstede/the Mercenary Culture by Goffee and Jones.

### Tough and arrogant culture

This is a type of culture that seems to be very hard, tough, and arrogant where organizations tend to hire strong individualists who dare to take high risks regardless any consequences. This culture needs tough attitudes shown by its employees who dare saying what they want without considering that they might hurt others. Thus, in order to be respected and considered part of this culture junior employees and new comers must fight and be aggressive even with their seniors during meetings. Outsiders when deal with such employees, feel their arrogance, toughness and the pressure they put on them to accept their opinions, conditions and solutions. It is like either my way or the gate way relationship type.

In viewing of the above, we can classify some of the cultural types found through literature under such category as follows: The Power Culture by Harrison/the Tough Guy Culture by Deal and Kennedy/the Job- Oriented Culture by Hofstede/the Closed System Culture by Hofstede.

### Supportive culture

This is a type of culture where sense of belonging to an extended family, control and associate with all work transactions and employee's relationships. People of such culture are extremely friendly, care a lot for each other and consider any action or decision that might hurt others regardless its bad impact on work and results. Leaders are thought of as mentors and perhaps as parent figures. Doors are open to any body to express his/her opinion even if it is to the opposite of his/her managers'. People feel that their personal problems are taken into account and they are part of a big family where organizations care for its employees and show responsibility for employee's welfare. In viewing the above, we can classify some of the cultural types found through literature under such category as follows: The Support Culture by Harrison/Clan Culture by Quinn and Rohrbaugh/Employee Oriented Culture by Hofstede/Open System Culture by Hofstede/Loose Control Culture by Hofstede/Networked Culture by Goffee and Jones.

### Innovative culture

This type of culture is highly concerned about innovation. Organizations of this type of culture are very dynamic, energetic, and eager to change. Their employees are expected to be willing to take risks, take initiatives and create new idea. Effective leadership enjoys visionary, innovative, and risk-oriented. All that require employees who have a degree of innovation and flexibility, that help their organizations adapt to both market and customers' needs in a very short period of time prior to competition. In viewing the above, we can classify some of the cultural types found through literature under such category as follows: The Bet- Your- Company Culture by Deal and Kennedy/the Adhocracy Culture by Quinn and Rohrbaugh/the Time Based Culture by Rollins and Roberts/the Network Culture by Rollins and Roberts. Meanwhile, this proposed model has been compared to the outcomes of the empirical study conducted by Delobbe et al. [5]. The results show that there are four types of culture that are quite

similar in both the researcher's and Delobbe et al. suggested cultural diagnostic tools as follows: (the Recognition-support Culture by Delobbe et al. and the Supportive Culture by the researcher/the Commitment-solidarity Culture by Delobbe et al. and the Result-Oriented Culture by the researcher/the Innovation-productivity Culture by Delobbe et al. and the Innovative Culture by the researcher/the Control Culture by Delobbe et al. and the System Oriented Culture by the researcher).

## References

1. Denison D (2000) Organizational culture: Can it be a key lever for driving organizational change?. In: Cartwright S, Cooper C editors. *The Handbook of Organizational Culture*. London: John Wiley & Sons.
2. Cameron K, Quinn R (2006) Diagnosing and changing organizational culture- based on the competing values analysis, Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, pp: 3-4 and p: 117.
3. Kwan P, Walker A (2004) Validating the competing values model as a representation of organizational culture through inter-institutional comparisons, *Organizational Analysis* 12: 1.
4. Thompson AA, Strickland AJ (1987) *Strategic Management: Concepts and Cases*. Fourth Edition, Business Publications Inc.
5. Delobbe N, Haccoun R, Vandenberghe C (2002) Measuring core dimensions of organizational culture : A review of research and development of a new instrument. Unpublished manuscript, Universite catholique de Louvain, Belgium.
6. Harisson R (1972) Understanding your organization's character, *Harvard Business Review* 50: 119-128.
7. Deal TE, Kennedy AA (2000) *Corporate culture: the rites and rituals of corporate life*, Perseus Books Publishing, IV.
8. Quinn R, Rohrbaugh J (1983) A Spatial Model of Effectiveness Criteria: Towards a Competing Values Approach to Organizational Analysis, *Management Science*, pp: 360-377.
9. Hofstede G (1991) *Cultures and Organizations, software of the mind*, McGraw-Hill Book Company.
10. Denison D ( 1997) Corporate culture and organizational effectiveness, *Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*, p: 2 and p: 175.
11. Rollins T, Roberts D (1998) *Work culture: Organisational performance and business success*. Quorum Books.
12. Goffee R, Jones G (1998) *Character of a corporation*. Harper Collins Publisher.