

# National and organisational cultures and the study of sport management

## Contact details

Name author(s): Vassil Girginov

Institution(s) or organisation(s): School of Sport & Education, Brunel University

City and country: Uxbridge (West London), UK

Email address for correspondence: vassil.girginov@brunel.ac.uk

## Aim of paper and research questions

The purpose of this workshop presentation is to offer an overview of the conceptualisation of culture at national and organisational levels and its implications for the study and practice of sport management. In particular, the presentation examines what theoretical and practical lessons sport managers can learn from different conceptualisations and operationalisations of national and organisational cultures.

## Literature review

The basic premise of dilemma theory, as developed by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993), shares the view of other cultural models that people from all cultures have similar problems, but differ in how they measure and resolve them. It sees cultures not as arbitrary or randomly different, but as “mirror images of one another’s values, reversals of the order and sequence of looking and learning” (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000: 1).

A central assumption of the dilemma theory is that people from the same country will try to resolve dilemmas in the same way, as cultural cohesion is a prerequisite for stability in society. The vision is one of ‘shareable integrity’ and implies that shared meaning and cultural cohesion are also important prerequisites in multicultural terms. Culture is conceptualised as a set of seven interrelated every day dilemmas, which all managers share, but differ in the solutions they provide to those dilemmas. Five dilemmas arise from the relationships we form with people, one from our attitudes to time, and one from our attitudes to the environment.

The dilemma methodology, which uses a structured questionnaire, examines where managers start when forming a values integrity. It suggests that values and assumptions are manifested in behavioural patterns. The purpose of this instrument is to provide managers’ cultural profiles which tell us how they function in ‘normal conditions’. Such an approach has therefore, practical relevance as it deals with real world issues by using as evidence sport managers’ behaviour.

The organizational culture inventory (OCI) has been developed by Cooke & Lafferty (1989) to test relationships between antecedents and culture as well as between culture and outcomes of interest. The OCI consists of 12 specific styles and behavioural norms that are placed on a circle which allows for comparisons between organisational cultures. These cultural styles or norms are clustered in three more general and oppositional organisational culture types: constructive, passive/defensive (or *people-oriented*), and aggressive/defensive (or *task-oriented*) (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Cooke & Szumal, 2000). The constructive culture type of organisational culture concerns cooperation, enjoyment of the task and creativity and is characterised by meeting the satisfaction needs of organizational members. The passive-defensive culture type values traditional authority, norms of conformity and compliance, and top-down authority. The aggressive-defensive culture exhibits some negative aspects such as competition and opposition

that could have detrimental effects on organizational performance. Both the former and the latter styles are concerned with the security needs of organization members.

### **Research design and proposed data analysis**

Two conceptualisations of culture and their operationalisations will be discussed. As culture presents itself on different levels, national, corporate or professional, the dilemma theory is concerned with the differences in culture at a national level, whereas the Organisational Culture Inventory with different styles of organisational cultures. Previous and own studies using both frameworks will be considered through a thematic analysis by identifying relationships between conceptualisation and operationalisation of culture and specific sport management practices.

The choice of the dilemma theory and the OCI complies with Shein's (1996: 231) four concerns for progressing in the field in that conceptualisations of culture: (i) are anchored in and derive from concrete observations; (ii) hang together and make sense of the data; (iii) are amenable to some kind of formal operational definition, and (iv) provide some link to the concerns of practitioners.

### **Discussion of progress**

It is contended that culture is a pluralistic concept, which reflects not only geographical differences, but also a range of gender, occupational and situational sub cultures. Therefore, no single dimension can provide a satisfactory explanation of the cultural orientations of sport managers or the culture of the organisations in which they work. Each of the various models provides a framework, which organises the meaning of culture of management in different ways. Moreover, "the culture dimensions developed for understanding nations simply do not work when applied to organisations" (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000: 405).

### **References**

- Cooke, R.A., & Lafferty, J.C. (1983, 1986, 1987, 1989). *Organizational Culture Inventory*. Plymouth, MI: Human Synergistics.
- Cooke, R.A., & Rousseau, D.M. (1988). Behavioral norms and expectations: A quantitative approach to the assessment of organizational culture. *Group & Organization Studies*, 13(3), 245-273.
- Cooke, R.A., & Szumal, J.L. (2000). Using the Organizational Culture Inventory to understand the operating cultures of organizations. In N.M. Ashkanasy, C.P.M. Wilderom & M.F. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational culture and climate* (pp. 147-162). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hampden-Turner, C., & Trompenaars, F. (2000). *Building cross-cultural competence*. London: YaleUniversity Press.
- Hampden-Turner, C., & Trompenaars, F. (1993). *The seven cultures of capitalism*. London: Piarkus.
- Hofstede, G., & Peterson, M. (2000). Culture: National values and organisational practices. In N. Ashkanasy, C. Wilderom & M. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of organisational culture and climate*. London: Sage.
- Schein, E. (1996). Culture: The missing concept in organisational studies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 229-240.