

WORK VALUES AND WORK CULTURE IN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS

EVIDENCE FROM AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Kavita Singh

***I*NTRODUCTION**

The very notion of work involves an element of usefulness and respectability. It is an expenditure of energy, designed to overcome the resistance the object offers to change (Schrevkar, P 1948). Attitude to work is socially and culturally moulded as men are taught what to expect and want from work through a variety of socializing agencies.

The meaning of work has shifted along with changes in the social order. To the ancient Greeks and Romans, work was simply a curse. The Hebrews likewise saw work as painful drudgery, but also as a way of expiating sin and recovering lost spiritual dignity. In primitive Christianity, work had little intrinsic value or importance, but was instrumental in promoting health of body and soul, making possible the virtue of charity, and guarding against evil thoughts and habits. In medieval Catholicism, work was the natural affliction of the 'fallen man'. But later development conceded that work is a form of service to God. Work is valued as a means of spiritual salvation. The virtues of austerity were added to it (Fox Alan 1971). The Bhagwat Gita advocates the philosophy that an individual should do his work (karma) as a duty and not bother about the fruits.

The importance of organizational culture is now well established in organizational literature (Deal and Kennedy 1992; Peters and Waterman 1982; Sathe 1985; Schien 1983, 1984, 1985). While Deal and Kennedy describe values to be 'the bedrock of any corporate culture' (1982), values has been a key concept in almost all formulation of culture (Hatch 1993; Peters and Waterman 1982; Schien 1985). Values can be defined as generalized, enduring beliefs about the personal and social desirability of modes of conduct or 'end states' of existence (Rokeach 1979; Schwartz 1992). The value concept is a powerful one because it can be meaningfully employed at all levels of social analysis – cultural, societal, institutional, organizational, group and individual. Values can have a major impact on how employees approach their work and on their feelings about their jobs and the organization itself (Boxx, Odom, and Dunn 1991), and consequently influence the work culture of the organization.

A developing economy like India can achieve its pinnacle of advancement if it can increase its productivity appreciably. Raising productivity for an economy is usually considered to be an issue of whether an economy can encourage capital spending, i.e. increase capital, and input that complements labour. However, productivity, especially in the short term is decisively affected by the employee's attitude towards work, which in turn is clearly determined by the manner in which their work places are organized and run by management. Here-in lies the importance of work culture of the organizations, i.e. work related activities in the framework of norms and values regarding work.

Work organizations in India are not self-contained. They are conceived as instruments of nation building. They are much more open to societal forces. In short, there is a basis for postulating a desirable direction for building organizational culture. Consistency among the facets and levels of organizational functioning and assumptions are not enough. They have to be directed towards work : 'Organizational culture has to be built around work'. This notion gives rise to the evolution of work culture as a concept, which needs to be diagnosed and studied. If a particular organization has a non-work culture, there is ground for wholesome change – including changing the basic assumptions, which led to non-work orientations and activities.

Work culture means work related activities, and meanings attached to such activities in the framework of norms and values, are generally contextualized in an organization. An organization has its boundaries, goals and objectives, technology, managerial practices, material and human resources as well as constraints. Its employees have skills, knowledge, needs and expectations. These two sets of factors – organizational and individual – interact and over time establish roles, norms and values pertaining to work.

The concept of work culture has been, examined by different theorists and conclusions drawn by some of them are:

Pettigrew (1979) identifies “work culture as the system of personally and collectively accepted meanings of work, operating for a given group at a given time’. According to Peters and Waterman (1982): “Work culture is defined as a system of ‘shared values’, which results in high performance in organizations”. Singh (1985) says that: “The work culture is the prevalent and common patterns of feeling and behaviour in an organization”. Sinha (1990) labels work culture as the totality of the various levels of interacting forces around the focal concern of work”. Work culture means work related activities in the framework of norms and values regarding work.

Work culture in this context would include:

- ✍ Work related activities
- ✍ The cognitions, the affect and the values attached to them
- ✍ The normative structure within,
- ✍ A setting

Overall the literature indicates that the individual work values may have a lot to contribute to the work culture of the organizations. Chakraborty (1991) studied three organizations to examine their value systems. A closer look at the value statements examined in these organizations showed a mixed pattern of indigenous and universal values. These value structures substantiated the initial assertion that Indian organizations display certain unique characteristics in the way they function despite the compulsion of modern technology. Many Indian scholars have tried to highlight the unique Indian situations and how these situations have contributed significantly to our understanding of the functioning of Indian organizations.

There is a growing realization that Indian socio-cultural values are not dysfunctional to the functioning of organizations, provided that an optimal level of fit can be obtained between individual values and organizational values. One of the modalities for obtaining this fit is through organizational socialization in which the values of the members of an organization are integrated with the values of the organization. Most organizations consciously encourage their members to think and behave in consonance with the goals of the organizations (Richer 1987).

Oliver Nick (1990) examined the influence of employee's work values, demographic characteristics

and organizational rewards on levels of organizational commitment, involvement, identification and loyalty in a U.K. employee owned firm. The idea that commitment can be understood as a function to 'fit' between employee's values and organizational rewards was explored. Under multiple regression analysis, demographic variables made little impact on the level of commitment, but both organizational rewards and work values showed significant relationship to commitment. Employee who showed strong participatory value exhibited relatively high commitment, those with strong instrumental values showed relatively lower commitment, providing some support for the 'fit' model.

Purpose

To remain competitive during this period of accelerating change, organizations will have to continuously pay attention to the notion of work culture as the issues of positive work culture and improving productivity, not merely of labour but of all other factors of production have acquired special significance and urgency in the context of India's quest for a place at the global market. It is widely recognized that if the Indian industry is to succeed in the ever-increasing international competitive environment, it will have to reduce costs, increase output and produce quality product at the right price. The change in approach to industrial development through thorough dismantling of controls and regulations, the pressures to modernize and invest in research and development, the resolve of Indian industry to become recognized leaders, at least in some selected segments, signal a welcome change and a new dynamism. But this, as well as foreign investors interest in the development potential and new investment prospects in India, can be sustained only by a positive work culture.

Work culture is the social interlocking mechanism upon which the enterprise can function effectively. Through this organizations will be in a position to establish better psychological contract with the employees. This, in turn, could lead organizations to higher level of performance. To develop and maintain a functional work culture, organizations have to make conscious efforts. They cannot afford to take either inactive or reactive positions. If they have to succeed in the emerging turbulent environment, they have to be proactive and even interactive and work towards developing a positive work culture. If culture is man made, organizations can make efforts to create a work culture, which will be complementary to employee's satisfaction and organizational performance. It is with this forethought that this research design was envisaged which would help us in identifying the impact of individual work values on the work cultures of the organizations.

In this context, to identify the prevalent work culture of Automobile Industry becomes a difficult task as it is fast growing industry and has witnessed a period of maximum growth in last 15 years. It is a highly competitive industry with new and improved technology and growth orientation. We can observe certain commonalties in terms of technologies, processes, customer base and methods. All the aspirants entertain the hope of initiating a market revolution because the demand for mobility is huge. So success would depend a lot upon the work values and work behaviour of employees and therefore the work culture of the organization.

To investigate the relationship between work values and work culture, the following hypotheses were examined:

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant positive relationship between instrumental values and the dimensions of work culture
 2. There will be significant positive relationship between participatory values and the dimensions of work culture
-

3. There will be significant positive relationship between task values and the dimensions of work culture

Method

The sample consisted of 282 respondents working in five different automobile companies. The study was based on non-probability incidental sampling. The sample consisted of managers, executives and supervisors from all the major departments of the companies namely, Personnel, Engineering, Production, Marketing, and Maintenance etc. Average age and tenure of the sample was 39 and 12 years respectively. 22 out of the 282 respondents were females.

Instruments and Measures

Measure of Individual Work-values

For the purpose of identifying the work values, preserved and held important by people working in organizations, an acquired work value scale developed by Oliver Nick was used.

Oliver Nick while conducting his survey gauged the work values by asking the respondents to rate the importance they ascribed to different aspects of work and work organizations on a 5-point scale. These included conditions regarding respondent's immediate job, material rewards and organizational characteristics. The data generated by these items were factor analysed using SPSSx FACTOR routine (Principal component analysis with VARIMAX rotation)

The three factors thus extracted were assembled into 3 scales labeled as "instrumental values" (factor 1), "participatory values" (factor 2) and "task values" (factor 3). The scale on instrumental values ascribed to factors like job security, size and fairness of income, working condition and so on. This scale had a reliability (alpha) coefficient of 0.84. Strong participatory values were characterised by emphasis on opportunities to participate in decision making, working for the mutual benefits of self and co-workers, having good relationship with management and so on. The scale had an alpha coefficient of 0.79. The final work value scale is task centered and refers to the importance ascribed to aspects of respondent's immediate job, such as variety and interest of work. The reliability of this scale was rather low, being 0.64.

Measure of Work Culture

The questionnaire on work culture was prepared using the literature on quality and the new management paradigm by Lawrence M. Miller and Jennifer Howard. In their discussion they have identified 12 major paradigm shifts that demonstrate the swift change in thinking and behaviour of work environment of world-class organization. For the purpose of the present study 8 out of 12 shifts were selected which can explain the work culture of the organization. Each of these shifts implies new priorities. These eight shifts became the dimensions of work culture in the present study. The shifts are:

1. ***Control Management to Commitment Management***

The culture of the organization is changing because the nature of work and workers is changing. In the past, work was controllable. On the assembly line, jobs were repetitive and required little thought. Performance could be measured simply and reward and punishment administered to provide control. The managers counted, controlled and determined reward and punishment.

Today, however, the critical performance is thinking about better ways to get the job done, initiating actions to improve, and creating new products, services or methods. They are not so easily 'controlled.' They require innovative thinking, risk-taking and autonomy.

Managers must give up control to those who have their hands on the work. High control increases fear and reduces risk taking, initiative, creativity, and destroys the very performance that is the key to today's success. Eliminating fear and unnecessary control increases commitment, creativity and other discretionary factors. Managers create commitment by sharing vision and values, involving employees in decision making, facilitating knowledge of customers and performance, and helping to improve the process.

2. ***Task Focus to Process and Customer Focus***

In the past, managers were responsible for defining employee responsibility in terms of specific tasks. In today's work environment, the "right" task definition changes too frequently as methods and machinery are continuously improving. To optimise quality, employees at all level must understand who their customers are, their requirements and they must be involved in efforts to improve their process to meet customer needs. A quality organization is a customer-focused organization. A customer-focused organization defines work in terms of responsibility for the complete process that serves the needs of the customers. The manager's job is conditioned by his understanding of the needs of his customers.

3. ***Command to Consensus Decision Making***

Command decision-making has been the dominant decision making model for most of the mankind's existence. In Henry Ford's factory, the workers were mostly uneducated and had little knowledge of the work processes beyond their immediate tasks. Command decision produced the conformity and uniformity that led to success in highly repetitive work.

Things have changed. Rather than centralized command decision making, we need commitment, involvement and ownership, which leads to creativity and acceptance of responsibility. The degree of system integration or interdependence between organizations and people dictates a consultative or consensus decision process.

4. ***Individual Work to Teamwork***

In the past managers assigned tasks to individuals and then rewarded or punished them. This worked well as long as the tasks were simple and independent. Today, tasks are increasingly complex and interdependent requiring greater teamwork. Teamwork requires decision making by the employees and among employees. Today, in many team-based organizations, employees are making their own decisions about the tasks that have to be completed and also about the members who would be performing them. They may take turns rotating tasks, or they may choose to specialize in tasks. Now the manager helps the teams make these decisions well and assures that the process is functioning well.

5. ***One Right Way to Continuous Improvement***

Products and Services, requirements, and work processes changed slowly in the past. These change overnight today. By the time the "right way" is discovered, a new way is required. We must adopt the racing spirit. Like continuous improvement of the racing cars on the track, we must constantly be looking for a better way.

In the past, the manager was the authority on the right way to do things. If he did not know it, he was seen as weak. Therefore, he often acted like he knew the right answer, even when he did not. Now the manager is liberated from this dehumanizing assumption. It is assumed now that the 'right way' is constantly moving forward. The new 'best way' may come from the lowest-level employees who have their hands on the products. The

manager is not judged by knowing the right way, but by helping to facilitate continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is only possible if everyone at every level and in every function is involved and accepts responsibility for improving performance to customers, not just the manager.

6. ***Unstated Values to Shared and Stated Values***

In the past, the leaders were not accountable to those below and did not need to reveal their principles. They only answered to someone above. But now, quality organizations have clearly stated values that define desired behaviours, ethics and goals. When values are clearly stated and shared, they serve as a unifying force directing energy towards productive efforts.

Stated and shared values create a problem for managers. They are expected not only to conform to those principles, but, to be an example. If an organization values teamwork, managers are expected to model teamwork. If an organization values continuous learning, managers are expected to model continuous learning.

7. ***Tough on People to tough on Competition***

One of the greatest misconceptions about leadership during the recent past was that leaders are tough on their people, which may not be correct. Work environment has to communicate the idea that it is tender and affectionate towards its own people but is hard on competitors.

8. ***Wealth Consuming to Wealth Creating***

The quality organization fulfils the fundamental role of business organization in a free society by creating new products and service. This creates new jobs and adds to the collective wealth of the society.

Within our organization, the work culture should ensure that we spend our resources in a way that add value and creates wealth. This can only be accomplished if managers see themselves as responsible for creating new products and services, making better use of all resources, and thereby creating new jobs. This is the wealth-creation process.

The scale consisted of 24 items on the basis of the above discussed, eight dimensions. For the purpose of scoring analysis, a high score on the variable indicated that a shift had occurred in the work culture of the organization, whereas a low score indicated that the organization still followed the traditional approach.

Analysis of the Data

After scoring the questionnaire, the raw data was tabulated for each variable being studied separately. The computation of the raw data was done in order to do the following statistical analysis:

1. Correlational analysis
2. Multiple Regression Analysis

1. ***Correlational Analysis***

In order to understand the relationship of causal variable i.e., the individual work values and outcome variable namely work culture, the Pearson's product moment correlation was computed. It was also used to test hypotheses one through three.

2. Multiple Regression Analysis

Regression is the determination of statistical relationship between two or more variables. The dimensions of work culture were taken as dependent or criterion variables and the dimensions of individual work values were taken as independent or predictor variables.

Results

Table I shows the Pearson product-moment correlation between the individual work values and the dimensions of work culture.

Table 1: Coefficient of correlation between the individual work values and the dimensions of work culture

| S. No. | Variables | CM | CF | CS | TW | CI | SV | CO | WC |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-------|------|------|
| 1. | Instrumental values | -.34* | -.31* | .26 | -.16 | -.30 | -.37* | -.08 | -.14 |
| 2. | Participatory values | .03 | .12 | .19 | -.07 | .03 | .12 | -.08 | .03 |
| 3. | Task values | -.27 | .17 | .03 | -.21 | -.14 | .11 | -.07 | .10 |
| * significant at .01 level | | | | | | | | | |

KEY

CM – Commitment management

CF – Customer focus

CS – Consensus

TW – Teamwork

CI – Continuous Improvement

SV – Shared value

CO – Competition orientation

WC – Wealth creation

As may be seen from Table I, the relationship between the individual work values and the dimensions of work culture is either negative or insignificant. Most of the dimensions of work culture were found to be either significantly negatively correlated to individual work values or the relationship was insignificant.

Instrumental values were significantly negatively related to commitment management, customer focus and shared values. With rest of the dimensions of work culture, the relationship was insignificant. Participatory values were not related significantly to any of the dimensions of work culture. Task values were also not related significantly to any of the dimensions of work culture.

Since all the dimensions of work culture are not significantly related to individual work values, the stated hypotheses stand to be disapproved.

Regression analyses were conducted to ascertain the pattern of interrelationship between the predictors and criterion variables. The results of these analyses are contained in Table II in which only significant predictors are shown for simplicity of presentation. It is evident from the Table II that the variables explained some of the variance for five dimensions of work culture. Rest of the three dimensions namely, consensus, competition orientation and wealth creation, were not being explained by any of the dimensions of work values. Commitment management was being explained by 26% of the variance. Customer focus (31%) was explained by instrumental values, teamwork (49%) was explained by task values. Continuous improvement (39%) was explained by task values and shared values (36%) was explained by instrumental values.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis – Regression on criterion variable

| Criterion variable | Significant predictor | Beta | F | p | Total R² |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------------------|
| Commitment management | Task values | -.33 ^b | 9.90 | .0002 | .26 |
| Customer focus | Instrumental values | -.38 ^a | 12.78 | .0000 | .31 |
| Consensus | None | - | - | - | - |
| Teamwork | Task values | -.29 ^b | 20.04 | .0000 | .49 |
| Continuous Improvement | Task values | -.22 ^b | 11.64 | .0000 | .39 |
| Shared values | Instrumental values | -.31 ^b | 9.50 | .0000 | .36 |
| Competition orientation | None | - | - | - | - |
| Wealth creation | None | - | - | - | - |
| <i>a – significant at .01 level</i> | | | | | |
| <i>b – significant at .05 level</i> | | | | | |

Discussion and Conclusions

The main point to emerge from these results is the impact of individual work values on the dimensions of work culture in automobile industry. Instrumental values and task values appear to make more impact on the selected dimensions of work culture while participatory values do not contribute to explain any of the dimensions of work culture.

The consistently negative impact of instrumental and task values is less easy to explain. Work culture and its derivatives explain the general orientations of work environment that may extend beyond the formal contract between an organization and its members, and are arguably based on logic over and above a purely instrumental or task one. On this basis, lower perception of work culture from those who place high value on purely instrumental or task consideration is that to be expected. The results of this study suggest that instrumentally or task oriented employees have a comparatively lower perception of work culture.

Since the contribution of instrumental and task values was found to be negative to predict some of the dimensions of work culture, it can also lead us to conclude that if the organizations are not able to evolve a fit between the individual work value system and the norms of the organization, employees contribution to the organization becomes negative thereby making the work culture dysfunctional. This finding is in line with the findings of Posner B.Z. (1992) in which he conducted a research to identify the person-organization fit (value congruency) phenomenon. Data from 1600 professionals and management personnel from one large manufacturing firm revealed that person organization value congruency was directly related to positive work attitude and consequently to positive work culture.

Implications

In any organization, the importance of work culture can never be underestimated and overlooked – for work culture is central to any activity in the organization. In the present

study, a modest effort has been made to study the effect of individual work values on work culture.

The present study has shown that if organizations do not make attempts to socialize their employees, to develop congruence between the persons and the jobs, the personal work values may have detrimental impact on work culture. Organizational factors, which can be managed by the company make a direct contribution to work culture and, therefore, should be given due consideration.

References

- Alan Fox (1971), *A Sociology of Work in Industry*, London.
- Boxx, W., Odem, R., and Dunn, M. (1991), *Organizational Values and Value Congruency and Their Impact on Satisfaction, Commitment and Cohesion, An Empirical Examination within the Public Sector*, *Public Personnel Management*, 20, pp. 195-205.
- Chakraborty, S.K., (1991). *Management by Values*. Oxford Publishing Company.
- Chakraborty, S.K., (1995). 'Values for Indian Managers: What and Where to Seek' in *Indian Management-Emerging Responses* (eds.) R.R.Prasad, S.R.P.Shukla & Ashok Kumar, Tata McGraw Hill Publishing Company Ltd.
- Deal, T.E., and Kennedy, A.A., (1982), *Corporate Culture: The Rites and Rituals of the Corporate Life*. Reading, M.A.: Addison-Wesley.
- Nick, Oliver (1990) *Work Rewards, Work Values, and Organizational Commitment in an Employee Owned – Firm: Evidence from the UK*. *Human Relations*, 43, No. 6.
- Peter T.J., and Waterman, A.A. (1982). *In Search of Excellence* Harper & Row, New York.
- Pettigrew, A. (1979). 'On Studying Organizational Culture'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, pp. 570-581.
- Posner B.Z., (1992), *Person – Organization Value Congruence: No Support for Individual Differences as a Moderating Influence*. *Human Relations*, 45 (4) pp. 351-359.
- Richer, A.E., (1987). 'An interactionistic perspective on newcomer's socialization rates.' *Academy of Management Review*, 12, pp. 278-287.
- Rokeach, M., (1979). *From Individual to Institutional Values: With Special Reference to Values of Science in M. Rokeach* (eds.). *Understanding Human Values*. New York, Free Press.
- Sathe, V.J., (1985). *Culture and Related Corporate Realities*, Irwin Homewood IL.
- Schein, E., (1983). *The Role of Founder in Creating Organization Culture*. *Organizational Dynamics*, Summer.
- Schein, E., (1984). *Coming to a New Awareness of the Organization Culture*. *Sloan Management Review*, 25 (1) pp. 3-16.
- Schein, E., (1985). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco, Jossey Boss.
- Schein, E., (1991). *Organizational Culture*. *American Psychologists*, 45.
- Schrevkar, Paul. (1948). *Work and History: An Essay on Structure of Civilization*, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Schwartz, S.H., (1992). *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical advances and emperical tests in 20 countries*. In M.P. Zanna (eds.), *Advances in Experimental, Social Psychology*, Vol. 25, San Diego, C: Academic Press.
- Singh, N.K. and Paul, O., (1985). 'Corporate Soul: Dynamics of Effective Management'. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Private Ltd.
- Sinha, J.B.P., (1990). 'Work Culture in Indian Context.' New Delhi: Sage.
-