



Organisational culture in the public sector: evidence from six organisations

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Abstract *A process of organisational change has accompanied managerial reforms in the public sector and is oriented towards the development of a post-bureaucratic organisational culture. However, there remains a limited empirical understanding of culture in public organisations. Contributes to an understanding of organisational culture in the public sector through survey research that analyses culture by reference to the competing values of internal/external orientation and control/flexibility. Focuses on six organisations in the Queensland public sector which have been encouraged to depart from traditional bureaucratic values and to adopt a greater emphasis on change, flexibility, entrepreneurialism, outcomes, efficiency and productivity. Suggests, however, that public sector organisations continue to emphasise the values of a bureaucratic or hierarchical organisational culture.*

Introduction

Since the 1980s, the Australian public sector has undergone a series of managerial reforms linked to the new public management, which have aimed at achieving cost-efficiency, budget accountability and an improved customer focus in service delivery (Dixon *et al.*, 1996). A process of organisational change has accompanied the managerial revolution in the public sector and is oriented towards the development of post-bureaucratic organisational forms. The reform process has incorporated a decentralization of operations and an increased emphasis on flexibility, adaptability and performance management within these decentralised units (Hoggett, 1996). These changes have been pursued with relatively limited empirical understanding of organisational culture in the public sector (Sinclair, 1991) and are, therefore, potentially lacking in sensitivity to the culture characteristics of public organisations. This has both management and public policy implications.

From a management perspective, a lack of understanding of organisational culture in the public sector is of concern because research on organisational culture indicates that culture is central to the change process and to the attainment of strategic objectives (Bluedorn and Lundgren, 1993). Concern has been raised that management techniques associated with the new public management will conflict with the attitudes, values and culture within public sector organisations (Harrow and Wilcocks, 1990). There is a further argument that organisational strategies designed to achieve new forms of public management need to be developed with an awareness of existing organisational culture within public sector organisations. In the organisational

change process, it is imperative for managers to understand current organisational culture (Kanter *et al.*, 1992, p. 202). This enables change management strategies to be developed that are appropriate for the organisational context (Kanter *et al.*, 1992, p. 202). An improved understanding of culture within the public sector provides a basis for evaluating appropriate strategies for achieving improved outcomes in the public sector.

From a policy perspective, an awareness of the nature of public sector organisational culture provides a basis for both explaining and assessing the appropriateness and outcomes of the current reform process. Existing research on the outcomes of the new public management is inconclusive. Some researchers have found improved performance and accountability associated with performance management and review (Domberger and Hall, 1996). Other researchers have identified a loss of accountability associated with contracting (Boston, 1995), a decline in job satisfaction and increases in occupational stress among public sector managers (Bogg and Cooper, 1995). The outcomes in terms of quality of service delivery resulting from a greater client focus are equally unclear (Peters, 1998). Other research has suggested that performance is not necessarily enhanced by increased competition and improved managerial incentives, and that there are significant costs in applying private sector management techniques to public organisations (Massey, 1996). An understanding of public sector organisational culture may help explain the outcomes of the reform process in terms of the fit or absence of fit between public sector culture and the strategies and objectives of reform. By enhancing our understanding of culture within public sector organisations, the current research provides a clearer understanding of the nature of public sector organisations and provides further grounds for evaluating the appropriateness of the new public management, which is based, in part, on an understanding of private sector management experiences.

The research reported in this paper contributes to an understanding of organisational culture in the public sector through survey research that analyses culture by reference to the competing values of internal/external orientation and control/flexibility (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991). The research focuses on six organisations in the Queensland public sector. The Queensland public sector has undergone a process of change in which departments have been encouraged to depart from a traditional bureaucratic model with its emphasis on rules, procedures and stability and to adopt aspects of the new public management. The new public management has sought to achieve a greater orientation towards change, flexibility, entrepreneurialism, outcomes, efficiency and productivity (Orchard, 1998). It has also incorporated support for more participatory and flexible forms of work organisation designed to engender a sense of organisational commitment among employees (Williams, 1992). Despite the changing nature of management in the Queensland public sector, survey research indicates that the public sector

organisations continue to emphasise the values of a bureaucratic or hierarchical organisational culture. The implications for management and public policy are discussed in the final section of the paper.

The concept of organisational culture

Schein (1985) has argued that culture consists of three dimensions – assumptions, values and artefacts. Assumptions are widely held, ingrained subconscious views of human nature and social relationships that are taken for granted. Values represent preferences for alternative outcomes as well as means of achieving those outcomes. Artefacts are the more solid or physical representation of culture that includes rituals, slogans, traditions and myths. Much culture research has focused on organisational values that are seen as being the clearest visible manifestation of culture. Organisational culture has been defined as “widely shared and strongly held values” (Chatman and Jehn, 1994, p. 524). It is the value dimension of culture that is reflected in the cultural artefacts of an organisation (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991, p. 85).

The most significant differences in understandings of culture emerge in relation to the link between culture and change as represented in the integration and differentiation perspectives (Martin and Frost, 1996). The integration perspective views cultural change as process by which a set of unifying and homogeneous values replace a different set of previously held organisation-wide values. This approach suggests that culture can be managed to achieve organisation-wide consensus and shared values. It is the integration perspective that is associated with the work of Peters and Waterman (1982) and which came to prominence in the 1980s. Culture became a fad in management and organisational research and was seen as providing a quick fix for managers seeking to improve productivity or organisational performance more generally. In contrast, the differentiation perspective rejects the concept of an organisation-wide consensus or value framework, emphasising the importance of subcultures linked to demographics or professional occupational categories (Martin and Frost, 1996, pp. 603-04).

Despite differences among culture researchers, a number of important similarities have emerged in culture research. First, the concepts used to identify and describe culture tend to overlap between studies and indicate the centrality of the competing influences of the internal/external and control/flexibility divides within organisations. Second, there is an emphasis on values (rather than assumptions or artefacts) as a measure of organisational culture in recognition of the fact that “values are both more accessible than assumptions and more reliable than artifacts” (Howard, 1998, p. 233). It is values which are more accessible in quantitative research because while artefacts can be considered organisation specific, variations in values across organisations are based on “varying emphases on the limited set of value prevalent within a larger society” (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991, p. 85). The competing values

model, used in the current research, captures these trends in culture research by focusing on competing values along the internal/external and control/flexibility divides (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1991).

The current research utilised a later version of a survey instrument published by Zammuto and Krakower (1991) based on the competing values framework. The competing values framework (CVF) has been utilised in a number of studies in order to examine organisational culture (most recently in Zammuto *et al.*, 1999). The CVF explores the competing demands within organisations between their internal and external environments, on the one hand, and between control and flexibility, on the other (Denison and Spreitzer, 1991, pp. 4-5) (Figure 1). These conflicting demands constitute the two axes of the competing values model. Organisations with an internal focus emphasise integration, information management and communication whereas organisations with an external focus emphasise growth, resource acquisition and interaction with the external environment. On the second dimension of conflicting demands, organisations with a focus on control emphasise stability and cohesion while organisations with a focus on flexibility emphasise adaptability and spontaneity (Zammuto *et al.*, 1999).

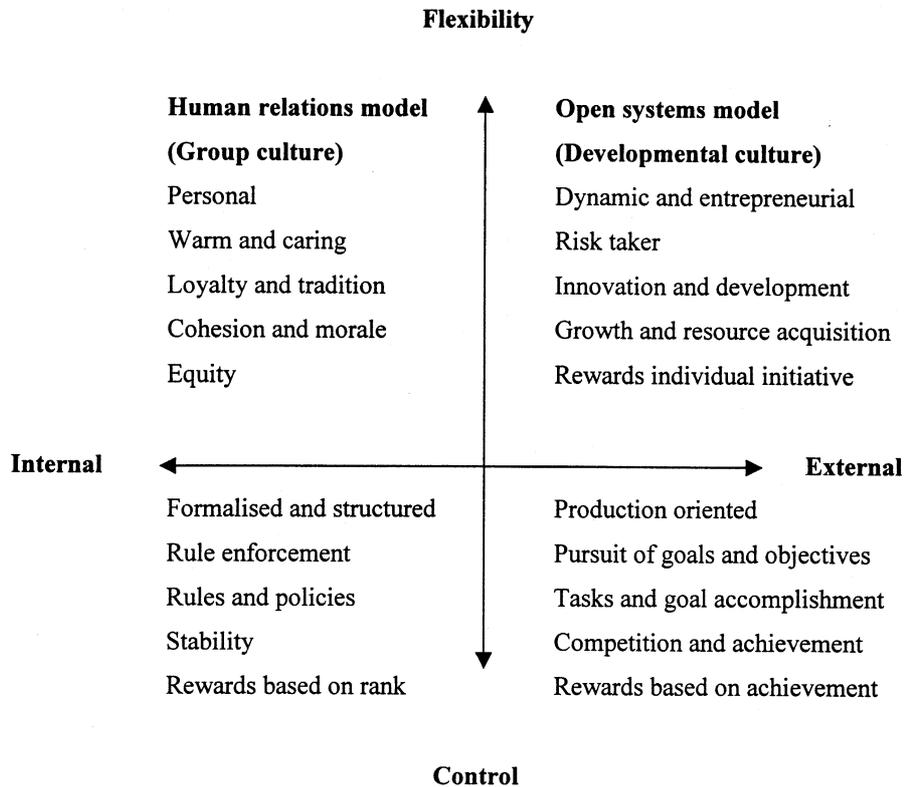


Figure 1.
The competing values framework of organisational culture

Source: Adapted from Zammuto and Krakower (1991)

Combined, these two dimensions of competing values map out four major “types” of organisational culture revealed in theoretical analyses of Figure 1). The internal process model involves a control/internal focus in which information management and communication are utilised in order to achieve stability and control. This model has also been referred to as a “hierarchical culture” because it involves the enforcement of rules, conformity, and attention to technical matters (Denison and Spreitzer, 1991). In this model, individual conformity and compliance are achieved through the enforcement of formally stated rules and procedures (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991). The internal process model most clearly reflects the traditional theoretical model of bureaucracy and public administration that relies on formal rules and procedures as control mechanisms (Zammuto *et al.*, 1999; Weber, 1948).

The open systems model involves a flexibility/external focus in which readiness and adaptability are utilized in order to achieve growth, resource acquisition and external support. This model has also been referred to as a “developmental culture” because it is associated with innovative leaders with vision that maintain a focus on the external environment (Denison and Spreitzer, 1991). These organisations are dynamic and entrepreneurial and characterised by readiness for change (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991). Their leaders are risk-takers and organisational rewards are linked to individual initiative.

The human relations model involves a flexibility/internal focus in which training and the broader development of human resources are utilized to achieve cohesion and employee morale. This model of organisational culture has also been referred to as “group culture” because it is associated with trust and participation through teamwork. Managers in organisations of this type seek to encourage and mentor employees. Compliance with organisational norms flows from trust, tradition and allegiance to the organisation. Goals are achieved through consensus building rather than control (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991).

The rational goal model involves a control/external focus in which planning and goal setting are utilized to achieve productivity and efficiency. This model of organisational culture is referred to as a rational culture because of its emphasis on outcomes and goal fulfilment (Denison and Spreitzer, 1991). Organisations of this type are production oriented, and managers organise employees in the pursuit of designated goals and objectives and rewards are linked to outcomes. Productivity and efficiency are major goals of this organisational model (Zammuto and Krakower, 1991).

While these four culture types appear to be incompatible, research has suggested that the different models of culture can and do coexist in the same organisation. A balance between the four culture types is regarded as desirable. Dysfunctional organisations are considered to be those in which particular culture types dominate, although certain types of culture may dominate within

functional organisations because of a range of factors including the sector in which the organisation operates or its public or private status (Howard, 1998, p. 235).

From public administration to public management: organisational culture in transition?

From the 1970s, there has been significant pressure on public sector organisations in the advanced economies arising from volatile economic conditions and pressures for government cost cutting. This has provided a context within which new management approaches have been quickly seized upon by practitioners as the basis for organisational change in the public sector. Management reforms have been seen as offering mechanisms for overcoming the deficiencies of the traditional bureaucratic model of public administration and developing an alternative management framework which is more suited to the increasingly competitive global economic environment (Hughes, 1994; Metcalfe and Richards, 1992; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

The traditional model of public administration has been well conceptualised in the literature. Research on public organisations has revealed a common set of characteristics including the presence of a system of rational rules and procedures, structured hierarchies, formalized decision-making processes and advancement based on administrative expertise (Bozeman, 1979). Stability and predictability have been central characteristics of the traditional model (Perry and Rainey, 1988). These characteristics of public organisations closely comply with Weber's legal-rational model, which described bureaucracy as hierarchical, rule enforcing, impersonal in the application of laws and constituted by members with specialized technical knowledge of rules and procedures (Weber, 1948).

A further feature of traditional public organisations is that they are subject to political rather than market controls. External controls on private organisations are market controls such as competition, consumer constraints and shareholder interests. Instead, public organisations have traditionally been constrained by political authority and political activities (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953). Their objectives, structures and processes have often been defined by central bureaucratic agencies or constrained by legislation (Blumenthal, 1983; Cole, 1988). They have been accountable to the public through the political process and have been subject to conflicting demands from multiple public interests in the form of social movements and interest groups (Hughes, 1994). As a result of these political constraints public sector organisations have had blurred objectives and goals and the autonomy of public sector managers to pursue organisational goals has been constrained (Day and Klein, 1987). In addition, public sector organisations have been motivated less by financial considerations than by political considerations (Perry and Rainey, 1988).

The literature on public organisations, therefore, suggests that they have traditionally under-emphasised developmental and rational aspects of organisational culture because they have lacked an orientation towards

adaptability, change and risk-taking (developmental culture) and they have lacked an orientation towards outcomes such as productivity and efficiency (rational culture). Instead these organisations have been oriented towards a hierarchical culture because of their emphasis on rules, procedures and stability.

Since the 1980s, management theories have proposed a model of management that is designed to overcome the deficiencies of the traditional bureaucratic model of public administration, and provide a basis for increased productivity and improved efficiency in the delivery of public services. New management approaches have been quickly seized upon by practitioners as the basis for improving performance in the public sector (Metcalf and Richards, 1992; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Those in support of public management reform have readily embraced Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence*, which provided a checklist of characteristics of successful organisations, which was used as a basis for public sector change (Hughes, 1994; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The mobilisation of an organisation in the pursuit of designated "ends" was an important management tool linked to successful organisational performance (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

The managerial framework has been based on the premiss that the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector organisations could be improved through the application of management techniques that had previously been reserved for private-profit making organisations in a competitive environment. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) argued in favour of "reinventing government" by separating the policy development role from the service delivery role and introducing market pressures in relation to the service delivery function. The new public management involves a shift in emphasis from rule enforcement and administration to the attainment of results through entrepreneurial management strategies, mission statements, performance management and performance based rewards (Metcalf and Richards, 1992; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Perry and Kraemer, 1983).

Proponents of public sector change have also been influenced by the views of Drucker (1964) on the need for a greater client focus, decentralized structure, performance measurement and output orientation. Changing views about the ideal model of public organisation have encouraged the public sector in many countries to shift control mechanisms from the hierarchical and formal structures of bureaucratic organisations to those control mechanisms that prevail in the private sector. The new controls which public sector organisations have been encouraged to develop are market-based mechanisms of control including financial (budgetary) controls, performance indicators, performance based remuneration and enhanced competition through privatization and contracting out and the introduction of internal market models (OECD, 1995).

These changes are designed to achieve greater flexibility and responsiveness of public sector organisations to the changing economic environment. The emphasis on goal orientation and efficiency and productivity

is associated with a rational culture, as defined by the competing values framework. Support for entrepreneurialism and flexibility is associated with a developmental culture, as defined by the competing values framework. Further, the new public management has also been influenced by Kanter's (1983) human relations focus, which emphasised individual initiative, empowerment and decentralization of decision making. This has links to the human relations model which has incorporated support for teamwork and decentralized decision making and emphasised the need for co-operation and the sharing of a common purpose for organisational success (Mayo, 1933, 1949; Barnard, 1938). Conceptualised in terms of the CVF, this represents support for a group or human relations culture.

It would be expected that public sector organisations worldwide would be in a state of flux as they shift away from traditional models of public administration under the influence of prescriptions of effective management derived from the experience of private sector organisations (Hughes, 1994). While there are various obstacles to public sector change, including the existence of important sub-cultures and professional allegiances (Sinclair, 1991), public sector organisations can be expected to increasingly model their private sector counterparts. This can be conceptualized as a process of organisational isomorphism in which public sector organisations are moulded to match or mimic the best practices of private sector organisations (Di Maggio and Powell, 1991; Metcalfe and Richards, 1992; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Rhodes, 1991). Conceptualised in terms of the competing values framework, we would expect public organisations to be de-emphasising a hierarchical culture and seeking to develop aspects of the developmental, rational and group cultures.

Organisational culture in the Queensland public sector

The current research contributes to existing literature by examining organisational culture in public sector organisations in order to determine whether organisational culture is aligned with managerial prescriptions of ideal public sector organisational culture which incorporate support for group, developmental and rational cultures. The research examines public sector organisations in Queensland, which have faced pressure to change in accordance with the prescriptions of the new public management.

The Queensland Public Sector has undergone a massive process of restructuring in the last two decades. This has occurred in part because of the broad process of public sector reform in Australia but also because of a change in government in Queensland in 1989 which brought the Australian Labour Party (ALP) to power after 32 years of government by conservative parties. The ALP sought to reform the public sector so that it was more responsive to political direction and more in tune with contemporary thinking regarding public sector management (Hede, 1993). The conservative nature of Queensland politics up to that time had meant that the Queensland public sector mirrored traditional bureaucratic institutions and adopted traditional approaches to

public administration (Stevens and Wanna, 1993). In the 1990s, the Queensland government sought to introduce changes that had already been achieved at the federal level. This included program budgeting, an enhanced focus on outputs rather than inputs, increased authority for line managers and the introduction of commercial principles in service delivery (Queensland Treasury, 1992, 1994, 1997).

The broader process of public sector reform in Australia is associated with the philosophy of the new public management, which has been critical of traditional approaches to bureaucratic administration that are viewed as unnecessarily rigid and stagnant. The new “managerialist” thinking argues for more flexibility and innovation in the management of the public sector and greater emphasis on outcomes including efficiency and productivity (Orchard, 1998, pp. 276-7). New forms of work organisation involving flexibility and participation are consistent with the managerial reforms (Williams, 1992, pp. 276-7). As explained above, these reforms are consistent with support for group, developmental and rational cultures as defined by the competing values framework. The current research was designed to examine whether organisational culture in Queensland public sector organisations reflected the emphasis of the new public management on group, developmental and rational cultures.

Methods

A mail-out survey was utilised for this research. A mailing list was developed from the *Public Sector Directory* – executive level, which was accessed over the Internet. This is a list of Queensland public sector employees with managerial responsibilities, listed by their department. The researchers chose six of the largest departments that as a group carried out a range of activities undertaken in the public sector including central co-ordination, infrastructure provision and social services. A sampling frame of 530 names was compiled from the six departments, which included all executive level names listed in this directory[1].

Of questionnaires returned, 191 were usable, showing a response rate of 36 per cent[2]. There were 48 female and 143 male participants. Participants had been employed in the public sector for an average of 17 years (ranging from one to 48 years), and individual employees had been in their current positions for between three months and 15 years (average of three years). Of participants, 17 per cent were aged 24-34 years, 37 per cent were aged 35-44 years, 37 per cent were between 45 and 54 years of age, and 9 per cent were older than 55. All participants were managers in the public sector, ranging from lower level managers, to senior executive level managers.

There were three sections to the questionnaire. Sections A and B utilised a later version of an instrument published by Zammuto and Krakower (1991) which measured culture from a competing values framework[3]. The instrument has five questions and each asks about an aspect of organisational culture: organisational character; organisation’s managers; organisational

cohesion; organisational emphases; and organisational rewards. For each question, the respondent is asked to distribute 100 points between each of four organisational types. The types relate to the four models from the competing values perspective (Figure 1), most recently discussed in Zammuto *et al.* (1999). In Section A, respondents completed the five questions in relation to their perceptions of the current culture. Section B asked respondents to complete the same questions, this time describing their organisation as they would ideally like it to be. Section C asked for demographic information including age, years of service, gender, and current position[4].

Initial analyses examined the goodness of the data. Each of the culture type total scores, which were the basis of hypothesis testing, were found to be normally distributed (not affected by skewness or kurtosis). Descriptive statistics indicated that level in the hierarchy had a binomial distribution. Indications were that there were two groups of managers: senior executive level, and lower level managers. Several *t*-tests were conducted on the overall scores for each of the four culture types to determine if there were any significant differences between the two groups of managers. Results showed only one significant difference. This was for the score on the open systems model ($t = -2.15, p = 0.035$). The mean for the higher level managers (15.88) was greater than for the lower level managers (12.50). The difference was reasonably small, and for one variable only; therefore, subsequent analyses were conducted with the managers as one sample.

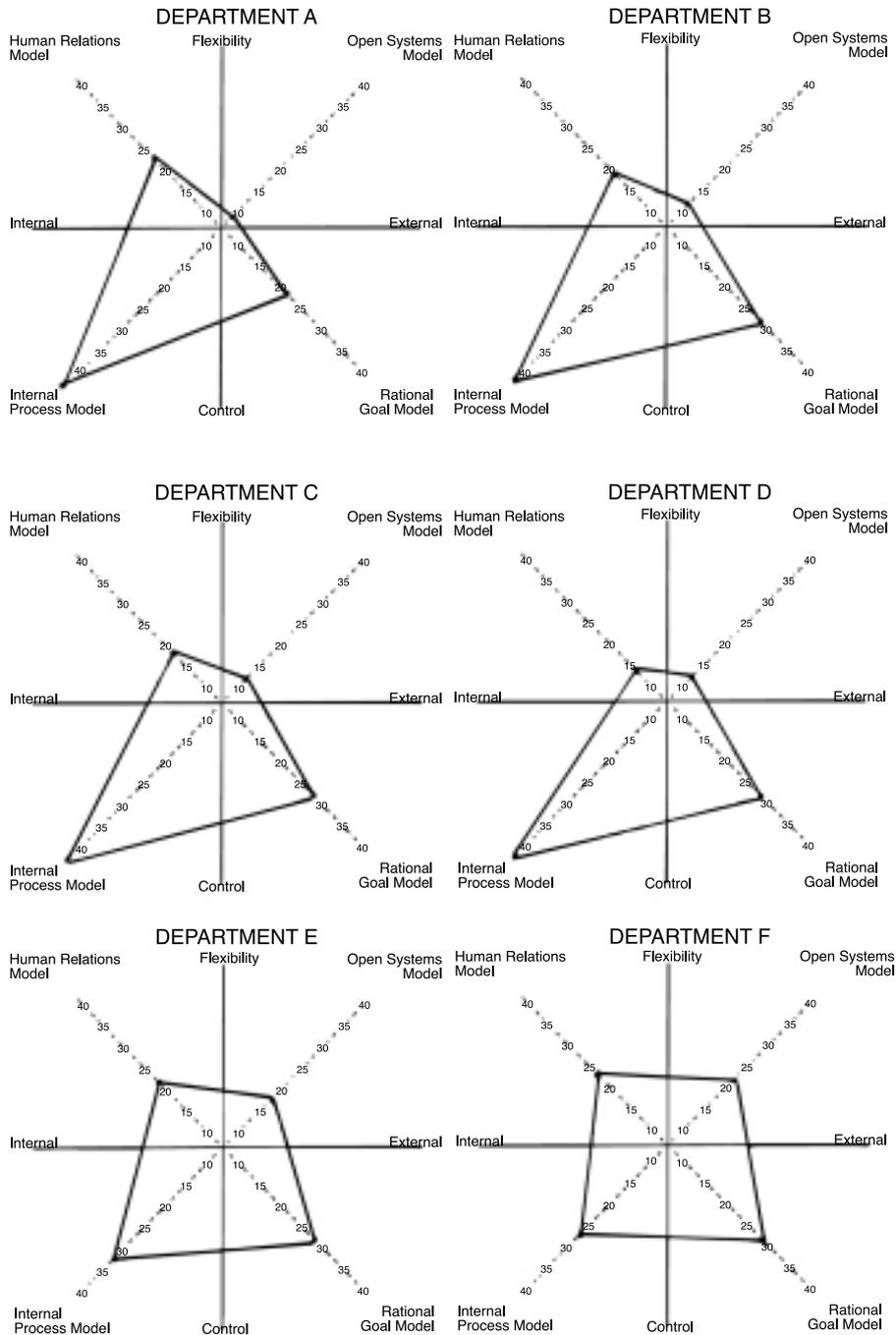
Reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) were calculated for each of the different culture types. Reliabilities ranged between 0.61 and 0.80 (see Table I).

Findings

The purpose of the survey research was to determine whether organisational culture in Queensland public sector organisations reflected the emphasis of the new public management on group, developmental and rational cultures. We expected to find that the traditional hierarchical model of public administration was not dominant within the cultural framework of the organisations. Contrary to what was expected, four out of the six Departments (A-D) were dominated by a hierarchical or internal process model of organisational culture. In Department E, the internal process model and the rational goal model were equally dominant. Only in Department F was the internal process model not the most dominant cultural model. In Department F, the internal process model was less dominant than the rational goal model (see Figure 2).

Model	Score
Human relations model	0.74
Open systems model	0.69
Internal process model	0.80
Rational goal model	0.61

Table I.
Reliability coefficients
for culture models



Source: Adapted from Zammuto and Krakower (1991)

Figure 2. The competing values framework of organisational culture

This finding contributes to our understanding of the alignment between the prescriptions of the “new public management” and culture in public sector organisations. We expected culture in public sector organisations in Queensland to reflect recent departures from traditional approaches to public administration (Metcalf and Richards, 1992; Niskanen, 1971; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). We expected that the internal process model would not be the dominant cultural form in the departments studied. Contrary to expectations, public sector culture remains heavily skewed towards an internal process model in four out of the six departments that formed part of the study. This suggests that the cultural characteristics of the traditional model of public administration remain dominant.

Four of the six public sector departments have a dominant culture that is hierarchical and involves a commitment to rules and attention to technical details. The four departments are characterised by a high level of conformity and tend to utilise formal rules and procedures as control mechanisms. As such, their culture remains consistent with the classic model of public organisations (Dahl and Lindblom, 1953; Downs, 1967; Weber, 1948). These organisations are not dominated by the flexibility and change orientation of the developmental (open systems) model or the goal setting, outcomes orientation and efficiency and productivity emphasis of the rational systems model or the employee participation and cohesion of the group (human relations) model.

Analysis of variance was conducted to determine differences between departments on each of the four models. There were no differences between any departments on the human relations model ($F = 1.11, p = 0.355$), or the rational goal model ($F = 1.01, p = 0.415$). For the open systems model, the analysis of variance was significant ($F = 5.71, p = 0.000$). Tukey *post hoc* tests were conducted, which showed that the differences were between Department F and the others (see Table II). Analysis of variance was also significant for the internal process model ($F = 5.71, p = 0.000$). Again, the differences were between Department F and three other departments (see Table III).

This finding suggests that Department F was most different from the other departments. The difference was on the open systems (developmental) and internal process models. This indicates that the difference is along the internal/external dimension. Department F had significantly higher scores on the external dimension. This can possibly be explained by the fact that Department F has an external focus because it is a central department with significant

Table II.
Mean differences
between departments
for open systems
model

	Mean difference	Significance
Department F – A	12.81	0.000
Department F – B	11.88	0.000
Department F – C	10.74	0.000
Department F – D	9.17	0.038
Department F – E	4.68	0.501 NS

responsibility for interacting with other departments. In addition, Department F has played a central role in driving the process of change in the public sector in accordance with the new public management.

None of the demographic variables (age, years in the public sector, and years in current position) was related to perceptions of the current culture for any of the models.

Implications for management and public policy

There are a number of possible explanations of the research findings which have both management and public policy implications. From a management perspective, the findings are suggestive of limits to managers' capacity to manage cultural change. There is a significant body of literature that draws attention to the difficulty of changing organisational culture on the grounds that culture is deeply ingrained in the underlying norms and values of an organisation and cannot be imposed from above (Beer, 1990; Molinsky, 1999; Turner, 1986). This would suggest that managerial support for a change in organisational culture is not sufficient for change to be achieved. This would explain why culture in the public sector remains different from the prescriptions of the new management framework. Future research should take into account the problems of change management in public sector organisations in an attempt to explain the resilience of the traditional model.

There are also public policy implications to be drawn from the current research. The findings are suggestive of the proposition that culture in the public sector remains aligned with a traditional bureaucratic model. A possible explanation of this finding is that public organisations are fundamentally different from private organisations and will, therefore, remain oriented towards a traditional model of public organisations involving a hierarchical culture, regardless of policy prescriptions designed to achieve organisational change.

Recent research has indicated that public sector organisations are fundamentally different from private sector organisations on a number of dimensions including the diversity of their goals, access to resources, and the nature of organisational constraints (economic vs. political) (Scott and Falcone, 1998). The functions and activities of public sector organisations and the way in which they are carried out are fundamentally different in some respects from private profit-making organisations (Massey, 1993; Scott and Falcone, 1998). Public sector activities form part of a broader government strategy of economic management and social development. They are, therefore, affected by

	Mean difference	Significance
Department F – A	-20.68	0.014
Department F – B	-16.75	0.001
Department F – C	-18.02	0.000
Department F – D	-17.27	0.141 NS
Department F – E	-4.86	0.962 NS

Table III.
Mean differences
between departments
for internal process
model

prevailing political ideologies and so are not performed in an equivalent manner to the production of goods or delivery of services in the private sector (Considine, 1990; Pollitt, 1990). It is possible that public sector activities cannot be easily equated with productive activities in the private sector because they involve high levels of inter-organisational coordination, research, communication, and negotiation and conflict resolution (Considine, 1990). Consequently, the prescriptions of management theory, which are drawn from the experience of successful private sector organisations, might be unsuitable for application to public sector organisations (Massey, 1993; Pollitt, 1990).

Further, limited research has indicated that public sector employees may have values and motives that are different from private sector employees (Perry, 1996). This might further explain limits to attempts to align organisational culture in the public sector with the “ideal model” derived from private sector experience. The small body of research on the values of public sector employees suggests that public sector employees are more altruistic than private sector employees and that they have a commitment to social development and the pursuit of the public interest (Sinclair, 1991). Future research should examine differences in the characteristics of private and public organisations and their employees (Perry and Rainey, 1988), which might explain the resistance of public sector organisations to the adoption of cultural characteristics generally associated with private sector organisations.

The research reported in this paper has provided evidence of the current state of organisational culture in the Queensland public sector and has examined culture in relation to the new public management. It has shown that prescriptions for organisational practice derived from management and public choice theory are not presently being modelled in public sector departments. Instead, culture in public sector organisations continues to reflect traditional approaches to public administration. Future research should examine the differences between public and private organisations which might explain the resilience of a hierarchical culture in the public sector and which would provide a further basis for evaluating the appropriateness of management reforms derived from the experience of private sector organisations.

Notes

1. A letter was sent to each person on this list, which was addressed personally to each potential respondent. The letter informed each person of the purpose of the research, contained a copy of the questionnaire, and invited each person to participate in the survey. They were informed that participation was voluntary, and that all responses would remain confidential. A reply-paid A4 envelope was also provided. The letter further encouraged people who were not able to participate in the research to complete section C (demographics) and return that in the reply-paid envelope. This was to enable a comparison of respondents and non-respondents to be made.
2. The response rate is higher if the number returned (62) because the respondent was not at the address listed (the directory was not completely up-to-date), and the number returned with only section C (demographics) completed (eight responses) are considered. This increases the response rate to 42 per cent.

3. Quinn and Spreitzer (1991) examined the psychometrics of two competing values framework culture instruments. Support was found for the psychometric properties of the Zammuto and Krakower instrument, on which the updated instrument is based. Quinn and Spreitzer also concluded that this instrument is appropriate when the goal is to identify differences among the culture types, and also when it is used in an applied setting, as it is in the present study.
4. The findings associated with managers' ideal perceptions. They have been published elsewhere and are not discussed in this paper.

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